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THE ROLE OF PARENTAL AFFECTION IN BIBLICAL RELIGION

by

Judea E. Miller

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the
Master of Hebrew Letters Degree
and Ordination.

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Referee:
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A DIGEST

In this thesis we have attempted a review of the role of God as father in the Bible. We have shown that this designation of "father" could be understood only in the context of the varied roles of "father" in biblical society. Therefore, we have presented descriptions of the familial relationships in the Bible in both the human and the divine spheres and have attempted to show where they illuminate one another.

Moreover, we have shown that basic to the parent-child relationships was a consciousness of mutual affection and responsibility; and that just as the relationships between a parent and a child were personal and intimate, so too were so many of the "encounters" in the Bible between the worshipper and his deity. Aspects of the fatherhood of God in the Bible may be described as sternly punitive and authoritarian. On the other hand, aspects of it may be described as showing tender affection, and profound love and compassion. In general, the deity was presented in the Bible as a real personality, who could not only love and hate, but who seemed to display all the complexity of emotions and ambivalence that only a "living" being could feel. He was described as the "living God" and, as such, could become involved with his children in ways that would normally defy neat theological formulae. Hence we have shown that the biblical concept of the

fatherhood of God was far more complex than it is commonly believed to be.

In addition, we have shown that there were apparently two somewhat different interpretations of the fatherhood of God in the Bible. One view, which undoubtedly had acquired wide popular appeal especially in pre-exilic times, was that the deity was an actual progenitor of his people. But alongside of this was a tradition of the "adoption" of Israel by its deity. This latter interpretation gave a new emphasis to the concept of the "covenant", which made moral demands upon the nation. And it was from this latter view that there eventually developed a more universal interpretation of the Fatherhood of God.

DEDICATED

to

ALMA

"Her children rise up, and call her blessed;
Her husband also, and he praiseth her."

CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1.
II.	A RELIGIOUS MOTIF	4.
III.	THE BIBLICAL FATHER	9.
IV.	A MODEL FOR PATERNITY	37.
V.	FATHER TO A KING	42.
VI.	A FOSTER FATHER	55.
VII.	THE DEUTEROCANONIC FATHER	81.
VIII.	PARENTAL LOVE	97.
IX.	FATHER TO THE OPPRESSED	101.
X.	TOWARD A MORE UNIVERSAL FATHERHOOD	104.
XI.	CONCLUSION	109.
XII.	BIBLIOGRAPHY	122.

(Rabbi Akiba) used to say.... Beloved are Israel for they were called the children of God. Still greater was the love in that it was made known to them that they were called children of God, as it is written, Ye are the children of the Lord your God....

Abboth 3:15.

I. INTRODUCTION

For the modern religionist the deepest interest of the Bible lies in its ideas. Perhaps the surest way to understand these ideas is through the study of them in their genesis and growth. One of the most striking ideas presented in biblical literature, and one that has pervaded religious thought and imagination up to the present time, has been the concept of the Fatherhood of God. The purpose of this thesis is to review the role of parental affection in biblical religion and, more specifically, to trace the conception of the parent-child relationship that was thought to exist between the deity and the worshipper.

This study does not purport to be an analysis of the deity or the "Fatherhood of God" as objective phenomena, but it is rather an examination of the idea or the conception of the "Fatherhood of God" as it was expressed in our biblical sources. The many different conceptions of God found in the various parts of the Bible make it almost impossible to characterize any one of them as the biblical idea of God. It is quite possible, as the Prophet Malachi states, that "the Lord does not change" (Malachi 3:6). But it is certainly true that the human understanding of Him has always changed whenever people have thought seriously concerning God and His

relations with humanity.¹

A view expressed among some theologians, as well as among some modern students of psychology, is that the figure of God as presented in the Old Testament is one of an authoritarian, stern, and punitive father-figure who demands absolute and unconditional obedience from his worshippers -- and that the attributes of love and mercy and forgiveness are generally absent from the Old Testament conceptions of the deity.²

¹ Charles Petterson has pointed out that "...a knowledge of the physical and social environment in which the ancient Hebrews lived is, by itself,...(an insufficient) explanation for all the ideas which they held. It is quite possible that what one believes to be true has been derived from more than one source. Some of it may have come to his mind directly from a supreme or divine being and at the same time other elements may have been supplied from his own experience. That respect is no reason for saying that no part of them came from God. Divine inspiration does not imply infallibility on the part of the one who receives it and who attempts to communicate its meaning to others. The doctrine of an infallible book is based on the idea that human understanding of truth is perfect, no less from the source from which it has been derived. It is this assumption which is here called in question." Charles H. Patterson, The Philosophy of the Old Testament, p.506.

A somewhat similar view may be found in Martin Buber's "Reply to C.G. Jung" where Buber points out that although a student of psychology may demonstrate the psychic origins of a belief in God, this nevertheless proves nothing about God as a superpsychic reality. Martin Buber, Eclipse of God, pp.171-6.

² Sigmund Freud, Moses and Monotheism, pp.79,172.

Bruno Bettelheim, Symbolic Wounds, pp.77,128-9.

G.T. Bettany, Judaism and Christianity, p.152.

However, in this thesis we shall attempt to demonstrate that the parent figure of the deity that is pictured in Old Testament literature is actually far more complicated than the authoritarian father painted by these theologians and psychologists; that in addition to the threatening, jealous, authoritarian father who granted his love and protection and care only on the condition that he be absolutely obeyed -- was portrayed a loving, merciful and forgiving parent-figure whose love was generously bestowed upon his people unconditionally; that Jahwe too was the nourisher and the comforter of his people, possessing even some elements of an all-loving mother figure.

II. A Religious Motif

Clarence Beckwith has observed that "the origin, including the development, of the idea of God is to be sought in the historical conditions through which the different races of men have passed."¹ According to him, the God "idea" is a dynamic concept that varies with the conditions and experiences of a people. "Accordingly, different peoples in different ages and countries, and the same people in different times and conditions, develop different ideas of God."² That this is true, few can deny. For the Bible, rather than emerging full blown from the head of Moses,³ is a varied literature that represents the product of more than a thousand years of history; a millennium of religious evolution and development that gradually emerged out of the debris of old myths and discarded hopes and changing insights, sometimes progressing toward an ever-deeper and more profound awareness of God, other times not. As such it is difficult to talk of "the biblical religion" as if it were an organic system of belief, a clear-cut and specific world-view which one could readily describe. Biblical religion,

¹ Clarence Beckwith, The Idea of God, p.16.

² Ibid., p.17.

³ A.B. Davidson writes that "...the Bible is a book composed of many parts, the composition of which extended over considerably more than a thousand years."
A.B. Davidson, The Theology of the Old Testament, p.1.

as any world-view, was never static. It was in constant flux and growth and change, just as authentic life is in constant flux and change. But even in this vibrant dynamism which we call biblical religion, there, nevertheless, may be discerned certain major strains or tendencies that seemed to manifest themselves almost as motifs running throughout our examples of biblical literature. Naturally, these motifs manifested themselves in different ways and under different conditions and, most significant, they apparently reflected different stages of cultural development. One such religious motif that seemed to appear and reappear time and again in biblical literature is that of the deity being conceived in a personal, kinship sort of relationship with his people. This conception most often was expressed in terms of a father-son type relationship.

To illustrate this, listed below are examples of instances in biblical writings where the noun "father" signifies a deity. These examples were chosen because in each case the deity is specifically designated as "father" and there can be little doubt from the wording in these passages that the word "father" is used merely as a simile or metaphor.

- 1) Deuteronomy 32:6: Do you thus requite the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?

Your quotations are from what English version? Add reference

- 2) II Samuel 7:14: I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men.
- 3) Isaiah 63:16: For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from of old is thy name.
- 4) Isaiah 64:7: Yet, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou art our potter; we are the work of thy hand.
- 5) Jeremiah 2:27: ...who say to a tree, "You are my father," and to a stone, "You gave me birth." For they have turned their back to me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, "Arise and save us!"
- 6) Jeremiah 3:4: Have you not just called to me,⁴ "My father, thou art the friend of my youth."
- 7) Jeremiah 3:19: I thought how I would set you among my sons, and give you a pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful of all nations. And I thought you would call me "My father," and would not turn from following me.
- 8) Jeremiah 31:9: With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back, I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.

⁴ Dr. Sheldon Blank suggests that Jeremiah 3:4 may be out of place in chapter 3. He observes that:
 "This verse comes too soon and without any transition. With 5a it interrupts between the related verses 3 and 5b. V.4 occurs again in a more acceptable form and position as v.19b. There it is suitably introduced by וְנִפְלֵא and the awkwardness of the perfect אֶתְּרֶךָ after וְיִשְׂרָאֵל does not occur."
 Hence Dr. Blank suggests that we omit verse 4.
 Sheldon Blank, Introduction and Critical Notes to the Hebrew Text of Jeremiah, p.11.

- 9) Malachi 1:6: A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I am a father, where is my honor? And if I am a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of hosts to you, O priests, who despise my name....
- 10) Malachi 2:10: Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?
- 11) Psalms 68:6: Father of the fatherless and protector of widows is God in his holy habitation.
- 12) Psalms 89:27: He shall cry to me, "Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation."

From the above twelve instances in the Bible of a deity being designated specifically as "father" we may discern indications of a religious motif in the Bible which apparently conceived of the deity as sort of an idealized father. But the full significance of this motif to biblical religion cannot be appreciated unless we understand what the biblical authors actually meant by the designation "father". To do this it is necessary to examine the context in which the biblical writers lived and from which they wrote. What did it signify to the worshipper when he called his deity "father"? What general associations and emotional colorations were conjured up when he prayed to his deity whom he called "father". Although "father" can mean certain things in our time and in our society, our object is to discover, if at all possible, what God as father meant to the biblical mind, and to examine what God as father would have meant in the context of biblical society. To do this, we shall turn now to a review of what "father" meant in the context of the familial life that is

described in the Bible. Then we shall see how these parent figures illustrate the role of the deity as a father to his people.

III. The Biblical Father

The preserved literature and traditions of ancient Israel were only those which were selected and passed on to us by editors of post-exilic generations who inevitably, in their selection, projected their own conceptions and standards and theologies and points of view into the traditions which they, in turn, handed on.¹ They, so to speak, "worked over" the ancient myths and lore that they had received and present us with a literature that has been more or less purged of its most overt heathen aspects. Of course, in the prophetic books, as well as in some of the Pentateuchal legislation, we find numerous allusions to pagan practices and beliefs held among the ancient Israelites. But these are presented mainly from the perspective of their unsympathetic critics and

¹ Stanley A. Cook writes as follows concerning the difficulties involved in discerning the folk-beliefs of Israelite society:

"Considering the monotheistic ideals of the prophets and teachers in Israel, the incessant war against heathenism, and the redaction that the books of the Old Testament have undergone, it is not to be expected that survivals should be numerous. It is to the people not to the prophets, to the lore and not to the literature, that we must look for further evidence. 'Neglected by sacred poets, it will linger among the superstitions of the rustics.'"

Stanley A. Cook, "Israel and Totemism," Jewish Quarterly Review, 1902, p. 430.

reformers. Therefore, any views we may have in the Bible of the earliest Israelite practices and beliefs present the difficulty of having been distorted by these prophetic critics and later editors. To attempt to discern vestiges of heathen or early Israelite folk practices and beliefs in our biblical sources, as we now have them, is fraught with the possibility of the error that too much be read into too little.

Therefore, in this thesis we shall not attempt to pierce glibly the thick wall of ignorance that separates us from early Israelite folk-society by using the tools of comparative ethnology. For basic to the voluminous work of scholars like W. Robertson Smith or James Frazer is the implicit assumption that all societies and civilizations undergo an evolution that is more or less pre-determined.² Hence we can discover our past by examining our more "primitive" contemporaries. However, this assumption is almost nowhere certain. For example, to look for an explanation of the biblical dietary regulations in the totem beliefs and practices of aborigines in

² For example, concerning the belief held by these scholars that all cultures passed through a stage of totemism George Aaron Barton writes that "It now seems... that the theory that all peoples have at one time passed through a totemistic stage is incapable of proof."
George Aaron Barton, Semitic and Hamitic Origins, p.96.

Australia, is to employ a methodology the accuracy of which leaves much to be proved and whose validity has yet to be demonstrated.

Recognizing that we are dealing with a composite literature that has been edited according to later points of view; and also that the "beginning" of the Bible may not be its oldest part -- we shall nevertheless undertake a survey of the biblical family as it is described for us in those biblical sources that are extant. Hence our examples and illustrations of the biblical family, and later of the fatherhood of God, will not be presented in any necessarily accurate chronological order. We shall merely undertake to survey the various biblical views of the father-son relationship as they are presented in our biblical sources, recognizing that our examples need not be contemporaneous with one another.

Although some scholars point to evidences of there having been a matrilinear descent system, or even a type of primitive matriarchate, in the earliest stages of biblical history³ -- our biblical sources as preserved for us present a patriarchal

³ W. Robertson Smith, Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia, p.178.

view of the biblical family. According to David Jacobson:

... the overwhelming evidence favors father-right in the Old Testament. Descent was traced through the father; ḥwā is the term for husband. To such an extent did the Semite regard the patriarchal family as the norm of social organization that he thought of all mankind under this form. For him every nation was a family that had increased and multiplied and traced its descent from a single father, to whom the name of the people which he was supposed to have begotten was usually ascribed. Each of the tribes was composed of the descendants of one of the sons of the eponymous ancestor of the nation.⁴

The biblical family was apparently patriarchal in character and organization. The father was the head of his family and was the supreme authority within the family. Isaac Mendelsohn has described the biblical father in this way:

Like the king who rules over his realm, so does the pater familias dominate his household. He is, as the West Semites called him, the baal ('owner') of his wives and children.⁵

In Genesis 3:16: Eve is admonished by God that "...your desire shall be for your husband and he shall rule over you." The biblical father too was the figure of authority for the

⁴ David Jacobson, The Social Background of the Old Testament, pp. 23-4.

⁵ Isaac Mendelsohn, "the Family in the Ancient Near East", The Biblical Archaeologist, Vol. XI, 1948, p. 24.

child.⁶ Being the authority within the family, there was a degree of obedience that the father could demand from his children as the following paragraphs will suggest. Apparently he could inflict severe punishment upon them, should they fail to display proper obedience and respect. It was specifically a duty and responsibility of the father to discipline his children in order that they be guided toward accepted standards of behavior. Proper character training, the responsibility of the biblical family, was thought to require

⁶ In a polygamous family, it would seem that the mother would be generally closer to the child than the father, who might have several wives, each with her own children. Hence one might expect to find love and tenderness expressed more overtly in the specific mother-child relationships, with the patriarchal father appearing mainly as the leader and the authority in the family. We may perhaps observe hints of this in the relationship of Sarah to Isaac, Hagar to Ishmael, and Leah and Rachel each to her own children (see Genesis 30:14-15). In Isaiah we find this tender mother-child relationship enunciated most explicitly. Jerusalem is described as the consoling mother of her children.

That you may suck and be satisfied with her consoling breasts; that you may drink deeply with delight from the abundance of her glory...and you shall suck, you shall be carried upon her hip and dandled upon her knees. As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you: you shall be comforted in Jerusalem. (Isaiah 66:11-13)

Jeremiah also presents a touching image of Rachel weeping for her children.

A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping, for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are not. (Jeremiah 31:15).

discipline and consistent ethical guidance. "Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid," is the advice given in Proverbs 12:1. In fact, Eli the priest was bitterly chastised for not exercising his parental authority to restrain and to discipline his own greedy and profligate sons.⁷

But the child evidently did not ideally receive punishment at the arbitrary will and whim of the father, but rather as a consequence of a misdeed. Hence the father would come to be regarded as the judge who would reward or punish his children as a consequence of the child's own deeds or misdeeds. It is almost as a judge passing sentence that Jacob foretells what will befall each of his sons.⁸ "...their father spoke unto them and blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them." (Genesis 49:28), in this manner rewarding or punishing them for their deeds and misdeeds. In this way the father-son relationship assumed an aspect which might be termed ethical. The son had certain duties and responsibilities toward his father, especially in the matter of obedience to the commands of the father. But should these commands be violated,

⁷ I Samuel 3:13.

