

Dr. Robert Vannoy, Genesis, Session 22, Abrahamic Covenant – Gen. 12, 15 Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide Quiz, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Vannoy, Genesis, Session 22, Abrahamic Covenant – Gen. 12, 15, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

This lecture excerpt from Dr. Robert Vannoy's Old Testament History course focuses on the Abrahamic Covenant, specifically examining Genesis 12 and 15. The lecture analyzes the covenant's promises, particularly the blessing of all nations through Abraham's offspring, debating different interpretations of the Hebrew text. A key discussion involves whether the blessing is passive (extended to others) or reflexive (nations emulating Abraham). Further, the lecture explores the covenant's ratification through a ritual described in Genesis 15, comparing it to suzerainty-vassal treaties and highlighting its promissory nature. Finally, the lecture touches on the fulfillment of the land promise, suggesting a future aspect remains.

**2. 13 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of
Dr. Vannoy, Genesis, Session 22 – Double click icon to play in
Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL]
Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament →
Pentateuch → Genesis).**



**Vannoy_Genesis_Se
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3. Briefing Document: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 22, Abrahamic Covenant – Gen. 12, 15

Okay, here's a detailed briefing document summarizing the main themes and important ideas from the provided lecture excerpts:

Briefing Document: Dr. Robert Vannoy on the Abrahamic Covenant

Purpose of the Lecture: To analyze the Abrahamic Covenant as detailed in Genesis, particularly chapters 12 and 15, and to explore its implications. The lecture also touches upon the structure of Deuteronomy as a preliminary assignment for the next quarter.

Key Themes and Ideas:

1. Deuteronomy Structure (Preliminary Assignment):

- Dr. Vannoy assigns a structural outline of Deuteronomy as preparation for future lectures.
- He wants students to identify the major divisions, subdivisions, and the basic purposes of each section (chapters 1-11, 12-26, and 27-34).
- The assignment is intended to encourage careful reading and reflection on the book's structure, not to produce a lengthy paper.

1. Abraham as a Spiritual Father:

- The lecture transitions from a discussion of Abraham as a historical figure to his role as a "spiritual father."
- The main focus is on God's covenant with Abraham, particularly in Genesis 12:1-3 and 15.

1. The Covenant in Genesis 12:1-3:

- **God's Call and Promises:** God calls Abraham to leave his country and family and promises to show him a new land, make him into a great nation, bless him, make his name great, make him a blessing, bless those who bless him, curse those who curse him, and ultimately, that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."
- **God's Promise of a Great Name vs. Human Ambition:** The lecture contrasts God's promise to make Abraham's name great with the attempts in Genesis 6 and 11 where people try to make a name for themselves improperly. God will properly bestow what others sought through self-aggrandizement.

- **The Blessing to All Nations:** The central promise of universal blessing is explored, with focus on the translation of the phrase “all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” in Genesis 12:3.
- **Passive vs. Reflexive Translation:** The lecture dives into the grammatical nuances of the Hebrew phrase, specifically the use of Niphal and Hithpael verbal forms, which could translate as either "be blessed through you" (passive) or "bless themselves in/by you" (reflexive). The traditional translation is passive, but modern commentators tend toward the reflexive. Dr. Vannoy indicates that the grammatical argument for the reflexive stems from the fact that the Hithpael is usually translated reflexively, and this should apply to all five mentions of the phrase within Genesis. However, this is not so simple, since a careful examination of the instances of the Hithpael shows that it can also be passive in certain cases.
- **Theological Significance:** The interpretation of this phrase (passive vs. reflexive) has a great impact on its theological significance, whether this means that nations *will be* blessed or whether it means that nations will see Abraham as an ideal to bless themselves through.
- **Arguments for Passive Translation:** The Septuagint, Targums, and New Testament quotations of these passages (Acts 3:25 and Galatians 3:8) all translate the expression passively, making an important point in favor of seeing the passage as conveying an active blessing that God promises to *do* rather than an aspiration that others might try to achieve. Paul even calls this announcement to Abraham "the gospel" in advance, in Galatians 3:8.
- **Christ as the Fulfillment:** Dr. Vannoy argues that the blessing to the nations is ultimately realized in Abraham's "seed," which points to Christ, connecting this covenant promise back to Genesis 3:15 and forward to Christ's salvation.

