

ABRAHAM'S GENOGRAM

Family Emotional
Process in Genesis

Abraham by Salvador Dali



Theologian Abraham Herchel once suggested, “All human history as described in the Bible may summarized in on phrase: God in search of Humanity.”

Sin by Elmo Chang



Familiar Story

Genesis 10-40
Viewed through
Family Systems Theory
– Bowen Theory

Wes Hempel – *House of Cards*



Yet Unfamiliar Story



Story of Abraham AND Sarah – patriarch AND matriarchs. A careful reading of the text provides new insights into the family system of the founding family of faith.

Sarah and Abraham -- San Vitale Ravenna

THE PROCESS IS ALWAYS THE SAME

The study of scripture like the quest for maturity is a never ending journey.

A few years ago I spent my first autumn among you looking at the first family of faith from the perspective of Bowen theory.

Here we are again. Some have requested that I revisit our old friends the Abrahams and I never really finish studying them so here we are once again.

Bowen Theory

A natural systems theory – a way of looking at creation in general and humanity in particular. Bowen contended that humanity had more in common with other forms of protoplasm than we ever realize.

There is a chronic anxiety that comes with the territory of living. It is manifested in different species, families, or cultures, and different families will vary in the intensity of chronic anxiety they exhibit.

Bowen Theory Continued

There are two great forces:

the **“togetherness”** force

and

the **“individuality”** force.

They are in tension: Two great counterbalancing forces in relationships.

It appears to be true for all protoplasm: The forces of **individuality** and **togetherness** create an often unrecognized, underlying tension in all of life. (Chronic Anxiety)

Togetherness Force supports dependence, connection, and affiliation.

Individuality supports independence, autonomy and nonalignment.

The Goal of Life

In other words how
to be a self and
be appropriately
connected is the
challenge.

