

International Workshop "Abraham as Ritual Model II"
Organizers: Thomas R. Blanton IV and Claudia D. Bergmann
Final Report

The workshop, which included speakers from Finland, the Netherlands, the United States, and Germany, was the second in a series of two. The first workshop was held at Erfurt's Kleine Synagoge on Dec. 17, 2018, and the second at Bildungshaus St. Ursula on Oct. 22, 2019. The theme of both workshops was the use of the biblical patriarch as a "ritual model"; that is, a figure that could be held up by later generations as an example of virtuous ritual behavior that ought to be emulated. Among the ritual acts associated with Abraham according to later traditions are circumcision, sacrifice, apotropaic ritual and exorcism, and hospitality, including the consumption of a ritual meal.

The workshop featured six presented papers followed by discussion and concluding remarks by Judith Frishman (Leiden). The papers presented included the following:

1. Mika Pajunen (Helsinki): "Abraham as a Mediator of Sacrificial Practices and a Model for Incantations in the Genesis Apocryphon and Jubilees";
2. Jan Willem van Henten (Amsterdam): "Abraham as Exemplum in 4 Maccabees";
3. Clare Wilde (Groningen): "Abraham as Model for Muhammad? Some Christian Arabic Views";
4. Thomas R. Blanton IV (Chicago): "Abraham, Covenant, and Circumcision: Philo's Revisionist Exegesis of Genesis 17";
5. Marcel Poorthuis (Tilburg): "Abraham and Kashrut: A Moot Point";
6. May May Latt (Chicago) and Claudia D. Bergmann (Erfurt): "'Look to Abraham and Sarah': The Motifs of Barrenness and Childbirth in Genesis and Second Isaiah."

In addition to the presenters, two attendees came to hear several of the lectures: one a research fellow at the Max-Weber-Kolleg at the University of Erfurt, and the other a student from the university. The papers presented were of high quality, and the interaction among all participants was both congenial and highly productive.

In addition to the two workshops, the project is expected to yield as a tangible outcome a volume to be coedited by Thomas R. Blanton IV and Claudia D. Bergmann. The coedited volume will consist of papers presented at both the 2018 and 2019 workshops, in addition to other papers solicited specifically for the volume. An acquisitions editor for the Jewish and Christian Perspectives series published in Leiden by E. J. Brill has already expressed enthusiasm for the publication of the volume in that series. The volume is projected to appear in 2021.