

Men: Strive to Become Spiritual Leaders of the Home

“Then Adonai appeared to him...¹⁷ when Adonai said, “Should I keep secret from Abraham what I am about to do,¹⁸ seeing that Abraham will most certainly become a great and mighty nation and in him all the nations of the earth will be blessed?¹⁹ For I have made myself known (Ki Yeda-ativ) to him so that he will command (tzevah) his sons and his household after him to keep (shomer) the Way of Adonai (Haderech Adonai) by doing righteousness and justice (tzedakah u-mishpat), so that Adonai may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him” (Gen. 18:1a, 17-19).

For centuries it was true that the strongest motivation of a man was his protective instinct. If someone threatened to invade his home and ravage his wife or children, he would defend them with his life. So many of the stories we enjoy in Family TV stations display America’s Pioneering Days. Is this true today in *Kol Simcha*? Well over 2,500 years ago, God revealed to the Prophet *Malachi* through prophetic foresight one of the greatest and most urgent problem of our day: delinquent fathers and un-parented children. Economists and social legislators offer us all sorts of diagnoses and solutions. The root of the problem is in the family unit. Parents have reneged on their responsibilities to their children. Guilt lies often with both parents, yet the primary responsibility rests on men. We note that Father Abraham was a very strong spiritual leader of his household.

In my June 19, 2015 message I outlined three God-given responsibilities every father has toward his family: (1) *prophet*, to represent *Adonai* to them, (2) *priest*, to intercede for them; and (3) *king*, to rule them according to *Adonai*'s standards of righteousness. In today’s *Torah* portion (*Vayera*) we see that Lot's failure to fulfill his duties as a husband, a father and a guard (*shomer*) brought disaster on his whole family. By contrast we observe that *Adonai* chooses Abraham because He knows him intimately (*yodea*) and can rely on him to be faithful in his tri-fold duties, this is the basis on which God promised him that he would become the head of a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. If faithful Abraham produced a blessed and prosperous nation, what would happen to a nation whose fathers fail in their primary obligations? Scripture states: *“You will father sons and daughters, but they won't belong to you, because they will go into captivity” (Deuteronomy 28:41)*. The Hebrew indicates that Moses is speaking to men. The word father refers primarily to the father's part in procreating children. So this verse is addressed primarily (but not exclusively) to fathers. What a shock when one realizes that not enjoying our children is a curse. I began to ask myself: *How many parents today really enjoy their children?* Not many, I concluded. What is the reason? I believe it is a curse for disobedience. *Adonai* made children the greatest blessing (Ps. 127) He could give to men and women. When fathers and mothers – but especially fathers – do not walk in The Way of the Lord (*Yeshua*), then their sons and daughters are no longer a blessing and can become a curse. The CJB translates Deuteronomy 28:41 more literally when it says: *“...but they will not belong to you...”* This, too, is being fulfilled today. In countless broken families the children no longer belong to their parents. Parents and children are estranged from one another. The failure of male leadership opens the way for many of the other evils that follow.

The pattern of evil that began in the Garden of Eden with Adam has been repeated countless times in subsequent human history. Adam (the husband) was delinquent in his responsibility to guard (*shomer*) the Garden and this opened the way for Satan to tempt and seduce Eve (if he guards the Garden, then the snake cannot get in). The delinquency of men (*lack of guarding their jurisdiction*) has likewise opened a way to the flood of evil that has now engulfed modern civilization.

Malachi points out one main responsibility that the father, as priest, has toward his family: *“For a Cohen's lips should guard knowledge, and instruction must be sought from his mouth. For he is a messenger of Adonai-Tzva'ot” (Mal. 2:7)*. The priest is responsible to know the *Torah* of *Adonai* and to interpret it for the Lord's people. This also applies to a father as priest. His children and family should seek the word of the Lord from his mouth.

