

THE DIGNITY OF ABRAHAM IN THE LIGHT OF *GENESIS*

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Abstract

A psychological analysis of the dignity of Patriarch Abraham in the light of Genesis (12,1–25,18) is given, especially in reference to the call of Abram promise of blessing and the creation and salvation. One may also analyse in this context: separation of Abram and Lot, and meeting King Melchizedek. For believers we are, we find this scheme in time: past – present – future. His divine promises and covenant, the apparition of Mamre, intercedeness for Sodom, the dismissal of Hagar and Ishmael, and Abraham's sacrifice in the land of Moriah.

1. Introduction

In (Genesis (12–25)), a narrative scheme is proposed to our lecture. The scheme is the following: promise of a land (first step) – promise of blessing (second step) – consecration (third step). This scheme is suggested to the reader when God says (first step), then does (second step), and sees (third step) (story of the creation) (Genesis (1,1–24)). This scheme is a narrative scheme suggested to the reader by the writer (with faith in God or without faith in God). For believers we are, we find this scheme in time: past – present – future (or creation – revelation – salvation) in a diachronic lecture or in a synchronic lecture.

In the story of Abraham, this scheme is constitutive as a link between God and man. This scheme is also found in the story of alliance and circumcision (Genesis (17)). This narrative method appears in (Genesis (12)) and the actors are God and his partner named (as an actor) for the first time Abraham.

The Bible, collected library of books for the believers, is skimmed by these three stops. Genesis says us for our existence and life, where Abraham is the

beginning of a “pastoral” generation whose alliance (or the three mentioned steps) is the foundation.

2. The first item – promise of land

The first item of the alliance mentioned is the following call of Abram by God:

Yahweh said to Abram, ,Leave your country, your kindred and your father’s house for a country which I shall show you; and I shall make you a great nation, I shall bless you and make your name famous; you are to be a blessing! I shall bless those who bless you, and shall curse those who curse you, and all clans on earth will bless themselves by you. So Abram went as Yahweh told him, and Lot went with him. [Genesis (12, 1–4a)]

These verses break the story of the journey of the family of Terah (11, 31–32 – (12, 5)). These verses modify completely the prospect: The journey from Ur to Harran, and after to the land of Canaan is not a will of Terah, but a holy will of God.

Abraham becomes in this way the ancestor of all who leave the Mesopotamia to go to the promised land.

If we compare the verses (12, 1) and (12, 4), we note:

- God is a person who enters into relations with the man. God is somebody whose speaking arouses allegiance (in a hebrew mind). This is, hearing, listening, understanding, and then obeying God is a person whose speaking is starting out and setting out.

- Abraham starts with breaking with his homeland, his family and taking a destination which is promised but unknown. Abraham in these verses is not nomadic. From the narrative point of view of the story, the unknown destination calls for the following of the text. In the verses, the verb bless or the name blessing appears five times: in Hebrew mind blessing is associated to speaking formally but blessing is a force, a synergy coming from God which brings life, plenitude, and happiness.

Blessing shows us the holy generosity: when a man gives blessing, he takes in the wealth of God.

3. The second item - promise of blessing

In the Bible, the blessing of God is linked to the prosperity and to a numerous lineage (Genesis (1, 22)). We find again this topic at the beginning of the verse (12, 2), but this promise overflows the person of Abraham who becomes the mediator of a blessing which is given to all the persons end of the verse (12, 2).

The contrast in the verse (12, 3) between those who bless you and those who curse you has to be noted. At the end, the blessing of Abraham becomes the benediction of the nations (cf. the end of the verse 12, 3). This blessing is without condition and universal.

This blessing is concerned for Abraham the promise of a lineage and is accompanied by the gift of a land (12, 1) and by a growth of his name (12, 2). These elements appear along all the biblical history of the patriarchs. The subject

of the name of God who increases is taken again in the ideology of the Kings (2 Samuel (7, 9)). The kingship of David has a legitimacy in the promise of these verses.

4. The third item – consecration and salvation

In the story of Abraham the promises are renewed, specified, and made complete. We give references of several texts where the promise is recalled several times:

- *to your lineage I shall give this land* [Genesis (12, 6–7)].
- *all land that you see, I shall give you...* promise of a land *I shall restore your nation as the dust of the land...* promise of a lineage [Genesis (13, 14–17)].
- *I shall give you the land of your pilgrim journeys, Canaan land...* promise of a land.
- *...kings go out from you...* promise of a lineage [Genesis 17 (2–8)].
- *...I bless Sarah...* promise of a blessing [Genesis 17, 16].
- *...Sarah will have a son...* promise of a lineage (18, 10–18).
- *...by this son all the nations of the land will be blessed...* promise of a blessing (18, 10–18).

5. Conclusions

In these texts the alliance is a promise made by God to Abraham and to his lineage. Three steps are repeated:

- promise of a land to Israel (Canaan land);
- promise of a lineage to Abraham (all the nations (so numerous as grains of dust of the land));
- promise of a blessing (the story of the lineage of Abraham is opened to the future). The text says nothing about the end (eschatology).

The three steps in this kind of text concern also the time: in the verses of (Genesis (12, 1–4)) the past, the present, the future are used with verbs. Future is mainly concerned for blessing. The alliance in this short text is a promise more than a partner link between God and the man (represented by Abraham). The text suggests an opened future for which the beginning is known but not the end.

The text suggests at this stay of the biblical history a promise in three steps. This alliance between God and the humanity will be repeated several times during the different books of the Holy Bible. The text suggests a place (Canaan) for the promise of a land for Israel. This lecture can be done by a man who is not believer in God. The traditional wisdom respects the three steps: speaking (or a talk), ethic, saving (philosophical salvation...). The believer founds his faith on this kind of text: the story of the alliance is a foundation for the faith. The Jews and Christians have this kind of text to say what they believe.