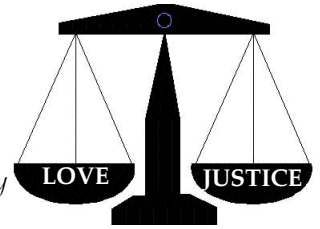


Yeshua MISHPACHAH

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.

UPHOLDING HUMAN
DIGNITY



Matt. 25:31-46

Where, O death, is your sting?

Dear Friends,

This nation's senior citizen population is growing rapidly. The issue for many of us who follow Jesus is how to help our parents as they age. Our 11 years of teaching at a retreat center revealed that one of the real *stings of death* is the guilt trip left on adult children by parents who die after prolonged mental deficiency and illness.

Too often, the biggest inheritance adult children receive is bitterness toward each other. Compounding this tragedy are the potshots faced by the child who becomes the care-giver for the parents. Siblings can create greater anguish than does the actual care for the parent.

But this scenario can be avoided! The conflict has been brought about by the *fear of death* which has such powerful influence over this present senior generation.

"A man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment"
(Heb. 9:27).

All of us are eventually going to die. Death is not an option. *How* we prepare ourselves and our families is optional. And this is the shortcoming of the senior generation of today. Seniors (and those on their way!): Too many of you don't know how to deal with death! Your reluctance to even discuss your eventual demise is sowing seeds of destruction in your family. After you're gone, you leave your children trapped in unresolved guilt.

Consider the potential mix of

spiritual conditions that families encounter, and the eternal destination of the deceased:

- *Believing parent* with believing child(ren) — heaven.
- *Unbelieving parent* with believing child(ren) — hell.
- *Unbelieving parent* with unbelieving child(ren) — hell.

A believing parent with believing child(ren) has the greatest potential for positive discussion to prepare the children for the possibility of the parent's prolonged mental deficiency and illness. Sadly, we've found that believing parents do little better than the second and third groups to prepare their families for their passing.

Believing child(ren) with unbelieving parents can be the most painful scenario for the child(ren). Recognizing the eternal consequences for those who don't trust Jesus is very hard to bear.

The last group, unbelieving parent and unbelieving child(ren), describes a picture of utter despair. There is neither hope nor peace when this life ends.

"Dad, you're dying..."

Mike's story: I had the privilege of letting my believing, terminally ill father know that he was dying. Dad had put his trust in Jesus three years earlier. When I told him he was dying, he looked at me with a peaceful smile and said, "Jesus has been waiting for me."

Dad's trust gave him confidence to face death. Prior to his

death he reconciled with everyone the Holy Spirit prompted him to ask forgiveness from. Dad lived without fear of death because, unlike so many seniors we've met, he didn't dread the *second death*. *"But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death"* (Rev. 21:8). I was holding his hand praying as his spirit passed from him. It was the most remarkable experience of my life!

A close friend use to say, *"Born once, die twice. Born twice, die once."* Older people who don't trust in Jesus are not only hell-bound. They are a terrible role model for their children who will follow their example. What a tragic inheritance: for their family to follow them to hell.

You who do trust Jesus: Do you *really* share the confident focus of Paul? *"We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord"* (2 Cor. 5:8). As with Dad, we've been privileged to observe other followers of Jesus with terminal illnesses whose trustful boldness reassured them that *they were going home*.

We know we'll see Dad again. Even now we like to think that maybe God is permitting him to observe our pilgrimage toward heaven: *"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easi-*

Preparing the Family of Jesus for the Dark Days to Come

ly entangles, and let us **run with perseverance** the race marked out for us” (Heb. 12:1).

“Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death”

(Heb. 2:14,15).

Jesus not only ascended to prepare a home for those who trust Him, He conquered the *fear of death!* If the fear of dealing with your own death characterizes you, then we encourage you to question if you have a trust-filled relationship with Jesus. Are you eagerly looking forward to seeing Him?

While neither Sue nor I want to endure some terrible terminal disease, that doesn't keep us from looking forward to *getting home* to see our Lord Jesus. Dad left me a wonderful example of trust. What are you leaving *your* children?

Paul also reminds us about Jesus' victory on our behalf: *“The last enemy to be destroyed is death”* (1 Cor. 15:26). For the follower of Jesus, neither the first nor second death holds any concern. That's why we can concentrate on preparing our families for the contingencies that might precede our death. If you're not fearful of death, then preparing your family is a responsibility you can undertake with confidence. Show your family through your trust how they can help you get home with dignity.

Our close friend Tom told us his Dad made him go to the hospital to be there when his grandfather died. Tom initially thought his Dad had acted cruelly to make him observe the death process. But now, however, he recognizes the

important reality his father wanted him to understand. So many children today are being protected from death and everything that leads up to it. If you “protect” them from death, you are insulating them from fully dealing with their own appropriate grief.

