

FAMILY - A TIME FOR LOVING

At this service honoring our teachers and The Contemporaries, our young couples ~~club. I would like to take a few minutes to talk about~~ marriage and family - a time for loving.

We are very tuned into the problems of stress in our lives and recently I read that one of the best antidotes to stress is a loving family. ^{Embrey}

But what about marriage today? ~~But~~ ^{What}'s happening to the ideal of "loving families and marriages today? With "sex" enthroned and exalted in our times, have love and marriage been rendered obsolete? A contemporary wit said, "The quickest way to destroy love is to get married." Is this true? Does marriage destroy love? What about open marriage, common-law marriage, trial marriage.

The news paper this morning carried some distressing news that the numer of unmarried couples is on the rise.. topping 2.3 million, including more than 700,000 unmarried couples who are raising children.... (More than 1.5 million couples of the same sex living together, including 92,000 with children) Among children under age 18 nearly one in four live with just one parent and there are 130 divorced Americans for every 1,000 still married and living with their spouse. With these statistics it does seem that all is not well our traditional marriages.

I am not ready to give up hope for our young people and their marriages. While divorce is still a major threat to our family life, I think in the 1980s we are still working off the problems of the 1970s. Do you remember the attitude of a decade ago. In those days we often heard a different kind of wedding vow... Let me remind you

of what went on:

Frequently the Gestalt prayer of Fritz Perl was part of the wedding ceremony, a prayer that went like this: "I do my thing and you do your thing. I am not in this world to live up to your expectations and you are not in this world to live up to mine. You are you and I am I, and if by chance we find each other, it is beautiful." Remember those weddings, by ^{the} ~~that~~ time in the ceremony the parents started to twitch nervously as they glance around at each other over their shoulders with looks of anger. Sometimes there were readings from Alan Ginsberg or Emma Goldman stating that the bride refused to be a servant to God, to the state, to society, to the husband and the family. and the young guests shouted, "Right on, sister, right on," And the parents just dropped dead. Later the family is resurrected to hear a glass broken in the hope the noise will drive away ^{and repressive noise} but it doesn't work as talk moved to rotten economic establishment and organized religion. ^{Scott South - Brave Clean & Perfect} And the family dropped dead again.

In the wedding ceremony of the 1970s the line "be thou consecrated, sacred to me" was often replaced by, "I shall be married to you, as long as I am able," or "As long as love endures," or "for as long as I dig it."

That legacy we are now living down and marriages have suffered the consequences.

But what about the family...the family is still alive but it isn't at all well. I believe the greatest enemy to the family is a word, PERMISSIVENESS. Isn't it true that many parents are actually afraid of their children and go along with almost everything, for fear of driving them away or losing them -- when they are already driven away or lost to the family? Isn't it true that FRUSTRATION AND FEAR ARE THE TWIN COMPONENTS OF MOST FAMILIES -- as we rationalize and say:

"MAYBE THEY'RE RIGHT AND WE'RE WRONG. ^{be} MAY THIS IS THE NEW WAY. WE JUST HAVE TO UNDERSTAND AND MODERNIZE OUR THINKING AND GO ALONG.'

Where is the Jewish role of father and Mother in all this? I keep hearing that the problem is that the parents aren't home enough.... But I think that evades the questio. Every survey hs shown that it's not the quantity of time you spend with your children, but the quality of time.

There were studies made at Yale and Stanford of the hatred of teenaged sons for their fathers. AND DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE PARADOX IS/ many of the youngsters, and particularly the disturbed youngsters, hate permissive paretns for being too permissive. They'll fight them. they'll argue with them. they'll resist them. Bht they want their parents to take a stand and say: NO. They want to feel that their parents believe in somehting and are willing to sacrifice for something. They want their parents to establish rules - fair and flexible -- but rules. They feel insecure and unloved with overly permissive parents.

A Dr. Blum of Stanford University, who has made a study of this for some 12 years, can predict with uncanny and almost unerring accuracy which children will be inclined toward drug addiction. His criterion? THE PERMISSIVENESS OF THE PARENTS. The more permissive the parents, the more inclined the children will be to drug usage or addiction. Does this say anything to us?

I think its distrubing. but I can tellyou what disrubes and frightens me even more. It's a statement by Dr. Minot Savage, a contemporary psychologist, who asked: "WHAT IS THE GEARTSEST GIFTY OF ALL THAT WE CAN GIVE TO OUR CHILDREN/' It is this: "GIVE THEM FIRST AND BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, TO CARRY WITH THEM THEIR WHOLE LIVES, THE MEMORY OF A HAPPY HOME." Does this shake anybody? It shakes me. The

awesome responsibility of knowing that you and I can shape the destiny of our children by the kind of home we have and by the kind of relationship that obtains between a husband and wife. How much happiness can there be in a home without a husband and wife loving each other and showing a little bit of that love?

OH, WE HAVE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT SEX. WE'RE BECOMING A NATION OF SEX MECHANICS. HOW MUCH ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT LOVE AND HOLINESS OF THE FAMILY AND THE SANCTITY OF THE HOME?

WITH ALL THAT'S HAPPENING ALL AROUND US, WHAT DO WE DO, AND WHERE DO WE START/ Let's start with the understanding that we are Jews, and that from the time of Abraham and Moses Jews do not conform, convert or collapse when the predominant culture goes pagan and places priority on sex without love.

