

Blessings on fathers in Yeshua's name!

Rich Blessings in *Avinu Malkeinu*,

Our Father, Our King!

A Father Restored

Once in a great while we read a story in a newspaper, magazine or book that so touches us that we keep pondering it over and over. Such was the case last month when we read a story in the N.Y. Times about a fireman from Buffalo, NY who spoke to his family after ten years of silence. We share the story with you this month as it appeared, praying that it will speak to your heart as it did to ours.

A Buffalo firefighter who apparently suffered brain damage in a 1995 burning roof collapse and has since been virtually silent and nearly blind had a sudden unexplained recovery on Saturday, animatedly speaking to family and friends and trying to recover a lost decade.

"How long have I been gone?" the puzzled firefighter, Donald Herbert, 44, asked in a 14-hour marathon of hugs, kisses, reunions and conversations with his wife, four sons, other relatives and old firefighter comrades. "We told him almost 10 years, and he said 'Holy cow!' " Simon A. Manka, his uncle, recalled yesterday. "He thought it had been three months."

In a news conference at Father Baker Manor, a skilled nursing home in the Buffalo suburb of Orchard Park, where Mr. Herbert has been a patient for seven years, Mr. Manka said his nephew - who has passed most days in a wheelchair in front of a television set - abruptly returned to life and "began to speak after nine and a half years of silence."

Pending medical tests, Mr. Manka said, the extent and the probable duration of Mr. Herbert's recovery are unknown. "However, we can tell you he did recognize several family members and friends and did call them by name."

It happened out of the blue Saturday morning, a nursing home employee said.

"I want to talk to my wife," Mr. Herbert was quoted as saying. A staff member called his wife, Linda, but it was his youngest son, Nicholas, 13, who picked up the phone and began speaking. "That can't be," Mr. Herbert said. "He's just a baby. He can't talk."

Nicholas was indeed a toddler when Mr. Herbert, then a 34-year-old member of a fire rescue squad, rushed into a burning two-and-a-half story apartment building in Buffalo on the morning of Dec. 29, 1995. He wore a

breathing mask against heavy smoke and was searching the attic for victims when the roof collapsed.

Buried under flaming debris, Mr. Herbert was knocked unconscious and, according to reports at the time, went six minutes without oxygen before other firefighters pulled him free. They carried him out a window and down a ladder, and he was taken to Erie County Medical Center in critical condition.

Mr. Herbert, who had rescued two adults and two small children in a 1990 fire and had many citations for bravery, had severe head trauma as well as prolonged oxygen deprivation and remained in a coma for two and a half months.

An avalanche of cards and letters, meanwhile, was delivered to his wife and sons, Donny, 14; Tom, 13; Patrick, 11; and the baby Nicholas. News articles at the time described Mr. Herbert as a dedicated family man, coaching his children's soccer and baseball teams, taking them hunting and fishing.

Fellow firefighters rallied around the family, helping with the boys, with shopping, with financial help. The outpouring of support included a benefit party, organized by firefighters and other well-wishers, at the Memorial Auditorium in Buffalo. Thousands attended, and tens of thousands of dollars were raised.

While Mr. Herbert regained consciousness in 1996, his speech was slurred, he was unable to eat without assistance, he was confined to a bed or a wheelchair and his vision was reduced to a series of blurs. Doctors said that they had found no damage to the optic nerves, but that the part of the brain that controls vision appeared to have been damaged. Moreover, Mr. Herbert's memory seemed all but nonexistent. He could not say how old he was or what his job had been. He seemed unable to recognize family members and friends, and firefighting comrades had become virtual strangers.

In 1999, a year after he was moved to the nursing home, Linda Herbert prevailed in a brief legal fight with Mr. Herbert's parents, Geraldine and Donald P. Herbert, over who should have control over decisions in a medical emergency, like pneumonia or a serious infection. All agreed that extraordinary resuscitative measures should not be taken in the event of a stroke or a heart attack.