⁸ Genesis 49:1-27.
See also Noah's blessings and curse to his sons in Genesis 9:25-27.

then it could be taken as a sign of disobedience and disrespect. For this, the son would be punished.

Among the varied legislation in the Pentateuch may be found numerous references to the authority possessed by a father over his children,⁹ as well as the duties and obligations that children had to their parents, especially in attitudes of respect and deference. In Genesis 38:24, is an instance of a father, Judah, sentencing his daughter-in-law, Tamar, to death. In general, the position of the child was one of complete subordination to patriarchal authority.¹⁰

In fact, during the period of the Judges, and during other periods as well, the father possessed the right to sacrifice his child; this is an indication that the biblical father had certain powers of life and death over his children. This may be illustrated in Genesis 22 and in Judges 11:34-40. But it is interesting that in both these examples, the fathers,

⁹ For example, we learn in Exodus 21:7 that the father even had the right to sell his daughter into slavery.

¹⁰ W. Robertson Smith comments that "In ancient society the attitude of the son to the father, especially that of the adult son employed in his father's business, has a certain element of servitude. The son honours his father as the servant does his master. Even now among the Arabs the grown-up son and the slave of the house do much the same menial services, and feel much the same measure of constraint in the presence of the head of the house."
W. Robertson Smith, The Prophets of Israel, p.170.
See Malachi 1:6 and 3:17 for possible evidence of this type of servile relationship of a son to a father.

Abraham and Jephthah, loved their children dearly and did not relish the thought of sacrificing them. In both of these cases the father was placed in a tragic predicament in which he was forced against his will to sacrifice his child. In the account of Abraham's intended sacrifice of his son Isaac, it was said that "...God tested Abraham". The divine command to sacrifice Isaac was as a test of Abraham's loyalty and obedience to God. But this would also illustrate that the act of child-sacrifice was not necessarily one of unfeeling and cold-blooded murder. On the contrary, it was the dedication to the deity of one's dear and precious possession.

However, in Leviticus 18:21 and 20:2-5, and in Deuteronomy 12:31 and 18:10 are laws directed against the sacrifice of children. Nevertheless, references to child-sacrifice continue down to the time of Menassah, Josiah and Jeremiah.¹¹ Moreover, in Ezekiel 20:25, 26, 30, 31 we have the following startling statement:

- V.25, Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life;
- V.26, And I defiled them through their very gifts in making them offer by fire all their first-born, that I might horrify them; I did it that they might know that I am the Lord.

¹¹ II Kings 16:3; 21:6; 23:10; II Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; Ezekiel 16:20,21,36; 20:25-26, 31; 23:37; Isaiah 57:5; Psalm 106:37-38.

V.30, Wherefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord God: Will you defile yourselves after the manner of your fathers and go astray after their detestable things?

V.31, When you offer your gifts and sacrifice your sons by fire, you defile yourselves with all your idols to this day....

And again in chapter 16:17,20,21,36 Ezekiel declares:

V.17, ...and you made for yourself images of men,...

V.20, And you took your sons and your daughters, whom you had borne to me, and these you sacrificed to them to be devoured. Were your harlotries so small a matter

V.21, that you slaughtered my children and delivered them up as an offering by fire to them.

V.36, Thus says the Lord, God, "Because your shame was laid bare and your nakedness uncovered in your harlotries with your lovers, and because of all your idols and because the blood of your children that you gave to them..."

In all these passages, Ezekiel is obviously referring to the practice of child sacrifice. However, in the strange passage in Ezekiel 20:25-26, which was quoted above, there may possibly be an allusion to the sacrifice of children to Jahwe! Moreover, in both the stories of the sacrifice of Isaac and of Jephthah's daughter, the deity to whom the children were offered was named Jahwe.¹²

¹² See Genesis 22:11,14,15,16 and Judges 11:30,31,32,35,36 where Jahwe is specifically named. S.R. Driver comments in his commentary on Genesis that in chapter 22, verses 1-13 and 19 belong to an E source, while verses 20-24 belong to J. Verses 14-18 "are probably an addition due to the compiler of JE."

S.R. Driver, Genesis, p.216.

However, verse 11, which Driver includes in the E stratum, mentions Jahwe.

In view of the prevalence of the practice of child sacrifice, S.R. Driver suggests that it is possible that Jahwe's claim to the first-born might have had some relation to child sacrifice.¹³ We read in Exodus 13:12,13 that the "first-born of man among your sons you shall redeem." From the context, it might be implied that, like the "firstling of an ass", you shall break its neck if it is not redeemed.

V.12, You shall set apart to the Lord all that first opens the womb. All the firstlings of your cattle that are males shall be the Lord's.

V.13, Every firstling of an ass you shall redeem with a lamb, or if you will not redeem it you shall break its neck. Every first-born of man among your sons you shall redeem.

V.15, ...Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first open the womb; but all the first-born of my sons I redeem.¹⁴

It is interesting that the expression "set apart" used in verse 12, above, has the same root and hiphil conjugation as that of the verb (נָסַח) that is used elsewhere in the Bible to refer to child-sacrifice; specifically in those passages where the mode of sacrifice is to "cause to pass through" the fire.¹⁵

¹³ S.R. Driver, Op.Cit., p.221.

¹⁴ Compare this with Exodus 22:29,30.

¹⁵ This verb is used in the expression to "cause to pass through" the fire to Molech in Deuteronomy 18:10 and in Jeremiah 32:35. Moreover it is used also in II Kings 16:3; II Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; and in Ezekiel 23:37 to refer to child-sacrifice. However, in these latter four examples, the deity to whom the sacrifice is offered is not named.

But, as we mentioned above, there are laws in Leviticus and Deuteronomy against child-sacrifice. But unlike the laws in Deuteronomy, those in Leviticus 18:21 and 20:2-5 against child-sacrifice are specifically against sacrifice to Molech. One may well wonder whether these Levitical laws were against child-sacrifice in general or merely against the sacrificing of children to Molech.

Perhaps the most magnificent statement in the entire Bible concerning the practice of sacrifice is in Micah 6. Verse 7, below, mentions specifically the practice of child-sacrifice.

- V.6, With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?
- V.7, Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?
- V.8, He has showed you, O man, what is good, and what the Lord requires of you, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

Hence, according to Micah, child-sacrifice was not necessary for the proper worship of Jahwe, to whom, according to Ezekiel, infanticide was as the "slaughter of my children" (Ezekiel 16:21).

Nevertheless, the parent did apparently possess an absolute authority over his children. Moreover, the child was explicitly forbidden on pain of death or anathema to strike or

course either his father or mother.¹⁶ Although the Bible is not always clear about who actually puts the child to death, it may be inferred that the parent merely would accuse the child and perhaps initiate some sort of prosecution, while death itself would be inflicted by people other than the father. An illustration of this is presented in Deuteronomy 21:18-21, where there is a brief description of what could be done to a "stubborn and rebellious" son who did not prove amenable to discipline. The parents deliver him to the "elders of the city". After an investigation, they may have the son stoned to death by "all the men of the city". In Genesis 38:24-25, however, when Judah learns that his daughter-in-law has "played the harlot", he orders that they "Bring her out, and let her be burned." Evidently the father had the right to have his child put to death. But apparently for the Deuteronomic writer some just cause and an investigation by the "elders of the city" had to be shown for such extreme punishment. Thus the parent-child relationship assumed, for the Deuteronomic writer, features that were prescribed by convention and law. For their violation the child could be severely

¹⁶ Exodus 21:15,17; Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy 27:16.

punished or even in some severe cases, put to death. Hence the parent could demand respect and obedience from his children. And the children could expect just, and possibly stern, retribution from the father in accordance with their own deeds.

Furthermore, the children of Israel were expressly enjoined to honor (192) both their father and mother. In fact, this was considered so important that it was included as the Fifth Commandment in the Decalogue, immediately following the duties owed to God and the Sabbath.¹⁷ However, there are some difficulties in reconciling this commandment with the social conditions that prevailed in ancient Israel. A. Powell Davis points out that both parents were not equal. The father was the chief authority within the family, with the wife almost as his possession. Also the parent-child relationships were complicated by the practice of polygamy, where the father might possibly have more than one wife, and perhaps even concubines. A. Powell Davis writes that some scholars suggest that this commandment, therefore, relates to ancestor worship. However, Davis follows W.F. Bade's suggestion that this commandment is addressed only to adult, male Israelites

¹⁷ Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16.

and refers to the aged parents of sons who had formed their own households.¹⁸ The admonition in Proverbs 23:22 may express this relationship of an aged parent being honored by his adult son: "Hearken to your father who begot you, and do not despise your mother when she is old."

In addition, the noun father was used to designate not only kinship but also authority in other areas. For example, Naaman is addressed by his servants as "My Father".¹⁹ Elijah is called "father" by his disciple Elisha.²⁰ And when Ahaz asks Tiglath-Pileser, the king of Assyria, for help, Ahaz designates himself as "your servant and your son".²¹ This expression seems to be a tautology indicating subjection.

So far we have been discussing the more authoritarian roles assumed by the biblical father. Now we shall turn to the important function served by the "father" in the biblical family as a teacher and a moral guide. The family has always served as the primary educational medium in any society. For it is in the familial situation that a person has his initial and his most influential contacts with the culture and civilization of his society. The family not only shapes the basic

¹⁸ A. Powell Davis, The Ten Commandments, pp.113-116.

¹⁹ II Kings 5:13.

²⁰ II Kings 2:12.

²¹ II Kings 16:7.

personality and outlooks of the child, but also introduces him to that society. Willard Waller has pointed out that: "Sociologists have long realized that the family plays a peculiarly important role in the transmission of culture. The child does not merely absorb the culture of his group; he absorbs the culture as it is transmitted to him by the family."²² And we have no reason to doubt that this was true also for the biblical family throughout its history. For the importance of the biblical father in shaping the character of his child and in preparing him for adulthood, we have many illustrations in our biblical sources.

The role of the father as the custodian, so to speak, of the traditions of his people is illustrated in Deuteronomy 32:7, where the children of Israel are admonished to "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders and they will tell you." The fathers, and the "elders", are to be appealed to as the natural depositories of historical information and traditions. This would have been especially significant in a period when the knowledge and traditions of the past were largely preserved in the form of oral tradition.

²² Willard Waller, The Family, p.31.

We see this illustrated also in Job 8:8-10.

- V.8, For inquire, I pray you, of bygone ages, and consider what the fathers have found;
- V.9, for we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, for our days on earth are a shadow.
- V.10, Will they not teach you, and tell you, and utter words out of their understanding?

And again in Psalm 78:2-6.

- V.2, I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings from of old,
- V.3, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us.
- V.4, We will not hide them from their children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and his might, and the wonders which he has wrought.
- V.5, He establishes a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers to teach to their children;
- V.6, that the next generation might know them, the children yet unborn, and arise and tell them to their children.

References to the father's role as a teacher and a moral guide appear frequently in the book of Proverbs. There we find such well-known aphorisms as "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it";²³ and again in the warning: "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him"²⁴. We are reminded of the value placed on the teachings of fathers in the statement in Proverbs 6:20-22.

²³ Proverbs 22:6.

²⁴ Proverbs 13:24.

See also Proverbs 1:8 and 4:1-4.

- V.20, My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching.
 V.21, Bind them upon your heart always, tie them about your neck.
 V.22, When you walk, it shall lead you; when you lie down, it will watch over you; and when you are awake, it will talk with you.²⁵

And in Deuteronomy 6:7, in a passage that has become an important part of the Jewish liturgy, we read that it was the sacred duty of the father to instruct his children in the Lord's commandments; "and you shall teach them diligently to your children."

²⁵ For similar statements see Proverbs 1:8; 4:1-4; 13:1,24; 15:5; 23:19,22; 29:17.

Robert Gordis points out that the word beni, "my son", which occurs twenty-two times in the book of Proverbs suggests the address that was used in the "house of study" of a teacher to a disciple. Dr. Gordis continues: "...the constant emphasis upon sexual morality in Proverbs and Ben Sira...implies that the students were not children but young men."

Robert Gordis, H.U.C. Annual, 1944, pp. 83-93.

With the suggestion that the beni might often be closer to adulthood than to childhood, this writer would not want to argue. However, many of the statements in Proverbs mention a mother along with the father. This would clearly indicate a familial situation rather than that of a school. For example, we read in Proverbs 1:8: "Hear, my son, your father's instruction, and reject not your mother's teaching." Here father and mother are apparently used in parallelism one to the other to indicate parents in general. Similar statements may be found in Proverbs 4:3; 6:20; 23:22; 29:15.

Basically, the father was the authority, in the sense that he had the responsibility to preserve, direct and protect those who were under his care. Possibly we may have an illustration of this usage of the designation "father" in Genesis 45:8, where the mature Joseph informs his brethren that "... it was not you who sent me here, but God; and he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt."²⁶

The father's role also had elements of what may be described as a priestly function. For example, in Judges 17:10 and in 13:19, Micah requests the Levite to "Stay with me, and be to me a father and a priest." Possibly the Levite would in some way be adopting Micah under his cultic protection and oracular guidance as Pharaoh had been under the fatherly guidance of Joseph. Also perhaps we have here a type of kinship relationship that could be entered into or contracted between two parties, one assuming the role of "father" or guide or whatever the agreement would involve. But in Judges 17:10 and 18:19 the noun "priest" is used in apposition to the term "father" suggesting that the title "father" might also have implied a priestly function.

²⁶ In II Kings 2:12, Elijah is called "father" by his disciple.

In this connection, James Strahan makes an interesting suggestion that the biblical father also had a significant role to play as a priest; as the guardian, so to speak, of the family numina. He writes that "the reverence paid to the head of the family was due not so much to his superior wisdom and strength as to his position as priest of the household. His unlimited authority rested on a spiritual basis. The family was a society bound together by common religious observances. Everyone born into it recognized as a matter of course, its special cult, in which the worship of ancestors seems to have been originally the distinctive feature..."²⁷

To illustrate this, Strahan points out that the family burying place was considered holy ground and, therefore, many of the famous old sanctuaries probably owed their sacredness to their being regarded as the graves of heroes. "Ancestor worship was, of course, family worship." Assuming that James Strahan is correct, that many of the old sanctuaries contained the graves of heroes, then the question may be asked: whether the presence of these graves made the areas holy, or whether the heroes were buried there just because it was considered holy or sacred ground. In any case, we have suggestions in

²⁷ James Strahan, "The Family", Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics, p.724.

the Bible that the father was the guardian of the sacred lore and the traditional cult, which he apparently passed on to his eldest son, thereby securing the continued identity and the prosperity of the family. Possibly this is what is involved in Isaac's blessing of Jacob in Genesis 27:28-29. In any case, the patriarchs erected altars and offered sacrifices. We have mention of this in Genesis 12:7f; 13:18; 22:9; and 35:7. Moreover, in the account of Passover in Exodus 12, the ceremony was essentially a family rite and was apparently presided over by the father.

Having reviewed the biblical father in his various roles as an authoritarian figure, teacher, and priest, we turn now to the view of the biblical father as a loving parent. Any presentation of the biblical father which did not take into account all these varied roles would be incomplete and would give a most distorted picture of the biblical father.

Willard Waller has made the significant observation that:

Most of the family literature is adult-centered, emphasizing how parents contribute to the development of children, and how they prepare the child for his place in the world. The reciprocal of doing for the child is what the child's very dependence does for the parent. The adult's need to protect and love someone is met nowhere as satisfactorily as in serving children.²⁸

²⁸ Willard Waller, Op. Cit., p.33.

