

Yeshua MISHPACHAH

A NEWSLETTER TO THE FAMILY OF JESUS FROM RESTORATION MINISTRIES

The Hebraic family is not simply an individual or private matter. Rather, it is an institution in which the whole community has a stake. Thus, the Hebrew word "mishpachah," meaning family, not only refers to parents and children, but to the whole extended family worldwide in the body of "Yeshua"— our Jesus.

Soon after our arrival in Colorado Springs, we decided to walk up a particular dirt road that led into the mountains near the city. We began our hike that morning at about 6,800 ft., climbing for several miles and stopping frequently to catch our breath. Many times we wanted to stop and turn back, but something drew us on.

As we proceeded along the many switchbacks and turns in the road, we thought the road would ultimately take us to the top of one of the peaks. Instead, we arrived at a saddleback between two peaks. We were too tired to go any further, but from the saddleback we could see the many trails that led from that point up to the surrounding peaks. A sign told us we had arrived at "7,800 ft." After a brief rest, we began the hike back down. At a turn in the road where you could see for miles, the Holy Spirit gave me a revelation: 'Sue's and my life and ministry up to that time had been like that road, with bends and switchbacks as we proceeded upward. With the restoration truths God has given us to share, our lives were at the saddleback. Now we were going to give the message to others who would take it with them on the varied 'trails' God has called them to travel.

How old were you when your father accepted you as a man?

During our 10 years at the retreat center I frequently asked men that question. More than you can imagine, it elicited some very painful responses. We in this culture and in the Christian community fail to grasp how important passage into manhood is. Many other cultures have rites of passage to mark the transition from boyhood to manhood.

I can still remember the event that marked when my Dad accepted me as a man. At age 23 I had come home on leave from the Navy. My Dad took me to the Polish-American Club where he and his friends often gathered. When he bought a round of drinks for everyone there, he was accepting me as a man. Those older men knew what a 'rite-of-passage' WW II and the Korean Conflict had been for them. They knew that I would soon be in Vietnam.

As followers of Jesus we need to ask ourselves, "What is Christian manhood? How do we prepare our sons for it? What criteria do we use to declare them 'a man?'"

The essence of this rite of passage is when a boy who is becoming a man is prepared to live for something or someone

larger than his own self interest or pleasures. War tends to do that, although God's Word shows us even more noble goals for a boy-becoming-man to aspire to.

Going back to the question I asked the men at the retreat center: In tears, men, many of them 40+, would answer, "My father still doesn't treat me like a man." During women's retreats I met the wives of these same men. Many would admit, "I love my husband, but I don't like him." The men whose fathers never accepted them as a man had a difficult time being respected by their wives. When I asked these same women, "Do you find it hard to respect your husband?", often a tearful "yes" was the response.

Let me share a piece of pertinent information. In one study we read, adolescence in the 1960's went from age 13 to age 19. In the 1980's it went from age 12 to age 30 and was still climbing. The beginning of adolescence was the onset of puberty; the end when a person took complete responsibility for his or her own actions.

The church in the US today has an increasing percentage of single people and a growing divorce rate. Don't get me wrong, I believe in singleness if

God is calling you to celibacy in² increasing even more (see order to serve Him more effectively (see 1 Cor. 7:32-34). But something ominous has occurred in the Church in the last few decades. We have lost God's purposes for marriage as well as the biblical methods of preserving quality marriages. The biblical significance of the marriage *covenant* has been lost when we see that 50%+ of church marriages are ending in divorce. The destructive impact of divorce on the current and future generations of children is immeasurable. We encounter an increasing number of young people who know more about getting divorced than they do about holding together a marriage.

God ordained marriage as a physical representation of His relationship with His people. He also intended that through marriage we would pass along the faith through children who would love Him wholeheartedly: *"Has not the LORD made them one? In **flesh and spirit** they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking **godly offspring**. So **guard yourself in your spirit**, and do **not break faith with the wife of your youth**"* (Mal. 2:15).

The Lord gave us parents the responsibility to use our home life to teach our children His ways: *"These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up"* (Deu. 6:6,7).

What is encouraging in the midst of this pain is that even as sin is increasing, God's grace is

reproducing faith in their children. Sue and I believe this is why God took us from our retreat ministry in New England to Israel three years ago. It was His plan to show us and many others what He was doing to counteract Satan's success. God is responding by restoring the relational intimacy and power of the early Church. Central to the restoration is the relational priority of Jesus, the Home, and the Home Fellowship. As these Hebraic foundations once again become part of our faith communities, godly marriages that pass along a loving-trust in Jesus and are supported by the community of a home fellowship will be the visible fruit of God's tender mercy being poured out on us.

Sue and I aren't naive enough to think that all this can be done in one generation. It may take a few generations for the foundations of the early Church to become the pattern to be passed along in our faith communities again. We believe that this current generation of adults and children can establish a 'beach head' for the ones to come. In the Pacific during WW II, the beach head was often the critical part of winning the battle for an island. Many soldiers were killed establishing the beach head. But once established, it provided the vital staging area that enabled them to conquer the rest of the island.

The restoration is now establishing a beach head. Satan, who has influenced Christianity for centuries through Greek philosophy and Roman organization, is going to do all he can to keep godly marriages from

reproducing faith in their children.

Rites of Passage

When a girl enters puberty, her menarche and physical development identify her with all womanhood. She may still be emotionally immature, but that monthly responsibility and the hormonal changes are significant signs that maturity is coming. Puberty does not have the same significance for males in our culture. Biblically, male development requires him to learn responsibility so that when he takes a wife he will be responsible not only to God for himself but also for the wife and family God gives him. Remember, God doesn't accept excuses from husbands. If He didn't accept Adam's excuse, He will have no regard for the ones that husbands may give Him today.