What happens if priests fail in their function? *Adonai* declares: *“My people are destroyed for want of knowledge. Because you rejected knowledge, I will also reject you as Cohen for me. Because you forgot the Torah of your God, I will also forget your children” (Hosea 4:6)* What a powerful word! *Adonai* is telling our people, *‘I expected you to be*

priests, but you rejected the knowledge you needed. This was not secular knowledge they rejected, but knowledge of **The Way** (*haderech*) and the Word of the Lord (*Yeshua*). As a result God no longer accepts them as priests- and even vows to forget their children.

As priest of his family, each father has the privilege to do what Job did – to bear up his children continuously before *Adonai* in prayer. This keeps them under the continuing oversight and protection of the Almighty. But when a father fails to fulfill his intercessory ministry as priest, *Adonai* says, “*I will forget your children.*” The NIV renders this verse as, “*I also will ignore your children*”. That is, “*Your children will no longer be under My special, watchful care.*” You might say that this terrible situation calls for an army of committed intercessors who will stand in the gap on behalf of such families. But the intercessory prayer of a father on behalf of his family is unique. No one else can fully take that father's place. This unique privilege carries unique responsibilities.

Chronologically Malachi is the last book of the *Nevi'im* in the *Tanach* and also of the Old(er) Testament. Interestingly the last word in the last book is *curse* (i.e., *anathema*, *cherem* in Hebrew). Had *Adonai* have no more to say to humanity after the Prophets (*Nevi'im*), His last word would have been *anathema* (curse). Thank God for *Yeshua*, our curse bearer (Gal. 3:13) and who empowered and gave us the way out of the curse! *Adonai* says in the last two verses of the Prophets: “*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Adonai. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers – else I will come and strike the earth with utter destruction (a curse)*” (*Mal. 4:5-6, KJV; Mal. 3:23-24 CJB/TLV*).

Malachi's message was addressed to people extremely zealous in their religious practices, yet who complained that the Lord did not answer their prayers as they expected. In response *Adonai* pointed out their failures as husbands and fathers: “*13Secondly, you do this: Tears cover the altar of Adonai – you are weeping and groaning because He no longer accepts the offering or receives it favorably from your hand. 14Yet you say, “Why?” Because Adonai bears witness between you and the wife of your youth, whom you have treated deceitfully. Yet she had been your companion and your wife by covenant*” (*Mal. 2:13-14*). God looked behind all their external religiosity and saw broken marriage vows and husbands abusing wives. In contemporary speech Malachi's message might be summarized like this: “*Nothing you do in religion makes up for what you don't do at home.*”

Adonai went on to explain one main purpose of a monogamous marriage as He originally ordained it: “*Did the One not make her with a remnant of Ruach? Then what is the One seeking? Offspring of God!*” (*Mal. 2:15a*). When the husband and wife live together in harmony according to the principles of Scripture, they are empowered to raise righteous, God-fearing children. But when a marriage breaks up, it is the children who suffer the most. *Adonai* continued with a warning to all husbands: “*So protect your spirit—do not betray the wife of your youth.*” (*Mal. 2:15b*). He followed this with an uncompromising statement of His attitude toward divorce: “*For I hate divorce,*” – says *Adonai the God of Israel*’ (*Mal. 2:16*).

Adonai's Word confronts our modern civilization with two alternatives: Restore family relationships and survive or allow family relationships go the way they have been going in the last decades and continue to deteriorate. If we do, we will perish under God's curse. However, the final outcome of this crisis will be decided by the response of **men and fathers**. They are the ones whom God holds primarily responsible. In God's message through Malachi, He requires first that the hearts of the fathers turn to children. Only after that will the hearts of the children be turned toward their own fathers. In our day God is judging us through our children.

There are many voices crying out today that Believers need to become socially relevant. In no area in society does the Congregation have a greater opportunity to become socially relevant than in the area of family life. In so doing we shall be responding to the most urgent crisis of our time. Our Community needs to present a clear message depicting Believing families as God intended them to be – a message that defines the roles of husbands, wives and children. But it must be a message in accordance with the great, unchanging principles established in Scripture from Genesis onward. There must be no compromise with the humanistic forces that have infiltrated the Body of Messiah in these last three or four generations. *Shabbat Shalom!*