The importance of the bearing and raising of children was recognized and appreciated in biblical literature. The goal of the biblical marriage was apparently to produce children, preferably sons.²⁹ Progeny were valued and cherished, particularly as the perpetuators of the clan and of the family property. If, as James Strahan has suggested, the family was as a cult with the father at its head, then it would become almost a matter of sacred duty to secure the continuance of the family. The cult must be handed down from father to son, from generation to generation. In such an organization, celibacy would naturally be regarded as an impiety as well as a misfortune. For celibacy and childlessness would threaten the existence of a social unity of worship. When a family became extinct then it was a cult that died.

In a real sense, therefore, children came to be regarded as the spiritual heirs of the personalities of their parents; the guarantee of the continuance of the family and its inheritance, both material and spiritual. In fact, so much importance in the biblical narratives was laid upon the bearing and rearing of children, that domestic happiness often seemed to hinge

²⁹ Rebecca received what was possibly customary blessing for a bride. "And they blessed Rebecca and said to her, 'Our sister, be the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them'" Genesis 24:60.

directly upon whether there was an heir. On the other hand, barrenness in a woman was taken as a reason for personal shame and reproach. Possibly the father felt that without an heir the continuity of his inheritance would be broken and his identity eradicated. For example, when God promises that Abram's "reward shall be great," Abram complains bitterly:

O Lord God, what wilt thou give me for I continue childless... Behold thou hast given me no offspring.³⁰

The husband who had no son dreaded the extinction of his home. Whether this fear was rooted in some forms of ancestor worship or not, we cannot readily ascertain. But we do know that at certain times if a man's first wife had no son, then it was his sacred duty to take a second wife or a concubine; and if he died without an heir, it was considered an act of piety on his brother's part to marry his widow in order to raise up children in his stead.³¹

Similarly, the domestic happiness and status of a woman depended directly upon her ability to conceive and to

³⁰ Genesis 15:2-3.

³¹ Deuteronomy 25:5,6.

bear children, especially sons, for her husband.³² For the possession of children was considered as a sign of divine favor. Eve speaks of her son as acquired "with the help of the Lord."³³ Jacob too describes his children as "the children whom God has so graciously given..."³⁴

So we see that in the biblical family there was another factor in addition to the natural parental affection that is probably found among almost all peoples. Children were "a heritage from the Lord". (Psalm 127:3). And because children were considered as blessings from God and as tokens of divine favor, accordingly parenthood was given a heightened status

³² We see instances of the domestic tragedy caused by barrenness in a wife in the examples of Sarah, Rachel, and Hannah. (See Genesis 16:4; 30:1-2; and I Samuel 1:6,7). It is interesting that these three childless wives were each the most beloved. But Pedersen comments that "they were exceptional, and derive their particular interest from the fact that the art of the narrator appears in his showing the tragedy of these women, who enjoy privileges to which they feel they are not entitled."

Pedersen, Israel, p.71.

³³ Genesis 4:1. This view that children are as gifts from the deity is illustrated also in Psalm 113:9; 127:3-5; and 128:3-4.

³⁴ Genesis 33:5.

in the eyes of the biblical community.³⁵ And progeny would be enjoyed and appreciated as "children whom the Lord has so graciously given."

Isaac Mendelsohn offers a plausible explanation for the high value placed in the Bible upon the possession of children. He points out that the biblical economy was mainly based upon small scale agriculture where the family normally constituted a self-sufficient economic unit. In such an economic organization, each child was welcome as an addition to the labor strength of the family.³⁶ But whatever was the underlying motive, a high value was placed in the Bible upon children. Children were considered the cherished possession of the family. Emotions, however, need not necessarily have an economic base, or even a rational source; for even the "heart (of the harlot) yearned for her son."³⁷

³⁵ Pedersen comments that "Motherhood is the patent of nobility of a woman; through it she acquires her place in life and a share in the family. Even the slave woman feels so exalted when she has become a mother, that she can look down upon her childless mistress..."

Pedersen, Op. Cit., p.71.

And it was also important that a man have a son. Pedersen points out that this was considered so important that a newly-married man was exempt from having to go to war. This was done, according to Pedersen, in order that he be permitted "to devote himself to his wife, until she has given birth to her child."

Ibid., p.72.

See Deuteronomy 24:5 for an illustration of this practice.

³⁶ Isaac Mendelsohn, Op. Cit., p.39.

³⁷ I Kings 3:26.

From even a most superficial reading of the Bible, one cannot fail to discern the tenderness and warm affection that parents were thought ideally to feel toward their children. The Bible contains numerous touching and vivid examples of parental love. Can one fail but to perceive the uninhibited joy of Sarah over the birth of her long-awaited son Isaac,³⁸ or the pathetic distress of Hagar at the rejection suffered by her child Ishmael.³⁹ And when God seeks to test Abraham, he is commanded to make a sacrifice of his most cherished possession, his beloved son, Isaac.⁴⁰ The biblical narrator is saying, in a sense: what a great love and obedience Abraham must have felt for God to have consented to sacrifice his darling, Isaac.

And the "Joseph Saga" too abounds with intimate vignettes of family life and affection, as well as of the rivalries and sibling jealousies and tensions that sometimes grip a family. But underlying the entire narrative may be discerned a beautiful motif of fatherly love.⁴¹ Jacob made a special robe as a gift for the young Joseph, the beloved "son of his old age" and the apple of his father's eye. Undoubtedly, the "son of his old age", Joseph,

³⁸ Genesis 21:7.

³⁹ Genesis 21:16.

⁴⁰ Genesis 22:1-19. See page 16, above.

⁴¹ Note too the honor and affection that the mature Joseph showed to his father in Genesis 45:9-11; 46:29; and 47:12.

was the son, with whom the father most closely identified. Joseph was then the only son of Rachel, the favorite wife, and the son who was born to the father when he was apparently advanced in years. When Jacob was told of Joseph's alleged death, his grief was severe.

Then Jacob rent his garments, and put sackcloth upon his loins and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted and said, "No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning." Thus his father wept for him.⁴²

And Jacob also speaks of his son Benjamin, "If harm should befall him on the journey... you will bring my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol."⁴³ Jacob pathetically expresses the deep loss and grief felt by a father at the loss of his child with the hopeless words, "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."⁴⁴ His loss was irreparable and his grief inconsolable.

A somewhat similar display of grief may be seen also in David's self-mortification for the sake of his sick baby. "David therefore besought God for the child; and David fasted, and went in and lay all night upon the ground."⁴⁵ Upon

⁴² Genesis 37:34-35.

⁴³ Genesis 42:38.

⁴⁴ Genesis 43:14.

⁴⁵ II Samuel 12:23.

learning that the child was dead, David commented calmly: "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he will not return to me." What a weight of personal loss must have been felt by David beneath that surface calm.

And there is still another illustration of the depth of a father's love in the career of King David, who had had difficulties with Absalom, his rebellious son.⁴⁶ As the army of David goes out to repulse the invasion instigated by Absalom, David orders his soldiers to "deal gently for my sake with the young man Absalom." Despite the trouble, bitterness and pain caused by Absalom, David still persists in feeling a tender fatherly compassion for him. The first question that David asks of the messengers returning from the battle is: "Is it well with the young man Absalom." No matter how rebellious and troublesome Absalom had become, or how much he plotted and conspired against the throne of his father, David still thought of him as the "young man Absalom," the naughty son whom David would gladly receive should he return. "And the spirit of David longed to go forth to Absalom." Upon learning of the death of Absalom, a rebel and an enemy of the monarchy, David cries the lament:

⁴⁶ II Samuel 18:5f.

O My son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom!
 Would I had died instead of you.
 O Absalom, my son, my son.⁴⁷

The above illustrations indicate how highly the affection in the father-son relationship was honored and idealized in the biblical narratives. The Patriarchs were in a real sense the models of fatherly love and responsibility. And the Jewish king par excellence, David, was perhaps most sympathetic and understandable in the role of a father. For as a father, David rises to tragic heights; filled with deep love and warm affection for his children, David must witness helplessly as disaster upon disaster befalls so many of them. David is a most pathetic, and a most human figure when he cries: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son..." How skilfully and sensitively does the biblical narrator portray the deep compassion and tenderness that was fostered and nourished in the ideal of the biblical family.

⁴⁷ II Samuel 19:1.

IV. A Model for Paternity

We have thus far illustrated what the designation "father" signified in the context of the biblical family. The father was the chief authority within the family, and accordingly he could expect to receive the absolute obedience and respect of the other members of the family. In return for the loyalty and honor that he received, he directed his family and provided for its needs and welfare. But although the father was the main figure of authority within the biblical family, the intra-familial relationships were naturally also based on tender love, a consciousness of kinship and an awareness of responsibility, and a general attitude of mutual devotion. Hence, when one speaks of the father-figure in the Bible, one must keep in mind its varied roles which were mainly expressed under two aspects: ³ tender affection and ^{1 2 1} stern authority, ^{co 7} both intertwined in a complexity of emotion that is not Always readily separable. This complex, dual aspect takes on an added significance when one considers the observation of Dr. Sol Ginsberg that "Our heavenly Father is created in the image of our earthly fathers and thus feared, loved, revered or hated."¹

¹ Sol W. Ginsburg, Man's Place in God's World, p.21.

Likewise Theodor Reik has stated:

Psycho-analysis has proved that the idea of God in the life of the individual and of the people has its origins in the reversion and exaltation of the father.²

Sigmund Freud traces even the most sophisticated, as well as the most primitive, ideas of God back to man's desperate need to cope with his own frailty and apparent helplessness in the face of an inherently inhospitable universe. Freud points out that:

There are the elements, which seem to mock at all human control: the earth, which quakes, is rent asunder, and buries man and all his works; the water, which in tumult floods and submerges all things; the storm, which drives all before it; there are the diseases, which we have only lately recognized as the attacks of other living creatures; and finally there is the painful riddle of death, for which no remedy at all has yet been found, nor probably ever will be. With these forces nature rises up before us, sublime, pitiless, inexorable; thus she brings again to mind our weakness and helplessness, of which we thought the work of civilization had rid us.³

² Theodor Reik, The Psychological Problems of Religion, p.73.

Willard Waller has given an explanation for the genesis of this projection of the father-figure to God when he writes: "In the family children learn through frustrating experiences the reality of authority, the limitations on their rights and privileges, identifying in the process their parents as symbols of authority. From these experiences, patterns of reaction to all symbols of authority are constructed." Willard Waller, Op. Cit., p.35.

One may add in passing what seems obvious, that the first experiences of "tender loving care" are experienced in the family and that consequently the basic symbols for love and tender affection are also acquired in the familial situation.

³ Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, pp.26-7.

Thus, concludes Freud, "For the individual, as for mankind in general, life is hard to endure." In order to find at least some semblance of meaning and purpose in this terrifying dilemma, man reverts to another time when he was helpless and, nevertheless, felt protected and cared for; that is, man reverts to the helpless attitudes of early childhood when he was secure in the care and the protection of his parents. Hence, according to the view of Freud, man conjures up an all-wise and benevolent father-image whom he deifies and worships. Man thus takes the very natural forces that seem to threaten his security and existence and projects into them a personality with which he can relate and with whom he may communicate and thereby perhaps influence. And this relationship, based as it is upon the helplessness of man, generally assumes the form of the relationship between a parent and a child. Freud writes:

I believe, rather, that when he personifies the forces of nature man is once again following an infantile prototype. He has learnt from the persons of his earliest environment that the way to influence them is to establish a relationship with them, and so, later on, with the same end in view, he deals with everything that happens to him as he dealt with those persons.⁴

⁴ Ibid., p.38.

Therefore, concludes Freud, "God is the exalted father, and the longing for the father is at the root of the need for religion."⁵

And similarly, God was frequently pictured in the Bible as a "father" to his people. Above, in our section on "A Religious Motif" twelve instances were listed where the deity was specifically designated by the title "father". However, we have shown that in the context of the biblical family as it is variously described in our biblical sources, this designation "father" could denote several different types of relationships. For example, in the statement directed to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 14:1, we read: "You are the sons of the Lord your God." This could possibly mean that the Israelites were:

1. the descendants of the Lord.
2. the subjects of the Lord.
3. the disciples of the Lord.
4. the recipients of the Lord's care and protection.
5. the beloved of the Lord.

Moreover, the expression "You are the sons of the Lord your God" could denote any one or all of the attitudes and emotions expressed in the following degrees of relationships:

1. domination by the Lord
2. concern of the Lord.
3. affection and love from the Lord.

Hence, we shall now proceed to discuss in further detail each of the twelve biblical passages which we listed, in which

⁵ Ibid., p.39.

a deity was designated by the mun "father", and try to discern in what ways they each reflect the varied views of the father in the biblical family.

V. Father To A King

Among the twelve passages (which we listed was) one that pictures the deity as a father to a king. In II Samuel 7:13-16, the Prophet Nathan assures David that God has promised to watch over the Davidic dynasty and protect it.

- V.13 He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.
- V.14 I will be his father, and he shall be my son.
When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men;
- V.15 but my steadfast love shall not depart from him as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you.
- V.16 And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

This statement is almost identical with the passage in I Chronicles 17:12-14.

- V.12 He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever.
- V.13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son;
I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you,
- V.14 but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever and his throne shall be established forever.

In these parallel passages, the deity promises to establish the Davidic throne forever. "I will be his father, and he shall be my son." Possibly this statement, identical in both passages, is a formula of adoption. God will look after the Davidic kings as though they were his sons. They will be secure in God's care and protection as though God were their father. But the difference between these two passages is also significant. Where in II Samuel God

warns that "when he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of sons of men," there is no such statement in Chronicles, where God's care and protection for the Davidic kings is promised unconditionally. In Samuel, although God promises to "establish the throne" forever, he warns that he will severely punish the Davidic kings should they commit any iniquity. Thus in Samuel there is an ethical element that is apparently lacking in Chronicles. However, in Chronicles, God's love is promised freely and generously, without any prior conditions enumerated. In both passages God adopts the Davidic kings under his personal care and protection. He will be a father to them; and his "steadfast love" will not depart from them. But in the book of Samuel, God warns that iniquity will be punished "with the rod of men", implying probably subjugation to foreign invaders and oppressors. God will insure their thrones and protect their kingdom only so long as they are worthy of this care. In both cases God's "steadfast love" for the Davidic kings will persist forever. But in Samuel, this "steadfast love" would not prevent God from punishing his children when it should be necessary.

Another difference of note between these two passages is that where in II Samuel 7:13-16 God assures David that God will "establish the throne of your kingdom" and that "your house and your kingdom" will be made secure forever,-- in I Chronicles 17:14 God promises "I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever." In the passage from the

book of Samuel, God promises to care for David's kingdom. There God adopts the Davidic kings and the Davidic kingdom. But in the parallel passage from Chronicles, God will establish David's throne in God's kingdom. Here God seems to be appointing the Davidic kings to rule almost as God's agents. And possibly because it is God's own kingdom, there is no mention in Chronicles of punishment "with the rod of men."

In both passages, however, there seems to be the implication that there is some sort of mutual agreement or exchange that should take place as an initial basis for God's care and protection. In both passages, the king is to build a "house" for the deity. And, apparently, in return for this pious act, God promises to be father to the Davidic kings and they will be his sons. However, it is interesting that where in I Chronicles 17:12, the deity says that the king "shall build a house for me", in II Samuel 7:13 the deity says that the king "shall build a house for my name." Thus one may suppose that here the Chronicler perhaps thought of God actually dwelling in his house, and therefore needing this gift from the king. However, in the book of Samuel, the narrator clearly points out that this house is to be built merely for God's "name", possibly referring to God's reputation and glory among men. This would not be unlike the usage of "name" in I Chronicles 17:8 where God promises to David that "I will make for you a name, like the name of the great ones of the earth".

In any case, in Chronicles God assures his love and protection for the Davidic kingdom unconditionally.

In Samuel, however, though God also assures his love, God nevertheless warns that he will punish iniquity "with the rods of men, with the stripes of the sons of men."