Suzanne Simonson – *Swim Against the Stream*

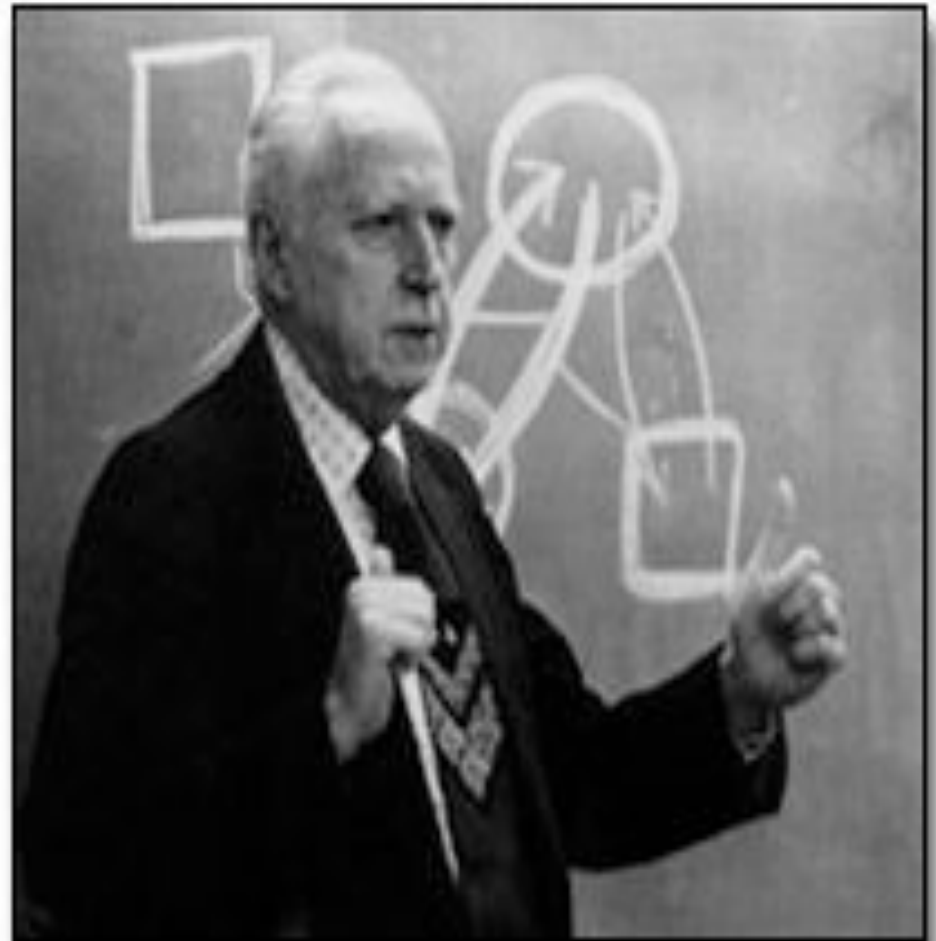


Sources on Bowen Theory

www.Ideastoaction.co

www.thebowencenter.org

Georgetown Family
Center



Bowen Concepts

- There are **nine** inter-locking concepts of Bowen Theory.
- Emotional System
- Differentiation
- Multi-generational transmission
- Emotional triangle
- Nuclear family
- Family Projection process
- Sibling position
- Societal regression
- **Spirituality [often ignored]**

The ones I will focus on primarily at least in the beginning are Emotional System, Differentiation, Multi-generational transmission and Emotional Triangle.

Bowen Concepts

Emotional System – refers to any group of people or other colonized forms of protoplasm (herds, blocks, troops, packs, schools, swarms, and aggregates) that have emotional interdependencies to the point

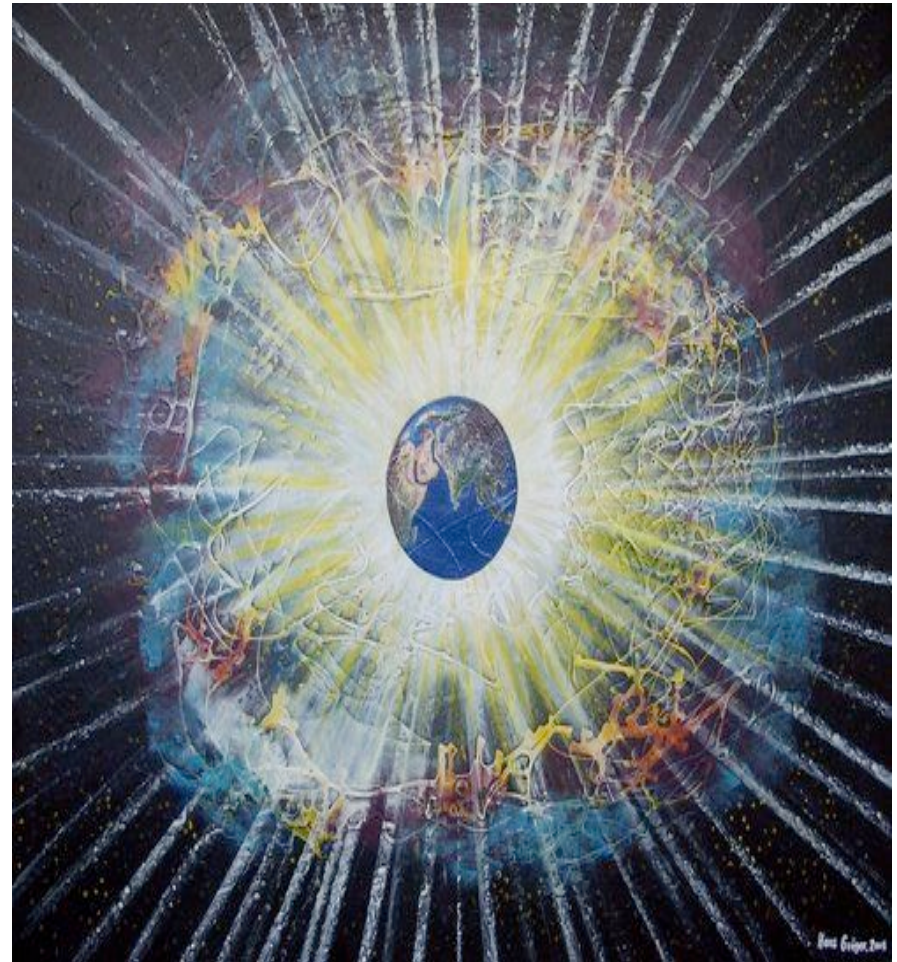
where the resulting system through which the parts are connected (administratively, physically, or emotionally) has evolved its own principles of organization.

