

# FAMILY BREAKDOWN-THE REMEDY-WEEK THREE

*Written by Rabbi Philip Hammond.. Posted in Reconciliation 2015-2016*

We enter this week with the intention of viewing an example of a family breakdown that Yeshua described in one of His parables. This example covers many areas that reflect the situation that the Children of Israel have experienced in the past, but continue to experience in the present. We would pray and hope that this situation would change in the not too distant future. So let us now view the example I am alluding too.

11 And He said, "A man had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.' So he divided his wealth between them. 13 And not many days later, the younger son gathered everything together and went on a journey into a distant country, and there he squandered his estate with loose living. 14 Now when he had spent everything, a severe famine occurred in that country, and he began to be impoverished. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would have gladly filled his stomach with the pods that the swine were eating, and no one was giving anything to him. 17 But when he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough bread, but I am dying here with hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired men."' 20 So he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; 23 and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found.' And they began to celebrate.

25 "Now his older son was in the field, and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he summoned one of the servants and began inquiring what these things could be. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your

father has killed the fattened calf because he has received him back safe and sound.’ 28 But he became angry and was not willing to go in; and his father came out and began pleading with him. 29 But he answered and said to his father, ‘Look! For so many years I have been serving you and I have never neglected a command of yours; and yet you have never given me a young goat, so that I might celebrate with my friends; 30 but when this son of yours came, who has devoured your wealth with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him.’ 31 And he said to him, ‘Son, you have always been with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found.’” Luke 15:11-32 [NASB]

This story has it all. Most counselling sessions could use this story to provide the necessary foundation for the help being sought. With this in mind let us inspect the value we can receive from this account to help with the reconciliation process of the Whole House of Israel. As with every story it has a beginning, and in this case it is vital we take a little time to look at this beginning. This is vital because it relates to the division within the family and the cause thereof.

Yeshua opens this particular parable describing the family situation whereby telling us that there were three main players in the parable. These central characters are the father, the older son and the younger son. So if an artist was to paint a picture of this initial beginning you would see a father with his two sons, perhaps around the family table, or standing outside side by side in discussions of some sort.

It is very likely that the younger son had been exposed to the many attractions of the “world”, perhaps engaging in the many activities his local peers engaged in. These activities and exposure to other thoughts and processes caused the young man to want more than he was given at home. He was opened up to new and numerous paths to walk and enter. He could visualise great opportunity and excitement, that staying at home under the direction of his father could not offer. So when he was old enough and the situation presented itself, he demanded that his father give him his share of the family wealth. This share of the wealth would allow him to begin his adventures and remove him from the family home and in his mind the “restrictions” that come with it.

It didn’t take long before the younger son organised himself and gathered his belongings and headed off into what is described as a distant country. What was the underlying

factor in the actions so described of the younger son? I would suggest it was the “love” of self. His whole focus was on himself and what rewards he could receive if he left the father’s house. He wanted to escape what he saw as the unfair restrictive laws of the father’s house. He wanted to do his own thing. He was desperate to build his own “kingdom” and break away from the family values and traditions.

Without the guidance of the father and the long held family values, it came about that all the pleasures and schemes that he had such confidence in actually robbed him of everything. His share of the family wealth had gone and he quickly found himself in dire straits. What was he to do? He no longer had the protection of the family and its resources. He no longer had the counsel of the father, and he was in a foreign country that operated with rules different to his upbringing. None the less he decided he would do what most do in such a situation. He would continue his rebellion and join forces with those who could offer him nothing of value, but in his mind it allowed him to “save face.” Those he had joined obviously had no real interest in his welfare once his money and wealth had run out and he was sent out to feed pigs. Here was a child from the House of Israel not only feeding pigs, but so hungry he was contemplating eating the same food as he was giving the pigs. It was this coming to the end of his own resources that caused a re-think in his mind. I am persuaded it was not just coincidence that pigs were used to paint the picture of the situation he found himself in. It was and is still well understood that pigs are an unclean animal, and no child of Biblical Israel should be found in pig pens, especially if such circumstances are due to the rebellious decisions of a stiff necked child. Can you imagine the temptation this younger son had before him, an empty stomach and a supply of bacon walking around? Yet perhaps his response to his predicament may actually have been influenced because he was surrounded by pigs. There may have been a vastly different outcome if he was sent out to feed some sheep or goats. Perhaps the sight of the pigs kicked off his thought process back to his upbringing and what values he was taught at home. If [and I can only say if] the animals had been sheep or goats, he may have killed one to eat, and as said, the outcome would have been very different. The situation in the pig pen brought him to his senses. He began to reconsider his opinions of the family value system and the provisions and protection it provided. He knew the stability that was found in the family “business”, stability that even allowed the hired hands to be far better off, than he was. The younger son was about to undergo the process of Teshuvah.

