

## Reading the Old Testament

### Paper Outline

**You are free to choose any chapter from any chapter in the Hill and Walton text that discusses books from Genesis to Job.**

**The paper should follow the following format.**

**1. What are the main points of the chapter?**

Major themes:

- Covenant and election: consist of God's divine election and divine covenant He made with the Israelites.
- Monotheism: Although monotheism means the worship of one God, the book of Genesis portrays the different levels of monotheism – preference for one deity, worship of one deity and believing that only one deity exists. It is concluded that Abraham was a practical monotheist, who worshipped El (God).
- Sin: is one of the major key themes in the book of Genesis as it was introduced into the world by Adam and Eve.

**2. How do these points fit in the overall shape of the Old Testament?**

Old Testament is divided into 39 books, which center in the idea that God reveals himself in covenant. Consequently, in Genesis, God instituted a program of revelation called the covenant. It is the book of beginnings and contains the foundations for much of the theology of the Old Testament. Additionally, the covenant is the foundation of Israelite theology and identity, and its history is therefore of understandable significance. The book narrates how the covenant was established firstly through Adam and Eve, consequently, Abraham, by detailing the various obstacles to the covenant. This is also

known as Covenant theology, where God *has* to reveal himself - either directly or indirectly for if he does not, we do not know God.

This theology is shown throughout shape the Old Testament in that: Throughout the Pentateuch, the books of the Law we are shown the God who speaks by His covenant; In the historical books, Joshua through Esther, the idea of covenant is applied in history – the God who enforces His covenant in history; Throughout the poetical books, Job through Songs of Songs, the idea of covenant is mused upon in the context of life. (i.e: Job – the idea of suffering; Psalms – reminds us to worship; Proverbs – the choices that we are challenged to make; Ecclesiastes – Transitoriness “vanity” nuance of something that is quick – life is quick, what’s the substance of life – we hang on fame, money, it’s here today, gone tomorrow, etc.); Through the major and minor prophets, Isaiah - Malachi, God speaks His covenant.

**3. Pick one theme and discuss how this theme is developed in the New Testament?**

The theme of covenant and election is language of marriage. Throughout the New Testament, Christ is depicted as the bridegroom and the church as the bride. Thus, the theology of the covenant is still present in the Old Testament through the Messiah. Because God the Father has chosen us, He gave his one and only son to die for us on the cross, so there would be no separation of the covenant He first created through Adam and Eve.

**4. What are some of the practical themes of this book?**

**#1: Fear of Man Leads to Deception**

Genesis 12 shows the beginning of the call of Abraham as a father of many nations. He set out of Haran, traveling through Canaan, Bethel and Egypt. When in Egypt, Abraham, then named Abram, and Sara (Sarai), deceived Pharaoh to believe that she was Abraham’s sister, instead of his wife in order to gain favor in his eyes. “.... I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they

will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you..." (Gen. 12:11-13) The promise of the Lord for Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) illustrated that God was with him, nevertheless the fear of man, the Egyptians in this instance, and thus, lack of trust in God, led Abraham and Sara to be deceptive and portray themselves to be someone they were not.

This is also shown in the Patriarchal story of Isaac. In Genesis 26, Isaac is Gerar, where God reaffirms His covenant with him. However, when presenting his wife, Rebekah, he followed the same pattern as his father Abraham and said that she was his sister. "When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful." (Gen. 26:7) In addition to God's covenant, Abraham's fear of man and deception showed to be generational. Throughout the rest of the Patriarchal period, one can perceive that deceitfulness became a generational habit, Jacob deceived His father Isaac to receive Esau's inheritance (Gen. 27:15), Laban deceived Jacob (Gen. 29:17-30) and Joseph's brothers deceived Jacob to believe he was killed (Gen. 37:31-35).

