NOTE: This summery was written by Laura Martin with a few ideas by Andrea Schara
Family Emotional Process in Genesis
“Theologian Abraham Herchel once suggested, “All human history as described in the Bible may summarized in one phrase: God in search of Humanity.”
Familiar Story

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

Wes Hempel – *House of Cards*
The study of scripture like the quest for maturity is a never ending journey.
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.
There are two great forces: the “togetherness” force and the “individuality” force. They are in tension: Two great counterbalancing forces in relationships.
Protoplasm

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

To be a self and be appropriately connected is the challenge.

Suzanne Simonson – Swim Against the Stream
Sources on Bowen Theory

www.Ideastoaction.com
www.thebowencenter.org
Georgetown Family Center
There are nine inter-locking concepts of Bowen Theory.

1. Emotional System
2. Differentiation
3. Multi-generational transmission
4. Emotional triangle
5. Nuclear family
6. Family Projection process
7. Sibling position
8. Societal regression
9. Spirituality [often ignored & passively denied]
1. Levels of differentiation of self. Families and social groups affect how people think, feel, and act, but individuals vary in their susceptibility to "group think". Also, groups vary in the amount of pressure they exert for conformity. The less developed a person's "self," the more impact others have on his functioning and the more he tries to control the functioning of others. Bowen developed a scale to measure differentiation of self.
Knowing where you end & the other begins
NUCLEAR FAMILY

This concept describes FOUR relationship patterns that manage anxiety, that govern where problems develop in a family.

- marital conflict,
- dysfunction in one spouse,
- impairment of one or more children,
- emotional distance
FAMILY PROJECTION PROCESS

- This concept describes the way parents transmit their emotional problems to a child. Some parents have great trouble separating from the child. They imagine how the child is, rather than having a realistic appraisal of the child.

- Relationship problems that most negatively affect a child’s life are a heightened need for attention and approval, difficulty dealing with expectations, the tendency to blame oneself or others, feeling responsible for other’s happiness, and acting impulsively to relieve the anxiety of the moment, rather than tolerating anxiety and acting thoughtfully.
Esau sells his birth order to Jacob
Sibling position Bowen theory incorporates psychologist Walter Toman’s work relating to sibling position. People who grow up in the same sibling position have important common characteristics. For example, oldest children tend to gravitate to leadership positions and youngest children often prefer to be followers, unless the parents disappointed them. Toman’s research showed that spouses’ sibling positions when mismatched often affect the chance of divorcing.
Multigenerational Transmission
4. Multigenerational transmission process This concept describes how small differences in the levels of differentiation between parents and their offspring lead over many generations to marked differences in differentiation among the members of a multigenerational family. The way people relate to one another creates differences, which are transmitted across generations. People are sensitive and react to the absence or presence of relationships, to information about this moment, the future and or the past, and this, along with our basic genetic inheritance, interacts to shape an individual’s “self.”
Triangles

A triangle is a three-person relationship system. It is considered the triangle as the “molecule” of larger emotional systems, as it is the smallest stable relationship system. A triangle can manage more tension than a 2-person relationship as tension shifts among the three. Triangles can exert social control by putting one on the outside or bring in an outsider when tension escalates between two. Increasing the number of triangles can also stabilize spreading tension. Marital therapy uses the triangle to provide a neutral third party capable of relating well to both sides of a conflict.
People sometimes manage their unresolved emotional issues with parents, siblings, and other family members by reducing or totally cutting off emotional contact with them. This resolves nothing and risks making new relationships too important.

Abraham & Isaac after the Akedah (the binding). McBee
This concept describes how the emotional system governs behavior on a societal level, similar to that within a family, which promotes both progressive and regressive periods in a society.
The overall effort that Dr. Bowen made in his development of theory was to move towards a fact based science of human behavior.

Therefore in this last concept, which is not yet fully developed, he noted that all events, even those that were spiritual or miraculous could be examined from a factual base.

The fact that certain things, even miraculous things occur is still facts.