



The Family

In carrying out the Divine Institution of the Family, God provided a prescribed structure for the family. This structure included many things including authority, provision for the members of the family, education of the family, servants, etc., management of the household, the mother, the father, the firstborn, the spiritual life and training of the children, and guidelines for social relationships.

The structure was made to work by a system of delegated authority and responsibility, national continuity that we often call our culture, heritage, and social norms. The structure brought together all areas of life under one roof. The structure provided a lifestyle frame of reference, enabling the person to reach adulthood with a basic framework for life and service to God. It is not a coercing of volition for God to determine ends and means in your life. God has an order in which things and people are to function.

Old Testament Scripture Regarding The Father

In the Old Testament, the wife was regarded as the property of the husband. He could divorce her, but she could not divorce him. He was the absolute authority in the entire household. He could sell his children as slaves and had the power of life and death over them. Lev. 18:21, Lev. 20:2-5, 2 Kings 23:10.

"You shall not give any of your offspring to offer them to Molech, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD." (Leviticus 18:21, NASB)

"You shall also say to the sons of Israel: 'Any man from the sons of Israel or from the aliens sojourning in Israel who gives any of his offspring to Molech, shall surely be put to death; the people of the land shall stone him with stones. I will also set My face against that man and will cut him off from among his people, because he has given some of his offspring to Molech, so as to defile My sanctuary and to profane My holy name. If the people of the land, however, should ever disregard that man when he gives any of his offspring to Molech, so as not to put him to death, then I Myself will set My face against that man and against his family, and I will cut off from among their people both him and all those who play the harlot after him, by playing the harlot after Molech.'" (Leviticus 20:2-5, NASB)

"He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech." (2 Kings 23:10, NASB)

The father was the head of the religious functions of the household. He was responsible for training all in his household. He was to be respected at all times by the children. Ex. 20:12, Lev. 19:3.

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be prolonged in the land which the LORD your God gives you." (Exodus 20:12, NASB)

"Every one of you shall reverence his mother and his father, and you shall keep My sabbaths; I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:3, NASB)

The Hebrew word for father is אָב ('âb). The Greek word for father is πατήρ (pater) and means nourisher, protector, upholder, the generator or male ancestor. While the family lived, the father continued to be the representative of it. The property was held in his name and all was under his control. Deut. 21:18-21.

"If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them, then his father and mother shall seize him, and bring



him out to the elders of his city at the gateway of his hometown. "They shall say to the elders of his city, 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey us, he is a glutton and a drunkard.' "Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death; so you shall remove the evil from your midst, and all Israel will hear of it and fear." (Deuteronomy 21:18-21, NASB)

The blessing of the father incurred great favor, but his rebuke and refusal was a special injury to those on whom it fell. Gen. 9:25, Gen. 9:27, Gen. 27:27-40, Gen. 48:15, Gen. 49.

"So he said, "Cursed be Canaan; A servant of servants He shall be to his brothers." (Genesis 9:25, NASB)

"May God enlarge Japheth, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem; And let Canaan be his servant." (Genesis 9:27, NASB)

"He blessed Joseph, and said, "The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, The God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day," (Genesis 48:15, NASB)

He was responsible for the welfare of his descendants. 2 Kings 5:27.

"Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and to your descendants forever." So he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow." (2 Kings 5:27, NASB)

He was the instructor and guide of the family. Ex. 12:26, Deut. 6:20.

"And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?'" (Exodus 12:26, NASB)

"When your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What do the testimonies and the statutes and the judgments mean which the LORD our God commanded you?'" (Deuteronomy 6:20, NASB)

Rebellion to either parent was made a capital offense. Deut. 21:18.

"If any man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, and when they chastise him, he will not even listen to them," (Deuteronomy 21:18, NASB)

Old Testament Scripture Regarding The Mother

The mother in the Hebrew economy held the higher position in the family when compared to mothers of many other nations. Having children was a great plus in the Hebrew economy and children were considered a great heritage of the Lord.

If the man had more than one wife, the son would use the title of "mother" for just his real mother and thus distinguish her from the other wives. From Sanskrit, the mother was designated "to measure" the idea apparently meaning one who molds and manages. The term "mother" also means the one who produces. The term "mother" also was used to speak of the grandmother, or a female ancestor of an intimate relationship. 1 Kings 15:10, Gen. 3:20, Judges 5:7, Job 17:14.

