

Father and Son

By Matthew ben Daniel

*And he blessed Joseph and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life long to this day, the angel who has redeemed me from all evil, bless the boys; **and in them let my name be carried on, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac;** and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."*

(Genesis 48:15-16 ESV)

According to Isaiah 64:8, God is our Father. This is also reflected in the Lord's Prayer ("Our Father in heaven..."). Unfortunately, in today's culture that does not carry the same weight that it used to. The enemy has been all too successful in redefining the family.

Today a father is one who goes off to work and earns money so that he can provide for his family. He is there for his children—sometimes. The son goes off to a public school to learn reading, writing, etc. At eighteen he is kicked out of the house to begin college and prepare to move out on his own. A good son looks up to his father and looks to him for advise—but he is his own person. That is not how it used to be.

Before the Industrial Revolution, most of the work was done at home. Fathers did not leave the family to bring in money. They stayed at home and taught their children their trade. Homeschooling was the way to learn. In ancient times, children did not leave the house at eighteen, twenty, or even thirty. Read the stories of Abraham and Isaac: Isaac lived with his father for life. Yes, he had his own tent, but he didn't leave the land. The laws of Israel were structured so that land would always remain in the family. Sons would receive a piece of their father's property as an inheritance—there was never separation. Even daughters who moved in with their husband usually married a man who lived nearby.

We have lost the education, work, and land ties between father and son. Instead of the father teaching, the government teaches. Instead of son's working with their father, they work for some company. Instead of staying on the land, sons leave. The intimate connection is all but severed.

With that background, I can now turn to the Scripture I opened with. One purpose of family is to carry on a name. I don't mean the physical last name that children legally inherit. That is only symbolic for the true Hebrew idea behind a name—character, reputation, authority. It's what defines you. How many sons today can stand up and say "I stand here in the name of my father"? How many even know the history of their fathers? The Jewish people hold tradition in such high standing because it is how they pass on their heritage—their name.

We live in an individualistic culture today. We are taught that the most basic unit is the individual—that family, community, and everything else is just the result of adding individuals together. This is the essence of democracy. Because of this belief men, women, and children feel a need to strike out their own path. This is what took fathers away from home, started the feminist movement (taking mothers away from home), and inspired rebellion among children. We are a society of progress—the children are better than the parents. Everyone becomes his own person. These ideas are false.

The most basic unit is the family. An individual is nothing outside of being adopted into a family. Communities and nations are larger units based on the family structure. Men and women cannot exist apart from each other. Children are created in the image of their father (Gen. 5:3). They take their fathers place, carrying on the heritage. The children are not the new and improved model—they are a continuation. Even the Hebrew word for son, “ben”, means to build or continue the house. They do not stand on their own—they stand on their father's name.

A cursory glance at Scripture will prove this. Why did God redeem Israel from Egypt? Because of their fathers (Exo. 2:24, Deut. 7:8; 9:5). Why didn't God tear the kingdom directly from Solomon? Because of his father David (1 Kings 11:12). God carries sin and love onto the descendants (Exo. 20:5-6). Deuteronomy 6:4-9, the most important declaration in our faith, declares the bond between father and son. Certainly, Ezekiel 18 provides a way for children to cut themselves off from the name of their fathers. But that should only be done when your fathers have turned away from the works of Abraham. Examine the Scriptures for yourself and see if this holds true.

I wrote sometime ago about culture shock. At the time I did not realize the extent to which the American culture is ingrained in us. It affects everything and has become the glasses through which we see the world and Scripture. And it blurs the truth. The American family is not what the family of God looks like.

God is our Father; we are His children. He has placed His Name on us. He teaches us. He works with us. He is raising us to stand on His Name. We are being conformed to His image—to be just like Him. This is what it means to be a son.

We are to follow the example of Yeshua. As the son of God, He did not come in His own name, but His Father's Name (John 5:43). He did not come doing His own will, but the will of His Father (John 6:38). His word was not His own, but His Father's (John 14:24). He did not come on His own authority, but on His Father's authority (John 8:28-29). He is our example.

Yeshua told us that unless we enter as a little child, we cannot enter the Kingdom of God (Luke 18:17). So, think about a child for a moment—that little boy that wants to grow up to be just like daddy. He is proud of his dad and of what his dad does. He loves to hear dad's stories. No matter what evil creature dares to appear, dad always saves the day. The rules are plain and sometimes dad has to bring out the belt. This is never fun for the son or dad. When trouble comes, when hearts are broken, when the road becomes too tough, dad is always there to hold his baby secure in his arms. Dad loves his children dearly. He loves to spend time with them and he treasures their love for him. That little boy that wants to be like daddy wants his dad to be proud of him. He wants to hear “That's my boy.” Because that's who he is—his daddy's child. And that's who we should strive to be—Daddy's boy.

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