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Authority in the home - what is wrong with parents?, 1955.

AUTHORITY IN THE HOME
What is Wrong With Parents?

December 18, 1955

In a normal home, dear friends, the question of authority seldom, if ever, arises. By its very constitution and by virtue of the functions which each member in the home performs, standards are automatically set and customary relationships, or jurisdictions, if you will, are accepted. The normal home is a partnership where all are free and yet where all are obligated. There may be legal definitions which spell out the rights and the duties of husband, wife and children, but no normal home is consciously built upon these definitions and the members - the several members - of the normal home are ever consciously aware of them in the day by day business of living. The home is a mosaic, made up of several units of different shapes, and sizes and colors, if you will, but all blended into one logical unit - into one harmonious unit - and the banner over it is love!

Such a home - a normal home - exercises by itself, intrinsically, authority, over all of its members, parents and children alike. It commands loyalty, and deference and sacrifice on the part of each one. Such a home is a voluntary, but covenanted little society, in which all are heavily committed to mutual aid, regard and protection. By the very fact of its being, by the very fact of its existence, a home exercises authority and influence.

And the greater democracy in the home, the greater is the corporate authority; the group fealty, what you might call the group patriotism, the greater is the priority of its stability and its permanence, in the eyes of its members. And at the behest of its unspoken requirements and demands, much must be done by everyone in it, much must be yielded, much must be undertaken, much must be sacrificed. It is not so

much the authority in the home as the authority of the home that should be of primary concern. There can be no wholesome home without such fundamental and accredited authority - just as no free country can long endure whose citizens are unwilling to own allegiance to it - obey its laws - defend its constitution and when called upon, make supreme sacrifices for it.

Now where such corporate authority of the home is recognized, the question of competitive authority within the home will seldom arise. Husband and wife will not quarrel as to who is the boss in the family. Neither is boss. Both are cooperatively building a home and raising a family, and their primary interest is not self-aggrandizement — what is mine — what is yours — whose voice will prevail — their primary concern is not the exercise of authority, but how to make the maximum contribution in whatever way possible, to a beautiful and happy home. Their primary dedication is not to self, but to one another and to the children, and to the home.

Sometimes the wife will prove to be the stronger personality in the home, for example. That happens. It happens very often. If she is a wise woman, what our Bible calls an * * * * * * an intelligent, a prudent, a wise woman — if she is a wise woman, she will never let on. She will protect the prerogatives of her husband, within the home and outside the home. She will never derogate him, not to speak of humiliating him, in public. For to rob a man of his self-respect is to destroy him. And to diminish a father's status in the home, in the eyes of the children, is to rob the children of the strong moral support which they need. Someone to lean on — someone to look up to. There appeared, in one of our local newspapers recently, in the Cleveland News, a series of very fine articles, written on the subject of parent-hood and children by Howard Whitman. And in one of these articles, the author points out the following:

"Leaders in sociology and psychology today are recognizing the need for a clearly defined father role and for the restoration of father's function as head of the family. In the psychiatric clinics and child guidance centers one hears frequently today of the 'need for male identification.'

What this basically means is that the family needs a man to model after. Small boys must find in their fathers the prototype of a man they can admire, emulate and sometimes even hero worship.

The new trend.even ventures to restore to father his authority and leadership. It is recognized that without these the family is a ship without a helmsman, and no one aboard can feel really safe. In the past it was the vogue for many experts to chide the father who tried to lead his family, even to call him neurotic (or worse, to fill him with fears that he was making the rest of the family neurotic). But in the forefront of family counseling this abides no longer.

"A certain amount of the firm hand and authoritative voice is needed. Father must play a more aggressive role. He must be responsible, firm, a leader, an exponent of fair play, a symbol of strength — and not just another mother."

