

## Yet, You Do Not Have Many Fathers

*<sup>15</sup>For though you may have ten thousand guardians in Messiah, **yet you do not have many fathers**. For in Messiah Yeshua, I became your father through the Good News. (1 Cor. 4:15, TLV)*

There are many voices crying out today that Believers need to become socially relevant. In no area in society does the Messianic Movement 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 constituency 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. The Messianic Movement **MUST LEAD!**

At the conclusion of Genesis 18, Abraham intercedes face to face (*panim al panim*) with *Adonai*. You cannot engage in such intercession without an *existing personal relationship* with the Master of the Universe (*Adon Olam*). The imminent theme of this exchange is about the fate and upcoming judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham undertakes a face-to-face appeal with the *Word Made Flesh* (that is with *Yeshua the Messiah*, who is the only visible Revelation of *Adonai*). Abraham has a history of concern toward his own family since his *brother* (his first cousin, i.e., *su primo hermano*) Lot lived in Sodom – this is nothing new! While Abraham may have cared in general for the people of Sodom in general, he stopped interceding when the number finally reached ten. Why ten? Abraham does not know exactly the number of family members with Lot, since the Scripture does not record Abraham ever visiting Lot in Sodom. I think Abraham surmised that Lot's family could have numbered 10. In the next chapter we see the two angels speaking with Lot: *"<sup>12</sup>Then the men said to Lot, "Who else related to you is still here? A son-in-law, your sons, and your daughters, whoever else is related to you in the city—bring them out of the place! <sup>13</sup>For we are about to destroy this place because their outcry has become so great before Adonai that Adonai has sent us to destroy it. <sup>14</sup>So Lot went out and spoke to his sons-in-law who were going to marry his daughters, "Get up!" he said, "Get out of this place! For Adonai is about to destroy the city!" But in the eyes of his sons-in-law, he was like a joker. <sup>15</sup>So when morning dawned the angels rushed Lot, saying, "Get up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be swept away with the city's iniquity!" <sup>16</sup>But he hesitated. So, the men grabbed his hand, his wife's hand and his two daughters' hands—because of Adonai's compassion for him—and they brought him out and left him outside the city" (Gen. 19:12-16)*. Here is reasonable possibility: Lot & his wife, 2 betrothed daughters at home (and two sons-in-law), 2 daughters married and two sons-in-law. In fact, *Adonai* would not have destroyed Sodom for those 10 potential relatives of Abraham. Had this people embraced the things of God! This is an awesome realization – our children and their families count!

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)*. 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.

*Adonai's* Word confronts our modern civilization with two alternatives: Restore family relationships and survive or Allow family relationships to continue the way they have been going and succumb. If we do the latter, we will perish under God's curse. But note, however, that the final outcome will be decided by the actions of our *men and fathers*. Why? They are the ones whom God holds primarily responsible for the future. In God's message through Malachi, the prophet points out one main responsibility that a 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).* *Cohanim* are responsible to know the *Torah of Adonai* and to interpret it for the Lord’s people. This also applies to a father in his role as priest of the home. His children and family should be able to seek the word of the Lord from his mouth. But what happens if priests fail in this 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 us *‘I expect you to be priests, but instead you reject the knowledge you need.’* This was not secular knowledge they rejected, but knowledge of *The Way (haderech Adonai)* and the Words of the Lord *Yeshua*. The result here is that God no longer accepts them as priests, and 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.

Jewish people are a people of traditions – among those traditions we highly esteem the traditions of the (our) fathers (cf. Gal. 1:14). How can future generations be able to esteem *“the traditions of the fathers”* when in our day we have so few fathers? It used to be that both the Believing and the Jewish Communities were models of family life and involvement with healthy sons and daughters who were *“mighty in Spirit.”* The reality of today’s families – even in Messianic Jewish communities – leaves us far short of the Biblical model.

You may be tempted to say, *“Rabbi, how do you expect to change a generation that has been so much in the making in one message?”* We cannot change a generation, but the *Ruach Elohim* can. Even though the process will take time, grace, plenty of patience, commitment, and love, we must always begin at the *“heart of the matter,”* that is, our heart. I pray the *Ruach HaKodesh* will come now and fill us today with His (and the Father and the Son’s) heart with respect to fathering the Elijah Generation – the generation of *K’she Yavo-Mashiac* (His coming)! We can indeed today, in the time allotted to this message, rekindle the flame of conviction to become the *“Avot Portion”* of our children’s *Amidah*.

The Lord has a great sense of humor, often calling for things to be from things that are not (after all, He created everything from nothing). I had no experience in fathering and I grew up without a father (he died when I was seven years old). Mrs. Arroyo could not be much help in fathering because she will never even know whom her real father is until she gets to heaven. *“Lord I am not qualified,”* I remember exclaiming in frustration while in prayer about my shortcomings as a father. But His Spirit gently reminded me: *“My son, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness”*. At that time I was failing as a father and I knew it very well. In fact, I was both desperate and full of guilt and there seemed to be no way of escape, so I cried to Him...

Notice that we men and fathers, are to turn our hearts to children in general, not just our own children (וְהָשִׁיב לֵב-אֲבוֹת עַל-בָּנִים) {*VeHashib Leb-Avot al-Banim*}. The reward is that when we do, Scripture assures us (וְלֵב בָּנִים עַל-אֲבוֹתָם) {*VeLeb Banim al-Avotam*} that the ministry of *Elijah* will turn the hearts of children toward their (by implication, their own) fathers, that is, us. *Adonai* Himself will cause our children to return to us to give us their most precious possession – their heart. When this takes place, can anyone contain the revival? Will this not cause the entire corporate community (both Jewish and Gentile) to take note? The Jewish community also wants to preserve their children! We in MJ have the answer!