

11-30-24 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene - *Toldot* (Generations)
Torah Portion: Gen 25:19-28:9
Haftarah: Malachi 1:1 – 2:7
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Heb 11:8-12

Under the Law Part 20– Abrahamic Covenant

Central question: Do you understand the progression of entering into the various levels of a covenant relationship with G-d?

Today we are in parasha *Toldot*, which means “generations.” It takes its name from the eighth word of the passage in English, and the second word in the original Hebrew.

Gen 25:19-21

19 Now these are the records of the **generations** of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham became the father of Isaac; 20 and Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, the sister of Laban the Aramean, to be his wife. 21 And Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord answered him and Rebekah his wife conceived.

19
 וְאֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַבְרָהָם אַבְרָהָם
 And these are the generations of Isaac, son: Abraham
 428 9999 8435 3327 1121 85 85

הוֹלִיד אֶת־יִצְחָק:
 begat Isaac:
 3205 853 3327

20
 וַיְהִי וַיְצַחֵק יִצְחָק בֶּן־אַרְבָּעִים שָׁנָה בְּקִחְתּוֹ אֶת־רִבְקָה
 And was Isaac old forty years when he took Rebekah
 1961 3327 1121 705 8141 3947 853 7259

בֶּת־בְּתוּאֵל הָאֲרָמִי מִפֶּדַּן אַרָם אֲחֹת לַבָּן
 the daughter of Bethuel the Syrian of Padan-aram, the sister to Laban
 1323 1328 761 6307 269 3837

הָאֲרָמִי לִוְיָאֲשָׁה:
 the Syrian. to wife,
 761 3807a 802

21
 וַיַּעֲתָר וַיִּצְחָק לַיהוָה לִנְכַּח אִשְׁתּוֹ כִּי עֲקָרָה
 And intreated Isaac the Lord for his wife, because was barren:
 6279 3327 3068 5227 802 3588 9999 6135

הָיָא וַיַּעֲתָר לוֹ יְהוָה וּרְבֵקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ:
 she and was intreated of him, the Lord and conceived. Rebekah his wife
 1931 6279 3807a 3068 2029 7259 802

We are in the midst of a series on the topic of “covenant.” As I have said before, Scripture shows us that there is but one covenant, and it has several “layers.” The covenant is simply expressed by us as “You are my G-d.” As expressed by G-d, it is, “You are My people.”

G-d offers the opportunity to each of us once we enter into the basic level of covenant relationship, to grow to the next level, but He does not condemn anyone for choosing to stay at whatever level we choose. How close we choose to be to G-d in the covenant-continuum is entirely up to us, individually.

We have previously examined the concept of justification and how that differs from the concept of sanctification. We enter into the door of justification by faith in G-d, and turning out backs on our former unbelief, and the way we once lived. Once we are through the doorway of justification (an event), we are invited to grow in our faith through our life's choices consistent with that faith, and that is the process of sanctification – which lasts for the remainder of our life in this age.

The entry-level covenant relationship (once we have entered the doorway of justification) is the Noahic covenant. The next level of the covenant relationship is the Abrahamic covenant, which has two sub-levels. The first level contains the promises given to Avram (pre-circumcision), and the second level contains the promises given to him post-circumcision and when his name was changed to Abraham.

In actuality, it seems to me that the first sublevel of the Abrahamic covenant is more of a ramp-up to the fullness, which it combines with

the second level of that covenant. We explored the first level – the Avramic covenant – last week. Let's now explore the fullness of that covenant as expressed in the second sub-level.

Abrahamic Covenant.

We see a bit of a further progression from the Avramic covenant in the last part of parasha Lech-L'Cha, which we saw three weeks ago. That further step in the covenant relationship is a big one, and involves a name change. Name changes normally signify a dramatic change in the relationship, normally to a higher level of intimacy, and this certainly qualifies. And G-d added to that name change the sign of circumcision.

Gen 17:1-14

17 Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him,

"I am God Almighty;

Walk before Me, and be blameless.

2 "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you,
And I will multiply you exceedingly."

3 And Abram fell on his face, and God talked with him, saying,

4 "As for Me, behold, My covenant is with you, And you shall be the father of a multitude of nations.

5 "No longer shall your name be called Abram, But your name shall be Abraham; For I will make you the father of a multitude of nations.

6 "And I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. 7 And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

9 God said further to Abraham, "Now as for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 This is My covenant, which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants

after you: every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 And you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants. 13 A servant who is born in your house or who is bought with your money shall surely be circumcised; thus shall My covenant be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. 14 But an uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant."

Remember that Abraham's "descendants" are not merely genetic descendants, but also include those who have become members of Israel according to the Abrahamic covenant.

Our sages have noticed that in this passage G-d repeats His earlier promise regarding giving the Land eternally, so He has made it clear that this covenant does not replace the former one [made between the parts of the divided animals], but is a fuller expression of that former one. And at this time He adds another promise, "I will be their G-d."