We'll cover this more fully in our next newsletter, in which we discuss God's wonderful design for grieving. When you are able to grieve as God intends rather than recoiling from dealing with death, you're able to affirm how much that person has meant to you. Expressing your appreciation for the deceased in heartfelt grief helps you have healthy relationships that don't fear pain and loss.

“I tell you the truth, all this will come upon this generation”
(Matt. 23:36).

So many in the 60 to 100 years-old age group seem unconcerned about the evil legacy they've left succeeding generations to deal with. If you're in this age group you suffered through the Great Depression and World War II. But after those trials, many of you made pleasure-bent retirement your idol and goal. The moral decadence of this country today is that for which *your generation* will be remembered.

You complain about (and live in fear of) the rampant crime, the raging lawlessness, the wanton disregard for ethics and morals. But remember this:

- You ducked when the Bible and prayer were eliminated from schools.
- You did little to stop the slaughter of 21 million aborted babies.
- In the fifties and sixties you raised a generation of self-indulgent, undisciplined children—falsely believing that the

goods and revelry you'd missed out on would make them happy. Now they're pursuing the same self-gratification idols you taught them to seek.

When your soldiers came back from war, they were welcomed. When those of us who were raised to be responsible came back from Vietnam, your spoiled kids spit on us. What were so many of *you* doing? Planning for your pleasure-bent senior years and building retirement homes.

You were the last “religious” generation this nation has known. The self-fulfillment gods you worshiped under your steeples who made you feel complacently comfortable did nothing to turn this nation away from sin. Only repentance and the forgiveness of Jesus can save you from the second death. Self-serving “religious practices” have led this senior generation away from the narrow path to life.

The gospel of self-indulgent ease you pursue has become the “bad news” false gospel of this nation. Repentance is no longer preached, sin is readily embraced. Arrogant presumption that “everything will work itself out” has replaced walking in God's path of righteousness.

The real fruit of the past half-century is a generation that fears death more than any that preceded them. There is a proverb for fear-bent denial of responsibility: *“What the wicked dreads will overtake him...”* (Pro. 10:24a).

Your fear of death has hindered many of you from talking about your passing with your children. Sue and I have probably encountered fewer than 1 in 500 adult children whose parents prepared them for their parent's eventual demise. Just writing a will falls far short of the forthright open discussion that's needed.

Our parents, especially Mike's Dad and Mom, fully discussed their preferences in case of mental incapacitation. Mike went home to care for each of them because he loved them enough to respect their expressed wishes. He represented their desires by upholding their dignity until their death.

Sue's Mom, who now lacks the mental faculties to make wise decisions, discussed with both of her children her desires. Now it's up to them to be responsible and true to her wishes as she continues to decline.

Medicine has progressed way beyond the guidance of biblical ethics.

More than bequeathing wealth, we can leave our children a greater gift by helping them prepare for and deal with our decline and death if we ever become mentally incapable. It is rare for siblings to fully agree on the decisions that affect their parents. Too many fail to carry out their parent's wishes even when they are made known.

Sibling consensus about the treatment and care of an incapacitated parent hardly ever works. From our experience, this approach is sure to stir resentment and misunderstanding. The emotions of dealing with all the factors

of your well-being prior to your death are too much for most families to achieve harmoniously.

Your prior preparation with the appropriate individuals before you ever become mentally incapacitated enables them to make loving decisions with minimal apprehension and disagreement. If you have several children, we encourage you not to give the responsibility to represent your wishes to *all* of them equally to work out.

Unanimity seldom happens without a lot of hurt and estrangement. Choose the person who is the most lovingly courageous, and give that one the ultimate decision making responsibility. The patriarch Jacob had 12 sons, but he committed himself into the care of one, Joseph. When it comes time to care for you, all your children can offer input with the appointed sibling. However, the final decision should not be dependent on their *approval*.

We encourage you to choose the child who you know in your heart will lovingly follow through on what you desire at all cost. His or her love for you is what will keep them from making decisions that only serve to forestall your death.

