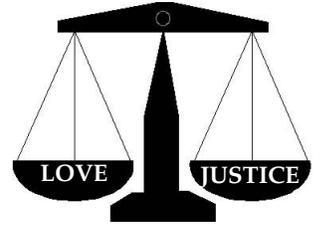


Yeshua MISHPACHAH

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

Raising Sheep for Heaven

Dear Friends,

For 10 years Sue and I tended sheep at our farm retreat-center. We raised them for their meat and wool, but they also provided visual illustrations as I counseled church leaders. As in any type of farming, everything exists for specific purposes, and reproduction plays a crucial role. Whatever you sell must be replaced by offspring.

The essence of our pilgrimage with Jesus Christ is similar to farming:

- We are called to fulfill our Father's purposes while we live on earth, *and* to reach our desired outcome—eternity with Him.
- We're also responsible to spiritually reproduce and prepare succeeding generations to follow us.

If you had the land and planned to raise sheep to sell, wouldn't you want to know what type of sheep are the most marketable to get the best price? Wouldn't you study the best ways to raise healthy sheep? You'd take the time to do whatever was needed so that you could achieve your goals. I wish this intensity of preparation were as evident when it comes to preparing our children to serve the interests of our Father for their welcome at His Throne!

So many goals and purposes of Christian parents for their children parallel those of the world. Sadly, many have not fully considered the eternal consequences of their spiritual neglect. If you emphasize achievement over character, or education over personal responsibility, or success over obedient trust, you're setting up your children to seek the world's measure of success rather than our Father's.

How do you know if you are raising children (or spiritual disciples) who follow you on the pilgrimage to fulfill our Father's purpose? He caused His teachings to be permanently written so that you could evaluate your methods and goals. Our Lord warns His people to judge ourselves on earth so that we and our children don't face judgment at the Throne. As Peter admonishes, *"For the time has come for the judgment to begin. It begins with the household of God; and if it starts with us, what will the outcome be for those who are disobeying God's Good News?"* (1Pet. 4:17).

When the Eighth Graders Became Sheep

Students from a nearby Christian school came for a three-day retreat. Our son Mike had attended the school for three years before we home schooled him, and I had been president of the Parent-Teacher Association. The pastor of the church that sponsored the school was a close friend.

As the kids unpacked and got settled in their dorms, the eighth grade teacher, who had been a foreign missionary for many years, shared with me her sorrow: "As much as I've tried, I don't seem to be able to instill the kind of motives these kids need to serve the Lord Jesus. They have a pecking order among themselves based solely on their academic grades." Having known her and her deep devotion to Jesus, her sense of failure touched me deeply.

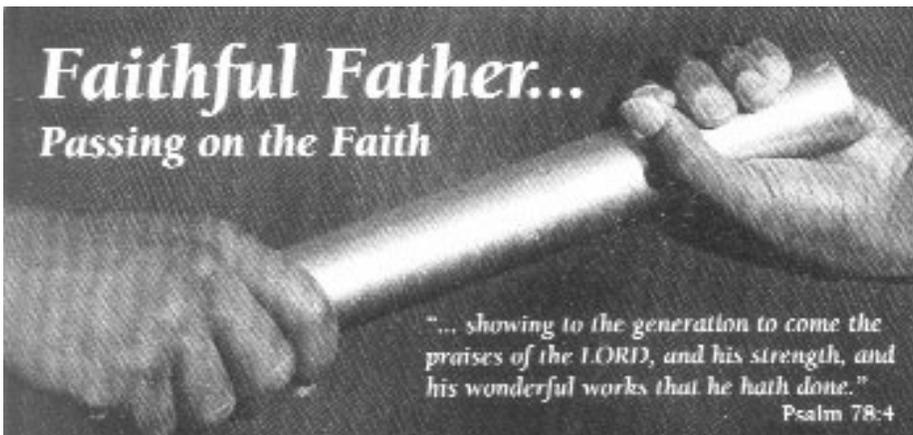
"Would you mind if I helped? These kids need to be broken down and rebuilt if they're ever going to have the attitude that serves the interests of Jesus. Let me coordinate their activities for the next 3 days." With her permission I devised a plan.

