

RESPECT FOR PARENTS

(Part 4 of 5)

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The Law of Moses contains examples of both horrible treatment of children by their parents and honorable treatment of children by their parents. Worship of the false god Molech, an Ammonite god, was one of the most horrible things ever conceived. His worshippers would sacrifice their children to him, and he paradoxically was revered as “the protecting father”! The Law of Moses forbade his worship (Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5), yet Solomon, Manasseh, and Jehoiakim paid homage to him. Palestinian excavations have unearthed infant skeletons in the area of these ancient shrines to Molech. His image was thought to be a huge hollow brass figure in which a raging fire was built. In his glowing outstretched hands was placed Israelite infants whose screams were drowned out by the instrumental music played by the priests of Molech. Merrill F. Unger lists forty false gods but says of Molech, “No form of ancient Semitic idolatry was more abhorrent than Molech worship.” God stated his hot displeasure through Jeremiah: “Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away, and take up a lamentation on high places; for the Lord hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath. For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the Lord: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. And the carcasses of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate” (Jer. 7:29-34). The horrible deeds of these parents in no way invalidated or cancelled out the principle of parental respect demanded by the Law of Moses. God would punish them for their sinful disrespect of his will, but his design for the closest of human ties would remain forever intact.

Others like the prophet Hosea received instruction from God to bring their children, at least the names of their children, into their prophetic ministries. The time in which Hosea prophesied was a time of idolatry or spiritual adultery on the part of Israel and Judah. The love of God even for his adulterous people was to be

illustrated by Hosea who was to take a wife of whoredoms (Hosea 1:1-2). The long story of Hosea and his wife Gomer is a story of true love that pictures God's faithfulness to an unfaithful nation and underscores the longsuffering nature of God. Hosea and Gomer had a son God named Jezreel (Hosea 1:3-5), which symbolized the great slaughter God would bring on Jehu for the violent acts of aggression he had committed (II Kings 9). Other children followed. Loruhamah, the name of their daughter, meant "not pitied" showing God's anger for wicked Israel would be unleashed without pity (Hosea 1:6-7); Loammi, their second son, stood for "not my people" showing God's rejection of Israel (Hosea 1:8-10). In this way these children would go throughout their lives wearing the names that symbolized the prophetic work of their father, and while the message was one of judgment, it was God's message, and the keeping of their personal names was the keeping of respect for their parents and their God.

The Christian Age

The New Law, God's standard of authority for the Christian Age, demands "respect for parents." The very last words of the Old Testament said, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Mal. 4:5-6). The very beginning of the New Testament announces that it is "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt. 1:1). The statement and the genealogical record of Jesus that follows points with respect back to the fathers from whom Jesus physically descended. Novice readers of the Bible on occasion have reported difficulty in understanding why the New Testament starts out with such unusual sounding and hard to pronounce names and seemingly odd construction of sentences, balking at the simple verb "begat." However, those who have made the Bible their lifelong pursuit relate to the rich heritage realized by the Redeemer at his birth and know it is essential to establish his royal lineage to prove the claim of not only the book of Matthew but of the entirety of the Bible that this Jesus is the King of the Jews, the Savior of the world.

The reader is allowed to see in the beginning the faith of Jesus' foster father Joseph as he received instructions from the angel of the Lord regarding the virgin birth of the Savior and later as he is warned to take protective measures against wicked king Herod and flee with the young child and his mother into Egypt for safety. The Bible says concerning the latter, "When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt" (Matt. 2:14). He waited not for the morning light but complied immediately with heaven's demand. Jesus was nestled

and nurtured within a human family, of whom Luke wrote, “And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:51-52).