From this time forward, you will find the phrase used, “G-d of Abraham.” From this point forward, G-d is not merely the creator of everything, but also the G-d of Abraham’s “descendants.”

Our Sages have also described the responsibilities, and attributes of those who are entering into this higher level.

Regarding “I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojourning” – Rabbi Yudan said five things: If your descendants accept My Godliness upon themselves, I will be God and patron for them; if not, I will not be God and patron for them. If your descendants enter the land, they will be able to accept My Godliness, but if not, they will not be able to accept it. If your descendants fulfill the precept of circumcision, they will enter the land; but if not, they will not enter the land. If your descendants accept the Shabbat they will enter the land; but if not, they will not enter the land.¹

A couple of big things accompany this completed level of the Abrahamic covenant. One is the name change, and the other is the circumcision.

¹ Bereshit Rabbah 46:9

Let's first deal with the name change. Avram means "lofty father." But Abraham means "lofty father of a multitude."

Our sages have suggested also that Avram was known as a pagan before entering into a covenant relationship with G-d, as was Sarai.

But after both of their names were changed, their identities also changed, and they became associated with the One true G-d.

And let us now deal with the matter of circumcision.

The matter of circumcision is to be scheduled on the eighth day, regardless of when that day falls. It even preempts the Sabbath day.

Let our master instruct us: Is it correct that one is permitted to heal on the Sabbath? Thus have our masters taught (in Yoma 8:6.): WHERE LIFE IS IN DOUBT, IT OVERRIDES THE SABBATH; but if it is doubtful whether one is recovering or not recovering, one does not override < it >.
For the sake of circumcision, however, one does override the Sabbath.²

² Midrash Tanchuma Buber, Lech Lecha 20:1

The Abrahamic covenant, and the sign of circumcision, are not only tied to the Holy Land, but to being part of the People who are allowed to partake of the Holy Festivals of Leviticus 23. We find this hinted at in the first Passover in Egypt.

Ex 12:47-50

47 All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. 48 But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it. 49 The same law shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you."

And as Israel was coming into the land, immediately after crossing the Jordan, a command was made that all Israel should be circumcised, and then the entire people celebrated the Passover for the first time in the Land.

Josh 5:1-12

5 Now it came about when all the kings of the Amorites who were beyond the Jordan to the west, and all the kings of the Canaanites who were by the sea, heard how the Lord had dried up the waters of the Jordan before the sons of Israel until they had crossed, that their hearts melted, and there was no spirit in them any longer, because of the sons of Israel.

2 At that time the Lord said to Joshua, "Make for yourself flint knives and circumcise again the sons of Israel the second time." 3 So Joshua made himself flint knives and circumcised the sons of Israel at Gibeath-haaraloth. 4 And this is the reason why Joshua circumcised them: all the people who came out of Egypt who were males, all the men of war, died in the wilderness along the way, after they came out of Egypt. 5 For all the people who came out were circumcised, but all the people who were born in the wilderness along the way as they came out of Egypt had not been circumcised. 6 For the sons of Israel walked forty years in the wilderness, until all the nation, that is, the men of war who came out of Egypt, perished because they did not listen to the voice of the Lord, to whom the Lord had sworn that He would not let them see the land which the Lord had sworn to their fathers to give us, a land flowing with milk and honey. 7 And their children whom He

raised up in their place, Joshua circumcised; for they were uncircumcised, because they had not circumcised them along the way. 8 Now it came about when they had finished circumcising all the nation, that they remained in their places in the camp until they were healed. 9 Then the Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the name of that place is called Gilgal to this day. 10 While the sons of Israel camped at Gilgal, they observed the Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month on the desert plains of Jericho. 11 And on the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. 12 And the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten some of the produce of the land, so that the sons of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate some of the yield of the land of Canaan during that year.

When we enter into the end times, the L-rd will begin to have less patience with those who have an outward appearance of being in the Avramic covenant, but whose heart is not fully connected to G-d. Those will not only include the nation who has an inheritance in the Land, but those who do not.

Jer 9:25-26

25 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord, "that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet uncircumcised —
26 Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the sons of Ammon, and Moab, and all those inhabiting the desert who clip the hair on their temples; for all the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised of heart."

The circumcision of the flesh is important, but for it to have effect, it must be coupled with circumcision of the heart. We find this in the vision Ezekiel had of a coming Temple – the one in which Yeshua will sit on His throne.

Ezekiel speaks of a time when the ingathering of all peoples has occurred, and people from many nations are coming to Israel. But G-d instructs that although they had entered into the Abrahamic covenant, including circumcision - giving them the right to the land – they will not be permitted to enter into the Temple unless their heart and their flesh are both in alignment with G-d.

