

December 13-19, 2021

The Family: A Proclamation to the World

“A FAMILY IS CENTRAL TO THE CREATORS PLAN”

Summary: *“The Family: A Proclamation to the World” is a nine-paragraph declaration issued by the leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This doctrinal statement teaches of the divine role of the family in God’s eternal plan. It explains the importance of strong marriages and families and elaborates on how best to strengthen them. The family proclamation is full of inspired answers to society’s problems and is a firm anchor for individuals and families in a world of shifting values. While it is a statement of the doctrine for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the values of home and family improvement contained in this proclamation are shared by people all over the world and of many different faiths. This proclamation was read by President Gordon B. Hinckley as part of his message at the General Relief Society Meeting held September 23, 1995, in Salt Lake City, Utah.*

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

What is the relationship of family to ‘older and newer’ Children of Israel?

It is clear to see the close relationships Jews and members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have in their families. Even with most theological differences, the family relationship remains. Family is one of Joseph and Judah’s strongest similarities. “The Bible appears to be more concerned with social and family relations than with individual ones, and thus puts more emphasis on being a good neighbor than it does on friendship. The Bible also warns against false friendship, saying that people might be attracted to a person solely because of his wealth, and not out of motives of respect. “Balaam’s eyes opened . . . , he stood on a lofty summit overlooking the camp of the People of Israel in the plain below . . . Balaam blessed the nation, predicting its victory over Edom and Moab . . . Balaam, seeing Israel’s tents arranged in such a way that each family was assured of its privacy, praised the nation he had come to curse, with the words: ‘How goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, thy dwelling places, O Israel!’” **(Numbers 24:5) (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)**

What are some of the weekly family ‘ceremonies’ in a Jewish family?

Let’s take a look at Jewish culture as it applies to family, family leadership, children and their responsibilities and reverence for each other. One of the most consistent rituals includes, at the Sabbath’s beginning, a weekly pouring of a bit of ‘kosher wine,’ juice (or ‘living’ water’ if the others are not available), by the eldest male in the family. He will say a blessing, take a sip of the wine (*Kiddush*) and then each family member partakes thereafter. Another part of the Sabbath’s beginning is to bless a piece of broken bread. Again, the eldest male partakes first and the rest of the family partakes thereafter (*Motzi*). “Responsibilities of a man, a woman and of children are stated in the scriptures, Talmudic and oral traditions. In many religious Jewish families, the father blesses his wife and children on a weekly basis. Women and children are to be cherished and blessed. They have different responsibilities, yet they should share an honorable status without preference.” **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** Yet, as Judaism spread, and without the guidance of living prophets, some discrimination began to creep in.

How does family reflect our relationship with God?

Jeremiah used the favorite image of an even earlier prophet, Hosea, comparing the relationship between God and Israel to that of husband and wife. Israel, in not keeping

its responsibilities, deserted the true faith and had become like an unfaithful wife. Both husband and wife have a commitment to each other that should be like God's and Israel's dedication to one another. "Lo, children are a heritage of the Lord; the fruit of the womb is a reward' (**Psalm 127:3**). In Jewish tradition, the central purpose of marriage is to have children. Children are considered a great blessing; they are the hope and the promise of continuing life." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What is the woman's role in a Jewish family?

The strong Jewish tradition about women places them on a lofty pedestal. "The woman's legal status, as defined in the Bible, is generally the same as that of man, as is her moral responsibility but certain laws do discriminate both for and against her. For example, special attention was paid to injury suffered by a pregnant woman, and the conditions applicable to a woman sold into slavery were far better than those of a male slave. The owner was expected to marry her himself or have one of his sons marry her and he had to treat her as a daughter-in-law." "It is said that a man without a wife lives without joy, blessing and good, and that a man should love his wife as himself and respect her more than himself. Women have greater faith than men and greater powers of discernment. The Torah, the greatest joy of the rabbis, is frequently pictured as a woman and is represented as God's daughter and Israel's bride." "Woman (Eve) was created primarily to serve man (Adam) as a helper, and throughout the Bible she is expected to be a good wife and mother. But in ages when many cultures regarded their women as mere chattels, the Jews did not disregard the girl's wishes when a marriage arrangement was made. Womanly traits, good and bad, were proverbial in the Bible. Foolishness, contentiousness, and indiscretion were

censured. On the other hand, graciousness, industry, and generosity were lauded, particularly in the paean of praise to the woman in Proverbs, whose beginning is usually translated as "A woman of valor who shall find, and her worth is far above pearls." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What secular and religious rights and responsibilities do women have in Israel, nowadays?