Emotional Field

The structure or resulting field, therefore, tends to influence the functioning of the various members MORE than any of the components tend to influence the functioning of the system.

EXAMPLE: The solar system. When the planets came into rotation around the sun the gravitational field that is set up becomes more powerful than any one of the planets by itself.

Genesis by Han Groeger



Multi-Generational Transmission

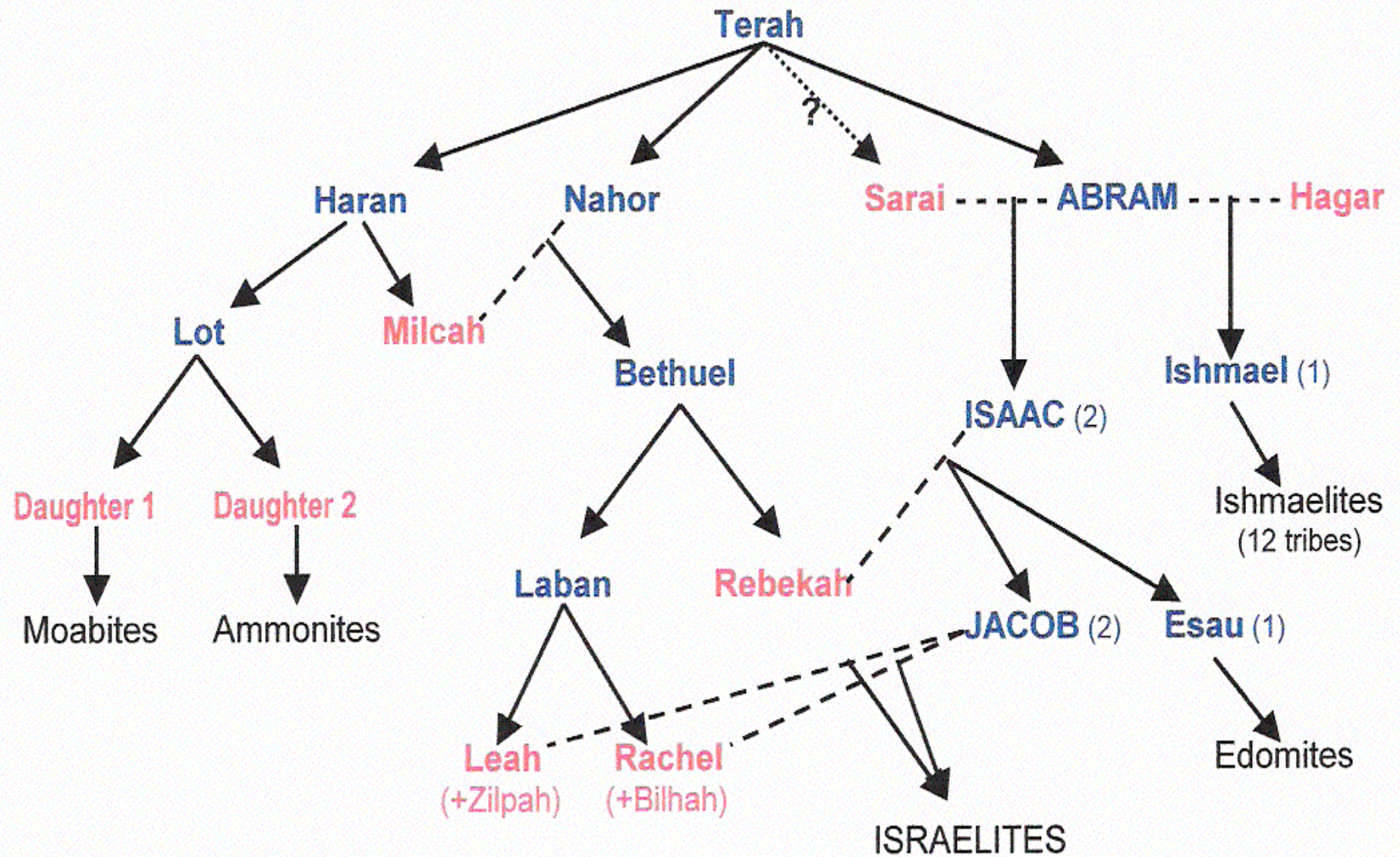
Emotional responses, both their nature and the degree of their intensity, are passed down from “generation to generation.” Bowen it was not just the influence of the past, but it was the “presence of the past.”

