

# FAMILY BREAKDOWN-THE REMEDY-WEEK FOUR

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

This week we are going to view how the parable of the “lost son” is an outline of what has and is taking place in the reconciliation of the Two Houses of Israel. Last week we went through the story and briefly viewed the various behaviours and responses of the central characters in the story. We looked at how the younger son was absorbed with satisfying his own wants and the result of this rebellion. We looked at the different responses from the father and the older son when the younger son returned to the fold. So with this in mind let us now have a brief look at how this story relates to the Two Houses/Kingdoms of Israel.

We opened this series by viewing the recorded events in 1Kings chapter 11 and 12 that outlined the schism of Israel. We know this resulted in the formation of two kingdoms or Two Houses of Israel. We have the Northern Kingdom [Israel made up mainly of ten tribes], commonly called and known now as the House of Ephraim/10 tribe Israel, and we have the Southern Kingdom [Mainly two tribes, Judah and Benjamin] commonly called and known as the House of Judah. The records show that the Northern Kingdom set up their own rules and religious regulations generally ignoring the Torah of Moshe.

“For Israel had torn [itself] away from the house of David, crowning Jeroboam son of Nebat [over themselves], and Jeroboam pushed Israel away from following HASHEM and caused them to commit a grave sin. The Children of Israel went in [the way of] all the sins of Jeroboam, which he committed, they did not turn away from them, until HASHEM removed Israel from His Presence, as He had spoken through the hand of all His servants the prophets. So Israel went into exile from their land to Assyria, to this day.” 2Kings 17:21-23 [AST]

This resulted in them losing their identity and being scattered throughout the nations, thus becoming “lost”. In other words the “House of Ephraim/Israel” is labelled as “lost” because they indeed lost their way and identity becoming estranged from the instructions of HaShem.

Judah on the other hand, for the most part, have been following the instructions of HaShem and as such have kept their identity and cannot be described as “lost” in this context. Granted this is a simplistic overview but it should help us view the parable of the lost son in the light of the reconciliation process.

With this in mind let us once again bring the main characters of this story into focus. We have the family, the father and the two sons. The biblical picture being painted for us is as follows. The family represents the Whole House of Israel, the father represents our heavenly Father, the older son represents the House of Judah and the younger son represents the House of Israel/Ephraim.

If we re-read the parable viewing the father as HaShem, the younger brother as Ephraim and the older brother as Judah, we have a picture of our past history as a nation, a picture of our nation at present, and a picture of our nation in the future. The past is shown when the younger son [Ephraim] decided to leave the father’s house and go into a far country. This reflects the Northern Kingdom under Jeroboam leaving the instructions of the Father and following their own man made instructions that also employed the rituals of other faiths and gods. Sadly this is a picture of today’s Christian church, an organisation whose “kings” take the people away from the teachings, values and instructions of HaShem. It is well recognised amongst many biblical scholars that Christianity very likely makes up the majority of present day Ephraim.

Now keep in mind that in the Ancient Near East it was customary for the inheritance only to be given when the father had died. So it would be fair to say that the younger son [Ephraim] had totally removed from his mind any thoughts that the father or family had any value. He saw the ways of the father [HaShem] as outdated and dead – a “thing” of the past. He [Ephraim/Christianity] was eager to leave behind the instructions of the father, and move onto new teachings and develop for himself a whole new way of living. The younger son approached the father determined to go his own way and demanded his inheritance, and as we witness the father allowed it without argument. This alludes to the historical event of Ephraim/Israel being scattered throughout the nations.

We fast forward to today and we find the pattern continuing. Do we not witness the Christian Church refusing to acknowledge the validity of the torah, preferring to follow their own set of rules instead of the Whole House instructions of the Father. For instance modern day Ephraim would rather worship on Sunday instead of the Sabbath. This

modern day Ephraim has changed the Moedim /Appointed days of the Father to suit their political purposes. Christianity celebrates the unbiblical days of Christmas, Easter, and Sunday. They engage in eating unclean foods and the list goes on.