But Mr. Herbert's condition remained stable over the years. "He would sit in a wheelchair in front of a TV with no awareness," Linda Herbert's mother, Mary Blake, said yesterday. "He could say yes or no, but he could not put words together or talk back if people asked him a question. Most days, he just sat silently."

On Saturday, as word of Mr. Herbert's progress spread, a stream of visitors arrived at Father Baker Manor for joyous reunions with a man who had seemed lost to them.

For a stretch of 14 hours, Mr. Manka said, Mr. Herbert spoke with people and asked questions, especially about his sons: Donny, now 24, and Thomas, 23, both in graduate school; Patrick, 21, a college student, and Nicholas, 13, a schoolboy but hardly the infant his father remembered. "He wouldn't go to sleep," said Ms. Blake. "He stayed up all night talking to his sons."

Mr. Manka, a lawyer, said in a telephone interview that his nephew's apparent recovery struck everyone as amazing. "He was completely different," he said. "He was asking questions, and he'd recognize a voice. When somebody came in the room, he'd say the name before anyone told him who it was. He was the same for nine years, and then all of a sudden he started talking."

Patrick J. Coghlan, who was the lieutenant in charge of Mr. Herbert's rescue squad on the night of the roof collapse and who retired in 1999, remembered years of all-but-fruitless visits by colleagues to the nursing home, with Mr. Herbert sitting quietly, seemingly unable to respond. On Sunday, he said, Mr. Herbert recognized the voices of his comrades and, while he could not see them, identified members of his old crew.

No one had an explanation. "We don't know what to make of it," Mr. Manka said. "The doctors haven't finished their evaluation. The doctors are cautiously optimistic, and so are we." "We have no idea how it happened," Ms. Blake said. "There are more people praying for this young man, so it's all in God's hands. Even if we had him for just one day, we'd be eternally grateful."

Our Father Speaks

The first thing that the Lord ministered to us after we read about Donald Herbert's miracle is that God is full of surprises. He is the Awesome God who opened the Red Sea for His people Israel. *"Who is like You, O LORD, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing wonders?"* (Exodus 15:11) God is still doing wonders, performing miracles today. Nothing is impossible with Him (Luke 1:37).

Secondly, there is always hope with God. Yeshua is *Tikvah Israel*, the Hope of Israel. We are to never give up hope, never give up on anyone, always cling to the hope that the Bible speaks of in Job 14:7, *"For there is hope for a tree, If it is cut down, that it will sprout again. . ."* and in Psalm 71:5. *"For You are my hope, O Lord GOD; You are my trust from my youth."* More on hope: *"You are my hiding place and my shield; I hope in Your word."* (Psalm 119:114) *"For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."* (Romans 8: 24-25) Recently we have seen people come to salvation, including a family member who had been prayed for during more than thirty years. God came through at 11:59. He is never late. Hope in God!

Donald Herbert's selflessness and heroism in rushing into a burning building to save others reminds us of a far greater sacrifice made by the Son of God, Yeshua, who voluntarily laid down his life to rescue all of mankind from the flames of hell.

The sentence in the NY Times article that touched us the most was: "He wouldn't go to sleep, He

stayed up all night talking to his sons." This is the Father's heart. God, our Father, wants to communicate with His sons (and daughters). Perhaps that's why He never sleeps (Psalm 121:4). Our Father wants to hear all about us, what we're doing, what we're feeling, what's on our heart, what our hopes and dreams are. He also longs to share **His** heart with us, His hopes, His dreams, His desires, His good plans for our lives. When was the last time you stayed up all night talking with the Father? If you are a father, are you taking the time to listen to your children and communicate your heart to them? Don't wait until next week, next month or next year. We have today, no one but God knows about tomorrow.

Neil's Reflections on Fathering

On trusting God: The first truth about God that Abraham shared with his son Isaac was: "*My son, God will provide...*" (Genesis 22:8), and He did. Abraham taught his son to look for God in the everyday of life. When a sacrifice was needed, when food was scarce, even when a bride was needed.

The greatest blessing a father can give his son is to teach him to value God's presence, His provision, and His Word. Neil has taught his sons to look to God's word for wisdom for every situation, and to expect God to have a solution for every problem.

