



## Communal Culture: The Father's House

### Notes

#### Bet Av = The Father's House

- Foundation of society
- The patriarch is the oldest cognizant male, ultimate authority, all are identified by him
- Multi-generational household
- As a son married, the girl left her father's Bet Av and joined her husband's Bet Av
- Example of the term "father's house": Genesis 50:22
- When a Bet Av grew too large, it divided. Example: Genesis 13 Lot and Abraham separating.
- You can't survive on your own, need your community

#### Nested Society

- A few Bet Avs together make a **clan**.
  - Shared values, stories, rivalries. A good place to find a spouse (2nd or 3rd cousins).
  - Example: Abraham got a wife for his son Isaac from his clan in Haran. Later Isaac's son Jacob also found his wives there.
- A few clans form a **village**.
  - Shared resources (e.g. water source, threshing floor, winepress; later a synagogue)
  - Homes clustered together, land to farm outside the village. Land is part of the family and inherited; do not want to lose it.
- A group of villages shared being in the same **tribe**.
  - 12 tribes of Israel; the Promised Land was divided among them.
  - Not unique to Israel. There were also 12 tribes of Esau and tribes in cultures today.
  - New Testament: tribes were less linked to their land portion, but the tribal identity remained (e.g. Anna in Luke 2 from the tribe of Asher, Paul, a Benjaminite).
- The tribes together form a **nation**.
- Example of this nesting: Joshua 7:14

#### The Bet Av as a safety net

- The patriarch was responsible for those in his Bet Av.
  - The Bet Av was a safety net for its people
  - Example: Genesis 14 Abraham rescued Lot and his possessions after being kidnapped.
- Orphans and widows at great risk if they lose their Bet Av, have no patriarch.
  - Example: Ruth and Naomi

## Us and God's Bet Av

- Ephesians 2:12-13 We were separated from God, like being without a Bet Av, but we were brought near by Christ.
- Acts 15:14-17 Gentiles are called by God's name.
- Ephesians 1:5 We were adopted as sons through Jesus.
- We bear his name and need to carry it well since we represent his Bet Av to the world. We are under his authority and protection.
- God is our Father and also King of the nations/world.

## Discussion

1. What is the building block of our society? How has that changed in recent decades? How does that compare to the Bet Av?
2. How does the image of the Bet Av and God's desire to protect and provide for us as our greatest Patriarch add to your understanding of what God does for us?
3. Do we try to make it on our own without a community? What benefits and challenges are there for having a community of fellow believers?

Read the following passages regarding the Bet Av.

Translations vary -- some refer to "father's house" and others to "family" or something different. All of these passages have one or more uses of "bet av."

4. Genesis 12:1. How was this countercultural for Abraham?
5. Joshua 2:12 and 2:18. Who was saved through Rahab's actions? Why?
6. 1 Samuel 2:27-31. What was the sin and what was the punishment?
7. Esther 4:12-14. If Esther had not acted, who could suffer and why?

These texts do not use the term "bet av."

8. Judges 14:1-3. Why were Samson's parents upset? Who did they expect him to marry?
9. Revelation 7:9. Who is included in Messiah's household/Bet Av?

## Recommended Resource

[The Believers](http://thattheworldmayknow.com) (thattheworldmayknow.com)

Learn more about the Bet Av from Ray Vander Laan (4-minute video )

