

# Separation of Father and Son in Genesis

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"Who is YHWH? However we interpret it, the Name of God means ultimate dominion: He-Whom-There-Is-No-Escaping."

~Thomas Cahill,

### The Gifts of the Jews<sup>1</sup>

Ultimate dominion, that God's rule is final, is the heart and soul of the Book of Genesis. In the beginning there was God; later, God created man (Gen. 1.1, 1.27).<sup>2</sup> But how does God's ultimate dominion affect the relationship that develops between God and man? Several times in Genesis God makes a [covenant](#) with man (Gen. 6.18, 17.2-8, 28.13-14). Explicit in this agreement, man is put in charge of perpetuating God's covenant, or in essence perpetuating the Israelite race. On the one hand, then, it is the father's job to impart knowledge of this important relationship to his son. On the other hand, the son must also take an active role in learning about and connecting with God. To do so, however, the son is forced to separate himself from his father in order to establish a [singular](#) or individual relationship with God. Juggling the father's role and the son's role in the passing of the faith from one generation to the next creates a tension that at first seems to

put a strain on the ultimate dominion of God. It is this very tension, however, that reinforces God as the preeminent being.

Examining this relationship of father and son for every male character throughout Genesis would prove overly exhaustive and unnecessary. In fact, the characters themselves are not of singular importance to the doctrine of Genesis. Rather, it is the formula of separation that emerges as the larger "lesson," so to speak, inherent in Genesis. This formula can be derived through an extensive comparison of two primary characters, which, of course, can then be extrapolated to incorporate othe...

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... As we have seen, the separation of father from son in Genesis is necessary so that the son can develop an equally personal relationship with God and, in turn, sustain an equally living and vital knowledge of God as the absolute provider and father. Further, the more radical the separation the more strongly impressed in the son's mind becomes the separation and, in turn, the ultimate dominion of God. It is little wonder, then, that the Hebrew interpretation of God, YHWH, has been carried through hundreds of generations and survived great epochs—after all, YHWH is "He-Whom-There-Is-No-Escaping" (Cahill 113).

#### Works Cited

1. Thomas Cahill, *The Gifts of the Jews: How a Tribe of Desert Nomads Changed the Way Everyone Thinks and Feels* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1998), 113.
2. The Holy [Bible](#), Authorized (King James) Version.

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