Consider the Jewish rite of *bar mitzvah* for males. At a *bar mitzvah*, a boy becomes a "son of the commandment.s." As a result of his *bar mitzvah* he becomes personally responsible for keeping the teachings of God (*Torah*). It takes time for mature men to guide and mentor the young man to prepare him for this event. During this period his study of God's Word is intensified; it is meant for him to learn to apply its truth to his life.

In other cultures and tribal societies, a boy becoming a man requires a period of preparation toward meeting the requirements of responsible manhood. My friend James Oderinde of Nigeria told me that in his tribe a boy calls all his

uncles “father.” Each male rela-³ will again see the non-optional truth of Hebrews 13:7: “Consider the **outcome** of a man’s life before you listen to his teaching. And **then** you can imitate **his faith**.” The Hebraic approach commands us to weigh the fruit of a man’s life before you listen to his teaching. A rabbi was esteemed first of all for the Godly way he lived. His personal character and obedience to God were more important than his teachings. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries the Greek philosophers introduced the education emphasis that still controls our religious programs. The Bible warns that “knowledge puffs up.”

As the restoration continues we will see this “family” of men in faith communities cooperating together to prepare their boys for responsible manhood. To accomplish this, Christian men need to reacquaint themselves with the biblical facets of mature manhood. At the same time they need guidance in developing these facets in the young men they come alongside.

Permit me to be prophetic and share with you what it *will* look like:

Our boys will no longer be taken from their fathers in church to Sunday school and youth groups. The men themselves will see their combined responsibilities as spiritual “fathers” to *all* the young men in their faith community, including those who have no dads at home. Men who need help in acting responsibly will be disciplined by the older sages, learning how to fulfill their role as father. The systems of Sunday school and youth groups (which are often means of encouraging paternal irresponsibility) will be seen for their true fruit: activity-oriented boys with little regard for responsibility. It takes men to raise a man.

As we experienced at our retreat center, men will come aside multi-generationally. Wisdom and experience from those who have tasted the tender mercy of our God will instruct the younger males. Men

spoken directly and individually from God to His people. Through *rhema* the Holy Spirit reveals God’s specific will and guidance for a person or family. Seeking the *rhema* of the Holy Spirit is humbling to a male’s sinful, self-confident nature. Seeking *rhema* is to men what gathering manna was to the Israelites: “He gave them manna to eat in the desert...to **humble** and to **test them** so that in the end it might go well with them” (Deu. 8:16). God wants to reveal His will for us through His Holy Spirit. Greek reasoning and rationalism are no substitute for faith that earnestly seeks the guidance and direction of God’s Spirit.

We will see the restoration of men seeking God’s *rhema* and once again establishing **halakhahs** for their families. This is God’s pattern for men as they help develop boys into mature men. The Bible commands a married man to know God’s will and commands for his family: “Husbands, love your wives, **just as** Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the **word**” (Eph. 5:25,26).

The term used for “word” here, **rhema**, means more than quoting Bible verses to your spouse. There are two words in the Bible which, when translated into English, mean “word.” These terms are **logos** and **rhema**. (We mentioned these in an earlier newsletter). *Logos* represents God’s ways and thoughts, forever unchangeable. The Bible is a part of God’s *logos* written down for man. *Rhema* is that specific word

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I asked wives on retreat, “How could your husband make it easier for you to respect him?” The answer? “I’d respect him more if he were a man who sought God.” “If he hungered to know God more, I would find it easier to respect him.” Paul encapsulated the desires of these wives in his instruction to live by the Spirit, and keep in step with the Spirit (see Gal. 5:25).

We’ve written before about *halakhahs*, but as Paul says, “It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard to you” (Phil. 3:1). *Halakhah* is the way God’s word is interpreted and applied to a particular situation. The emphasis is *not* on *interpretation alone* but on *applying* the Bible correctly to a situation. This process also requires dependence on the Holy Spirit. He is author of God’s Word, the interpreter of God’s Word, and the Counselor enabling you to apply

His Word.

Many followers of Jesus today have *halakhahs*. Birth control, dating, friendships, finances—all require us to apply God’s Word. If you are married and have prayerfully established with your spouse a biblical understanding of television viewing for your family, or have made your decision before God how to educate your children, you have established *halakhahs*. *Halakhah* is not intended to be just a code of rules, nor does it put you in a position of telling others what they should do. *Halakhahs* in your life and home evidence your love relationship with God.

We would like to share with you an important *halakhah* which we established with our son, Mike, as he was entering adolescence. It was a *halakhah* prescribing the conditions under which Sue and I would come to his wedding. As his father, I feel that I owe it to the father of Mike’s intended (whoever she may be!) that our son is responsible enough to have a wife.

Sue, as his mother and main woman in his life, owes it to the

⁴woman he intends to marry that she “respects” Mike. We cannot expect his wife to find it easy to respect him if his own mother cannot attest to this character quality.

Before we will come to his wedding, Mike needs to hear from us that he is both biblically “responsible” and “respectable.”

A Note from Sue: We haven’t intended to ignore women in this letter! But men are like the trunk of a tree, while women are the lovely, sturdy branches that produce the colorful flowers and life-sustaining fruit. From our observation it seems that repairing the trunk first can only improve the ability for the branches to mend.

Titus 2 admonishes older women to teach younger women *how to love*—specifically their husbands and children, but I believe this can be applied to all women in all relationships. We women can be tempted to worry and grow anxious, and then try to manipulate or control those we love rather than lovingly trust in God.

God bless each of you,

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