

ABRAHAM'S JOURNEY
AN ONLINE SERIES OF CLASSES
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OUTLINE
LECTURE TEN
SABBATH'S THIRD WORLD

1. Introduction.
2. The Circumcision Covenant as Sabbath's Third World
 - a. Evidence
 - i. Linguistic: Keywords
 - ii. Structural: Chiasm
 1. All Sabbath narratives to this point have been structured as chiasms...
 - a. The Sabbath itself.
 - b. The Rainbow Covenant.
 2. Comparing the centers: The centers of all the Sabbath chiasms seem to play off one another...
 - a. Sabbath and Rainbow
 - b. Circumcision?
 - b. Meaning.
 - i. What does it mean to view the circumcision covenant as Sabbath's expression in Abraham's world?
 - ii. A Theory: Sabbath = modeling of responsible creativity on the part of the Creator. Man as creator is meant to model God as Creator.
 1. Sabbath
 2. Rainbow
 3. Circumcision.
3. Two Lingering Questions:
 - a. Why is the Sabbath "out of place" in Abraham's World? In previous worlds, the Sabbath story preceded the Tree of Knowledge story. Here it comes afterwards. [I.e. circumcision follows the story of Abraham, Sarai and Hagar].
 - b. In previous worlds, mankind's failure in a "Tree of Knowledge" challenge signaled the end of an age; the destruction of a world. In Abraham's age, this does not appear to be so. Why might this be the case?

4. The Prologue to the Circumcision Covenant
 - a. Three elements
 - i. “Be Whole with Me”.
 - ii. “A Covenant Between Us”
 - iii. “I will greatly increase your offspring”
 - b. How do these three elements connect?
 - c. A Theory: The Circumcision Covenant as a Mission to Channel Man’s Creativity.
 - i. Sabbath: God models responsible creativity; don’t create forever
 - ii. Rainbow: God models responsible creativity; don’t destroy...
 - iii. Circumcision: Man’s turn...
5. The Circumcision Chiasm: A Line by Line Analysis.
6. Charting the “Evolution” of the Sabbath from World to World
 - a. From God to Man.
 - i. Sabbath in Genesis:
 1. A “private” event for God alone.
 2. Gift of land and children to man seems absolute: Man is charged with a “mitzvah” to subdue the land and to procreate.
 - ii. Rainbow: A virtually “unilateral” covenant, whose main weight of responsibility falls upon God.¹
 1. Keywords: “Ve’ani ... “Ve’atah” / As for me... As for you...
 2. God’s Role: It is up to God to remember the covenant and observe it;
 - a. but man’s involvement is a bit greater than before: God explicitly shares the existence of this covenant with man.
 3. Man’s Role: He will subdue the earth and procreate.
 - a. But while procreation is still a “mitzvah”, subduing the earth has simply become a fact: It is the way things are.
 - iii. Circumcision²:
 1. Tracing the “Ve’ani... ve’atah...”. What is God’s role in the covenant; what is Abraham’s role? As we shall see, things appear to have switched...

¹ See source notes, selection I.

² See source notes, selection II.

2. Both the “subjugation of land” and procreation are now facts; neither are phrased as ‘mitzvot’, commands. These have become responsibilities of God, rather than as parts of man’s obligation.
 3. By contrast, the keeping of the “creativity covenant”, once the province of God (see above; rainbow) has now shifted to become the burden of mankind.
- iv. Summary: Whereas before, God had modeled effective creativity, now man is charged explicitly with doing this on his own.
1. As we shall see below, the very existence of Abraham’s nationhood is predicated on his keeping of this covenant.

7. Implications.

a. Implications for the nature of Jewish nationhood.

- i. Instead of destroying Abraham’s world, the existence of Abraham’s nationhood becomes predicated on their adherence to the covenant.
- ii. Reading Joshua 5:1-12.
 1. The need to become circumcised before entering the land.
 2. The offering of the Pesach.
 3. The cessation of the Mannah / eating from the fruits of the land.
 4. Gilgal: Taking away the “shame of Egypt”. What does this mean?
 5. The appearance of the angel with the sword.
 - a. The ambiguous posture of the angel.
 - b. The angel’s sword / the Jews’ sword.
 - c. Cf. Moses’ near death at the hands of an angel, on his way down to Egypt. Tziporah’s act to save Moshe.

b. Implications for how we might deal with Ishmael.

8. Conclusions and Remaining Questions:

- a. We have seen that Abraham’s Journey, like the Age of Noah, mirrors the “Age of Creation” in precise ways. As Abraham’s Journey continues, does this mirroring continue – or have we come to its end?