"In modern Israel, the Declaration of Independence ensures complete equality of political and social rights to all its inhabitants, regardless of religion, race, or sex, but the real Magna Carta of the Israeli woman was the Women's Equal Rights Law of 1951, giving women equal legal status with men. The only field of law in which there remains a degree of discrimination against women is that of personal status. Matters of marriage and divorce come within the exclusive jurisdiction of the religious courts and thus, for example, a divorce must be given by the husband to the wife. On the other hand, in accordance with the *halakhah* (Jewish law), children take the national identity of their mother and not that of their father." "The *Talmud* teaches that it is a woman's duty to beautify herself so as to appear pleasing to her husband. The rabbis said: 'A woman beautifies herself by powdering herself, by parting her hair and leaving it loose over her shoulders, and by applying rouge to her face.' Said Rav Huna: 'Only the young ones do so, but not the old ones.' Said Rav Hisda to him: 'Even your mother does so, even your grandmother does so, and even a woman on the verge of the grave.' Though the *talmudic* attitude toward the use of cosmetics is basically favorable, it is combined with warnings against its utilization for immoral purposes. Furthermore, cosmetics were not permitted during periods of mourning." (**Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.**)

What secular and religious rights and responsibilities do men have in Israel, nowadays?

Jewish tradition places a strong responsibility on the husband and father. Further details of Jewish custom in the family parallel the members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' lifestyle. "The father's duty is to provide for his children, to give them a proper education, to teach them a trade, and to prepare them for marriage. Some authorities require that the father teach his son to swim. The father is morally accountable for the behavior and the sins of his children until they reach the age of their own responsibility—*bat mitzvah* at the age of 12 for girls, and *bar mitzvah* at the age of 13 for boys. The father retains responsibility in legal matters for his son until the age of 20 and for his daughter until she marries." "Great emphasis is placed on the importance of education and religious training, which should begin early in the home. The mother's role is vital since she is the one who creates the home atmosphere in which basic values are fostered and transmitted. She trains her sons and daughters in *mitzvot* (blessings / commandments) and prepares them for formal education. The rabbis advised parents to be loving but firm in the upbringing of their children and warned against showing favoritism." "In some communities it is customary for the father to bless his children on the Sabbath eve when he returns from the synagogue."

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Two millennia ago, the Apostles reiterated, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." **(Ephesians 6:4)**

What secular and religious rights and responsibilities do children have in the House of Israel?

"Children are obliged to treat their parents with honor and respect. Children must

provide dependent parents with food, clothing, and personal attention if it is necessary. This obligation is removed from a daughter when she marries. "Judaism considers the establishment of a family a holy task. Children are a gift from God and childlessness the greatest misfortune that could befall a marriage. The virtues of domestic bliss have been frequently extolled by the rabbis, and the close-knit Jewish family, where the home has been the center of religious practice and ceremony, has greatly helped the survival of Judaism and preserved the moral integrity of the Jews." **(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)** Although there are many variances in Jewish religious interpretations and worship expressions, the family is always the central holding point. The sanctity of family is why Jews—even unobservant—always want to remain Jews. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints share that perspective. Even to His children that wander away from the path leading to salvation, He is still "Father" in Heaven. As the children start their own family, the parents are "removed" from their former role yet still maintain a spiritual influence through their previous teaching and subsequent prayers and spiritual influence on their children. The unity of the family can still be imaged as "fitly framed."

(Ephesians 2:21) As with any home, protection from unwarranted outside influence is necessary. Security systems or defensive armor are part of the proper stewardship of the family's leaders. Sustaining the Lord as the Chief Cornerstone and following His instructions to defend ourselves with His words in these latter days we can protect our families inside or outside of the home. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." **(Exodus 20:12) (Ephesians 6:1-3)**