Ezek 44:1-10

44 Then He brought me back by the way of the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces the east; and it was shut. 2 And the Lord said to me, "This gate shall be shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the Lord God of Israel has entered by it; therefore it shall be shut. 3 "As for the prince, he shall sit in it as prince to eat bread before the Lord; he shall enter by way of the porch of the gate, and shall go out by the same way."

4 Then He brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the house; and I looked, and behold, the glory of the Lord filled the house of the Lord, and I fell on my face. 5 And the Lord said to me, "Son of man, mark well, see with your eyes, and hear with your ears all that I say to you concerning all the statutes of the house of the Lord and concerning all its laws; and mark well the entrance of the house, with all exits of the sanctuary. 6 "And you shall say to the rebellious ones, to the house of Israel, "Thus says the Lord God," Enough of all your abominations, O house of Israel, 7 when you brought in foreigners,³ uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, to be in My sanctuary to profane it, even My house, when you offered My food, the fat and the blood; for they

³ Heb. *Nahar*, which is a non-believer, outside all covenant relationships.

made My covenant void — this in addition to all your abominations. 8 "And you have not kept charge of My holy things yourselves, but you have set foreigners to keep charge of My sanctuary."

9 "Thus says the Lord God, "No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart and uncircumcised in flesh, of all the foreigners who are among the sons of Israel, shall enter My sanctuary.

Let's look at the attributes of this level of covenant relationship.

1. To whom does this covenant extend? This upper level of this covenant is extended to Abraham "and his descendants" who will constitute a coming "great nation." But this level applies solely to the "children of the son of promise" (Israel, and those who are truly grafted-in). Gen 17:12.
2. What is the duration of this covenant? This level of covenant is permanent, forever. Gen 17:7
3. What are the benefits of this level of covenant? This level of the covenant gives those who are fully brought into the Abrahamic covenant several additional benefits:

- a. They will be permitted to live in the Promised Land (Gen 17:8)
 - b. G-d has said “I will be their G-d.” The “G-d of Abraham.” (Gen 17:18)
 - c. Those in this covenant are known as “G-d’s people.” (Gen 17:14)
 - d. G-d will bless those who bless these people. (Gen 12:3)
 - e. The Redeemer will come from this group of people. (Gen 17:7)
4. What is the sign of this covenant? Circumcision of the flesh is the sign of this upper level of this covenant level, known as the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 17:10-14). But this sign has no value if the heart is not also circumcised.
5. What are the levels of observance which go along with this level of the covenant? Following the example of Abraham, who began only with faith, and a commitment to do what G-d told him to do, he followed all of G-d’s instructions which he knew. And G-d revealed to him more and more instructions as time went on, and so Abraham grew in knowledge of G-d as well as in faith. We do the same thing, after entering into this level of covenant. We begin with a small understanding, but as we learn and understand what G-d expects of us to live a holy life, we bring our lives more and more into alignment with His Torah.

This is illustrated by the intention of the Beit Din assembled in Jerusalem to deal with those from among the nations who had come to faith in G-d.

The question was at what point in the covenant process were these new believers to be placed, and what instructions should be given to the believers who were coming to faith as part of that covenant level.

Acts 15:1-21

15 And some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." 2 And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. 3 Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. 4 And when they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. 5 But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." ⁴

⁴ They wanted these new believers to be thrust into not only the Abrahamic covenant, but be directed to enter into the Mosaic covenant as well.

6 And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. 7 And after there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ⁵11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

12 And all the multitude kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles. 13 And after they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. 14 "Simeon has related how

⁵ Nobody in the lineage of Abraham, or those coming to faith from the nations, have before been required to begin at the higher levels of covenant. All have been offered the chance to enter at the Noahic covenant level, then progress further at their own pace. And that is a gentle way of growth, which won't crush these new believers. Allow them to be discipled gently, rather than forcing them to comply with the requirements of levels beyond their current abilities.

God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 "And with this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

16 'After these things I will return,
And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen,
And I will rebuild its ruins,
And I will restore it,
17 In order that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,'
18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from of old.

19 "Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.⁶ 21 "For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."⁷

⁶ A reiteration, and modification to, the seven laws of the Noahic covenant, which would show genuine faith.

⁷ "Moses" is an idiom for Torah. The intention is to allow the new believers to enter at the Noahic level, then progress to the Avramic sub-level, then to the full Abrahamic level. Then they will have the chance to progress to the Mosaic level as they learn more.

6. What is the title given to the people who are part of the Abrahamic Covenant level? They move from being *ger toshav*, (sojourning stranger) to *ger tzadik* (holy sojourner). These are classed as being part of the People of Israel. These become more “holy” because at the fullness of this level, they are considered part of the People of Israel, and they will naturally learn Torah, and be compelled by the Spirit to live a holy life in response to that knowledge.

The Abrahamic covenant is also a type of “doorway” to an even deeper covenant relationship, which we will discuss in our next session, the Mosaic covenant.