In both the passages from Samuel and from Chronicles, God is quoted concerning David's son, Solomon: "He shall be my son, and I will be his father." Obviously, if David begot Solomon, the "father" here could not mean paternity in this literal sense of procreation. Undoubtedly, what was meant was that God will adopt Solomon to be his son, providing him with loving care and protection. This would not be unlike the usage of "father" in Genesis 45:8 and Judges 17:10 and 18:19.¹

And similarly in I Chronicles 22:9,10, God again promises his protection to Solomon in this way:

1

See page 26, above.

W. Robertson Smith points out that "in Arabia paternity did not originally mean what it does with us. With us the very foundation of the notion of fatherhood is procreation, and the presumption of law that the husband is father of all his wife's children rests on a well-established custom of conjugal fidelity, and on the certainty that the husband will object to have spurious children palmed off on him...."

The various senses of ab cannot then have come from that of "progenitor"; but they might very well come from that of "nurturer", which is common enough in the actual usage of the Semitic languages, and would give in the most natural way such a doctrine of fatherhood as we have found in Arabia."

W. Robertson Smith, Kinship and Marriage, pp 139-142.

- V. 9 Behold, a son shall be born to you; he shall be a man of peace. I will give him peace from all his enemies round about, for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quiet to Israel in his days.
- V.10 He shall build a house for my name. He shall be my son, and I will be his father, and I will establish his royal throne in Israel forever.

Here, as in II Samuel 7:13, the house shall be built for God's "name". Moreover, we once again meet this formula of adoption, although slightly modified in its wording, in I Chronicles 28:6. There God assures David: "...It is Solomon your son who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be his father." Here Solomon is "chosen" to be God's son, that is, to be (under the aegis of) the deity's special concern.

In all these passages thus far, the deity is to be a father to Solomon and to the Davidic kings, adopting them as his sons. It may possibly be inferred from these passages which we have quoted that there was a popular view that the deity was father to the king, that the king was the son of God. However, this fatherhood was one of choice on the part of the deity. Hence this kinship relationship between God and the king was one of adoption rather than one of any natural or physical descent. In this sense, then, the sonship of the Davidic kings might indicate that they were thought to be, so to speak, the proteges of the deity, under whose special care and protection, and perhaps even guidance, they remained during their reigns. The statement in I Chronicles 28:6, "...for I have chosen him to be my son, and I will be

his father," is like the statement in Psalm 2:7, "You are my son, today I have begotten you." Both may have been used also as a formula of adoption. The king would then have been honored as a "son" of God, that is, the representative of God who is under special divine protection and care. In Psalm 2 God is depicted as saying:

- V. 6 "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."
- V. 7 I will tell of the decree of the Lord:
He said to me, "You are my son, today I
have begotten you."
- V. 8 Ask of me, and I will make the nations
your heritage, and the ends of the earth
your possession."

However, the statement in Psalm 2:7 that "today I have begotten you" is confusing. What has transpired on that day ("today") to have set the king in a new relationship to the deity? Possibly this refers to the day that the king ascended the throne; the day that he was anointed king. Perhaps this process of anointing was thought to involve a sort of rebirth on the part of the king, whom the deity has "begotten". Or, on the other hand, possibly the whole Davidic line was adopted as God's sons at the time that David was anointed king. In any case, the Davidic kings were to be in a special relationship with the deity.

The other kings of the earth have "set themselves" ² ('לִּשְׁתַּבֵּחַ) as monarchs, while Jahwe has "set" ('הִקְדִּישׁ 'הָאֵל) or rather installed his king on the throne of Zion.

Hence this royal sonship probably signified an intimate relationship of trust and obedience. As a "son", the king may be confident that he was the object of care, protection, and "steadfast love" from his "father", the deity. According to Johann⁵ Pedersen, the Israelite king therefore had a special function to serve in the cult.

He was the leader of the feasts, just as he was the man through whom Yahweh's spirit worked, when great deeds were to be performed. In the same way the king was as a matter (of) course, the leader of the cult which was adopted for the whole country. But he was more than that. Jahweh's spirit did not work in him with ecstatic violence on special occasions. The power was present in him as a constant possession, because he was Yahweh's anointed and Yahweh's son, and this power of the king's could only be upheld by constant renewal of the cult. Hence we can say with a certainty that the whole position of the king demands a cult which serves especially to strengthen him." ³

²
Psalm 2¹/2. Of course "set themselves" is in parallel with "take counsel together against". Hence 'לִּשְׁתַּבֵּחַ would be used in the sense of "stand up against" as it is used in Psalm 94:16. However, there seems also to be implied a contrast between the "kings of the earth" and Jahwe's king. God has installed his king ('הִקְדִּישׁ 'הָאֵל) and they, on the other hand, have installed themselves. ('לִּשְׁתַּבֵּחַ).

³
Pedersen, Israel, Vol. II, pp. 85-6.

Thus the king was vital in ^{order} to enable the nation to have continued contact with the deity, who had adopted the king to be his own son.

In Psalm 89 God is pictured again as taking the Davidic dynasty under his special protection. They shall cry to God "Thou art my father, my God, the rock of my salvation."

- V.21 I have found David, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him
- V.22 so that my hand shall ever abide with him, my arm also shall strengthen him.
- V.23 The enemy shall not outwit him, the wicked shall not humble him.
- V.24 I will crush his foes before him and strike down those who hate him.
- V.25 My faithfulness and my steadfast love shall be with him, and in my name shall his horn be exalted.
- V.26 I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers.
- V.27 He shall cry to me, "Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation."
- V.28 And I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth.
- V.29 My steadfast love I will keep for him for ever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.

In verses 27 and 28, the father-son relationship is probably not used in a "natural" sense, but rather, as in the other passages we have quoted, in the sense of adoption.

Therefore, the king was considered the son of God; and perhaps, as in I Chronicles 17:14 and in Psalm 2:6, he was thought by some to be reigning in place of God over God's kingdom. ⁴

But although in Psalm 89, other kings too may be called the sons of God, only David was the "first-born" son, the son who is in a special position of favor and affection to the deity. God says in verse 28, "And I will make him the first-born, the highest of the kings of the earth." ⁵ The first-born was the son who received the "birthright" and the largest share of the father's inheritance. ⁶

⁴

However, in I Chronicles 29:10, God is addressed by David as the father of the nation rather than just father of the king.

"Therefore David blessed the Lord in the presence of all the assembly; and David said: 'Blessed art thou, O Lord, the God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.'"

⁵

In Exodus 4:22 and in Jeremiah 31:9, Israel was called the first-born son, the implication in these two passages is that Israel is particularly dear to God. See page 90, below.

⁶

In Deuteronomy 21:17, the first-born received the largest share of the family inheritance, a "double-portion." And in II Chronicles 21:3, Jehoram was awarded the throne "because he was the first-born."

This promise to the king is not unlike the promise God makes to Israel in Deuteronomy 26:19: "... he will set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor, and that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he has spoken." ⁷

God's promise to David in Psalm 89 seems to be forever and unconditionally assured in verses 29, 30, and 34-38.

- V.29 My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him.
- V.30 I will establish his line for ever and his throne as the days of the heavens.
- V.34 But I will not remove from him my steadfast love or be false to my faithfulness.
- V.35 I will not violate my covenant, or alter the word that went forth from my lips.
- V.36 Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David.
- V.37 His line shall endure for ever, his thorne as long as the sun before me.
- V.38 Like the moon it shall be established for ever; it shall stand firm as the witness in the sky; Selah.

However, almost in contrast to the above seven verses, verses 31-33 of the same Psalm present a view very much like that in II Samuel 7:14. ⁸ Here God's loving care and protection appear to be contingent on the behavior of the Davidic kings, who will be scourged and punished if they fail to observe God's Commandments.

7

It is interesting to compare with this promise, Amos' interpretation of Israel's special position in relation to God. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." (Amos 3:2).

⁸ See page 42, above.

- V.31 If his children forsake my law and do not walk according to my ordinances,
- V.32 if they violate my statutes and do not keep my commandments,
- V.33 then I will punish their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with scourges.

However, if Psalm 89:29-38 was originally a single unit, then perhaps the viewpoint presented is that God's "steadfast love" and "faithfulness" will never be withdrawn from the sons of David. But as in II Samuel 7:15, this "steadfast love" will not prevent God from punishing his "son" when necessary.⁹ This would not be unlike the Fatherly relationship that is described in Proverbs 3:11-12.

- V.11 My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his proof,
- V.12 for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

So we see at least two, and possibly three, different views of God's fatherly affection toward the Davidic kings, his adopted sons. In one view God's love seemed to be unconditionally promised. Another view was that God would be a protector of the kingdom only so long as the kings obey his commandments; that is, God's love for the kings would be contingent on their behavior. A third possible view would be that although God may have to punish iniquity with "the rod of men", nevertheless God's "steadfast love" will never be taken away from them.

S. Mowinckel describes the unique position of the the Israelite kings in this way:

Considered from one point of view, then, the king is more than human. He is a divine being, possessing this superhuman quality because Yahweh has 'called' and 'chosen' him to be the shepherd of His people, and has made him His son, has anointed him and endowed him with His spirit. He performs the will of Yahweh, and transmits His blessing to land and people. He represents Yahweh before the people.

But as a human being, a man from among the people (i.e., a representative man from the chosen people of Yahweh) he also represents the people before Yahweh; and gradually the main stress comes to be put on this aspect of his vocation. ¹⁰

The special relationship between the king and the deity might best be illustrated in II Samuel 23:2-5, reputed to be the last words of king David.

- V.2 The spirit of the Lord speaks by me, his word is upon my tongue.
- V.3 The God of Israel has spoken, the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men ruling in the fear of God,
- V.4 he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth upon a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth.
- V.5 Yea, does not my house stand so with God? for he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire?

Thus the king, as "son" was thought to stand in a closer and more intimate relationship to God than was anyone else. He was the son of God and, so to speak, the custodian of God's people. In mythological language, it is said that God has "begotten" him, as we read in Psalm 2:7.

¹⁰

S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh; p. 59.

Which elements here were unique to Israel and which were part of the common patterns of kingship in the ancient Middle East, is difficult to ascertain with any real definitiveness.¹¹ But we have shown that basic to many of our illustrations of God's fatherhood to the Davidic kings, was an ethical element. Whether this too was part of a universal pattern of kingship in the Middle East, we are not at this time in a position to know.

11

According to Professor Mowinkel, the Israelite monarchy was the result of the fusion of the traditions of the old desert chieftainship with the ideas and customs of Canaanite kingship. Ibid, p. 59.

A similar view was expressed by Pedersen who describes the conflict between Saul and David as one between two different conceptions of kingship, with Saul representing still the "old chieftainship."

J. Pedersen, Op. Cit., pp.46-7

VI. A Foster Father

But when God is pictured as father in the Bible, it is usually meant as father to Israel, the nation. In addition, in these national relationships are sometimes found imagery that suggest a family: with God as father, the land as mother, and the people as son. It was certainly not uncommon for the land or a city to be pictured as the mother of its inhabitants. We see several examples of this in the Bible itself. For example, in II Samuel 20:19, Joab is accused of seeking "to destroy a city which is a mother in Israel." Also in Isaiah 54:6 the land is pictured as being comforted "For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God." And in Lamentations 1:1,7,11, Jerusalem is poignantly portrayed as the bereaved mother of her people, who "have fallen into the hand of the foe." In Lamentations 2:19, Jerusalem is here too commanded to "Pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord. Lift your hands to him for the lives of your children who faint for hunger at the head of every street." Similarly, in Isaiah 66:12,13, God is described as finally reconciled with Jerusalem who will now have abundance with which to comfort and nourish her children:

- V.12 For thus says the Lord: "Behold, I will extend prosperity to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall suck, you shall be carried upon her hip, and dandled upon her knees.

In the following verse, God himself assumes a mother image.

- V.13 As one whom his mother comforts so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.¹

Moreover, God is portrayed in a somewhat similar mother-figure in Isaiah 49:14, 15.

- V.14 But Zion said, "The Lord has forsaken me, my Lord has forgotten me."
 V.15 "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb?" Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you.

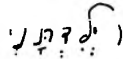
However, we shall try to limit our study in this thesis to God portrayed in a father-image.

And apparently this divine paternity assumed varied interpretations in the imagination of the people. For example, in Jeremiah 2:26,27 the prophet Jeremiah makes this accusation against the house of Israel:

¹
 Moses complains in Numbers 11:12 that God is imposing unfairly upon him by making Moses be as a nursemaid to God's people. Moses asks God, "Did I conceive all this people? Did I bring them forth, that thou shouldst say to me, 'Carry them in your bosom, as a nurse carries the sucking child, to the land which thou didst swear to give their fathers?'"

- V.26 As a thief is shamed when caught, so the house of Israel shall be shamed: they, their kings and their prophets,
 V.27 who say to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to a stone, 'You gave me birth.'" For they have turned their back to me, and not their face. But in the time of their trouble they say, 'Arise and save us!'
 V.28 But where are your gods that you made for yourself? Let them arise, if they can save you, in your time of trouble; for as many as your cities are your gods, O Judah.

As we have seen, the concept of the fatherhood of God can suggest different connotations even within the context of the Bible. In the above passage from Jeremiah we may have a reference to an actual ^{a presumed} physical relationship with some totemic ancestor gods who are represented in the tree and the stone. This would present the fatherhood of the deity in perhaps its most primitive form. For the prophet Jeremiah may be criticizing some sort of primitive totemism when he describes the shame of the Israelites "who say to a tree 'You are my father,' and to a stone 'You gave me birth.'" Speaking through his prophet Jahwe appears here indignant at this primitive cult. Of course, "father" could possibly mean protector and overseer rather than progenitor or procreator. However, this meaning is unlikely in this passage because they also say to a stone "You gave me birth." Had they merely said "mother", the usage might be interpreted metaphorically.

But they distinctly say here "You gave me birth" () signifying actual procreation. ²

Apparently the tree was seen as a phallic representation, while the stone was seen as a feminine symbol. According to A. Powell Davis: "It was often a matzebah, or rough unhewn stone pillar, that was the dwelling-place of Ashtart. Usually, a 'cup' was hollowed out of the stone... perhaps to receive blood, but sometimes this cavity was transferred to an adjacent altar. The exact significance of the matzeboth is difficult to discover....the matzebah is almost always surrounded by other pillars, definitely phallic symbols." ³

W. Robertson Smith points out that no Canaanite "high place" was complete without its sacred tree standing beside the altar. According to W. R. Smith, the cult of trees was familiar to all the Semites, including the Israelites. Therefore, "it is hardly possible to avoid the conclusion that some elements of tree worship entered into the ritual even of such deities as in their origin were not tree-gods.

2

W. Robertson Smith has observed that "The relation between the gods of antiquity and their worshippers was expressed in the language of human relationship, and this language was not taken in a figurative sense but with strict literality."

W. Robertson Smith, Religion of Semites, p.29.

3

A. Powell Davis, Op. Cit., p86.

The local sanctuaries of the Hebrews, which the prophets regard as purely heathenish, and which certainly were modelled in all points on Canaanite usage, were alter-sanctuaries." ⁴

We have no reason to doubt that in this passage from Jeremiah 2:27, the fatherhood of the deity was thought of as a physioal fatherhood. ⁵ The gods might be totemic, or else possibly symbolic representations of deified ancestor heroes. Although he was not a student of Semitics nor an anthropologist, Friedrich Nietzsche's description of the process of deification of ancestors, as he understood it, provides some illuminating philosophical insights into the kinship relationship with the deity. Nietzsche writes as follows:

Among primitive tribes, each new generation feels toward the preceding ones, and especially toward the original founders of the tribe, a judicial obligation... Early societies were convinced that their continuance was guaranteed solely by the sacrifices and achievements of their ancestors and that these sacrifices and achievements required to be paid back. Thus a debt was acknowledged which continued to increase, since the ancestors, surviving as powerful spirits, did not cease to provide the tribe with new benefits out of their store. Gratuitously? But nothing was gratuitous in those crude and "insensitive" times....Then how could they be paid? By burnt offerings (to provide them with food), by rituals, shrines, customs, but above all, by obedience--... But could they ever be fully repaid?