Forces are not “diluted” by the passage of time or space – it is as if “it were happening now.”

Mosh by Dan Witz



Family of Abraham



Key: blue = men; red = women;
dashes = marriages; arrows = children

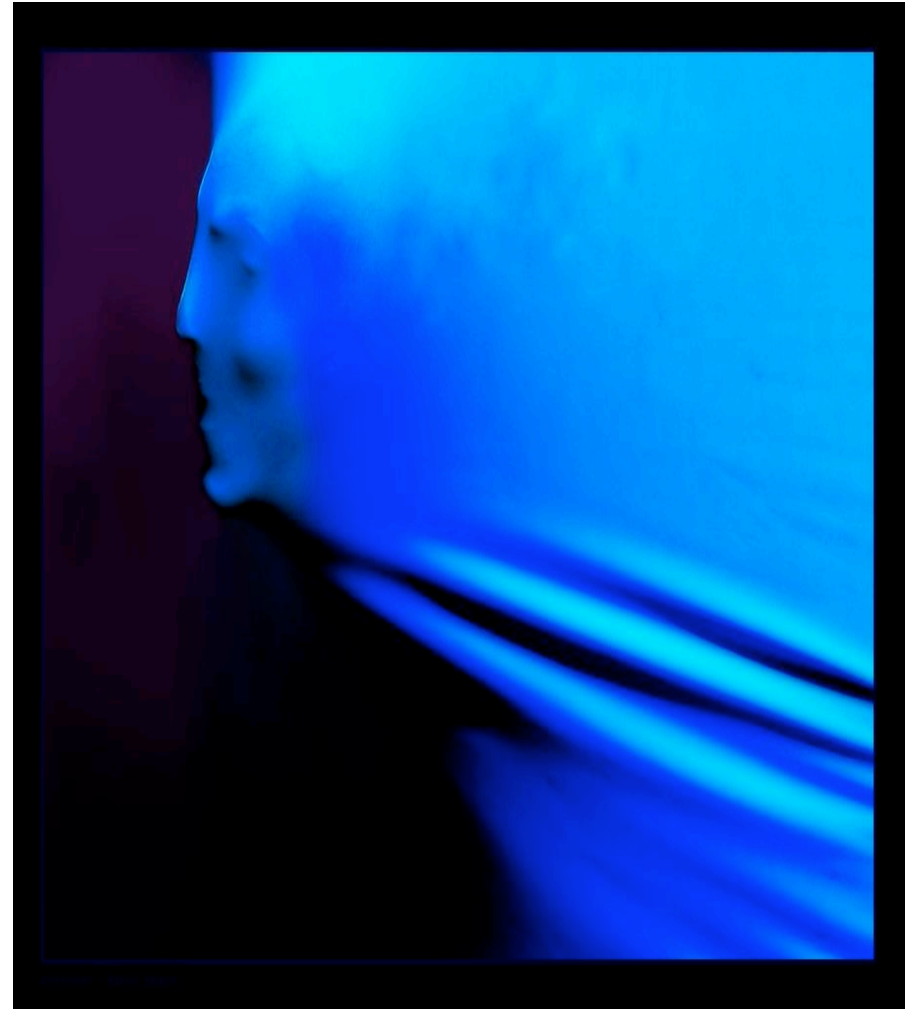
Differentiation: the way anxiety is transformed