First, I had the girls challenge the boys to a race. While they shoveled the chicken coop, the boys cleaned out the sheep pen. What began with some grumbling started to bring them together. Then the assignments got progressively harder. What I watched for were the *helpful* kids—the ones who were aware of others' needs and served them. When everyone else was tired, they were the ones pouring cups of water or rubbing sore backs. As I spotted kids with these qualities, I complimented them and encouraged the rest to take notice of those who *served others*.

[During many youth retreats I'd survey the group at the end of their stay about who they admired the most during the retreat. It was ALWAYS *the young person who served others without concern for him/herself*. Interestingly, although the ones with servant hearts were recognized and appreciated on retreats, back on their own turf these qualities weren't highly regarded. Achievement and good looks were the criteria back home, and many youth directors fell right into affirming worldly qualities. Popularity and the desire for recognition are seductive.]

Preparing the Family of Jesus for the Dark Days to Come

On the afternoon of the third day we had a picnic and swam in the river that flowed below the retreat center. The lodge was a long uphill walk from the river. I mean LONG and STEEP! When we were getting ready to make the trek



changes. Our righteousness is found in Him alone, but are we walking in that righteousness? Do you think He will change the criteria for entering His presence when you or your children arrive at the throne? Ponder this passage carefully:

back, the willing helpfulness of everyone was overwhelming! As we stopped halfway back for a breather, the teacher sat down and cried for joy. In between tears and laughter she told everyone how pleased she was with the caring nature each of them had come to cherish. And they knew they were changed! That special time knit them together in a unified bond. The teacher died of cancer a few years later, and I can picture the "Well done!" she heard as her name was spoken to all the hosts of heaven.

When the Pilgrimage Ends, How Will You Be Judged?

Unless we parents and those responsible for discipling others clarify from the Scriptures God's ultimate goal and purpose for our children and disciples, we can, with good intentions, unwittingly be preparing them for their own destruction. Just as the Christian school mentioned earlier emphasized "academic excellence" but missed the importance of infusing Christ-like character qualities, many of us can miss the mark as well.

Paul reminded Timothy that there are certain people we must please in life, and requirements to fulfill if we are to achieve victory:

"You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules" (2 Tim. 2:1-5). WHO must be pleased when our pilgrimage is over? By what standard will He judge us?

Please stop and read the parable of the sheep and goats found in Matthew 25:31-46. Jesus never

fully: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats" (v. 31,32).

I believe Jesus is warning all of us to seriously consider the love He demands, the love in which His followers are more concerned for the welfare of others than for themselves. Especially true is our concern for those who can never repay us.

"Then the righteous [sheep] will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me'" (v. 37-40).

But to those who fail to reflect His vital character quality of love, only one outcome awaits: "Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels...Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (v. 41,46). Are you sure that you are teaching your child(ren) or disciple(s) about a life of loving and obedient trust that will get them welcomed at the Throne? Do you and your children actively show care for the least of the brothers of [Jesus]? Do you have the courage to review and possibly reconsider your thinking?

Sheep Fit for Heaven

You know how much we emphasize the home as the basic building block for all spiritual development. As parents we want to encourage you to biblically discern your responsibility to your family. Every other desire you have for your children pales in light of the standard by which they'll be judged when they face the Lord Jesus. He will not be the little child in your children's manger set. They will meet Him as KING of Kings and LORD of Lords. At the end of our earthly pilgrimage the Lord Jesus has revealed His standard of judgement for all of us—"I tell you the truth, whatever

Faith is not worthy of the name
until it erupts in action. Catherine Marshall

you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

I know that to some of you this may sound like earning heaven through works. Not at all! I am writing about **evidence**. If we have the indwelling Holy Spirit as the seal of our Father consummating His Covenant with us, then we will fulfill His purposes: *"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do"* (Eph. 2:10). In light of God's criteria for judgment, won't His Spirit guide you to help those who can never repay you? Your children need to learn this from you.