"He reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom." (1 Kings 15:10, NASB)

"Now the man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all the living." (Genesis 3:20, NASB)

"The peasantry ceased, they ceased in Israel, Until I, Deborah, arose, Until I arose, a mother in Israel." (Judges 5:7, NASB)

"If I call to the pit, 'You are my father'; To the worm, 'my mother and my sister';" (Job 17:14, NASB)



Old Testament Scripture Regarding Children

All firstborn male of Israel and firstborn of animals belonged to Jehovah. Exodus 13:2; Exodus 13:15; Exodus 12:11-15.

"Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast; it belongs to Me." (Exodus 13:2, NASB)

"It came about, when Pharaoh was stubborn about letting us go, that the LORD killed every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of beast. Therefore, I sacrifice to the LORD the males, the first offspring of every womb, but every firstborn of my sons I redeem." (Exodus 13:15, NASB)

"For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am the LORD." (Exodus 12:12, NASB)

The firstborn son was the priest and head of the whole family. Num. 3:12-18; Num. 8:18.

"But I have taken the Levites instead of every firstborn among the sons of Israel." (Numbers 8:18, NASB)

"Now, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the sons of Israel instead of every firstborn, the first issue of the womb among the sons of Israel. So the Levites shall be Mine." (Numbers 3:12, NASB)

The birthright of the firstborn received a double portion of the family estate. Deut. 21. The firstborn son had the authority over those who were younger. The firstborn son had to provide food, clothing, and other necessities in his house for his mother until her death and his unmarried sisters until they were married. Gen. 35:22-23; 2 Chron. 21:3.

"It came about while Israel was dwelling in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine, and Israel heard of it. Now there were twelve sons of Jacob—the sons of Leah: Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, then Simeon and Levi and Judah and Issachar and Zebulun;" (Genesis 35:22-23, NASB)

"Their father gave them many gifts of silver, gold and precious things, with fortified cities in Judah, but he gave the kingdom to Jehoram because he was the firstborn." (2 Chronicles 21:3, NASB)

The birthright of the firstborn could be transferred to another son by the father in Genesis 25:31, but was later overruled in Deuteronomy 21:15-17.

"But Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." (Genesis 25:31, NASB)

"If a man has two wives, the one loved and the other unloved, and both the loved and the unloved have borne him sons, if the firstborn son belongs to the unloved, then it shall be in the day he wills what he has to his sons, he cannot make the son of the loved the firstborn before the son of the unloved, who is the firstborn. But he shall acknowledge the firstborn, the son of the unloved, by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the firstborn." (Deuteronomy 21:15-17, NASB)

Male children were especially desired. Gen. 15:2; Gen. 30:1; 1 Sam. 1:11; 1 Sam. 1:20.

"Abram said, "O Lord GOD, what will You give me, since I am childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" (Genesis 15:2, NASB)



"She made a vow and said, 'O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.'" (1 Samuel 1:11, NASB)

Male children were trained by their mothers to age five years. At age five, the boys were trained by the fathers or under tutors. Num. 11:12; Isaiah 49:23; 2 Kings 10:1; 2 Kings 10:5; Gal. 3:24.

"'Was it I who conceived all this people? Was it I who brought them forth, that You should say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom as a nurse carries a nursing infant, to the land which You swore to their fathers?'" (Numbers 11:12, NASB)

"'Kings will be your guardians, And their princesses your nurses. They will bow down to you with their faces to the earth And lick the dust of your feet; And you will know that I am the LORD; Those who hopefully wait for Me will not be put to shame.'" (Isaiah 49:23, NASB)

"And the one who was over the household, and he who was over the city, the elders, and the guardians of the children, sent word to Jehu, saying, 'We are your servants, all that you say to us we will do, we will not make any man king; do what is good in your sight.'" (2 Kings 10:5, NASB)

"Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24, NASB)

Sons were instructed in reading and writing, in the Law, commandments and doctrines, and deeds and revelations of God. Exodus 12:26; Exodus 13:8; Exodus 13:14; Deut. 4:10; Deut. 6:7, Deut. 11:19; Prov. 6:20.

"'And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?'" (Exodus 12:26, NASB)

"'And it shall be when your son asks you in time to come, saying, 'What is this?' then you shall say to him, 'With a powerful hand the LORD brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery.'" (Exodus 13:14, NASB)

"'Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when the LORD said to me, 'Assemble the people to Me, that I may let them hear My words so they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.'" (Deuteronomy 4:10, NASB)

"My son, observe the commandment of your father And do not forsake the teaching of your mother;" (Proverbs 6:20, NASB)

Daughters were under the instruction of the mother until married. Daughters were not desired as much as a male child. Daughters were provided for by the firstborn son in case of the father's death and even though the father may be alive. The daughters could be sold to be concubines and given in marriage by the father. The home was built around children. Gen. 16:2; Gen. 30:3.