It is harmful to destroy the spiritual authority of a father within a home. A wise wife never does it. In our Bible we read that when the Lord decided to create a helpmate for Adam, the first man, the text reads: * * * * * * (I will make him a helper fit for him) and there is here an inherent contradiction.

means a help but means against him. And the rabbis were quick in their Aggadik technique and insight to sieze upon this interesting contrast and they said ** (if a man is lucky) ** (and his wife is a help unto him) real help - builds him up in moral - in status - in significance - ** (if he is unlucky) ** (she is against him) she destroys him - she undermines him. The great Akiba, one of the foremost teachers among the rabbis, who was blessed with a great love - for whose sake a young woman left the home of rich parents and slaved, according to the legend, some twenty-four years, until the ignorant Akiba studied and became the foremost teacher of

his day. Akiba, who knew love and knew the devotion of a fine woman, said this:

The Hebrew word for a man is

The Hebrew word for a woman is

. The two words have in common an and a

- which means fire. And they have one other word, which belongs only in part to one and in part to the other, and that is

God.

If they are fortunate

then God unites them.

If they are not fortunate

the

fire consumes them both.

"House and wealth are inherited from fathers" we read in the Book of Proverbs in our Bible. A man can inherit a house - wealth - the rich inheritance. But a prudent wife is from the Lord. A prudent is from the Lord. And on this there is a lovely Agada among our rabbis. A Roman matron once asked the eminent scholar, Rabbi Jose ben Halafta, "In how many days did the Lord create the world according to your tradition?" "Why in six days", answered the rabbi. "And what has he been doing since?" asked the Roman matron. "Why"said the rabbi, "The Lord has been busy making matches and deciding which man shall marry which woman." "Why," said the matron, "even I can do that! And so she took a thousand of her man-servants and a thousand of her maid servants and lined them up and said this man will marry this woman and this man will marry this woman - and so she married them off. The next morning they appeared, says this Agada of the rabbis and one had a broken head and another a broken nose and another a torn face - a motley crowd of beaten and bruised and unhappy newly-weds. "Now I can understand" says the Roman matron "how much time your good God must spend in arranging some happy marriages at least, in the world." Wealth and inheritance come from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.

A wise man never raises the question - who is master in this house. That is an unworthy challenge - a dictatorial ukase which may or may not evoke resentful obedience, but certainly never respect or affection. The rabbis said * *

"Towards children, towards one's wife, towards one's own nature — towards human nature itself", declared a famous rabbi, "let thy left hand thrust away and thy right hand draw near!"

One must never be severe in chiding in reproving — one must learn to avoid extremes towards others as well as towards as oneself. "Always a man should be heedful about the honor due to his wife — for no blessing comes to dwell in a man's house except through his wife". No, our teachers were not much concerned with the problem of competitive authority within the home, but with the authority of the home upon all the members thereof.

Parents who do not exercise authority in the rearing of their children, destroy them. There prevailed for some time an absurd and fantastic notion among half-baked intellectuals, who had become addicted to certain untested theories of child psychology, that you must not discipline your child, lest you curb his self-expression — lest you stunt his personality and destroy his personality—individuality. You must let your child do as he pleases, else you will give him frustrations which he will carry with him for the rest of his life. It used to be very popular some years again let your children do as they pleased and you stand by (and suffer) while they are doing it.

Parenthood my friends is not a modern profession. It is as old as man - as old as the human family - as old as Adam and Eve, who were not successful parents. Of their two sons one turned out to be a murderer and the other his victim. Perhaps Adam and Eve did not exercise the principle of self-restraint and moral obedience in their own lives and therefore presumably failed to emphasize them in the training of their children. Much wisdom has been distilled, through the unnumbered centuries, out of the family experiences of the human race which might well serve as a guide to the men and women of our own generation. The people in biblical times, I am sure loved their children quite as much as we do today, and there must have been many in those days who greatly indulged their children, even though they may not have studied child psychology - the kind that I have referred to. And so, when we read in our sacred text,

"but he who loves him is diligent in disciplining him." There must be a valid reason