4

W. Robertson Smith, Religion of the Semites, p. 187

5

We may have references to an ancient mythology which pictured the deity as father over a family of lesser deities in Genesis 6:2 and Job 1:6, 38:7 and in Daniel 2:25.

An anxious doubt remained and grew steadily, and every so often there occurred some major act of "redemption", some gigantic repayment of the creditor (the famous sacrifice of the first-born, for example; in any case blood, human blood). Given this primitive logic, the fear of the ancestor and his power and the consciousness of indebtedness increase in direct proportion as the power of the tribe increases, as it becomes more successful in battle, independent, respected and feared....Following this kind of logic to its natural term, we arrive at a situation in which the ancestors of the most powerful tribes have become so fearful to the imagination that they have receded at last into a numinous shadow: the ancestor becomes a god. Perhaps this is the way all gods have arisen, out of fear...."6

Of course, there are some basic points where Nietzsche was inaccurate in his description. For example, he speaks of a "judicial obligation." But one suspects that this would be a bit ^{too} philosophical for the so-called "primitive mind", to whom the mystique of the sacred and the taboo was perhaps more significant than a "judicial obligation". Also, it is interesting that "consciousness of indebtedness" and guilt increased among the ancient Israelites in proportion as the vicissitudes of the nation increased. But Nietzsche's description of the deification of ancestor heroes and the growing sense of indebtedness to the past may not be so far from the truth. And nations often thought of themselves as being descended from some divine ancestor. 7

6

Friedrich Nietzsche, The Genealogy of Morals, pp.221-2

7

Nietzsche's description of the growing sense of indebtedness and fear, for which the ancestor-deity had to be propitiated through some major act of "redemption", finds an echo in Sigmund Freud's hypothesis concerning the fatherhood of God in his Totem and Taboo and again in his Moses and Monotheism. Freud traces the fatherhood of God back to

remote antiquity when "men lived in small hordes, each under the domination of a strong male." (Moses and Monotheism, p. 127). Freud theorizes that this primeval leader was the absolute master and father of the whole horde and possessed unlimited power and authority over the other members of the horde. This primeval father, according to Freud, possessed all the females of the horde. If the sons aroused his jealousy, they were either killed, mutilated, or expelled from the horde. Therefore, the sons had to provide themselves with wives, possibly stealing them from others. In this way the sons might in turn succeed in attaining a similar situation to that of the father in the original horde. Freud also suggests that perhaps the youngest son, who, protected by his mother, could profit by his father's advancing years and waning strength to eventually replace him as head of the horde after his death. (This might find a parallel in the aid Rebecca gave to Jacob in obtaining his father's blessing in Genesis 27:5-17, 42-46; and the help that Bathsheba gave to secure the throne for her son Solomon in I Kings 1:11-31). Freud proposes that the decisive step in changing this primeval social organization was wrought about by a revolt of the sons, motivated in part by an Oedipus-like urge to supplant the father.

One day the expelled brothers joined forces, slew and ate the father, and thus put an end to the father horde... these cannibalistic savages ate their victim. This violent primeval father surely had been the envied and feared model for each of the brothers. Now they accomplished their identification with him by devouring him and each acquired a part of his strength. (Totem and Taboo, p. 234).

However, the memory of the father continued. A strong animal, which was perhaps at first also feared and dreaded, was found as a substitute. The relationship to this totem animal retained much of the original ambivalence that was probably felt towards the father. Hence, according to Freud, the totem was looked upon as the corporeal ancestor and protecting spirit of the clan. Accordingly, he was revered and protected. Thus like Nietzsche, Freud interprets the emergence of the fatherhood of God as the result of a deep sense of guilt felt by the sons. Furthermore, Freud suggests that this totemism marked the earliest appearance of religion.

Our remarks concerning Frazer and W. R. Smith (on p. 10 above) apply equally well to Freud's ingenious work on the early history of religion. For a more detailed discussion of Freud's hypothesis see our essay on Parental Affection in the Bible. pp. 29-35.

In Numbers 21:29, the Moabites are addressed as the sons and daughters of Chemosh.⁸ Also Malachi possibly expressed a somewhat similar view when he calls a heathen woman "the daughter of a foreign god," in Malachi 2:11.

Moreover, proper names expressive of this concept are not uncommon in the Bible. Below are listed examples of some Hebrew proper names that contain the element abi, father, that may possibly express such a kinship relationship between the worshipper and his god. Of course, in many cases there are some questions as to what the precise meanings of these theophorous names actually are.⁹ For example, in the name of Abimelech,

8

Chemosh is described as the god of the Moabites in Jeremiah 48:7,13, 46 and I Kings 11:33. However in Judges 11:33 Chemosh is designated as the god of Amorites.

The famous Moabite Stone contains an inscription that opens with these words: "I am Mesha, son Chemosh..., king of Moab, the Dibonite...." Jack Finegan, Light from the Ancient Past, p.157.

9

David Jacobson comments that, "There are few studies so fascinating or so unproductive of result as the interpretation of Semitic proper names. The chief difficulty is the fact that the nouns ʔk and nk take in the construct state the termination which serves also as the suffix of the first person singular.... The difficulty is increased by the necessity of deciding whether the word relationship is a theophorous element, which element of the name is the subject, and what is the correct reading of a corrupt text." David Jacobson, The Social Background of the Old Testament, pp. 195-6.

abi may be taken either in the construct case or the nominative. With abi in the construct, the name could be interpreted as meaning "father of Melech." ¹⁰ However, with abi in the nominative, the same name would be "father is Melech." The yod might be a binding vowel or else a possessive suffix in the first person, singular. However, G. Buchanan Gray presents some very convincing arguments why these names, with the exception of those names with the kinship elements ben or bas, should most often be interpreted with the kinship designation in the nominative. ¹¹

¹⁰

Melech was probably the correct name of Molech, which is probably Melech vocalized with the vowels for the Hebrew word for "shame", bosheth. This god is mentioned in Leviticus 18:21; 20:2-5; I Kings 11:7; II Kings 23:10; Isaiah 30:33; 57:9; and Jeremiah 32:5.

¹¹

G. Buchanan Gray, Hebrew Proper Names, pp75-86.

Abimelech	"My father is king" "My father is Melech"	Genesis 20:2-4 21:22-25, 26:1,8 Judges 8:31 II Samuel 11:21 I Chronicles 18:16
Abiel	"El is my father"	I Samuel 9:1 I Chronicles 11:32
Abijah Abiah	"Yah is my father"	I Samuel 8:2. I Kings 14:1. I Chronicles 2:24; 7:8, 24:10 II Chronicles 11:20 Nehemiah 12:4.
Joab	"Yah is Father" 12	I Samuel 26:6. I Chronicles 4:14 Ezra 2:6.
Eliab	"El is father"	Numbers 1:19; 16:1 I Samuel 16:6. I Chronicles 6:12; 12:9; 15:18.
Abi-albon	Wellhausen suggests that this name is a corruption of Abibaal, "Baal is my father." 13 Possibly, this name is the same as Abiel in I Chronicles 11:32. 14	II Samuel 23:31.
Absalom	"My father is peace" "Shalem is my father" 15	II Samuel 3:3. II Chronicles 11:20,21.

I am indebted for this list of names to the extremely thorough study of Hebrew names by G. Buchanan Gray, in his Hebrew Proper Names, pages 22-34.

12

G. B. Gray suggests that Joab is probably a composite name in which the second element is ab, father. However there is still some uncertainty connected with this name. Ibid., pp.24-5.

13

This name, according to G. B. Gray, was restored by Wellhausen from Abi-albon to Abibaal. However, G. B. Gray presents some pertinent arguments against this restoration. Ibid., pp 25, 122.

14

This suggestion is by S. R. Driver and is mentioned in the Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament Based on the Lexicon by William Gesenius, p. 3.

15

Cyrus Gordon writes that Shalem is mentioned in a Ugaritic tablet as being among "the gods of Ugarit". Shalem is a son of El and the brother of Shahar, the morning star.
Cyrus H. Gordon, The Living Past, p. 158.

Below are three names with what are also probably theophorous elements and which suggest also kinship with a deity.

Ben-hadad	"Son of Hadad" 16	Jeremiah 49:27 I Kings 13:3, 24, 26; 15:18, 20; 20:1-17. II Kings 6:24; 8:7, 9; 13:3, 24, 25. II Chronicles 16:2, 4.
Bithiah	"Daughter of Yah"	I Chronicles 4:18.
Benaiah	"Son of Yah"	II Samuel 8:18; 23:30 I Chronicles 4:36; 15:18. II Chronicles 20:14; 31:13. Ezekiel 11:1. Ezra 10:25, 30, 35, 43.

16

Hadad is mentioned as the name of an Edomite king in Genesis 36:35, 36 and I Chronicles 1:46, 47, 51.

The name also appears for an Edomite king in I Kings 11:14-25.

However, Hadad was also the name of an Aramean weather deity, or storm god.

Brown, Driver, Briggs, Op. Cit., p. 212.

From the above illustrations, it is clear that there was a view that the deity was a "father" to the worshipper. But whether this was conceived as a literal descent from the deity, or the "son" or worshipper was merely considered under the protection of the deity or a disciple of the deity, is not always certain. However, from the evidence in Jeremiah 2:26,27, it is certain that among at least some groups this divine paternity was taken in a very literal sense.¹⁷

W. Robertson Smith writes that "in the heathen religions the fatherhood of the gods is physical fatherhood."¹⁸ Hence he interprets the phrase in Numbers 21:29, where the Moabites are called the sons and daughters of Chemosh, in a most literal sense; that they were the actual progeny of the god Chemosh.

...they belong to an age when society in Syria and Palestine was still mainly organized on the tribal system, so that each clan, or even each complex of clans forming a small independent people, traced back its origin to a great first father.¹⁹

¹⁷
See our discussion of Jeremiah 2:26,27
pages 56-59, above,

¹⁸
W. R. Smith, Religion of the Semites p.41.

¹⁹
Ibid p. 42.

Whether this was actually the case in Moab and in the other nations neighboring Israel we cannot presume to know. Nor can we know for a certainty whether this was also the case in the "popular" folk beliefs among the ancient Israelites. However, in the "normative" religion of the Israelites, that is, the religion that is preserved for us in our biblical sources,--the fatherhood of God was usually meant in a more spiritual sense. For after Amos, the prophets taught, in the main, that God's relationship to Israel was on the basis of a "Covenant" which implied duties and obligations on the part of Israel in exchange for God's care and protection. Of course God loved Israel. That was why God "chose" Israel to be his people in the first place. But this love had to be requited with obedience and loyalty to God's commandments. God had chosen to be a "father" to Israel. He had given commandments and religious-moral duties to his people. And if these obligations were not fulfilled then God would reject Israel. But would he disown Israel? That is a moot point about which the prophets themselves seem to disagree. In any case, God would only protect and watch over Israel so long as they deserve this care; that is, only if they are as obedient children. Isaiah, speaking for God, says in 1:15-20.

- V. 15 And when you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood.

- V.16 Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil,
 V.17 learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Then Isaiah assures Israel:

- V.18 ...if your sins are like scarlet, shall they be as white as snow? Though they are red like crimson, shall they become like wool?
 V.19 If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land;
 V.20 But if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

And likewise, Amos interprets Israel's sonship as involving additional responsibilities for the nation. For, says the Lord in Amos 3:2, "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities." Israel's relationship to the deity was one of choice and agreement, and not one of physical descent. Hence it would not be too difficult to conceive of the deity adopting other people as well. Since God's "children" were not conceived of as progeny in a physical sense, it was not impossible to think of the deity as concerning himself with other nations too. Chemosh might be a blood kinsman with Moab. But Jahwe was the God who had entered into a covenant with fathers of the Hebrew nation. Hence God could ask in Amos 9:7:

"Are you not like the Ethiopians to me, O people of Israel?" says the Lord. "Did I not bring Israel from the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor and the Syrians from Kir?"

And it would not be too fantastic and incomprehensible for

Deutero-Isaiah to say in Isaiah 49:1,3,6:

- V. 1 Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar. The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he called my name.
- V. 3 And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."
- V. 6 He says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach the end of the earth."

And ultimately, this tradition of a spiritual fatherhood could blossom into a monotheism whose magnificent universality could encompass all the sons of man. ²⁰

We read in Isaiah 42:1,4-7:

- V. 1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations.
- V. 4 He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.
- V. 5 Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:
- V. 6 "I am the Lord, I have called you in right-
eousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations,
- V. 7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

²⁰

See page 107-108, below.

And the seeds of this fatherly compassion could produce a book of Jonah where the father of all could show a profound love and pity for human beings as human beings quite aside from the fact that they belong to his chosen people.

Such a divine father could say, "And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle?"

Admittedly, there are other, contrary opinions also expressed in the Bible. There is narrow exclusivism and ethnocentricity. There is hate and bitterness expressed against strange people and foreign nations. But basic to the traditions of Israel was the belief that the deity had "chosen" Israel. In this act, lie the seeds for the teachings of an Amos, an Isaiah, a Jeremiah, a Deutero-Isaiah, and for the book of Jonah. Although Chemosh's fatherhood to Moab would limit him only to Moab -- Israel's God loved his people, but he was not limited to them alone. He was father to Israel; but he transcended the limits of this paternity.

In comparing this concept of the fatherhood of God with that of other nations and their gods, W. Robertson Smith points out that:

In heathenism it is to be observed that god - sonship has a physical sense; the worshippers are of the stock of their god, who is simply their great ancestor, and so is naturally identified with their interests, and not with those of any other tribe. In Israel, however, the idea of Jehovah's fatherhood could not take this crass form in the mind of any one who remembered the history of Jehovah's relations to His people.... Jehovah's relation to Israel is not of nature but of grace, constituted by the divine act of deliverance from Egypt. 21

Indeed, the earliest patriarchs of the nation traced their origins from distant lands beyond the Euphrates where they were not the children of Jahwe, but worshipped other gods. For example, we read in Joshua 24:2,3

V. 2 And Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and Nahor and they served other gods.

V. 3 Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River and led him through all the land of Canaan, and made his offspring many...."

Hence we find this contrast between the "natural" relationship that was thought to exist between other nations and their gods, and the covenant relationship between Israel and its God. For Israel the parental relationship was modified by a tradition of divine selection that was expressed in the covenant between the deity and his people. For Israel was not the literal offspring of Jahwe. Rather Israel was, so to speak, the foster child whose adoption rests on the terms of a covenant or agreement between Israel and its deity.

There are many references in the bible to the adoption of Israel by Jahwe, who, according to Hosea 9:10, found Israel "like grapes in the wilderness." For example, in the poem in Deuteronomy 32 we read,

- V.10 He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Ezekiel too portrays the act of adoption in particularly poignant imagery.²² We read in Ezekiel 16:3-6,

- V. 3 ...Your origin and your birth are of the land of the Canaanites; your father was an Amorite, and your mother a Hittite.
 V. 4 And as for your birth, on the day you were born your navel string was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor swathed with bands.
 V. 5 No eye pitied you, to do any of these things to you out of compassion for you; but you were cast out on the open field, for you were abhorred, on the day that you were born.
 V. 6 When I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you in your blood, "Live."

And also in Ezekiel 20:5, 18-19, we find clearly described the act of adoption, the act by which the deity undertook a fatherly relationship to Israel.

- V. 5 ...Thus says the Lord God: On the day when I chose Israel, I swore to the seed of the house of Jacob, making myself known to them in the land of Egypt. I swore to them, saying, I am the Lord your God.
 V.18 And I said to their children in the wilderness, Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their ordinances, nor defile yourselves with their idols.

²²

See also Deuteronomy 32:10-14.

