Oasis
From the **Tents of Mercy Network** of Congregations and Humanitarian Aid

WHAT IS THE FATHER'S HEART?

Eitan, grandson and father Nick

One of the fondest memories from my childhood was being carried in my father's arms. I can remember times when we pulled into the driveway and I feigned being asleep, just to feel his strong arms under me, carrying me to my room and laying me in my bed. **"…in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place"** (Deuteronomy 1:31).

When I was a kid the orthopedic specialist determined that I had a tight Achilles tendon that would prevent me from ever running. He recommended a simple exercise that my father began applying conscientiously. He cradled my foot in his ample hand and pushed the top of my foot back to stretch the tendon at the lower end of the leg, where the foot connects at the heel. He did that night after night. And guess what? I became an all-star baseball player–after the doctor said I wouldn't run. I owe that to my father's love put into patient action.

I was blessed with a dad who truly cared. Not everyone grows up with such a father. Just as Esau cried out for his father Isaac's blessing, many have the same cry stifled within. **"When Esau heard the words of his father, he cried with an exceedingly great and bitter cry…'Bless me – me also, O my father'"** (Genesis 27:34).

The influence of fathers (and mothers) on their children is incalculable. It can literally make the difference between a saint and a "satan." Hitler's father instilled in him the fear of losing status in society. This fed the appetite of rejection to "show the world" that he would not be belittled. On the other hand, Abraham Lincoln credited the mental agility of his natural mother and the supportive loving friendship of his step-mother as major factors in his history-altering leadership.

God's truth is incarnational. He became a man in order to convey to us who He is. God appointed fathers and mothers to embody His own fatherhood in a tangible way–the first encounter each new child has with a "greater power."

We need examples. Learning takes place at greater depth through demonstration than lecture. I have been blessed beyond measure to have fathers in the faith who nurtured my spiritual growth and imparted a security regarding the call of God on my life. This foundation of godly confidence releases boldness with humility – a kingdom combination that can bear a lifetime of good fruit.

Regarding David, the future king, we read that **"The Lord has sought for Himself a man after His own heart…"** (1 Samuel 13:14). But what is God's heart? What is He like as a father?

I want to suggest but four of the many qualities we could attribute to God's father heart. He is the bestower of BLESSING, FORGIVENESS, IDENTITY, and INSTRUCTION.

Blessing

We begin with the patriarchs. Abraham, after receiving the original blessing from God, passed the blessing on to Isaac, Isaac to Jacob, and Jacob to his twelve sons (Genesis

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A Call and a Task

From the beginning of the Bible we read of God choosing a people group to perform a specific task. This choice was not based at all on superiority relative to other nations but on His sovereign will (Deuteronomy 7:7, Ezekiel 36:22).

God identified Abraham, chose him and called him. He told Abraham to leave his father's house and go to a distant land that would one day be given to his descendants. Despite having little understanding at the time, Abraham faithfully followed God's leading.

Through Abraham God gave birth to the entire nation of Israel, and then He had a whole people covenantally belonging to Him, through whom He could work. These offspring, by God's grace, were entrusted with the task of revealing the holy God, the Creator of the Universe, to the rest of the world.

"You are to be holy to Me because I, the Lord, am holy, and I have set you apart from the nations to be My own." (Leviticus 20:26)

God's Visible Presence

As the people of Israel made their way to the Promised Land, God's presence was strongly visible. The surrounding nations could hardly deny that God was in the midst of Israel–with powerful enemies repeatedly defeated and daily miracles manifested.

God was there, encouraging and supporting his people, making a way for them because He had given them a special task to carry out. Even in their times of rebellion, God's hand was visible to turn His people back to Him.

Trying to Be Like Other Nations

Israel, as God's people, have a responsibility that is clearly outlined in the Scriptures. However, the sad reality is that for a long time we have denied this identity and instead tried very hard to be like the other nations–asking God for a king and adopting foreign traditions.

Our attempts to blend in with the rest of the world have led to many troubles in our history. By rejecting our calling, we have trampled our right as the firstborn and neglected our accountability to the King of kings. Today, our government seems too eager to demonstrate to the international community that Israel is simply one of many democratic, humanistic countries. We try hard to satisfy our diplomatic partners and neighbours even at the price of harming ourselves.

For far too long Israel has been flirting with the world in order to convince them that we are no different from everyone else. We have allowed the standards of the world to creep in and determine how we are to live. Hence, it is not surprising that today Tel Aviv is

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regarded as the most gay friendly city on the planet. Our eternal capital, Jerusalem, is subject to international rulings. The UN has no trouble passing any anti-Israel resolution as soon as the opportunity presents itself. It is as if the world is trying to suppress Israel and its role.

Nevertheless, now is not the time to become discouraged. I believe God has brought us to this time in history in order to turn the tide and change the current status quo. We must pray and intercede for our people to turn to God. We must return to our roots, remembering who we are and what we are here for. Israel as a people is still called of God. Recognising this reality will begin a transformation, restoring us to be bearers of His light to the nations.