CAN'T WE BELIEVE THAT WE ^{for} HAVE SOMETHING WE NEED -- THAT THE WORLD NEEDS/ CAN'T WE BELIEVE THAT A CULTURE MAY BE WRONG AND THAT OUR JUDAISM IS RIGHT, AND HAS STOOD THE TEST OF 4,000 YEARS? THAT PERHAPS WE HAVE SOMETHING FOR WHICH PEOPLE ARE HUNGERING AND YEARNING -- A ROMANTIC, SACRED CONCEPT OF MARRIED LOVE AND THE HOLINESS OF THE HOME AND FAMILY WITH OBLIGATIONS, WITH COMMITMENT?

In Judaism, MARRIAGE IS CALLED "KEDUSHIN." THERE'S NO HEBREW WORD FOR MARRIAGE. "KEDUSHIN" MEANS HOLINESS AND HOLINESS MEANS WHOLENESS, FULFILLMENT, COMPLETION. THE EXPRESSION USED ABOUT THE FAMILY HAS ALWAYS BEEN "TAHARAT MISHPACHA," THE PURITY OF THE FAMILY. AND HOME IS CALLED A "MIKDOSH MA'AT," A LITTLE SANCTUARY, JUST AS SACRED AS ANY SYNAGOGUE BECAUSE GOD IS THERE AND LOVE IS THERE. ^{vs} YOU don't need learned scholars and research teams to tell us that we'd have a better society and a better world and better life if we returned to these and regarded married love and family as sacred.

Let me give you just a couple of examples of this thought from

Jewish tradition:

When Moses came down from Mt. Sinai was it right for him to smash the tables of law, no matter how great the provocation or ~~how~~ intense his anger? What do the sages say?"

When Moses came down from the mountain top with the tables of law in his hands and he saw the children of Israel repudiating each one of the commandments, the letter flew away and all that he had left was stone - - cold, heavy --- and they dropped from his hands and splintered into fragments and the sages say: WHEN THE SPIRIT OF LOVE, WHEN THE SPIRIT OF HOLINESS LEAVES A HOME, IT IS A HOUSE -- A HOUSE OF STONE OR WOOD - - BUT NO LONGER A LITTLE SANCTUARY BECAUSE THE SPIRIT OF GOD ISN'T THERE ANY MORE. THE SPIRIT OF LOVE ISN'T THERE ANY MORE.

And then there are the words from the Prophet Hosea... "I WILL BETROTH THEM UNTO ME FOREVER. No instant marriage. I WILL BETROTH THEE UNTO ME FOREVER. NOT AS LONG AS I DIG IT.

There is also in our tradition constant reference to forgiveness and compassion - yet:

There is nobody more severe, and at times more lacking in compassion than most husband for wives and wives for husbands. Where does the compassion go? For strangers? Yes. For those who are nearest and dearest to us? Too often not all that much.

How often are we responsible for that what happens to our love? ~~So~~ we blame our mates. How often are we responsible for the attitudes of our husbands and wives, and yet we ~~shout~~^{shout} and threaten and blame. AS GOD IS COMPASSIONATE, YOU MUST BE COMPASSIONATE UNTO THOSE YOU LOVE AND WHO LOVE YOU. When was the last time you said to your husband or wife: "You're wonderful!" when was the last time you said to your wife or husband: "I need you. And my work doesn't mean much without you. I need you." When was the last time you said it?

The Jewish believe has it that we don't need open marriage to tell us that we have to respect differences. | Because our sages taught us that once man and woman were joined together very much as Siamese twins and they were litterly one. And they incured the anger of God and He sent down an angel with a sword and he cuth them apart and scattered them though time and space, saying: "Whenever you find our mate, ~~h~~you shall become one again: one flesh, one soul, one being." to which a learned sage answerred: "WHEN ~~NYOU~~ ARE MARRIED, YOU ARE ONE AND STILL TWO. You harmonize ~~Your~~ differences into a glorious symphony of love. This is our belief. | ~~We find God throuh married love.~~

There's the holieness of the family. That's why ^{in truth} they hated idolatry, sybolizing fertility rites, becaue there is no meaningful sex without love, and there is no meaningful relationship without commitment and dedication one to the other.

I think you know that if you ever take a moment to think what is the most important thing in your life, and you think for a moment --- Will it be money? Will it be success? Will it be power? Will it be property? Will it be fame? --without love, ashes. Nothing - Gornish.... Two people who love each other, preventing each other from being hurt, watching over each ~~ok~~ other, walking hand in hand together --with love can take anything. Without love, we can take nothing.

Of course we love our children. We would give them presents and education, everything. If the greatest ^{gift} is the memory of a happy home and we can only do this, give this present to them, ^{where} *we can only give them a happy home* there's love.

That's why I believe that lvoe is a meaningless word if it's a noun. Love love, love. Sweetness and saccharine mush. "TO LOVE" IS MORE DIFFICULT AND IS THE MOST SACRED THING IN LIFE. That is why this

sermon on the Jewish family - has to be about, a time for loving.
Before you leave this sanctuary tonight, take a minute to assess our
priorities --what is really meaningful and sacred in our life.
Hopefully that assessment will take you home to those who will out
live and last anything that you do and accomplish in life - your
family.

Shabbat Shalom

*Love
& Commitment*

Amber Ago 1988

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