"He who spares the rod hates his son" * * *

for including such a statement in the Bible and for phrasing such a statement so forcably. "He who spares the rod hates his son." Why? Because if he loved his child he would not deny his child the learning and the training which the child needs for his own security in the present and for his protection in the future. "Everything that was created in the six days of Creation," say our sages, "requires additional fashioning." Everything that was created by God in the first days of creation requires additional fashioning * * * * (especially man.) Nothing is created perfect. No man is born perfect. Children are born into a society and must be trained. Painstakingly, firmly, lovingly, skillfully - trained - in the ways of integrating themselves in social life. Social life means that there are other people besides oneself to consider and in the home there are other people besides oneself there is father, there is mother - there is brother - there is sister - who must be considered quite as much as oneself! Social living means that there are other people who have rights which one cannot disregard with impunity and one will not be permitted in the future to disregard with impunity. Social living means that one must live and let live - one must give as well as take -- and one must make concessions and compromises for an all round good community life. Social living means that one must/live with disappointments and frustrations. Children are growing into a world where they are bound to encounter it sooner or later -- disappointments and frustrations -- and they must learn how to meet them - not become embittered, resentful and anti-social because Social life means that every human being in a society is held accountable for his actions. There is no escape for accountability. If a child is not not trained in a home -- in his initial world -- in his initial social life -- if he is not trained to observe these rules -- he will be unfit to live, later on, in a society, for society will not be as indulgent with him as his loving parents are. Society will hit back beat him down - and make him terribly unhappy. So that he who spares the rod of discipline (rod doesn't/mean always the barrel-stave) hates his son.

Parenthood is a trust in training which cannot be abdicated - cannot be turned over to the school or to the church or to the social worker or to the maid in the house or to the courts. This trust of parenthood, among other things, involves the responsibility of making the final decisions. Now a decision need not be peremptory. One should reason with children, of course — one should explain, persuade. But in the last analysis, your judgment must prevail. Because yours is the superior experience. Yours is the duty to help your child grow up and to transmit the standards of efficient group life to your child. Yours is the business to help your child grow into the wisdom of living. Children must learn controls. Controls are necessary in life. An engine without controls will run off its tracks and destroy itself and much else besides.

Now interestly enough, children welcome fair and consistent and reasonable control. Without it they really feal insecure. Just as children really understand the reason for punishment - if it is not unmeasured, unreasonable or excessive - especially if they know that there is also sure reward for right conduct and for cooperativeness in the home. And they will come to rely upon - to trust - the fairness and the understanding of their parents, even if momentarily they may resent the withdrawal of privileges, or any other form of reasonable punishment.

To be firm does not mean to be strict. Authority is not tyranny. But to say "no" whan a "no" is called for. Not to be a dictator. No parent need have a sense of guilt when he exercises or she exercises their authority in the home. In the freest democracy in the world authority is delegated to elected or to assigned individuals, appointed individuals, or to judges, who are duty-bound by their very election or selection to exercise authority — that's what they are put there for — to make decisions. Failing to make these decisions they fail in the offices to which they have been called.

The art of raising children is a difficult art. The rabbis spoke of

(the heartaches and pains which go

with raising children). Naturally. But because it is a difficult art it is an additional

challenge to parents to prepare themselves - educate themselves - for the proper exercise of that art. It is not an excuse for abdicating.

I am afraid that the reason why our juvenile courts are crowded today with unhappy and unfortunate children, boys and girls - not merely those who come from poor homes, or illiterate homes, but a good number of them coming from good homes - where they have had every opportunity and every comfort - is due in a large measure (not exclusively I realize, butin a large measure) to the fact that somewhere along the line parents failed them. Failed them not in giving them material things which they needed, but failed them in denying them the supreme evidences of love and devotion, namely a constant - benevolent - attentive - devoted - firm, discipline of love.

The authority of the home - the authority of parents in the home. These are the two facts which need great emphasis in our society today when so many homes are breaking up and so many children are being victimized.

Amen.