V.19 I, the Lord, am your God; walk in my statutes,
and be careful to observe my ordinances.

This was, therefore, to be a completely fresh relationship. The types of worship practiced in the past were to be repudiated and completely discarded for this new deity, this "new" god who chose Israel to be his people. And basic to this adoption was a tradition of covenant or agreement between Israel and its deity. God would be a father to Israel; he would watch over Israel and care for it and protect it. But the Israelites were to reciprocate with their loyalty and obedience to the divine laws and ordinances. This sonship was to be contingent upon Israel's obedience to the terms of their covenant. Rejection of the covenant would apparently suspend the privileges of their relationship to Jahwe. This theme^{was} developed and elaborated in detail by the pre-exilic prophets.

Yet apparently the multitude of the people, together with many of their priests and so-called "false" prophets, understood the covenant relationship with God in quite the same manner as Moab or some of the other heathen peoples probably thought of their relationship with their national deities. That is, they thought that it was not necessarily a relationship resting upon moral conditions; but it was rather conceived in the form of a natural, paternal relationship based upon mutual affinity and belonging. Hence the people could confidently believe themselves assured of the unconditional protection of their God, whatever might be the

character of their morality. A major aspect of the activity of the pre-exilic prophets bore upon the constant struggle of the moral-ideal belief in God and his ethical relationship with his people, as opposed to the natural conception of the fatherhood of the deity which gave an unconditional assurance of divine protection.

Thus Micah mocks at the vulgar soothsayers who gave the masses false hopes. In Micah 2:11, he exclaims: "If a man should go about and utter wind and lies, saying, I will prophesy to you of wine and strong drink, he would be a prophet of this people." The people take their wishes and dreams as facts. God, so they would believe, certainly would not desert his children. The "false" prophets, says Micah, prophesy what they are paid for. And the people apparently paid them to prophesy what the people/^{so}desperately wanted to hear. So Micah announces to those who make the people err, crying "Peace!" when they are given as a bribe something to eat-- that the day shall be dark for them, and "the sun shall go down upon the prophets...for there is no answer from God." For the nation is being beguiled and led astray by these false hopes. "Its heads give judgement for a bribe, its priests teach for hire, its prophets divine for money; yet they lean upon the Lord and say, 'Is not the Lord in the midst of us? No evil shall come upon us.'" (Micah 3:5f.).

Jeremiah too lashes out bitterly against these false hopes aroused by certain prophets and priests. "They have

healed the wound of my people lightly, saying, 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." (Jeremiah 6:13,14). Certainly God had chosen the children of Israel to be his sons. He truly is their father. But connected with this election, was an obligation on the part of the nation. Israel must show itself worthy of its exalted position. As Amos preached: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all of your iniquities." (Amos 3:2). Hence it was incumbent upon God's children that they "Seek good and not evil, that you may live; and so the Lord God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the Lord, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph." (Amos 5:14,15).

It was against the complacent and foolishly optimistic, who felt secure in God's care and protection that Amos exclaimed "Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria." (Amos 6:1). It was (just) this very concept of the election of Israel to be a son to Jahwe, upon which the nation supported their complacent trust in God's protection. Indeed, against this false optimism, Jeremiah warns, "...Do not listen to the words of the prophets who prophesy to you, filling you with vain hopes; they speak visions of their own minds, not from the mouth of Jahwe." (Jeremiah 23:16).

We may well wonder whether these "false" prophets were

physical punishment as
an irreversible fact
chance and selection
may be conditional
and reversible

So this, perhaps, the
distinction to be drawn?
If so, the words "choice"
and "selection" are
confusing as you use
them on these pages

really as corrupt as Micah makes them out to be. Probably, as Jeremiah observed, "they speak visions of their own minds." They probably shared the popular belief that Jahwe is the special, national father of his people, whom he has chosen to be his child. Therefore, how could one fear that he would give his children over to destruction. But with Amos, and the prophets who followed after him, there arose the understanding and insight that the covenant had involved mutual obligations, after the fashion of an adoption or, in Hosea's thinking, a marriage. Moreover, the covenant obligations gave special ethical responsibilities to the nation. It was unthinkable that God should default on his obligations. Therefore, any misfortunes that afflict the nation must be the consequences of Israel's own default. By observing how God acted in their history with what appeared to be a terrible consistency, punishing evil and making righteousness on the part of the nation the condition of his being their God and protector -- the prophets taught a new and stern doctrine of God's fatherhood. This was in marked contrast with the masses who, not unlike their pagan neighbors, felt secure in their deity's love and protection. God was their father, he would undoubtedly watch over them. But the prophets taught that this fatherly love was contingent on Israel's behavior.

However, the emotion of parental love that was projected to the deity mitigated, at least in some of the prophets,

the possibility of any complete rejection of Israel. Thus in Hosea 2:1, there is the assurance that the nation will be reunited with their father, who has for the time being rejected them: "...and in the place where it was said to them 'You are not my people', it was said to them 'Sons of the living God.'" The use here of the term "living God" might be a comparison with the gods that are just inanimate idols.

But, as far as this writer knows, there is no mention of a covenant contracted between Moab and its god, Chemosh; for there the relationship was apparently one of natural kinship and probably independent of Moab's conduct. But in Israel, the concept of a covenant or contract between God and Israel plays a most significant role in the history of the development of biblical religion. God will be, so to speak, as a loving parent to the children of Israel, whom he has "chosen" or adopted; and he will care for them and protect them, but only if they prove obedient to his commandments. Should Israel disobey, then Israel would receive severe punishment and bitter chastisement from the father. We saw a similar relationship described in Psalm 89:31-33, where God's protection of the Davidic dynasty, his "first-born" son, is contingent upon whether God's commandments are kept. ²³

23

See page 51, above.

Nevertheless, there are references to the relationship between this foster-father-God and his adopted-child-Israel, that take on the tender emotion normally associated with "natural" parentage. For example, we read in Psalm 103:9-14,

- V. 9 The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- V.10 He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger for ever.
- V.11 He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor requite us according to our iniquities.
- V.12 For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him;
- V.13 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
- V.14 As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him.
- V.15 For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust.

The fatherly relationship expressed in this psalm is one of deep compassion and sympathy for the suffering and oppressed, whom God takes under his personal protection. But above all, it is a profound understanding and sympathy for his children, whose frailty he knows and understands. Indeed, did not Jahwe enter into a covenant with Israel in the first place because he loved Israel and felt compassion for it. We find such a view expressed in Deuteronomy 4:37.

And because he loved your fathers and chose their descendants after them, and brought you out of Egypt with his own presence, by his great power...

Thus in his love and in his pity, God chose them for his own, and entered into covenant relations with them. ²⁴

24

Sigmund Freud comments that "...astonishing is the conception of a God suddenly 'choosing' a people, making it 'his' people and himself its own God. I believe it is the only case in the history of human religions."

Sigmund Freud, Moses and Monotheism, p.55.

VII. The Deuteronomic Father

Most of our references in the Bible to God's fatherhood seem to interpret it mainly in its more spiritual sense. However, the imagery often used causes one to suspect that occasionally the biblical authors themselves did not always know whether they were speaking of a spiritual fatherhood or a physical fatherhood. For God was portrayed as displaying essentially all the emotions and attitudes of a real father. Apparently, it was the depth of God's feeling for Israel that was significant, rather than the degree of the deity's kinship relationship to Israel.

In three significant passages, the Deuteronomic author illustrates his view of the complex role of Jahwe as "father" to his people. These passages are in Deuteronomy 1:30,31; and in 8:3-6; and 32:5,6,18, 19-20. We read in Deuteronomy 1:30,31:

- V.30 The Lord your God who goes before you will fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes,
- V.31 and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the Lord your God bore you, as a man bears his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.

And in Deuteronomy 8:3-6:

- V. 3 And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know; that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.

- V.4 Your clothing did not wear out upon you, and your foot did not swell, these forty years.
- V.5 Know then in your heart that, as a man disciplines his son, the Lord your God disciplines you.
- V.6 So you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

The above two passages present images of God as father.

In the first example, Deuteronomy 1:31, God is depicted as a loving parent, tenderly bearing his young child, Israel, through a particularly difficult and trying period.¹ Here God is compared to a nourishing parent whose love is unconditionally given and whose tender care is freely and generously bestowed upon Israel. In the second passage, however, in Deuteronomy 8:5, God is compared to a father who sternly disciplines his son in order to teach him the correct ways in which to behave. In the wilderness, Jahwe has been as a

¹

Compare this with the tender parent images of Jahwe gently bearing his children in Deuteronomy 32:11; Exodus 19:4; Hosea 11:3; and particularly the gentle picture in Isaiah 46:3-4.

- V. 3 Hearken to me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who have been borne by me from your birth, carried from the womb;
- V. 4 even to your old age I am He, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear, I will carry and will save.

father disciplining his child and educating him with a view to the child's own ultimate good. Here the expression used for "disciplines you" is פָּדַלְתָּ . The root of this verb (פָּדַל) denotes education in a moral sense.² It is probably used to suggest the discipline with which a stern parent trains his child. We find examples of this usage in Proverbs 19:18 and 29:17. Moreover, we find a statement in Proverbs 3:11,12 that aptly expresses this relation. "My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof, for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights."

²

There is a similar use of this root in Deuteronomy 4:36 and 11:2,

However, the root is used in the sense of more severe chastisement and punishment in Leviticus 26:8; Psalm 6:2; and in Jeremiah 10:24 and 30:14.

In I Kings 12:11,14 and Psalm 39:10,11, the punishment involves flagellation.

Now we shall turn to the third passage in the book of Deuteronomy where the deity is pictured as being in a parent-like relationship with Israel. In the magnificent poem contained in Deuteronomy 32:1-43, there are found several instances of this motif. In verse 6 of this poem God is designated as the father of his people, whom he has created and established. The author asks, "...Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you." Here the deity is evidently considered a physical father or procreator of his people. In verses 5 and 19-20, however, God is pictured as a father who has been bitterly disappointed by the disloyalty and the dishonor that he has received at the hands of his ungrateful children.

- V.5 They have dealt corruptly with him, they are no longer his children because of their blemish; they are a perverse and crooked generation.
- V.6 Do you thus requite the Lord, you foolish and senseless people? Is not he your father, who created you, who made you and established you?
- V.19 The Lord saw it, and spurned them, because of the provocation of his sons and daughters.
- V.20 And he said, "I will hide my face from them. I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faithfulness.

In verses 5-6, God is deeply grieved by the ingratitude of his children for all the care he has bestowed upon them. Therefore, in verses 19-20 God rejects them. In anger (see verses 35-36) he will seek his vengeance in their destruction.

And in all this, God is pictured pathetically as a bitter parent, disillusioned by his children's unfeeling ingratitude. He has done wonderful things for them, yet they show no awareness of their debt to him. His love is unrequited; they are insensible to their obligations to him, unconcerned about any consciousness of gratitude. Verses 10-12, describe how tenderly God took care of Israel.

- V.10 He found him in a desert land, and in the howling waste of the wilderness; he encircled him, he cared for him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.
- V.11 Like an eagle that stirs up its nest, that flutters over its young, spreading out its wings, catching them, bearing them on its pinions,
- V.12 The Lord alone did lead him, and there was no foreign God with him.

Despite all this tender care they refused to remain loyal to their God. ³ Consequently, this nation of ingrates must bear the wrath of God's unrequited love. Thus, according to the Deuteronomic writer, God is "father" to Israel. But he will protect Israel and watch over the nation only so long as they are ^{as} obedient children and loyal to their father.

³
We see this ungratefulness presented sharply in Deuteronomy 1:31-33.

- V.31 And in the wilderness, where you have seen how the Lord your God bore you, as a man bears his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.
- V.32 Yet in spite of this word you did not believe the Lord your God,
- V.33 who went before you in the way to seek you out a place to pitch your tents, in fire by night, to show you by what way you should go, and in the cloud by day.

Moreover, in the same poem in Deuteronomy 32, God is also pictured as a mother, travailing with her infant and bringing him painfully into the world.

V.18 You were unmindful of the Rock that bore you,⁴
and you forgot the God who gave you birth.

But this verse too, in the larger context of the poem, does not express a love that is unconditionally offered.

⁴ *הַיָּהוָה יָלַדְתִּי* is usually translated as "begat". However since the verb here is in the kal, rather than in a causative, it would be better to translate it as "bore you", which would also fit the parallelism of the verse better. Moreover, an unhewn pillar or "rock" can have a feminine interpretation.
See page 60, above.

? cf
Gen
4.18
10.8

You are interested in the passage 3.14 (p.88)
whether it is by Jessemiah or not.
If you doubt that Jessemiah wrote
the paper form is "The authors
of Jer. 3.14..."

VIII. Parental Love

It was this spiritual kinship between Jahwe and his people Israel that was probably closer to what Jeremiah meant in 3:4 and 3:19. For here Jeremiah points out that although Israel appeals to God's parental love (Jeremiah 3:4,5), ¹ nevertheless they will receive just punishment from the deity as from an angry parent. God's fatherly protection is made contingent on Israel's behavior. This is not unlike the Deuteronomic writer. But Jeremiah seemed to retain throughout an apparent tenderness for the nation that the stern Deuteronomic writer sometimes appears to lose. Jeremiah's picture is of a God who is tormented by grief for the punishment he must inflict upon his beloved children. We read in Jeremiah 3:4,5;

- V.4 Have you not just now called to me, "My father,
thou art the friend of my youth -
V.5 will he be angry for ever, will he be indignant
to the end?" Behold, you have spoken, but you
have done all the evil that you could.

Here the deity is called the "friend of my youth," perhaps the one who dandled the child on his knee. Possibly this same phrase, "friend of my youth", when interpreted in the context of 3:1, in which is discussed the problem of whether a divorcee who has remarried after her divorce may return to her original husband, may mean "sweetheart." In any case, Israel has matured and deserted Jahwe to turn to evil and

720. 24
is an
analogy

¹
See footnote on page 6, above. ; but - ?

corrupt ways. For this, the people have been punished with drought (verse 3). Israel appeals to God, asking whether he will remain indignant always. If Israel repents and returns, Jahwe as father might possibly forgive them. But if, as in verse 1, Israel is thought of in terms of the relationship of a divorced wife who had remarried, then it is doubtful whether Jahwe would ever be able to forgive and take Israel back.² In any case, in this instance, the deity's loving care was conditional, depending directly upon Israel's behavior and being denied to Israel when Jahwe is provoked.

In verse 14, however, Jeremiah writes in a somewhat different vein.³ "Return, O faithless children, says the Lord; for I am your master; I will take you, one from a city and two from a family and I will bring you to Zion." Here Jahwe begs Israel to repent, to acknowledge its guilt (verse 13) and he will forgive Israel and take it back.

²

See Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

³

Dr. Sheldon Blank observes that many of the ideas in Jeremiah 3:14-18 are "characteristically post-exilic", and, therefore, are probably not by Jeremiah. Sheldon Blank, Op. Cit. p. 13.

Of course, "One from a city and two from a family" might be small consolation to a decimated people. But at least there would be a future. At least there is hope for God's mercy to a remnant of the people.

In this verse in Jeremiah 3:14, Jahwe is also designated as "master", giving the fartherly relationship a distinctly authoritarian tone.⁴ This contrasts sharply with the picture presented in verse 19.

⁴
The expression used is לָקַח אֶת בְּתוּלָה . The Hebrew root לָקַח is used in Isaiah 26:13 to express dominion or rule over someone. As a noun it is sometimes used for deity, husband, owner, and ruler. This root is also applied to deities, as in the case of בַּלְעַזַּר , or to the proper name of a specific Canaanite deity, Baal. Below are some examples of its usage in the Bible.