Trust in the words of Jesus, *"I tell you the truth, anyone who has **trust in me** will **do what I have been doing**. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father"* (John 14:12). In Covenant union with our Father, **we have** the desire and power to do the things that glorify Him. This is the evidence of His indwelling Spirit that we will be welcomed at the Throne! What testimonies do your children or disciples hear from *you* to evidence that your pilgrimage will ultimately find you welcomed into heaven? If you don't have any testimonies that would convict you in the court of Jesus that you really are His follower, then now is the time to **stop and reconsider**. Not only are you hurting yourself, but you are leading your children down the broad road to destruction.

True Servanthood: A Life of Loving-Justice

Your parents probably taught you social graces which you've passed on to your children. Good manners enable people to get along in society. But often the *biblical foundations* are overlooked—those principles that please our Father and are the solid ground for our children to be prepared to be welcomed into eternity. Many think that one of the highest character qualities they can teach their children is to *be kind*. But this falls way short of what our Father commands. His standard is what I term "loving-justice." It is more than a social grace. It is seen in someone who is so emptied of himself that his thought-life is consumed with how he can serve others. Consider the example Jesus presented of a lovingly just man, the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37).

The expert in the law had answered Jesus's question correctly, *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself"* (v.27). But when he asked Jesus, *"Who is my neighbor?"*, the Lord told him about a lovingly-just man. Jesus had already taught the standard of loving-justice by which each of us can evaluate our actions, *"So in everything, **do to others** what you would have them **do to you**, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets"* (Matt. 7:12). The Samaritan involved him-

self in the mishap to the degree he would have desired help. Many Christians today cringe at the extent of his servanthood, but remember, the Lord Jesus used him as the standard.

For most of us, our relationships with others are often consciously or unconsciously negotiated for our own self-interest. We may think, "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." But our Lord's requirement calls for us to go outside our comfort zone and serve those who cannot repay us:

"Then Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous'" (Luke 14:12-14).

Going Beyond Kindness to Servanthood

The yardstick by which all our attitudes and behaviors are judged is the character of Jesus. By His standard we are compelled to stretch beyond our comfort zone. *"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps"* (1 Peter 2:21).

Kind people who lack a *heart of justice* don't go the distance the Lord requires of them. They evaluate their actions from their own perspective, not from that of the recipient. Kindness without justice makes it easy to pull out your wallet, but withhold yourself from the fullest extent that the other person needs you. Consider the following verses and the standards of behavior and attitude our Lord Jesus demands:

"I tell you,

- *Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.*
- *And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.*
- *If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.*
- *Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*
- *You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.*
- *He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?*
- *And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?*
- *Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*" (Matt. 5:39-48).

Suffering gladly borne for others converts more people than sermons. Therese of Lisieux

you've experienced some of these challenges to test your heart. How did you respond? Ask your children or disciple to describe their response to any of the above confrontations. Was there a gap between Jesus' commanded response and their own? Is forgiveness needed in any of these situations, from either our Lord or from another person?

Your Thought Life and Actions Must Conform to Jesus

None of Jesus's teachings will ever matter to you, nor will you ever be able to carry them out if you do not take seriously the command discussed in our June 2002 newsletter: *"Take every thought captive and bring it into obedience to Jesus."* It is *only the Spirit of Christ* that will enable you to live out His commands. But your *willing obedience* is the evidence that you do have the Holy Spirit, and that your pilgrimage is heading for the desired destination.

I'd like to close with the criteria for faith communities that we shared in our February 2002 Mishpachah. Are these part of the faith-practice that *your children or disciples* are experiencing?

1. Our fellowship with others must *spur us on to glorify our Father* through praise, worship, and living testimony.
2. Our fellowship with each other should result in *growth in Christlikeness* in each person.
3. Our fellowship must provide the corrective / confrontational means to assist each other toward *entering the narrow gate*.

Please have the courage to stop and reconsider your path before *your pilgrimage* ends. There is no Court of Appeals in heaven, and now is the appointed time to be walking in Spirit and in truth so that His presence can be clearly seen in both your words and your actions.