1. **The Promise of Land (Genesis 12:7, 17):**

- **Theophany:** Genesis 12:7 marks the first occurrence in the Old Testament of "the LORD appeared" to someone, a theophany, which is a visible and perceptible manifestation of God.
- **Everlasting Possession:** God promises the land of Canaan as an "everlasting possession" to Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 17:7-8).
- **Ongoing Validity:** Dr. Vannoy suggests the land promise is still valid, linked to the ongoing validity of the Abrahamic covenant, and argues there will be a future fulfillment of the specifics.

- **Provisional Fulfillment:** Dr. Vannoy points out that the land was provisionally fulfilled in the time of David, but the final promise remains unfulfilled.
 - **Spiritual Fulfillment:** Dr. Vannoy contrasts his position with that of those who believe the promise is "spiritual" and is now expanded to include the whole world, which is fulfilled in the church.
1. **Ratification of the Covenant in Genesis 15:**
 - **Visionary Setting:** God speaks to Abraham in a vision.
 - **Promise of Offspring:** The promise of a great seed from Abraham's own body is reiterated (verses 4-5).
 - **Faith and Righteousness:** Verse 6 states that Abraham's faith was "credited to him as righteousness," linking these important concepts for the first time. Paul refers to this verse in Romans 4, saying that righteousness is not based on human works but on faith in God.
 - **Covenant Oath Ritual: Cutting a Covenant:** The ritual of cutting animals in half and walking between them is explored as a customary practice in treaty ratifications. The Hebrew expression "cut a covenant" (karat berit) reflects this ritual. The implication being that if the terms are not met, it will happen to the breaker as it happened to the animal.
 - **God's Oath:** In this instance, it is God, represented by the smoking firepot and blazing torch, who passes between the parts of the animals, signifying that God takes the oath and assumes the curses if the covenant is broken. This is a key difference from the Sinai covenant where the people took the oath.
 - **Promissory Nature:** The ritual emphasizes the promissory nature of the Abrahamic covenant, which is a promise from God.
 - **Terror and Darkness:** The lecture explains that the terror and darkness that engulf Abraham during the ritual symbolize the solemnity and the frightening nature of the event. Some scholars have stated that this is a picture of Old Testament Golgotha where God takes the curse upon himself.

Key Quotes:

- "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever

curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." - Genesis 12:2-3

- "Unto your offspring I will give this land." - Genesis 12:7
- "Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness." - Genesis 15:6
- "The men who have violated my covenant and have not fulfilled the terms of the covenant they made before me, I will treat like the calf they cut in two and then walked between its pieces." - Jeremiah 34:18
- "By passing alone between the pieces God swore fidelity to his covenant promises and took upon himself all the curses symbolized by the carcasses." - Meredith Kline

Significance of the Abrahamic Covenant:

- The Abrahamic covenant is a pivotal moment in the Old Testament narrative.
- It establishes a line through which God's redemptive plan will be carried out.
- It is a promissory covenant where God takes the oath, ensuring its fulfillment.
- The covenant ultimately points to Christ as the means through which all nations will be blessed, and the promise is not primarily a future national fulfillment of land for a group of people.

Implications and Further Study:

- The lecture encourages further study of the complexities of interpreting the Hebrew grammar related to the covenant.
- It emphasizes the importance of historical and cultural context in understanding the ritual of covenant ratification.
- The lecture raises questions about the future fulfillment of the land promise, which will be discussed later in the course.

Overall, this lecture excerpt provides a detailed analysis of the Abrahamic Covenant, its promises, and its theological significance within the broader context of the Old Testament. It encourages critical thinking and close reading of the biblical text, as well as the nuances of biblical Hebrew.

4. Study Guide: Vannoy, Genesis, Session 22, Abrahamic Covenant, Gen. 12, 15

Abrahamic Covenant Study Guide

Quiz

Instructions: Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. What is the primary purpose of the assignment concerning the book of Deuteronomy?
2. According to Dr. Vannoy, what is the significance of the phrase "I will make your name great" in God's covenant with Abraham?
3. Explain the translational issue regarding the phrase "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you/by you" and its importance.
4. Why is the Hithpael verb form important in the context of the Abrahamic covenant and how does it challenge traditional grammatical interpretations?
5. What is the significance of New Testament quotations of the promise to Abraham, such as in Acts 3:25 and Galatians 3:8?
6. What is a theophany, and what is significant about the first occurrence of this term in relation to Abraham in Genesis 12:7?
7. According to Dr. Vannoy, what is the relationship between the land promise and the Abrahamic covenant?
8. In Genesis 15, what is the significance of the phrase, "Abram believed the Lord, and he credited it to him as righteousness?"
9. Describe the covenant oath ritual in Genesis 15 and explain its significance.
10. According to Meredith Kline, how does the Abrahamic covenant differ from the Sinaitic covenant?