"So Sarai said to Abram, 'Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.'" And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai." (Genesis 16:2, NASB)

"She said, 'Here is my maid Bilhah, go in to her that she may bear on my knees, that through her I too may have children.'" (Genesis 30:3, NASB)

Hebrew woman had a deep longing to bear children. Gen. 24:60; 1 Sam. 1:11.



"They blessed Rebekah and said to her, 'May you, our sister, Become thousands of ten thousands, And may your descendants possess The gate of those who hate them.'" (Genesis 24:60, NASB)

"She made a vow and said, 'O LORD of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head.'" (1 Samuel 1:11, NASB)

A large number of children was considered grace from God. Deut. 28:4; Psalms 113:9; Psalms 128:3; Prov. 17:6; Eccl. 6:3.

"Blessed shall be the offspring of your body and the produce of your ground and the offspring of your beasts, the increase of your herd and the young of your flock." (Deuteronomy 28:4, NASB)

"Grandchildren are the crown of old men, And the glory of sons is their fathers." (Proverbs 17:6, NASB)

Sterility in marriage was considered divine punishment. Gen. 16:2; Gen. 30:23.

"So Sarai said to Abram, 'Now behold, the LORD has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I will obtain children through her.' And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai." (Genesis 16:2, NASB)

"So she conceived and bore a son and said, 'God has taken away my reproach.'" (Genesis 30:23, NASB)

There was a definite connection between the birth of a child and sacrifices in the temple. 40 days after birth of a boy, the sacrifice had to be made. 80 days after the birth of a girl a sacrifice had to be made. The firstborn had to be presented to Jehovah with an offering and the weaning of a child was also often accompanied by a sacrifice. Lev. 12:1-8; Gen. 21:8.

"Speak to the sons of Israel, saying: 'When a woman gives birth and bears a male child, then she shall be unclean for seven days, as in the days of her menstruation she shall be unclean. 'On the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. 'Then she shall remain in the blood of her purification for thirty-three days; she shall not touch any consecrated thing, nor enter the sanctuary until the days of her purification are completed.'" (Leviticus 12:2-4, NASB)

"But if she bears a female child, then she shall be unclean for two weeks, as in her menstruation; and she shall remain in the blood of her purification for sixty-six days." (Leviticus 12:5, NASB)

"The child grew and was weaned, and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned." (Genesis 21:8, NASB)

Children were sometimes dedicated to God for special services. Judges 13:2-7.

"For behold, you shall conceive and give birth to a son, and no razor shall come upon his head, for the boy shall be a Nazirite to God from the womb; and he shall begin to deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines." (Judges 13:5, NASB)

Male descendants of Abraham were circumcised on the eighth day. Gen. 17:12.

"And every male among you who is eight days old shall be circumcised throughout your generations, a servant who is born in the house or who is bought with money from any foreigner, who is not of your descendants." (Genesis 17:12, NASB)



Education was primarily in the home and was the duty of the parents. Exodus 12:26-27; Deut. 6:7; Joshua 4:21-24; Col. 3:21.

"And when your children say to you, 'What does this rite mean to you?' you shall say, 'It is a Passover sacrifice to the LORD who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when He smote the Egyptians, but spared our homes.'" And the people bowed low and worshiped." (Exodus 12:26-27, NASB)

"You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." (Deuteronomy 6:7, NASB)

"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart." (Colossians 3:21, NASB)

Discipline was to be firm with corporal punishment. Prov. 22:15; Prov. 23:13; Prov. 29:15.

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him." (Proverbs 22:15, NASB)

"Do not hold back discipline from the child, Although you strike him with the rod, he will not die." (Proverbs 23:13, NASB)

"The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother." (Proverbs 29:15, NASB)

Jesus' love and concern for children was shown in Matthew 18:1-14 and in Matthew 19:13-15.

"Then some children were brought to Him so that He might lay His hands on them and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the children alone, and do not hinder them from coming to Me; for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.' After laying His hands on them, He departed from there." (Matthew 19:13-15, NASB)

Obedience and respect to parents was commanded. Eph. 6:1-3; 1 Tim. 3:4; 1 Tim. 3:12; Titus 1:6.

"He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity" (1 Timothy 3:4, NASB)

"namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion." (Titus 1:6, NASB)

If a child cursed their parents, they were under the divine curse and were to be put to death.

Drunkenness called for death by stoning. Deut. 27:16; Exodus 21:15-17.

"'Cursed is he who dishonors his father or mother.' And all the people shall say, 'Amen.'" (Deuteronomy 27:16, NASB)

"He who strikes his father or his mother shall surely be put to death. He who kidnaps a man, whether he sells him or he is found in his possession, shall surely be put to death. He who curses his father or his mother shall surely be put to death." (Exodus 21:15-17, NASB)

A newborn child had the cord cut, was washed with water, rubbed with salt and was wrapped in swaddling clothes. Ezek. 16:4.