1. as a verb "to marry," Genesis 20:3; Malachi 2:11.
2. as a verb "to rule over", Isaiah 26:13; I Chronicles 4:22.
3. as a noun for foreign deities, Judges 2:13.
4. as a noun for owner of property, Exodus 21:29.
5. as a noun for rulers, Isaiah 16:8.
6. We find in Hosea 2:18 the root used in this manner:
"And in that day, says the Lord, you will call me,
'My husband' ($\text{אֶתְּ$), and no longer will you
call me, 'My Baal' (בַּלְעַזַּר)."

There we find the father-son relationship expressed in still a different way.

V. 19 I thought how I would set you among my sons, and give you a pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful of all nations. And I thought you would call me, "My Father," and would not turn from following me.

Here the deity is described as a disappointed parent who had had such high hopes for Israel. God has adopted Israel to be his very own. He has given it a "pleasant land, a heritage most beautiful of all nations." Nevertheless, Israel has been foolish and ungrateful and has callously turned away from God. Yet here there is no indication that God has consequently withdrawn his love from his people. For despite Israel's sins, God cries out "Return, O faithless children..," (Jeremiah 3:14); and again "Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness..." (3:22). Jeremiah felt confident that ultimately, after Israel had been duly chastised and purged of its iniquities, God would once again be to his people as a loving father.

And in Jeremiah 31:9, the deity is pictured as a loving father who is at last reunited with ^{his} child, Israel. Almost like a shepherd (verse 10) he leads them gently back to their home.

V.9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them back; I will make them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path in which they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.

Here God and Israel, father and son, are reunited in unrestrained joy. ⁵

5

This calls to mind the classic statement of reconciliation between father and sons in Malachi 3:23,24:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the land with destruction."

Erich Wellisch has made a comparison between the father-son relationship as presented in the classical Greek and the Biblical sources. The classic Oedipus myth ends in patricide and tragic destruction for all involved. The father is murdered; the mother, after having married her son, commits suicide; Oedipus blinds himself and ends his days as a wanderer haunted by hopeless guilt. The children of Oedipus too all end their careers disastrously.

However, in the Biblical account of the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham withholds his knife and the two generations, father and son, walk together ('יִצְחָק') and are henceforth bound together in a covenant of love. According to Wellisch, in the biblical view, love triumphs over competition and fear.

Erich Wellisch, Isaac and Oedipus. pp. 50-52, 78, 114.

Here in fact, Israel was thought to be in a special position of favor to God. Thus Ephraim is described as the "first-born" son, the son who, according to Deuteronomy 21:17, receives a special birthright from his father. ⁶

In Jeremiah 31:20 is one of the most beautiful expressions of parental love in the Bible: "Is Ephraim a darling son unto me? Is he a child that is dandled? For as often as I speak of him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore my heart yearneth for him, I will surely have compassion upon him, saith the Lord."

6

In Exodus 4:22, 23 God instructs Moses to say to Pharaoh:

"Thus says the Lord, Israel is my first-born son, and I say to you, 'Let my son go that he may serve me, if you refuse to let him go, behold I will slay your first-born son.'"

As in Jeremiah 31:9, 20, the biblical ideal of parental affection also is most tenderly drawn and most sensitively illustrated in the prophecy of Hosea. To express something of the tenderness and protecting care which God has shown to his people, Hosea speaks of God's relation toward Israel during the early years of their contact as those of a loving father towards a baby son. For in his attempt to express the depth of Jahwe's love toward his people Israel, Hosea did not confine himself to the analogy of the relation between a husband and a wife. He used also the comparison of the relationship between a parent and child. As a father loves his son, so does God love Israel. But this is in bitter contrast with the ungrateful son who is now older and who has forgotten his father's love and care during former years.⁷

7

George Aaron Barton has observed that: "The primitive conception of physical fatherhood became after Hosea the conception of a moral father with all the high qualities of an unselfish parent raised to an infinite power... whose rule demanded perfect ethical relations between his sons, and especially between his sons and daughters."

George Aaron Barton, Semitic Origins, p. 306.

Although he must chastise Israel for its sins, God takes no joy in this and will not completely destroy his beloved children, whom he will ultimately forgive. Even while God is smiting the nation, he feels a tender affection and love for them. This pictures God in a tragic position. He must punish Israel; yet, nonetheless, he loves Israel.

Hosea presents a most touching picture of God's love for his child, Israel, God recalls most vividly the tender parental love and compassion that he has felt for his children from the earliest period of their relationship. But his children foolishly requite God's love and devotion with disloyalty and rebelliousness.⁸ We read in Hosea 11:1,2:

- V. 1 When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt I called my son.
- V. 2 The more I called them, the more they went from me; 9 they kept sacrificing to the Baals and burning incense to idols.

Can there be a more tender picture of parental love and affection than that of a loving parent first teaching the young child how to put firm steps on the ground and walk.

8

In Isaiah 1:2, God voices a similar complaint: I have nourished and reared children and they have rebelled against me."

9

We are using here the N.S.R.V. translation. The Hebrew text however, would be translated "the more I called them, the more they went from them."

B.3 And it was I ¹⁰ who taught Ephramim to walk, I took him up in my arms; but they did not know that I healed them.

God has cared for Israel, guiding and directing him.

V.4 I led them with cords of compassion, ¹¹ with the bands of love, and I became to them as one who eases the yoke on their jaws, and I bent down to them and fed them.

Above we have the picture of someone gently leading an animal, and stooping to feed it. And in Hosea 7:15 we find what appears to be a picture of a son who is somewhat further along in age and on a further stage of maturity; and who is being instructed by his father in more vigorous exercises. "Although I trained and strengthened their arms, yet they devise evil against me." But willful and perverse Israel insisted on worshipping foreign gods. Jahwe himself laments in Hosea 11:7, "My people are bent on turning away from me." But despite their sins, God feels a warm love for his people, his children.

10

We are using here the N.S.R.V. translation. The Hebrew text, however, would be translated "...I took them by their arms."

11

We are using here the N.S.R.V. translation. The Hebrew text, however, would be translated "...with cords of a man."

*Does the NSRV assume
a different text?*

We read in Hosea 11:8,9:

- V.8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim !
 How can I hand you over, O Israel !
 How can I make you like Admah !
 How can I treat you like Zeboiim !
 My heart recoils within me, my compassion
 grows warm and tender.
- V.9 I will not execute my fierce anger,
 I will not again destroy Ephraim;
 for I am God and not man, the Holy One in your
 midst, and I will not come to destroy. 12

Thus the prophet Hosea, in addition to his famous image of Israel being as an adulterous woman who is unfaithful to her husband, God --also depicts God's relationship to Israel as one contrasted by parental affection and filial ingratitude and impiety. Here Jahwe's fatherhood to Israel is conceived of as based on both parental affection and stern authority. At times these two attributes seem in conflict, and God is depicted as torn by an inner turmoil between his justice and his mercy. In Hosea, God the father appears almost as a tragic figure. Not unlike David, whose heart "longed to go forth"¹³ to his rebellious son Absalom, the heart of the deity too may be said to have "longed to go forth" to Israel his son.

12

We are using here the N.S.R.V. translation. The Hebrew text, however, would be translated "I will not come in fury."

13

II Samuel 13:39. See page 35-36, above.

Hosea perceived that beneath God's burning wrath was an unquenchable love for Israel. Hosea would have believed with the Psalmist: "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him. For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are dust." ¹⁴

¹⁴

Psalm, 103:13, 14.

We shall now consider two passages in Isaiah 63:16 and 64:8 where a significant insight is given into the concept of the fatherhood of God. Both these passages appear in the form of prayers. We shall quote these passages below together with the other verses before and after them in order to preserve their context.

Isaiah 63:15-19a:

- V.15 Look down from heaven and see from thy holy and glorious habitation. Where are thy zeal and thy might? The yearning of thy heart and thy compassion are withheld from me.
- V.16 For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us; thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer 15 from of old is thy name.
- V.17 O Lord, why dost thou make us err from thy ways and harden our heart, so that we fear thee not? Return for the sake of thy servants, the tribes of thy heritage.
- V.18 Thy holy people possessed thy sanctuary a little while; our adversaries have trodden it down.
- V.19 We have become like those over whom thou hast never ruled, like those who are not called by thy name...

Isaiah 64:7-11:

- V. 7 Yet, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are clay, and thou art our potter; we are all the work of thy hand.
- V. 8 Be not exceedingly angry, O Lord, and remember not iniquity for ever. Behold, consider, we are all thy people.
- V. 9 Thy holy cities have become a wilderness, Zion has become a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation.
- V.10 Our holy and beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, has been burned by fire, and all our pleasant places have become ruins.
- V.11 Wilt thou restrain thyself at these things, O Lord? Wilt thou keep silent, and afflict us sorely?

Both these passages present poignant prayers for God's mercy to be shown once again toward his people, who have obviously suffered some recent catastrophe (64:9, 10). Apparently the Temple, which had been recently built and had been standing for only a short while has been destroyed (63:18). The prophet recognizes that these disasters are from the hand of God; they are punishment for the nation's sins (64:8). Hence he pleads for God's forgiveness and mercy. The people are frail and do not really know what they do. Therefore, pleads the prophet, they should not be held strictly responsible. Indeed, the prophet appeals to God, pleading that they are powerless, mere clay in the hands of the Divine Father. He asks God to remember that he is Israel's God (64:8), their father (63:16; 64:7). Implied also is a certain amount of bitterness and accusation against the father, who has in some way caused his people to err (63:17, 19a; 64:7). In this prayer God is depicted as a father who has sternly withheld his paternal protection from his children, apparently because they have sinned. However, the prophet argues that God should not be so severe; that he should forgive them because they are his own people, and that they are powerless. The prophet points out that they are like helpless clay in the potter's hand. But there is also suggested a defiant, almost challenging, ring in the prayer when the prophet accuses God: "O Lord, why dost thou make us err...?"

The prophet asks the deity to remember that he is their father and, therefore, he alone can help them, and that they are utterly dependent upon God. Just because of their helplessness, the prophet demands that God come to their assistance for "we have become like those who are not called by thy name."

The passage "For thou art our Father, though Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us", perhaps refers to some popular expectation of assistance from the deceased ancestors of the nation which has been disappointed by the catastrophe that has fallen upon the nation.¹⁶ Therefore, the nation has no one but God to whom to appeal. Hence as a son, the prophet desperately appeals to God, the father of the nation. As the children of God, they can approach God. And they can reason with the deity as a child with a parent. Convinced of God's paternal affection for Israel, as were Jeremiah and Hosea, the author of these two passages can confidently approach the deity with an expectation of a sympathetic and understanding hearing.

16

This might be similar to the figure of Rachel weeping for her children, in Jeremiah 31:15. Possibly the forefathers were thought of as serving as intercessors for the nation to God. Hence the prophet must approach God himself in behalf of the nation.

IX. Father to the Oppressed

We have thus far considered the fatherly affection that was thought to exist between the deity and Israel the nation and between the deity and the king of the nation. We shall now consider God's parental concern as it was thought to exist for the widows and orphans and the oppressed. We find this illustrated in Psalm 68:6, 7. ¹

- V. 6 Father of the fatherless and protector of widows
is God in his holy habitation.
- V. 7 God gives the desolate a home to dwell in; he
leads out the prisoners to prosperity;
but the rebellious dwell in a parched land.

Here we have presented two possible views. If both of these verses in their present form are original to the psalm, then the author made God's care and protection contingent upon the loyalty and the submissiveness of his people, for "the rebellious dwell in a parched land." However, if as Charles Augustus Briggs suggests ² that the last line quoted above is a later gloss,-- then God's love is apparently proffered without any prior conditions.

In both cases, however, God is viewed as a "father to the fatherless" and a "protector of widows." Both the words "father" and "protector" (or judge) appear to be used here almost in the same sense; that is, he would serve as their vindicator against injustice and abuse. But how would the

¹
In Psalm 10:14, God is described as "the helper of the fatherless."

²
Charles Augustis Briggs, The Book of Psalms, Vol. II, p.98.

deity accomplish this? We find what may be a similar use of the word "protector" or "judge" (13) in I Samuel 24:15, where David says to Saul: "May the Lord therefore be judge, and give sentence between me and you, and see to it, and plead my cause, and deliver me from your hand." Here the deity would serve as "protector" or judge by:

1. giving sentence or judgement between David and Saul,
2. pleading David's cause (but before whom?),
3. delivering David from Saul's hand.

Thus we may infer that in Psalm 68 God would uphold the cause of the widow and orphan by seeking justice for them as an advocate and judge. And possibly he may administer his sentence by some sort of miraculous interference in the affairs of men or by a partial direction of the forces of nature. Perhaps, on the other hand, the deity would do this in the manner of an "avenger" ³ as we see in Lamentations 3:58-60,64.

- V. 58 Thou hast taken up my cause, O Lord,
thou hast redeemed my life.
- V. 59 Thou hast seen the wrong done to me, O Lord;
judge thou my cause.
- V. 60 Thou hast seen all their vengeance, all their
devices against me.

Therefore,

- V. 64 Thou wilt requite them, O Lord, according to
the work of their hands.

³

There are examples of a kinsman "avenging" the "blood" of his slain relative in Numbers 35:19,21,24,25,27; Deuteronomy 19:6,12; and in Joshua 20:3,5.

Likewise, there is the warning in Proverbs 23:10-11 not to "enter the fields of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is strong; he will plead their case against you." We find a similar reference to God as "Redeemer" in Jeremiah 50:34, where God is described as the redeemer of the "people of Judah." Moreover, when Job 19:14 is compared with Job 19:25, we find the suggestion that although Job is deserted by his kinsmen who have failed to fulfill their duties (whatever they are) in behalf of Job, nevertheless Job will be vindicated by God; for Job knows "that my Redeemer lives."

On the other hand, however, perhaps here in Psalm 68:6,7 God's function as kinsman for the widowed and orphaned is in a somewhat different sphere. Possibly like a kinsman, the deity would act as a "redeemer" in the sense that it is used in Leviticus 25:47-49.

- V.47 If a stranger or sojourner with you becomes rich and and your brother beside him becomes poor and sells himself to the stranger or sojourner with you, or to a member of the stranger's family,
- V.48 then after he is sold he may be redeemed; one of his brothers may redeem him,
- V.49 or his uncle, or his cousin may redeem him, or a near kinsman belonging to his family may redeem him...

If this^{is} the sense that God is a "protector" in Psalm 68:6, then perhaps this may be also what was meant in verse 6, where God is described as leading "out the prisoners to prosperity." ⁴

⁴ This might also be the sense of kinship duty that is suggested in Hosea 13:14 where God asks: "Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death?..."

X, Toward A More Universal Fatherhood

We have discussed the figure of God presented as a father to his people.¹ But implicit in this conception were two views of the deity: procreator and nourisher; the first view suggested that as a physical father, so too was God the progenitor of his people.² The opening verses of Genesis presents God as a creator. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." But just a father sustains and cares for his children, so too was the deity viewed as being deeply concerned with the welfare of his children. Hence a psalmist could say, "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear him... The steadfast love of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting." For the Lord knows that "we are dust."³

¹
David Jacobson writes that it was common in Semitic thought for gods to be depicted as parents to their worshippers.

(Gods were) regarded as related to members of the group of which they were protectors... The most natural relationship was the father-son kinship of the deity and the people, and occasionally even the deity and the individual.

David Jacobson, Op. Cit., p. 192.

²
In Genesis 10 are long genealogical lists. The progenitor of a nation was described as "the father of..." and the nations were designated as "the sons of...."

³
Psalm 103:13-15.

But as a father has his duties and responsibilities toward his children who can expect to receive guidance and protection from him, so too do they owe the duty of filial piety toward their father. Malachi speaks for the deity when he asks Israel in Malachi 1:6:

A son honors his father and a servant his master.
If then I am a father, where is my honor? and if
I am a master, where is my fear?