Quiz Answer Key

1. The primary purpose of the assignment is to understand the structure of Deuteronomy, including its major divisions (chapters 1-11, 12-26, and 27-34) and their respective purposes. It is intended to get students to look carefully at the structure of the book and to prepare them for future study.

2. The phrase is significant because it contrasts with the improper attempts by the people in Genesis 6 and 11 to make a name for themselves. God is promising to give Abraham what others sought improperly but will give it to him properly.
3. The phrase can be translated either passively ("be blessed through you") or reflexively ("bless themselves by you"). The passive implies that the nations will receive a blessing through Abraham's line, whereas the reflexive implies that they will look to Abraham as an ideal, and the theological implications differ significantly.
4. The Hithpael verb form is significant because traditional grammar rules state that it cannot be translated as passive, leading some scholars to interpret the blessing as reflexive. However, research shows that the Hithpael can also have passive meaning, allowing for a broader range of interpretation.
5. The New Testament quotations are significant because they consistently translate the promise passively and highlight its importance for salvation. Paul refers to this promise as the gospel, suggesting its central role in the plan of redemption.
6. A theophany is a manifestation of God in a temporary form perceptible to the senses, and the first occurrence is significant because it marks the first time in the Old Testament that the LORD appeared directly to someone. This appearance includes both visual and verbal communication with Abraham.
7. The land promise is seen as integral to the Abrahamic covenant, and like the covenant, it is considered everlasting. Dr. Vannoy suggests that while it had a provisional fulfillment in the time of David, its full realization is still future with the return of Israel to the land.
8. The phrase highlights the concept of righteousness by faith. Abraham is declared righteous not by his works but by his belief in God's promise, which God credited to him.
9. The covenant oath ritual involves the slaying and cutting of animals, with God symbolically passing between the pieces, and is associated with the idiom "cutting a covenant." This act demonstrates that God takes the full obligation of the covenant on himself.
10. The Abrahamic covenant is a promise covenant in which God takes the oath, while the Sinaitic covenant is a law covenant in which people take the oath. This shows the distinct nature of the two covenants.

Essay Questions

1. Analyze the significance of the covenant oath ritual in Genesis 15, explaining its historical and theological implications in relation to the Abrahamic covenant and its symbolic meaning in how the covenant is ratified.
2. Discuss the differing translations of the phrase "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you/by you" in Genesis 12:3, evaluating the scholarly arguments for both the passive and reflexive interpretations. Consider the theological implications of each.
3. Explore the role of the land promise in the Abrahamic covenant, examining different views on whether it has already been fulfilled adequately or if a future fulfillment is still anticipated.
4. Compare and contrast the Abrahamic covenant with the Sinaitic covenant, focusing on the differences in oath-taking and the nature of each covenant as a promise or law agreement.
5. Trace the development of the promise of the line of redemption from Genesis 3:15 through Genesis 12, paying attention to Abraham's place in God's salvific plan as presented in this material.

Glossary

Anachronism: Something that is out of place in time, such as an object or idea belonging to a different historical period.

Covenant: A formal agreement between two parties, often with specific obligations and promises. In a biblical context, it is often a divine promise and agreement with humanity.

Durative: Continuing in time; extended or prolonged.

Hithpael: A reflexive or reciprocal verb stem in Hebrew.

Imputation: The act of attributing or crediting something to someone, such as righteousness being credited to a person through faith.

Iterative: Repeated or recurring.

Niphal: A passive or reflexive verb stem in Hebrew.

Provisional: Temporary or conditional; not final or permanent.

Reflexive: A grammatical term where the action of a verb reflects back on the subject, such as "they bless themselves."

Septuagint: The Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, dating from the third to first centuries BCE.

Suzerainty/Vassal Treaties: Treaties between a more powerful suzerain and a lesser vassal, often defining obligations and relationships.