## **#2: Disobedience Brings Turmoil, Pain and Suffering**

".... You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir. Then the word of the Lord came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son who is your own flesh and blood will be your heir. He took him outside and said, "Look up at the sky and count the stars – if needed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." (Gen. 15:3-5) The Lord promised Abraham and Sara that they would have children, a generation to which His covenant will be passed down to; however, due to their old age, Abraham and Sara grew desperate and decided not to

wait on the promise of the Lord. They decided to take matters into their own hands, acting outside of God's will and thus, disobeying Him. "... The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my slave; I can build my family through her.... He slept with her, and she conceived" (Gen. 16:2, 4) This caused suffering not only to Sara, but mostly to Hagar and Ishmael, who became casualties of Abraham and Sara' disobedience. "... You are responsible for the wrong I am suffering..." (Gen. 16:5) "Then Sarai mistreated Hagar; so, she fled" (Gen.16:6)

This principle is also present in the Patriarchal story of Jacob, where his deceitfulness toward Isaac and his disobedience resulted in strife between him and his brother Esau; pain and suffering to his father, and turmoil within himself for as a result he had to flee so his brother would not kill him. "... When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry..." (Gen. 27:34) "...Your brother Esau is planning to avenge himself by killing you... Flee at once..." (Gen. 27:43)

### **#3: God is a [Faithful] Generational God.**

Primarily stated in the covenant the Lord made with Abraham. "... To your offspring I will give this land..." (Gen. 12:7) In His faithfulness, God renewed His covenant throughout the next generations of Patriarchs: with Isaac, "... I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham..." (Gen. 26:3); with Jacob, "... I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying..." (Gen. 28:13); and with Joseph, "The Lord was with Joseph so that he prospered.... But while Joseph was there in prison, the Lord was with him..." (Gen. 39:2, 21) God kept His promise not only to Abraham that He will be with him and with his generations, but with Isaac, Jacob and Joseph as well.

### **#4: God's Promises Demand Obedience, Purification and Sanctification**

In Genesis 17, God reaffirms His covenant with Abraham, nonetheless, this time around, He requires and demands something of Abraham for the promise to be fulfilled. "... walk before me faithfully and blameless. Then I will make my covenant between me and you..." (Gen. 17:1-2) "... As for you.... You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between you and me." (Gen. 17: 9, 11) Circumcision was usually performed on the eighth day after a boy was born, however, here God is asking Abraham to get circumcised as a physical declaration of his commitment and obedience to His covenant, "...My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant..." (Gen. 17:13).

This timeless principle also presents itself in the Patriarchal story of Jacob. In Genesis 35, when God called him and his family back to Bethel – where the Lord had first made the covenant with him – as a condition to leave the city of Shechem in Canaan, Jacob demanded that his family "...Get rid of the

foreign gods you have with you and purify yourselves and change your clothes. Then come, let us go to Bethel, where I will build an altar to God, who answered me in the day of my distress and who has been with me wherever I have gone.” (Gen. 35: 2-3) Their devotion only to the Lord, their cutting ties with any pagan activities, and their cleansing signified a physical sign of their obedience. “... Jacob and all the people with him came to Luz in the land of Canaan. There he built an altar, and he called the place El Bethel...” (Gen. 35:6)

#### **#5: God Calls Us by Name – He Redeems**

Throughout the Patriarchal Period, God re-names certain people, naming them according to their calling and His purpose for them, and also redeeming their past. Abram, which means “exalted father,” was later on renamed by God as Abraham – which means “father of many.” “.... No longer will you be called Abram, your name will be Abraham, for I have made you a father of many nations...” (Gen. 17:5); Then, there is Sarai, who God renamed as Sara. “... As for Sarai your wife, you are no longer to call her Sarai; her name will be Sarah... she will be the mother of nations.” (Gen. 17:15-16).

Lastly, God redeemed and renamed Jacob, whose name means “he deceives,” however, since he no longer known for his sin, God renamed as Israel, which means “he struggles with God.” “... Your name will no longer be Jacob, but Israel, because you have struggled with God and with humans and have overcome.” (Gen. 32:28)