Here Malachi uses the word "son" in parallel with "servant," and "father" in parallel with "master" -- defining the subject status of a son to his father. ⁴ Malachi presents in 1:1-5 a simple view of the conditional nature of the deity's love toward Israel. The deity recognizes that both Esau-Edom and Jacob-Israel are brothers and that the deity is, therefore, father to both people. Nevertheless he says, "Yet I have loved Jacob and I have hated Esau." Indeed, the deity has shown his love for Israel by ^{the} destruction of Edom, Israel's enemy. "I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert." Now Edom will be called "the wicked country" because everyone who sees the thoroughness of Edom's destruction will know that Edom must surely be detested by the deity. Here is presented a direct correspondence between God's love and man's prosperity and God's hate and man's destruction.

4

See page 15, above.

But sometimes, as with the biblical father, the deity must chastise and punish his children for their disobedience and misdeeds. Hence, if the children of Israel want lasting security and prosperity, they must be careful not to arouse the anger of the Lord, but must obey his authority and commands as those of a strict father. Malachi's father-figure, unlike those of Hosea and Jeremiah and the authors of Isaiah 63-64 and the author of the book of Jonah was mainly^a punitive God who based his relationship to his children primarily on a basis of rewards and punishments. God assures Israel in Malachi 3:7 "...return to me, and I will return to you." In any case, the righteous of the nation will not be forsaken; for God will reward them for their righteousness. "...the Lord heeded and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and thought on his name. They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him." (Malachi 3:16,17).

But in Malachi 2:10, the prophet verges on an insight into the fatherhood of God that is boundless in its implications for a universal view of mankind. Malachi asks Israel rhetorically: "Have we not all one father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers." Here, in the context of the prophecy, Malachi is addressing only his people Israel. He seems to argue that since God is Israel's father and they are all his children, then it follows naturally that a brotherly love should be shown one to the other, and family loyalty and faithfulness upheld. Perhaps Malachi is protesting against schismatic elements within his community. Nevertheless, the implications of this remark are boundless. In Malachi 1:2 Malachi recognizes that Esau-Edom too is the brother of Jacob-Israel and therefore both are the children of God. Yet in Malachi's view, God loves Israel alone and hates Edom. Malachi never comes to see that the proposition in 2:10 would apply equally well to Edom and ultimately to all mankind; to a spiritual unity and kinship of all nations and people. He approaches the threshold of this magnificent concept, but is never quite able to enter and grasp hold of it with all of its implications. Of course, there were probably historical reasons for Malachi's limitations, just as there are still historical limitations preventing our own contemporaries from fully grasping hold of this ideal. Too few people today, just as too few people in Malachi's time, are able to draw the

implications of the concept of the Fatherhood of God.

We have seen that the concepts of the Fatherhood of God, like other ideas, underwent changes in the long cultural history of ancient Israel. And these changes were not always progressive toward a universalistic and a more humane view of God's fatherhood. These changes were, at times, regressive as well as progressive. Amos and Deutero-Isaiah preceded Malachi. Yet Malachi's views were in many ways far more primitive than the views of his two predecessors.

Basically, the Fatherhood of God, found its model in the elementary parent-child relationships that prevailed in the biblical family. As Israelite society grew and expanded out of its tribal shell, so too did the insights into the Fatherhood of God grow and expand. We find in Malachi, and in many of the other prophets as well, the kernel of a concept which was to grow in time into one of the finest flowerings of the spiritual genius of man: the brotherhood of all men under the Fatherhood of One God. For as our view of our heavenly Father grows and expands, so too does our view of man.

XI. Conclusion

The mind does not seem to be able to conceive of personal existence without some aspect of the familial relationship, in either the human or the divine spheres. That this is so seems natural, considering that the initial contacts that an individual has are in some sort of familial situation. No matter how sophisticated the human intellect becomes, a human being appears incapable of fully outgrowing conceptualizations in familial terms, with a basic pattern of child-parent relationships, whether these relationships be based on tender love, stern authority, or a delicate combination of these two extremes. One may employ different, complex or more mature terminology and thought concepts, but students of modern psychology have clearly demonstrated that behind these word-symbols are the basic familial models.¹ Therefore, it would be almost impossible to describe in any meaningful way the conception of the fatherhood of God in the Bible without some understanding of the role of the father in the biblical family.

1Sigmund Freud, A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis pp. 214-8.Kingsley Davis, Human Society, pp. 404-6.Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language, pp 32, 202-210.

The composite character of many of the books of the Bible, however, makes it difficult to discover exactly what the patterns were of the biblical family at different stages in the composition of the Bible. This difficulty holds true also with conceptions of the deity and of his relationship to the community of Israel, as well as to the individual worshipper. Therefore, it is impossible to be dogmatic in speaking of them. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there was a direct parallel between the organization of the biblical family and the biblical conceptualizations of God; that is, there was a direct correspondence between the parent-child relation and the God-worshipper relation.

As we have seen the familial patterns appeared in various parts of the Bible. We presented descriptions of the familial relationships as they were found in both the human and the divine spheres. For example, we observed in the Patriarchal narratives intimate views of the idealized domestic life of the progenitors of Israel. In addition, we reviewed some of the legislation found in the Pentateuch that dealt with the authority that parents ordinarily possessed over their offspring, as well as the obligations which the latter owed to their parents, particularly in attitudes of honor, respect, and deference. Moreover, we included with this the instructions, found particularly in the book of Proverbs, concerning relations between parents

and children, especially in reference to the function of the family as a major educational medium. But throughout most of our illustrations, we saw that basic to the parent-child relationship was a consciousness of mutual affection and responsibility and duty. And just as the relationships between the child and the parent were personal and intimate, so too were so many of the "encounters" of the worshipper and his deity.

We have discussed the tradition of Israel's adoption by Jahwe. Such a conception had to emerge from a nation that had itself been made up perhaps of a conglomeration of other tribes and nations whose own traditions may have been different one from the other. In any case, whatever were the historical reasons for the development of such a tradition -- the nation believed that it had been "chosen" by its deity to enter into a covenant through which the nation would become the "sons" of Jahwe. A sense of national unity could thus emerge even from a most heterogenous people if they were convinced that at some time they had been commanded "not to walk in the statutes of your fathers, nor observe their ordinances."

We have shown that there were apparently two different interpretations of this fatherhood of the deity. One view which undoubtedly had acquired wide, popular appeal especially in pre-exilic times, was that the deity was as an actual progenitor of his people. Although they were "chosen" to be his sons, nevertheless his relation to them was no different from that of a real father. This view of the divine paternity was not too different from the view probably held by some of Israel's neighbors, such as Moab. There Chemosh may have been considered as a progenitor of the nation and therefore, as an actual blood kinsman. So too was Jahwe thought by many to be a physical father to Israel. Therefore, he would be expected to be closely identified with the nation and personally

concerned with its prosperity and welfare, regardless of any moral considerations. It was from among the adherents of such a belief that there would arise faith in the impregnability of Samaria or Jerusalem. Such a belief could not easily conceive of Jahwe deserting his children.

But alongside of this confidence in God's paternal care was another interpretation of the fatherhood of God which grew from a new emphasis in the traditional view of the covenant. Yes, Jahwe was father to Israel. But he had chosen to be father to this people. The relationship was not natural, but one of choice. Of course, this choice was made because of God's love and pity for his people; this choice was made, so to speak, because of God's grace. But nonetheless, this divine paternity was to continue on the basis of the covenant agreement, which made moral demands upon the nation.

In any case, the deity was presented in our biblical sources as a real personality who could not only love and hate, but who displayed the complexity of emotions and ambivalence that only a "living" being could feel. He was the "living God" and, as such, could become involved with his children in ways that defy theological formulae. Jahwe was father to his people. Aspects of this fatherhood could be described as being sternly punitive and authoritarian. Other aspects of it could be described only as showing tender affection, profound love and compassion. Yet, in the main, these are only parts of a picture that conceived of a living relationship between the divine-father and his nation-son.

As opposed to an unapproachable force of nature, or a universal absolute or some philosophical "God-head" that is austere and blind to human needs and aspirations and feelings-- God as father in the Bible was a personality, intimately involved and concerned with the affairs of men. Our study has shown a conception of God that is standing in an ethical relation to man, and especially to his children Israel. As such, biblical history may be interpreted as being a record of God's personal relations and concern with Israel, and with his moral claims and the proclamations of his acts to his own people. God in the Bible was a being who knew and who cared about the lives of human beings. As a personality, God was aware and concerned and involved with man and the affairs of men. It was a deep and an abiding fellowship between the deity and the worshipper. Scholars may rightly raise questions about the historical developments of biblical religious conceptualizations. But basic to all these changing conceptualizations was the personal relationship between the deity and his people. ²

2

Commenting on the development of monotheistic religion, Freud observes that: "It (monotheism) had revealed the father nucleus which had always lain hidden behind every divine figure; fundamentally it was a return to the historical beginnings of the idea of God. Now that God was a single person, man's relations to him could recover the intimacy and intensity of the child's relation to the father. If one had done so much for the father, then surely one would be rewarded -- at least the only beloved child, the chosen people would be."

Sigmund Freud, Future of an Illusion, pp. 53-4.

Of course the question could be raised, for example, at what point in biblical history did monotheism actually emerge. Was Abraham a monotheist? Were Moses or Samuel or David or Amos or Isaiah monotheists? Passages like those in Genesis 35:2-4 and Joshua 24:2 raise doubts about whether monotheism was the basis of religious belief almost from the beginnings of biblical history, or whether monotheism was rather the gradually emerging product of many generations of spiritual wrestling and questioning and struggling with the concept of God and his relationship to Israel. Nevertheless, the elementary one-to-One or child-parent relationship between the worshipper and his deity was the same. For basically, so long as the god was addressed as "father", as the one to whom prayer was directed, then the dynamic of the living relationship was probably the same whether we are dealing with polytheism or monotheism. ³

3

An inadequate understanding of this living relationship between the worshipper and his god may be seen, for example, in the writings of even so noted a scholar as the late Dr. David Neumark. Dr. Neumark recognized the dual aspect of God's attributes: an attribute of rigid justice along side an attribute of tender mercy. In the evolution of the stages of biblical "speculation", according to Dr. Neumark, there emerged first the concept of the zealous "God of Vengeance." But, continued Dr. Neumark, "reaction was bound to come before long... a God that knows no mercy had no prospect of endearing himself to the hearts of the people." Thus far Dr. Neumark's observations appear reasonable and might be historically accurate. But Dr. Neumark displayed an apparent misunderstanding of the religious encounter when he wrote in his Philosophy of the Bible.

"Further reflection on this question, notably the endeavor to remove the evidently conflicting conceptions of the 'gracious and compassionate God' and the 'zealous God,' was gradually leading up to attempts of writing these attributes in one formula by way of compromise. These were the first efforts toward a definition of the ethioal God conception.... This was bound to lead up to an endeavor to coin a new name for God... to designate their God-conception by one word, by a name which would stand as a sign for the attributes united in the compromise formula." (page 13).

Thus God is devoid of any personality and is conceived in a "formula" by way of Compromise" based on the coinage of a new name for God. Dr. Neumark continued in this fashion:

"The new name won the hearts of many prominent individuals and their groups for a new God-conception, and led up to the basis of a Covenant between this national unity and the God of Justice and Mercy." (page 15).

However, Dr. Neumark conceded:

"This was a task not easy of accomplishing as it is also evident that it took a development of centuries to accomplish it. The postulates of the new God-conception... called for a thorough reform of the entire system of life. (Ibid, p. 15.)

The above quotes from Dr. Neumark are illustrative of the extremes to which some scholars have gone to project an objective theory of rational and systematic evolution of the God "idea"; rather than seeing it as a dynamic complex that revealed itself in the lives of living men. How can one abstract a valid philosophy of biblical religion without some sense of the passion of the biblical religionist, without seeing it as what it probably meant to a person in a living relationship with his god. This abstraction would seem almost as futile as a committee of some modern Jewish congregational association reporting, for example, on "A God Concept for the Twentieth Century Jew," in an effort to come up with perhaps a more practical view of the deity or God-idea; rather than seeing religion as a natural outpouring of the human heart, possibly growing toward an ever deeper awareness of an encounter with the Divine. How could Dr. Neumark's conception of divine attributes possibly explain such an outpouring as that in Hosea 11:8-11:

- V. 8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim !
How can I hand you over, O Israel !
How can I make you like Admah !
How can I treat you like Zeboiim !
My heart recoils within me, my compassion
grows warm and tender.
- V. 9 I will not execute my fierce anger,
I will not destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not man, the Holy One
in your midst, And I will not come to destroy.
- V. 10 They shall go after the Lord, he will roar
like a lion; yea, he will roar, and his sons
shall come trembling from the west;
- V. 11 they shall come eagerly like birds from Egypt,
and like doves from the land of Assyria;
And I will return them to their homes,
says the Lord.

For, such an exclamation as that of Hosea springs from a living concern, an involvement, a deep and abiding faith. Indeed, such a profound faith is livable rather than describable.

It was in our illustrations from the prophetic writings that we found most explicitly expressed the ideal of parental affection and/^{the} Fatherhood of God. As God was considered the source of life and the final authority in the affairs of men, so too was the deity viewed as the parent par excellence. Hence in the descriptions of the reciprocal relationship between God and Israel, we have a glimpse into the biblical ideals of parental affection. ⁴

4

Maurice Samuel shows how among groups of modern Jews there is expressed a peculiar intimacy of relationship that is thought to exist between God and his people.

The incidence of God in Yiddish usage also sets the language apart. In it God appears in the double and not contradictory role of the Infinite and the Homebody. One may speak of Him as "He that lives forever", and also address Him as "Dear little God, dear little Father" (Gottenyu, Tattenyu) without incongruity. The intimacy with which the Chassidic Jew in particular treats the Everlasting at times would shock outsiders; it verges now on argumentative impudence, now on a maudlin assumption of kinship; and it passes from these without difficulty to resignation, humility and awe.

Maurice Samuel, The Professor and the Fossil, p.51.

We have shown that the concept of the fatherhood of God can suggest different connotations even within the larger context of the Bible. For example, in its most primitive form it could refer to an actual physical descent from some totemistic ancestor. But usually the fatherhood of God as presented in our biblical sources suggested the peculiar parental concern and affection that the deity was thought to feel for his people. For just as a father is the begetter of his children, so too did God come eventually to be seen as the creator and the preserver of mankind. Just as a father feels paternal love and compassion for his child, so too is God thought to feel love and tenderness and compassion for Israel. And just as a father instructs his child, so too is Israel thought to be taught and instructed through the media of the Revelation at Sinai and also through the Prophets. And as a child is punished by his father for disobedience, so too is Israel thought to be chastised and disciplined for its disobedience. "For the Lord reproves whom he loves." But as a father finally forgives the child whom he has duly punished, so too is Israel thought of as eventually receiving God's forgiveness. It was from this insight that there grew the magnificent belief in a Messianic hope for a better future.

But there was an additional element of the parental relationship between God and Israel that was significant in the development of biblical religion. The "chosenness" of Israel and the "covenant" agreement between God and his people we have shown added new dimensions to the view of the fatherhood of God. The deity had pitied the desolate and abandoned children of Israel and "chose" them to be his children. Hence he may be said to have adopted them. But, as has been pointed out, the prophets taught that this adoption was conditional. The conditions of this adoption were the covenant: so long as Israel remained loyal to the deity and faithful to his commands, then Israel would continue to rest secure under the care and protection of the deity. In this sense, the fatherhood of God had added to it an ethical element.

While not necessarily denying to God any of the attributes of a metaphysical nature, the biblical conceptions of the fatherhood of God insist that God, in his relations with Israel, has personality. For purposes of practical religion, it is God as a person with whom one has to deal. And in the context of biblical society, it seemed most natural that this person be conceived in the figure of a father. Of course this concept of the fatherhood of God may be dismissed by some "moderns" as crudely anthropomorphic.

More significant, however, than any picturing of the deity as a man, was a profound humanization of the concept of God. God was concerned with man; He felt for and with man. And consequently, man assumed infinite worth as a child of God, and life took on added value and significance as the concern of God.

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