Targums: Aramaic translations of the Hebrew Bible.

Theophany: A visible manifestation of God to humans.

Visionary: Related to visions. In the context of this lecture, it refers to internal and mental perception rather than through normal sensory mechanisms.

5. FAQs on Vannoy, Genesis, Session 22, Abrahamic Covenant, Gen. 12, 15, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Abrahamic Covenant and Related Themes

1. **What is the main focus of the lecture on Abraham, and what textual analysis is emphasized?** The lecture focuses on Abraham as a spiritual father and examines God's covenant with him, particularly in Genesis 12, 15, and related passages. The analysis emphasizes the nuances of the Hebrew text, exploring different verb forms and their implications for understanding the covenant's meaning, as well as its fulfillment. There is also a structural analysis of the book of Deuteronomy to see the flow of law, history and prophecy.
2. **What is the significance of God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3, specifically the phrase "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you"?** The promise in Genesis 12:2-3 is central to the Abrahamic covenant. The phrase "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you" is debated in translation. The traditional reading implies a passive understanding where blessings are extended through Abraham and his seed to all nations. However, some argue for a reflexive interpretation, suggesting that nations will look to Abraham as an ideal and bless themselves or each other. The lecturer leans towards the passive understanding, ultimately connecting it with the gospel through Jesus Christ in the New Testament.
3. **What is the debate surrounding the Hebrew verb forms Niphal and Hithpael, and how does it impact the interpretation of the blessing to Abraham?** The Hebrew verb forms Niphal (typically passive) and Hithpael (typically reflexive) are used in the five passages where the phrase "all the families of the earth will be blessed in you" or "in your seed" is found. Some scholars argue that the Hithpael form cannot be translated passively, forcing a reflexive interpretation in all five instances. However, the lecture points out that some Hithpael occurrences can be translated passively and that the Septuagint and other translations support a passive interpretation of all five instances. This allows for the understanding that God's blessing will be actively bestowed through Abraham's lineage.

4. **How does the New Testament treat the promise to Abraham, and what is its theological significance?** The New Testament, particularly in Acts 3:25 and Galatians 3:8, quotes the promise as a passive declaration, highlighting that all nations would be blessed through Abraham. Paul refers to this as "the gospel" announced to Abraham in advance. This interpretation connects the Abrahamic covenant with the messianic promise and the salvation secured by Christ, thus giving it a prominent theological significance.
5. **What is the significance of the land promise in the Abrahamic covenant, and what are the different interpretations of its fulfillment?** The land promise is the idea that God promised land to Abraham and his descendants. There are varying interpretations of the fulfillment of the land promise. Some consider it fully fulfilled during the return from Babylonian exile, but this fails to adequately match all of the specific details in the Old Testament. Others interpret it spiritually, where the land is expanded symbolically to include all believers in the church. However, the lecture suggests there will be a future physical fulfillment with Israel returning to the land, noting the provisional fulfillment during the time of David, where it was extended to the boundaries mentioned in Genesis.
6. **What is a theophany, and how does it relate to God's appearances to Abraham?** A theophany is a manifestation of God in a temporary, perceptible form. In Genesis 12:7, where God appears to Abraham, it is the first instance of this expression used in the Old Testament, marking it as a significant event. The appearance serves as a visible sign of God's presence and revelation to Abraham.
7. **What is the significance of the covenant ratification ritual described in Genesis 15, particularly the passing of the smoking firepot between the animal pieces?** The ritual in Genesis 15 is understood as a covenant oath ceremony where animals are cut in two. This represents a curse invoked on the party who breaks the covenant. In this case, God, symbolized by the smoking firepot, passes alone between the pieces, signifying his sole responsibility for upholding the covenant promises. This is different from law covenants, like the one at Sinai, where man takes the oath.

8. **How does the Abrahamic covenant differ from the Sinaitic covenant and what is the importance of that distinction?** The Abrahamic covenant is a promissory covenant where God takes the oath, promising to fulfill His part. In contrast, the Sinaitic (or Mosaic) covenant is a law covenant where the people of Israel take an oath to obey God's laws. This distinction highlights that the Abrahamic covenant is based on God's grace and promise, while the Sinaitic covenant is based on human obedience. The Abrahamic is foundational and the promises are what will ultimately lead to Christ, while the Sinaitic covenant is how the law was revealed to God's people.