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Sunday Morning Service

10:30 o'clock

Sound Risks int

RABBI SILVER

RHS
ARCHIVE

Authority In The Home
What Is Wrong With Parents?

Friday Evening Services
5:30 to 6:10

Saturday Morning Services 11:15 to 12:00

Librarian MIRIAM LEIKIND

Organist and Choir Director A. R. WILLARD

Editor SOPHIA LEVINE

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SUNDAY MORNING SERVICE

Extending the November address on "Marriage and Divorce," Rabbi Silver will this Sunday discuss the subject "Authority in the Home-What is Wrong with Parents?"

A large congregation welcomed Governor McKeldin last Sunday morning and listened to his eloquent and inspiring address.

MUSIC FOR SUNDAY

Organ

Fantasia	Sjogrenn
Cantabile	Loret
Solitude	Lemare
Opening Psalm—I Was Glad	Moses
Bor'chu (Congregational)	Sulzer
Sh'ma - Boruch (Congregational)	Traditional
Mi Chomocho (Congregational)	Sulzer
Kedusha	Thatcher
Silent Devotion—May the Words The Quartette	Zilberts
Before the Address	Shallit

Shallit O Lord, Return (Psalm 6) Mrs. Strasser Goldstein

Olenu - Va-anachnu

NOTICE TO PARENTS

ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 18th, PARENTS ARE REQUESTED TO PICK UP THEIR CHILDREN AT THE CLASSROOM DOORS INSTEAD OF AT MAHLER HALL.

THE TEMPLE WILL BE HOST TO THE ANNUAL PEDAGOGIC CON-FERENCE AND MAHLER HALL WILL BE SET UP FOR THIS MEET-ING.

schools and probe the attitudes of our pupils toward their studies.

or the accompnion.

Rabbi Silver will deliver the Keynote Message and the three areas of the survey findings that will receive special consideration in a "buzz session" discussion are:

"What should the role of Hebrew be in the Jewish School?" Led by Mr. B. Levitan.

"How does the curriculum of the Jewish School relate to the life of the child?" Led by Mr. S. Vincent.

"Are we effectively imparting Jewish values through our teaching?" Led by Mr. S. Sugarman.

CONGRATULATIONS

Mr. Alfred A. Benesch, Honorary Member of The Board of Trustees of The Temple, was the recipient last week of The Charles Eisenman Award for 1955 for distinguished service rendered to the Community of Cleveland. The bestowal of this honor upon Mr. Benesch was enthusiastically praised in the public press of the city.

A Citation for Distinguished Leadership to Max Feldman for his contribution to the Combined Campaign for American Reformed Judaism was made last week by the heads of The Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the President of The Hebrew Union College-Iewish Institute of Religion. Mr. Feldman has been successful in enlisting the financial support of the Union and the College by many members of our Temple.

Temple Memorial Book

The name of SIMON CHAVINSON

has been lovingly inscribed in The Temple Memorial Book by his wife, Dora.

a period of many years will always be remembered.

JUNIOR HIGH **BOOK REVIEW CONTEST**

The winners of the Book Review Contest will read their reports this Saturday morning, December 17th, at 11:00 o'clock, in The Temple.

Many fine reviews were submitted out of which the following were selected as winners:

Pamela Silverman, 7A; Lois Tischkoff, 7A; Joan Schiffer, 8D; Betsy Gould, 9A and James Kendis, 9B.

Paul Schultz. President of the Student Council will introduce the winners and present the awards.

Temple Memorial Book

The names of LESLIE JOYCE HAAS and LINDA JOAN HAAS

have been lovingly inscribed in The Temple Memorial Book by their family and friends.

Temple Memorial Book

The name of JOSEPH ROSKOPH

has been lovingly inscribed in The Temple Memorial Book by his daughter, Mrs. S. S. Goldurs.

In Memoriam

The Temple notes with deep sorr the passing of

SAM H. MEISTER

and extends heartfelt sympat members of his bereaved