Please notice the recorded order of this process. Firstly it comes off the back of finding himself completely “bankrupt” in a foreign distant country, with no friends. He is in the middle of a field of pigs, feeding them but he himself is starving and going without food. He is trapped and has nowhere to go. His only hope of survival is to return to the father’s house. Praise God, he returns with a broken and contrite heart, and not a scheming and deceitful heart, still wanting his own way. He acknowledges that he must go to the father and say that he has sinned. However notice he says he has sinned against heaven, in the father’s sight. Think upon this for a moment. The younger son admits he has gone against the holy Torah of HaShem. The very Torah his father taught both he and his older brother. He is so contrite, that he states he is no longer worthy of being a son, a trusted family member. He believes his place in the family structure should be no better than a hired hand. So with this in mind he made the decision to follow through on his thoughts and go to his father admitting his rebellion and sin.

From the account outlined we can assume the father was constantly praying for the return of this “lost” son. We are told the father saw him coming home from afar and ran to the son and kissed him with a loving kiss. In this moment the son confessed to the father of his rebellion against heaven [read HaShem] and stated that he was no longer worthy to be a family member. The younger son’s teshuvah was genuine. The younger son was now focusing on the “things” from above, instead of himself. He was focusing on the values taught in the family home. He was at the point that he could begin the process of devoting himself completely to another over and above himself. He had come home. This was not only a physical homecoming but a spiritual one. He had returned home to embrace the family values, and appreciate that these values were for his benefit. It was these same values that allowed the father to continue to love and pray for this “lost” son. This same son, who no doubt caused countless nights of lost sleep, brought shame upon the family name, split the family in two and squandered a considerable amount of the family’s wealth. This father could love this wayward son because his devotion was to another and not himself. The father had learnt and embraced the values of the Holy One of Israel, the same values Yeshua was teaching when sharing this parable. However the story continues. The father was to show another example of these “heavenly values.” Because the Teshuvah of the son was genuine, forgiveness was instant. The father showed this by installing the son to a place of authority within the family structure. The younger son was given the best robe [perhaps a priestly gown], a ring was put on his finger [this was similar to a modern day credit card], and he was given sandals for his feet, no longer a bare footed slave, but a restored son. Celebration was had with the killing of the fatted

calf, followed by eating and merriment. The father was celebrating the return of this “lost” son, a son that was described as dead, but now had returned with a contrite heart, fully embracing the family values and thus could be described as one who had come back to life.

However there was one member of the family that was far from ecstatic with these proceedings. The older son was not impressed with the love shown by the father and was not willing to join the party. He showed jealousy and as such he also rejected the family values regarding this issue. The older son was quick to remind the father about the torahless life that the younger son had led. How he had spent the family money on serving and engaging in worshipping the gods and idols of foreign lands. The father told the older son, rather than focus on these past issues, he should be happy that his brother had returned to take up the responsibilities and values of the family. The older son had no justification for being jealous as he always had the best the father had to offer. The father had good reason to be angry with the younger son, yet he chose the response of love over the response of anger. In truth both sons failed to follow in the footsteps of the father by failing to uphold the family values in regards to biblical love. At different stages and circumstances both sons fell into the destructive trap of loving and focusing on self. No doubt the younger brother had become more wayward, but once he saw his foolishness he returned to the father with a broken and contrite heart. The younger son showed no jealousy towards the older son after he had performed teshuvah [thus circumcised his heart] and returned home. The younger son had gone through a “born from above” experience and faithfully went forward focusing on the values taught by the father.

It is worth noting that it was only the father who had the love and mercy required to restore the family back together. It was the father who was on a constant look out for the younger son to return. It would have been the father who was in continual prayer for the overall situation to be rectified. It would fair to say the schism that had occurred would have broken the father’s heart. The father was overwhelmed with joy when the younger son returned home, and was disappointed by the reaction of the older son. The father knew the importance of the occasion. A lost son had returned to the light and life of the family, and the family was afforded the opportunity of once again becoming echad on all levels. The only stumbling block now was the reaction of the older brother. The older brother was challenged on many levels with the return of the younger son and needed to perform Teshuvah as well. The older son had to have the same heart as the father and truly welcome his brother home with open arms. The older brother should have had

confidence in the judgements and reactions of the father, putting aside his own thoughts and judgements warped by self absorption.

Some may be asking what has this got to do with the reconciliation between the Two Houses of Israel, others may see it very clearly. Most Christian commentators see the younger son as the Jewish people and see the returning younger son as those Jews who convert to Christianity. I do not believe this to be the case and challenge this conclusion. Next week we will be looking at the reasons why I challenge this teaching and how this parable truly relates to the reconciliation between the Two Houses.

Until then remember!

Truly there is no God like our God, the God of Israel and no nation like the Nation whom He elected.

Blessings to all citizens of biblical Israel,

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