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Good day Worthy Knights, in this part 57,

An approach to understanding the meaning of Sabaoth

To start, some more thoughts about practical literary criticism, to help with understanding the passages and words contained in the Rituals of the Masonic and Military Order of the Red Cross of Constantine.

The way in which something is written (its form), is inseparable from what it "says" (its content), and together, they create meaning. In order to understand what has been written, the third very important element is context.

Some pitfalls to avoid in trying to gain an understanding of a passage of literature, especially a scriptural passage:

1. Avoid making the assumption that a passage has only one meaning, and that it is a sort of code to be cracked, so that the reader will be rewarded with an enlightening eureka moment, when all will be revealed. A better approach is to read carefully, to be open-minded, and to avoid being dogmatic.
2. Interesting facts about the author's life do not create meaning in a passage, though they may give an insight to the period and the socio-political environment at the time of writing.
3. The thoughts that occur to a reader (whilst reading), as well as the beliefs of the reader, are not necessarily the same as those of the author, and therefore do not necessarily constitute the meaning intended. Allow the words to "speak" for themselves!

Sabaoth

/sab·a·oth/, /'sabā,äTH/ noun, archaic

1. the hosts (company of angels) of heaven
2. the armies of Israel
3. the sun, the moon and the stars

- all in the biblical title "Yahweh Sabaoth".

Sabaoth is a word used in the title, *yhwhš ʿbā'ôṭ*, usually translated as "the Lord of Hosts", employed most frequently by the Prophets of the Old Testament - those who spoke on behalf of God - a total of 247 times. This title is a contraction of the full form *yhwh ʿlōhē šʿbā'ôṭ yīsrā'ēl*, "Yahweh, the God of the armies of Israel" (cf. Samuel and Amos). Its first appearance in the Old Testament is in connection with the sanctuary at Silo (Shiloh), where the Ark of the Covenant was housed (cf. Samuel). The ark, the symbol of Yahweh's presence, was carried into battle as a sacred palladium.

The name Yahweh Sabaoth would thus describe Israel's God as the supreme commander of its armies, who led the hosts of Israel into battle. The title, however, was later used by the Prophets with more of a universal sense, to designate the Lord of the universe.

Sabaoth is sometimes taken to mean the angels who serve at the throne of the Almighty, but the singular *šābā'* is used more frequently for this heavenly army.

Sabaoth may possibly refer also to the stars, which in their orderly sweep across the night sky suggest the movement of an army on the march, but, again, the army of the stars is usually the singular *šābā'*. It is important to note that the Israelites were often warned against worshipping other deities, including the stars as deities. The theological concept of the stars as Yahweh's creation may also have been intended by declaring Yahweh the God of (the heavenly) hosts; in any case, the term Yahweh Sabaoth expresses God's sovereignty over all things.

One consistently recurring theme in many of the 271 passages in the Old and New Testaments which contain the word Sabaoth is the notion of God's justice. Yahweh Sabaoth is repeatedly described as a just God, with the expectation that the people of Yahweh behave with justice too, that is, in ways that are right, just, and for their lasting good.

Some passages in which Sabaoth is used:

David retorted to the Philistine, "You come to me with sword, spear and scimitar, but I come to you in the name of Yahweh Sabaoth, God of the armies of Israel, whom you have challenged." 1 Samuel 17:45.

David grew stronger and stronger, and Yahweh, God of Sabaoth, was with him. 2 Samuel 5:10.

Now, the vineyard of Yahweh Sabaoth is the House of Israel, and the people of Judah the plant he cherished. He expected fair judgement, but found injustice, uprightness, but found cries of distress. Isaiah 5:7.

Yahweh Sabaoth is the more respected for his judgement, God the Holy One has displayed his holiness by his justice! Isaiah 5:16.

Hate evil, love good, let justice reign at the city gate: it may be that Yahweh, God Sabaoth, will take pity on the remnant of Joseph. Amos 5:15.

The new glory of this Temple is going to surpass the old, says Yahweh Sabaoth, and in this place I will give peace – it is Yahweh Sabaoth who speaks. Haggai 2:9.

Yahweh Sabaoth says this. He said, "Apply the law fairly, and show faithful love and compassion towards one another." Zechariah 7:9.

I shall bring them back to live in the heart of Jerusalem, and they will be my people and I shall be their God, faithful and just. Zechariah 8:8.

On the day which I am preparing, says Yahweh Sabaoth, they are going to be my own special possession. I will make allowances for them as a man makes allowances for the son who obeys him. Malachi 3:17.

As Isaiah foretold: Had the Lord Sabaoth not left us a few survivors, we should be like Sodom, we should be the same as Gomorrah. Romans, 9:29.

Can you hear crying out against you the wages which you kept back from the labourers mowing your fields?

The cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord Sabaoth. James 5:4.



Angeles de Dios

Works consulted: see Part 200