On making good choices: Neil drove his sons to school from preschool through high school. Each day, he would remind them that life was full of choices, and that all choices had consequences. Then he would pray that they would make good choices, choosing God and good, choosing to be a blessing, and choosing to resist the temptation to be a cursing in someone's life.

On teaching one's children: In Bible times, the father was the primary educator of the children. He was the communicator of divine truth, the "living Bible," since no written Bibles existed. The fundamental goal of Jewish parenting was the transmission of an historical and ethical heritage. "The Talmud especially emphasizes this obligation of the father to teach his children: 'The father is bound in respect of his son, to circumcise... teach him Torah, take a wife for him, and teach him a craft.' " [Wilson, p. 280]

Neil Abraham (like his ancestor mentioned in Genesis 18:19) has always sought to teach his sons through his example of servanthood, humility, and integrity.

"Abba, Father"

While God is spoken of a number of times in the *Tenach* (Holy Scriptures) as "Father," with special emphasis on His **mercy** as a Father, no one addresses God as "my Father." That level of intimacy appears in the Brit HaDasha, beginning with Yeshua and His relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, His Father.

The Jewish people of Yeshua's day (and our day as well), have many prayers that include the word *Avinu*, our Father. But Yeshua, as Marvin Wilson points out in his book **Our Father Abraham**, often used the phrase "my Father" (*Avi*) when praying. Furthermore, he also called God "Abba" (Mark 14:36). "In first century Jewish society a little child would call his father "Abba," or "Daddy," but the term was so intimate and familiar that a Jew would be considered irreverent if he used it of God." (Wilson, pp. 56-57).

We had a personal experience with the word "Abba" twenty five years ago when we lived in a

home on Ft. Lauderdale beach and welcomed over 65 of God's children into our home over a period of eleven years. Five of these "children" included an Orthodox rabbi, his wife and three children who lived with us for seven weeks. Moshe's children called him "Abba." This was natural for them. What was totally unnatural and somewhat shocking for this family was the fact that we address God as "Abba." This level of intimacy was foreign to Moshe and his family.

The "Abba," "Daddy" relationship, the childlike closeness that we as Messianic believers have with God, is only possible through the Son of God, the Messiah Yeshua. Yeshua's relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was one of divine Sonship. That same sonship is available to all those who by faith, are adopted into God's family. *"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."* (Galatians 4:4-6)

Jack Frost: Insights on Fathering

On the first of our new series of television programs, *ALEF*, we interviewed Jack Frost on the topic of receiving the Love of God as Father. Here is a segment of that interview.

"We have demonic strongholds, but we have what I like calling mental strongholds. Mental strongholds are habit structures of thinking and a habit is something that is repeated so often, it is involuntary. There's no new decision of mind each time the habit is performed. We have mental habits or strongholds of the way we see God. That is one of the greatest hindrances to people really knowing intimacy with God because a stronghold is in disagreement with what God has said about Himself. As for my life, I always saw God as an angry authoritarian, abusive God that was just waiting to punish me, waiting to send me to hell, waiting to give me what I deserved. I had a stronghold; I saw God through the lens of my earthly father. Because my earthly father was harsh and authoritarian, and I had to perform right to get any look from his eyes of acceptance, it built a stronghold of belief in me that in a father's eyes, the only way I could have acceptance was to be perfect. If I wasn't perfect, then I would get "the look," the look that my dad would give me that I didn't have acceptance. It was a stronghold. So years later, when I became a believer in Yeshua, my image of God was that He was angry with me and I could never be good enough, and I could never pray enough, and I could never earn enough of His love and acceptance. So I always lived in torment and fear. I lived in the fear of failure in His eyes, the fear of rejection. This drove me to try and pray more, and to fast more. I could never rest in Him. I could never find peace in Him because there was a stronghold exalting itself above the nature of a loving, caring God."

May our Father show you how much He loves and cares for YOU!

Neil and Jamie

P.S. Jack's 7 disc CD series From Slavery to Sonship is excellent, foundational, and a real blessing. Order your set this month.