Differentiation means the capacity of a [person] to define his or her own life's goals and values apart \ from surrounding togetherness pressures, to say 'I' when others are demanding 'you' and 'we'. It includes the capacity to maintain a (relativity) non-anxious presence in the midst of anxious systems, to take maximum responsibility for one's own destiny and emotional being. Differentiation means the capacity to be an 'I' while remaining connected."

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P R S S U R E by Gilad Benari



Letting Go

Author unknown

*To let go doesn't mean to stop caring;
It means I can't do it for someone else.
To let go is not to cut myself off...
It's the realization that I can't control another...
To let go is not to enable,
but to allow learning from natural consequences.
To let go is to admit powerlessness,
which means the outcome is not in my hands.
To let go is not to try and change or blame another,
I can only change myself.
To let go is not to care for, but to care about.
To let go is not to fix, but to be supportive.
To let go is not to judge,
but to allow another to be a human being.*

*To let go is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes,
but to allow others to affect their own outcomes.
To let go is not to be protective,
It is to permit another to face reality.
To let go is not to deny, but to accept.
To let go is not to nag, scold, or argue,
but to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.
To let go is not to adjust everything to my desires,
but to take each day as it comes and cherish the moment.
To let go is not to criticize and regulate anyone,
but to try to become what I dream I can be.
To let go is not to regret the past,
but to grow and live for the future.
To let go is to fear less and to love more.*

Self-definition – Self-regulation



Differentiation is about how to say “no” to the system and still stayed connected to it.

Differentiation is the lifelong process of striving to keep one’s being in balance through the reciprocal external processes of self-definition and self-regulation.

Split milk David Copley

Differentiation

Differentiation is about how to say “no” to the system and still stay connected to it.

Differentiation is the lifelong process of striving to keep one's being in balance through the reciprocal external processes of self-definition and self-regulation.

Naturally differentiation is a goal that is never achieved, but one can grow and mature.

Differentiation Cont'd

The concept of differentiation of self is based on observations of the differences in emotional functioning among people. Bowen developed the scale of differentiation to describe the wide range of variation among humans in the degree to which behavior is emotionally determined and anxiety driven.

Level of Differentiation

A person's level of differentiation is manifested in two ways: **first**, in awareness of the difference between thinking and emotion within self and in the ability to keep the two internal systems in balance, **and** **second**, in the ability to maintain a boundary between self and others, a boundary flexible enough to maintain connection to others yet solid enough to think feel, and act for self.

Scale of Differentiation

The lower the level of differentiation, the more automatic and unthinking is the individual's reaction to the environment and to other people. The higher the level of differentiation, the more an individual is able to think under pressure, to weigh options, and to choose how he will respond

(Bower 1978, Kerr and Bowen 1988).

“the capacity to become oneself out of one's self with minimum reactivity to the positions or reactivity of others.

It's easy to hug the tiger but not so easy to “un-hug” the tiger!



The Cycle of Differentiation

#1 A Sense of limits – where I end and others begin. Having a sense of self.
(Chronic anxiety erodes this.)

#2 Knowing what you believe. A lot of people don't know what they believe.
(Write a beliefs paper. What would I die for?) Knowing what I believe helps
me know where I end and other begin.

#3 No fear of taking stands. This is an act that increases self. It creates self.
Definition is a double entendre. "Fin" means limit. The act of defining means
to put limits. This is defining myself rather than defining others.

Cycle of Differentiation (cont.)

#4 The ability to stay on course. This is the element of resolve. The willingness to stay in there. Lasting. This issue of resolve doesn't come automatically with ##1-3. The pioneers are the ones with resolve. The more self-definition you have, the more self-regulation you have.

#5 Staying connected despite it all. Non-anxious presence. The more self-regulation you have the more self-definition you can make.