Our love,

Mike & Sue

As we finished writing this newsletter we received the following story from Gene & Betty Steele who minister among the Tohono O'Odham people in Casa Grande, Arizona. I think you will agree the story captures the heart of a "sheep."

THE CAB RIDE

Twenty years ago, I drove a cab for a living. When I arrived at 2:30 a.m., the building was dark except for a single light in a ground floor window. Under these circumstances, many drivers would just honk once or twice, wait a minute, then drive away.

But I had seen too many impoverished people who depended on taxis as their only means of transportation. Unless a situation smelled of danger, I always went to the door. This passenger might be someone who needs my assistance, I reasoned to myself.

So I walked to the door and knocked. "Just a minute," answered a frail, elderly voice. I could hear something being dragged across the floor. After a long pause, the door opened. A small woman in her 80s stood before me. She was wearing a print dress and a pillbox hat with a veil pinned on it, like somebody out of a 1940s movie.

By her side was a small nylon suitcase. The apartment looked as if no one had lived in it for years. All the furniture was covered with sheets. There were no clocks on the walls, no knickknacks or utensils on the counters. In the corner was a cardboard box filled with photos and glassware.

"Would you carry my bag out to the car?" she said. I took the suitcase to the cab, then returned to assist the woman. She took my arm and we walked slowly toward the curb. She kept thanking me for my kindness. "It's nothing," I told her. "I just try to treat my passengers the way I would want my mother treated." "Oh, you're such a good boy," she said.

When we got in the cab, she gave me an address, then asked, "Could you drive through downtown?" "It's not the shortest way," I answered quickly. "Oh, I don't mind," she said. "I'm in no hurry. I'm on my way to a hospice." I looked in the rearview mirror. Her eyes were glistening. "I don't have any family left," she continued. "The doctor says I don't have very long." I quietly reached over and shut off the meter. "What route would you like me to take?" I asked.

For the next two hours, we drove through the city. She showed me the building where she had once worked as an elevator operator. We drove through the neighborhood where she and her husband had lived when they were newlyweds. She had me pull up in front of a furniture warehouse that had once been a ballroom where she had gone dancing as a girl.

Sometimes she'd ask me to slow in front of a particular building or corner and would sit staring into the darkness, saying nothing. As the first hint of sun was creasing the horizon, she suddenly said, "I'm tired. Let's go now." We drove in silence to the address she had given me. It was a low building, like a small convalescent home, with a driveway that passed under a portico.

Two orderlies came out to the cab as soon as we pulled up. They were solicitous and intent, watching her every move. They must have been expecting her. I opened the trunk and took the small suitcase to the door. The woman was already seated in a wheelchair. "How much do I owe you?" she asked, reaching into her purse. "Nothing," I said. "You have to make a living," she answered. "There are other passengers," I responded. Almost without thinking, I bent and gave her a hug. She held onto me tightly. "You gave an old woman a little moment of joy," she said. "Thank you." I squeezed her hand, then walked into the dim morning light. Behind me, a door shut. It was the sound of the closing of a life.

end his shift? What if I had refused to take the run, or had honked once, then driven away?

On a quick review, I don't think that I have done anything more important in my life. We're conditioned to think that our lives revolve around great moments. But great moments often catch us unaware—beautifully wrapped in what others may consider a small one.

PEOPLE MAY NOT REMEMBER EXACTLY WHAT YOU DID, OR WHAT YOU SAID, ~BUT ~ THEY WILL ALWAYS REMEMBER HOW YOU MADE THEM FEEL.

I didn't pick up any more passengers that shift. I drove aimlessly, lost in thought. For the rest of that day, I could hardly talk. What if that woman had gotten an angry driver, or one who was impatient to

How do you think this man's family felt when he arrived home to tell them what happened in his cab? Please ask our Lord to give you a lovingly just heart and watch what happens....

We had our dear friends James, Joyce, Malcolm, and Martin visiting us for a few days. I was able to take the pictures below to illustrate a father training his children.