"As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths." (Ezekiel 16:4, NASB)

Mothers were attended by midwives. The baby was attended and nursed by its mother as a rule. Gen.



35:17; Gen. 21:7.

"When she was in severe labor the midwife said to her, "Do not fear, for now you have another son.""
(Genesis 35:17, NASB)

"And she said, "Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age."" (Genesis 21:7, NASB)

Boy babies were circumcised on the eighth day. Weaning of the child occurred sometimes as late as two to three years of age. Gen. 21:4.

"Then Abraham circumcised his son Isaac when he was eight days old, as God had commanded him."
(Genesis 21:4, NASB)

The Relationship of Volition to Marriage and Family

One of the vital factors in a study of the Divine Institutions is to understand how the four work together in harmony. Therefore, one must understand how volition relates to marriage and to the family.

Volition including its expressions and restrictions must be determined on the basis of the context in which they occur. The structure within which volition appears will determine the true expression of volition in each situation.

What might be true of volition in one situation is not necessarily true of another. It is proper within certain frameworks to determine the ends and means to be acted upon by the volition of others. This is not coercing them. The husband in the marriage institution in carrying out his responsibilities as the head of the home, must make decisions which will determine certain ends and means in the marriage relationship, but this does not constitute a violation of the volition of the wife.

Within the framework of the family institution, the father or mother or both will determine the ends and the means often for the children, but this is not coercing of the volition of their children by this action. Volition operating properly in either the marriage institution or the family institution means the responsibility to choose the means and the ends which have been prescribed by duly authorized persons.

This principle is demonstrated by the many choices of God for the believer. The believer's prerogative is not omitted but the object of volition is already determined. They must exercise their volition with respect to certain determined means and ends.

In the family structure, each member had a vital role and function. It is important that within our homes we have concrete opportunity for meaningful function by each member of the family. The life of the Jewish family, or the Hebrews, centered around the worship of God and the daily concept was always there. The family unit under pressure often makes more progress than when prospering.

Love in the Jewish Dispensation

A highly disciplined family is more God's way than a blithering, wandering course. In all the isagogics regarding Old Testament times and places, very little is said about love. Love is demonstrated in a home by parents providing the basic elements of the family structure in terms of authority, provision, education, spiritual discernment, discipline, and social guidelines.

Even under the very tight and strict structure, previously described, love was always an unseen quality. Very little is mentioned about love when describing the structure for the family institution, but the narratives of life provide evidence of its presence. Gen. 22:2; Gen. 24:67.



"He said, 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.'" (Genesis 22:2, NASB)

"Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and he took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her; thus Isaac was comforted after his mother's death." (Genesis 24:67, NASB)

Love was not always expressed on an impartial basis. Gen. 25:28; Gen. 29:30; Gen. 37:3.

"Now Isaac loved Esau, because he had a taste for game, but Rebekah loved Jacob." (Genesis 25:28, NASB)

"So Jacob went in to Rachel also, and indeed he loved Rachel more than Leah, and he served with Laban for another seven years." (Genesis 29:30, NASB)

"Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his sons, because he was the son of his old age; and he made him a varicolored tunic." (Genesis 37:3, NASB)

There was also the presence of hatred and absence of love within families. Gen. 37:4.

"His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers; and so they hated him and could not speak to him on friendly terms." (Genesis 37:4, NASB)

Love was commanded of all people. Lev. 19:18; Lev. 19:34.

"You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:18, NASB)

"The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God." (Leviticus 19:34, NASB)

Love for God was commanded. Deut. 6:5.

"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." (Deuteronomy 6:5, NASB)

Discipline is an expression of love. Prov. 13:24.

"He who withholds his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him diligently." (Proverbs 13:24, NASB)

Love and joy in the marriage relationship go hand in hand. Eccl. 9:9.

"Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 9:9, NASB)

Love is expressed in obedience. Exodus 20:6; John 14:23.

"but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments." (Exodus 20:6, NASB)

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.'" (John 14:23, NASB)

Provision is an expression of love. Matt. 7:9-10.

"Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he



asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he?” (Matthew 7:9-10, NASB)

Love is to be the characteristic of friends, including family friends. Prov. 17:17.

“A friend loves at all times, And a brother is born for adversity.” (Proverbs 17:17, NASB)

All the statements of the Father’s love for the Son, indicate in the Scripture the necessity for love in the family relationship. Mothers are taught to love their children by the older ladies. Titus 2:4.

“so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,” (Titus 2:4, NASB)