Together With Gentiles

Biblical prophecies say Gentiles will come and we will serve God together. We Jews must accept those who are coming, and learn and worship together with them. It is a great responsibility. We must get ready. We must prepare ourselves and serve them as we did during the temple period, when 70 sacrifices were offered up yearly on behalf of the 70 root nations. This role will be restored, and it is already beginning. Over the last few decades the Feast of Tabernacles has become a good example of this - as thousands of Gentiles come annually to Israel to pray, worship, learn and eat together. And many more will come.

This is what the Lord Almighty says: **"In those days ten people from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"** (Zechariah 8:23)

Please pray for us Messianic Jews that we may never be ashamed or afraid of what we are, that we become salt and light for our nation and other nations, and that we never walk alone because the pillar of fire and cloud will accompany us.

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (Exodus 19:6, 1 Peter 2:9-10).

We invite you who love Him from other nations to join us, and unite with us into one strong body of our Messiah. ✡

YEVGENI

In His name,

Yevgeni Stanukevich

Special Announcement

From worship leader Marc Chopinsky

I'm pleased to announce the official release of my 'Legacy' digital songbook project! It contains 30 transcribed original songs in an easy to follow format. The printable PDF sheet music files have guitar chords, melody line, lyrics and accompaniment. The data disc (not playable in your car CD player, only on computer) also includes power point files for all the songs, hyperlinks to where you can hear samples and mp3 files for tunes not connected to the hyperlink locations.

Best of all there is no fixed price to receive your copy! Yes, you heard right...this is free! However, if you would like to offer a monetary gift as a contribution (there is NO OBLIGATION) to offset the costs of production and shipping from Israel, it would be appreciated.

In order for me to send your copy I only need a 'snail mail' address. Please send it to me at: **chopfamily@yahoo.com**

Of all these songs I would have to say "O Yeshua" is especially meaningful to me. The song came to me while I was reading Matthew 24 for the first time. I was thinking about the promised return of the Messiah to Israel and feeling a strong yearning/longing for that day. As time went on the song was recorded on the first "Israel's Hope" recording (a vinyl LP!!) and really captured the essence of our common expectation of His appearance in the sky after the regathering of our people from all over the earth.

O Yeshua, how long must we wait?
Longing for the day of Your return.
O Yeshua, in Zion shall be
Your people of praise
when You return.

Another one of the songs is taken from II Corinthians1:20 which says, **"ALL the promises of God, 'In Him' are Yes and Amen."**

Are you *'In Him?'*

Don't let another day go by without knowing who you are... **IN HIM.** ✡

MARC CHOPINSKY
Tents of Mercy Worship Team

Vintage shot with music partners Paul Wilbur and Rene Bloch

Marc and Leah with their grandson

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Eitan boating with his father and sister

Return of the Prodigal Son - by Rembrandt

48:14-16). This is the father's place – to bless his children, to grant them whatever resources he has – in character, in faith, in material goods – to launch them into a fruitful life.

Here, a book written by Gary Smalley and Greg Trent, *The Blessing*, can be helpful. They list five ways blessing is conveyed, emphasizing the immense impact of affirmation upon growing children (and yes grown ones, too), as well as the life-long damage caused by *constant criticism*. Blessing is conveyed by touch, words, communicating high value, pointing to a special future, and long term commitment to "the blessing" being fulfilled.

Forgiveness

Rembrandt's painting of the "Return of the Prodigal" vividly portrays the father's forgiveness of his wayward, willful, profligate son (Luke 15:18-21). Rembrandt's masterful image of the father's hands placed on a kneeling son, barely clothed in rags, touches the depth of undeserved forgiveness each of us desperately needs. What a foundation for a robust life of the soul – to be received back into the loving arms of a father against whom we have rebelled!

Identity

As the story of the prodigal unfolds, his father calls for a robe, a ring, sandals, and a fatted calf. Each of these items symbolizes new, favored identity. The father not only forgave his son, he changed his garment, restored lost authority, empowered him, and created a memorable and lavish celebration. What a picture of God restoring our 'Garden of Eden' inheritance, lost through sin! We have returned to His house, to become chosen and favored sons and daughters – after trashing what He first gave us.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15).

Instruction

Again and again the Book of Proverbs initiates "discussions" of how to live, with the words "My son…"

"My son, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways" (Proverbs 23:26). King Solomon understood that one of a father's chief duties is to instruct his children – both by precept and by living example. Loving discipline is an indispensable element of instruction. **"If you endure discipline, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not discipline?"** (Hebrews 12:7)

These manifestations of the Father's heart give us two bedrock ingredients. First, they enable us to comprehend the love of God, and how He wants to bless us, purify us, give us unwavering identity and train us in His way of life. Secondly, they equip us to be mothers and fathers in both natural and spiritual capacities. I have never met someone who doesn't need affirmation – the blessing of a father or mother figure. What I have been rewarded to see is young men and women emerging from a devastating lack of blessing, to become true children of the Father – radiating joy and secure in their life's purpose. ✡

EITAN SHISHKOFF

*Editor's note: This message developed out of a recent fathers and sons evening at Tents of Mercy Congregation

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