

The Role that *Elohim* Intended for *Chava*

Last week I spoke on the failure of Adam, the first husband, and its consequences. Any description of the husband's role would be incomplete without at least a brief account of the role of the wife. A marriage operates smoothly only when each partner functions in his or her biblical role. The Bible speaks about the wife's role.

1. She is a Helper: In *Bereshit* 2:18 *Elohim* said, “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.*” This could be translated, ‘I will make him a helper to complete him,’ which would seem to imply that a man without his wife is incomplete. The Hebrew text is hard to render in English, but let us focus on the main point: God provided the woman to be a *helper*. Many women today think ‘*if I'm a helper, I am inferior.*’ That is a mistake. In the Body of Messiah no one is superior or inferior to anyone else. Each of us is given a place and function. What God requires of us is faithfulness in the particular place and function He has assigned us. In John 14:16-17 *Yeshua* speaks of the provision He will make for His disciples after He leaves them: “*I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper... the Spirit of truth.*” So *Yeshua* describes the Holy Spirit as *Helper*, but does that mean the Holy Spirit is inferior? On the contrary, He is God! By implication, we could also say, “*I will pray the Father, and He will give you a wife.*” In the same way, a wife who fulfills her God-given role as helper is in no way inferior on that account. I thank God that my wife has been to me a wonderful helper. I could never have achieved what I have without Marilyn.

2. She Submits to Her Husband: This concept has been the subject of controversy in recent years, but Rabbi *Sha'ul* spells it out clearly in Ephesians 5:22: “*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.*” Much of the controversy is due to the fact that this verse has been detached from its biblical context. Verse 21 is addressed to all Believers: “*Submitting to one another in the fear of God.*” This is the primary submission within the Body of Messiah – all *Believers submit to each other*. This should be the distinctive mark of all of us: a meek, submissive attitude toward *each other*.

Within this context of mutual submission, the wife is granted a unique and special privilege: by her attitude toward her husband, she depicts the attitude of the Messianic Community toward Messiah. Seen in this context, submission is not a duty imposed on the wife, but a special privilege granted her. Both *Kefa* (Peter), who was married, and *Sha'ul* (Paul), who was unmarried, began their teaching on order in the home with the wife's responsibility to submit to her husband. There is a practical reason for this: if the wife does not fulfill her responsibility, it is almost impossible for the husband to fulfill his. The wife holds the key either to open the door to her husband's fulfillment of his role as head of the family, or else to close it against him. If the wife does not submit willingly to her husband's headship, there is only one way he can take that position-by self-assertive domination. No sensible wife would want that!

What if a wife chooses not to submit and her husband chooses not to take his place as head? Such a family is left unprotected spiritually. It is like a ship on a stormy sea with no captain on the bridge. It is doomed to suffer shipwreck. Unprotected families in our contemporary culture are the primary cause of the social instability and disorder we are experiencing. There is only one truly effective solution: to restore divine order in our families. Marilyn was spiritually more mature than I was when we were first married (Marilyn actually led me to the Lord.) Had she wished to dominate me spiritually, she would have had no trouble doing so! But to her credit she allowed this inexperienced young believer husband to be head of the home. She must have suffered agonies at some of the things I did! If Marilyn had held onto her place as spiritual leader of our home, I would have gone through life being known as ‘Marilyn's husband.’ But thank God, Marilyn let me take my place.

3. She Supports or Upholds: God has so created the human body that the head cannot hold itself up. If the man is the head of the home, it is the body that has to hold him up. And the one primarily responsible is the wife. We men are weak creatures in many ways. We need support! We can put on a macho exterior and throw

our weight around, but inside we are often wimpy mice. A spiritual wife will see her husband's weaknesses but not focus on them. Rather she will uphold him, wisely and tactfully, as he struggles to overcome them.

4. She Encourages: There is nothing more painful than a wife who discourages her husband. Imagine a preacher who has just delivered a poor sermon and faced a disappointing response from his congregation. If his wife says on the way home, *'That was a terrible sermon'* he can sink no lower; he is a worm! But if she says, *'That wasn't one of your best sermons, but I enjoyed it,'* he begins to think, *'well, maybe there's hope. Maybe I can make it after all.'* Since one of the titles of the *Ruach* is 'Helper,' it turns out that helper could just as well have been translated 'Encourager.' When a wife encourages her husband she is fulfilling the work of the *Ruach* in that situation.

5. She Intercedes for Her Husband: Wives sometimes fall into the trap of spending so much time worrying about their husbands, criticizing them and pointing out their faults, that they fail to pray for them. A wife on her knees thanking God for her husband will be the one to reap the benefits. Interceding produces better dividends than criticizing or complaining.

The Missing Ingredient

In a certain book on marriage, a wife was recounting how their inner tensions had exploded one day into an angry argument in their bedroom. The husband had been emphasizing – as husbands often do – the scriptural command to wives to be submissive to their husbands. The wife had been emphasizing – as wives often do – that she did not see why she should submit to him. *'After all,'* she told him, *'you don't have a good track record. You've made some pretty stupid decisions!'* At this point the *Ruach* convicted them simultaneously and they knelt down on opposite sides of the bed to pray. *'As we did that,'* the wife recalled, *'it was as if a cold wind blew through our bedroom that brought to mind the words from Scripture in Ephesians 5:21 '...submitting to one another in the fear of God.'* *We both recognized there was something missing in our relationship to each other – the fear of God. We'd been acting as if our relationship was only on the human level. When we had simply left God out of it.'* When they saw this, both repented of their failures and asked forgiveness of God and of each other. That was the beginning of a new relationship between them – a relationship in which they both accepted the place God had allotted to each of them. This is a diagnosis aid that explains why so many marriages between Believers never attain to the standard set forth clearly in Scripture. People are leaving out one essential ingredient: *the fear of the Lord*. Without the fear of the Lord a Believer's marriage will lack that special flavor that should distinguish it from marriages between unbelievers.

Respect, Reverence and Awe

Unfortunately many contemporary Believers have a wrong concept of what the Bible means by *the fear of the Lord*. They disdain it as something outdated that belongs *only* in the Hebrew Scriptures and has no place in post *Yeshua* lifestyle – nothing could be further from the truth! Actually the fear of the Lord carries a higher priority in the character requirements of Believers in *Yeshua* than it did for the people of God in the *Tanach*.

We need to ask ourselves, therefore: What does the Bible mean by the expression *the fear of the Lord*? It covers three related English words: *respect, reverence and awe*. Fearing God is not a cringing, slavish attitude, it is the appropriate response of the creature to the Creator – to His omnipotence, His majesty, His glory and His holiness. In Psalm 19:9 David says, *"The fear of יהוה is clean, enduring forever"*. The fear of the Lord will never become out of date. It is absolutely pure and absolutely purifying – something that, in all ages, God looks for in His people. In Isaiah 11:2 the prophet predicted the sevenfold anointing of the *Ruach* that was to mark *Yeshua* as the promised Messiah, the Anointed One. These are: *the Spirit of the Lord* (the Spirit that speaks in the first person as *God*), *the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of knowledge* and finally (to crown the list) *the Spirit of the fear of the Lord*. If *Yeshua* was thus marked by the fear of the Lord how can we as His disciples ever feel that such fear has no place in us? Shabbat Shalom!