Life is far more than just keeping the body existent. Humans have purpose and meaning, and

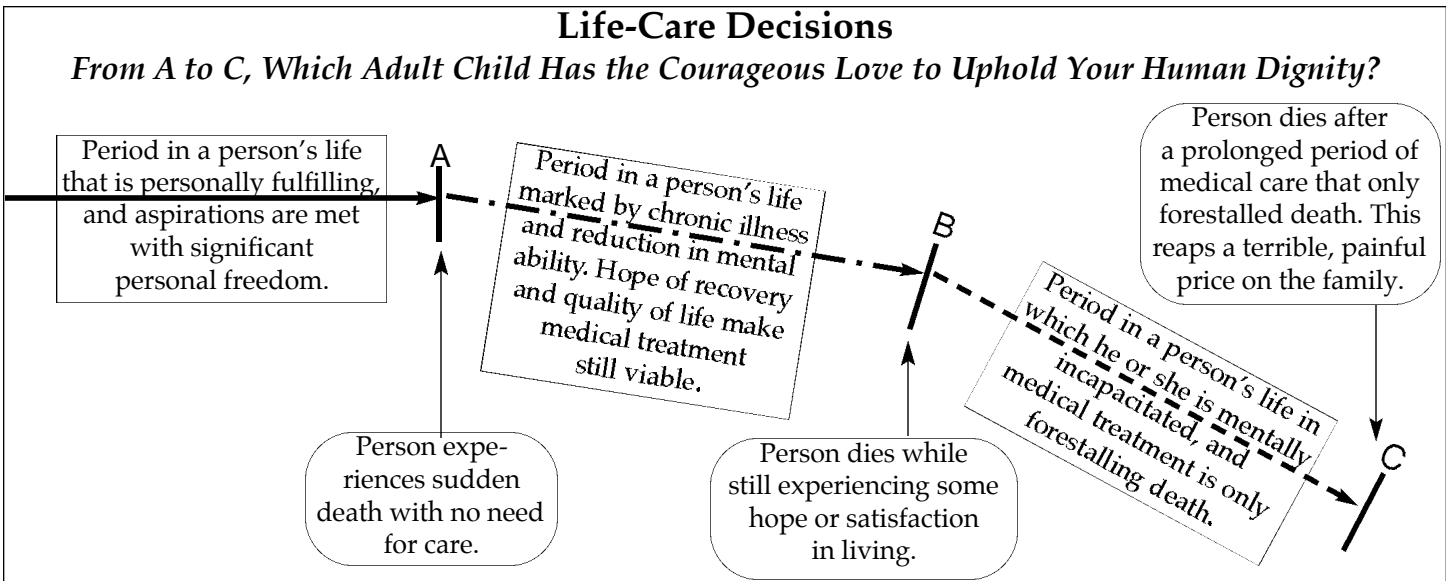
aspirations that give them reason to live. These, too, need to be discussed with your family. Ask yourself, "What gives me a reason to go on living?" Then express that answer to your children.

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously"
(2 Cor. 9:6).

As much as the above passage pertains to financial giving, we believe it applies to *every* act of care given to another person. There is an epidemic today of adult children who see any needs placed on them by their incapacitated parents as a bothersome inconvenience.

Because of the unabashed selfishness that this senior generation has passed on to their children, we can't blame them. The selfish lifestyles of the parents, their relocation to warm climates and limitless recreation that have kept them from fulfilling their parent and grand-parent roles, make it hard to want to help them when they're in need.

As a follower of Jesus, consider giving of yourself *just because of Him*. Remember, your children are



You are not "playing God" if you elect, according to your parent's earlier wishes, to not take extraordinary means to keep the body alive. Medicine has come to a point where it can forestall death without prolonging life. You, your family, even your church family must discuss your possible treatment options ahead of time.

If you are caring for a mentally incapacitated, deteriorating parent, take a longer-term view toward their death. They will have their good days and bad days, but the life that once gave them joy and fulfillment has been lost forever. You can't protect them from all the misfortunes of aging—the grieving of lost capabilities, the need for care even at a nursing home if necessary. You'll be plagued by guilt if you try to bear all their burdens as if you were the cause.

Consider their dignity and guard it as best you can. Many who are responsible for the care of their parents find out how shallow and petty their family can be at this time. Get on your knees and maintain a forgiving heart. Undemolished strongholds in your family will play havoc. Make sure you're clean!

The most difficult time of caring for a parent is in the period *B through C* on the diagram on page 3. All of who they once were is gone, except for the body being alive. Medical intervention is only

forestalling death.

If your parent is cared for in a humanistic institution (hospital or nursing home), the money-making system will do everything to keep them alive. People are easier to care for if they're unresponsive, and fear of lawsuits forces medical intervention where it's not wanted. You yourself will be plagued by feelings of helplessness and guilt. The strain on you and your family is often overwhelming, and many marriages are devastated.

We have written as straight forward as this topic needs to be addressed. Because of the unresolved guilt we've seen in so many ill-prepared adult children, we strongly encourage you seniors to leave a better inheritance. Prayerfully determine from God's Word your family *halakhahs* for this vital issue.

Our love, **Mike & Sue**