We know from the parable the time arrives when the younger son finds himself starving in the pig pens. This is now beginning to unfold. A small section of Ephraim is beginning to realise it is starving for food – spiritual food from above. There is an awakening amongst the ‘Northern tribes’, some are realising that they have been spending time in pig pens consuming food that has carried them so far, but it ends in starvation and death. Ephraim due to the decisions made by them in past generations have constantly fed on a diet of error and falsehood. None the less Ephraim/younger son doesn’t stay lost/dead. He realises he has been residing in a foreign, strange, and distant land, consuming products that are far from the Promised Land. Ephraim begins to realise the error of his ways. Ephraim finally admits he has been living a life that has had him adhere to the false teachings and deceitful promises of pagan kings and gods. Ephraim comes to the realisation that life is found in his Father’s house and the values taught therein. Ephraim knows he must arise, leave behind the pig pens and associated filth and return home via the narrow way.

“Enter by the narrow gate, since the road that leads to destruction is wide and spacious, and many take it; but it is a narrow gate and a confined road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” Matthew 7:13-14

It is vital for any who have strayed from the Father’s house to understand that in order to return and partake of the wealth found therein, they must recognise they are standing in pig pens. They must return by following and adhering to the narrow protective path of the Torah. The younger son/Ephraim fully understood this after he came to his senses. He knew he had sinned against heaven and needed to admit this before the Father and perform Teshuvah. The father/HaShem had been waiting for the return of this one who had lost his way due to leaving the household and following the pagan ways of the nations.

This is mirrored today in the fact that HaShem is waiting for Ephraim to come home. He is waiting to rejoice in the homecoming of this “lost house” of Israel.

Praise HaShem there are signs this is taking place as Christians slowly acknowledge the fact they have been following the rules and constitutions of man not HaShem. It must be stated that it is not only Christians who make up the House of Ephraim, but they are a large component of this House. The question Ephraim must ask itself is who and what does it love. Who is Ephraim dedicated too?

Past history shows that Ephraim often strayed from its dedication and faithfulness to HaShem. A few examples taken from the book of Jeremiah will give evidence of this.

“4 Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel.<sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord,

“What injustice did your fathers find in Me,  
That they went far from Me  
And walked after emptiness and became empty?

6 “They did not say, ‘Where is the Lord  
Who brought us up out of the land of Egypt,  
Who led us through the wilderness,  
Through a land of deserts and of pits,  
Through a land of drought and of deep darkness,  
Through a land that no one crossed  
And where no man dwelt?’

7 “I brought you into the fruitful land  
To eat its fruit and its good things.  
But you came and defiled My land,  
And My inheritance you made an abomination.

8 “The priests did not say, ‘Where is the Lord?’  
And those who handle the law did not know Me;  
The rulers also transgressed against Me,  
And the prophets prophesied by Baal  
And walked after things that did not profit. Jeremiah 2:4-8 [NASB]

6 Then the Lord said to me in the days of Josiah the king, “Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there. Jeremiah 3:6 [NASB]

However it wasn't only the House of Israel/Ephraim that was faithless to HaShem Judah was guilty as well. Judah also must ask who it is dedicated too. Why is Judah jealous of Ephraim/Israel? Who does Judah want to please, HaShem or the over bearing leaders of its House? Can Judah show the same love for Ephraim that the Father has shown? Has Judah always had the best interests of the Father's Household at heart? Further examples from Jeremiah answer these questions.

7 I thought, 'After she has done all these things she will return to Me'; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also. 9 Because of the lightness of her harlotry, she polluted the land and committed adultery with stones and trees. 10 Yet in spite of all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to Me with all her heart, but rather in deception," declares the Lord. Jeremiah 3:7-10

For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and to Jerusalem,

"Break up your fallow ground,  
And do not sow among thorns.  
4 "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord  
And remove the foreskins of your heart,  
Men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem,  
Or else My wrath will go forth like fire  
And burn with none to quench it,  
Because of the evil of your deeds." Jeremiah 4:3-4 [NASB]

So we should be in little doubt that both Houses of our nation have been rebellious in their behaviour on various occasions and continue to be so. Judah continues to show frustration and little regard for its "younger brother". Judah considers itself pious and righteous because it has for the most part stayed in the Father's house. However there is to be some interesting developments when the House of Israel/Ephraim repent of their rebellious ways and return to the ever loving Father.

Consider the following verses of scripture in light of our subject.

11 And the Lord said to me, "Faithless Israel has proved herself more righteous than treacherous Judah. 12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north and say,

‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares the Lord;

‘I will not look upon you in anger.

For I am gracious,’ declares the Lord;

‘I will not be angry forever.

13 ‘Only acknowledge your iniquity,

That you have transgressed against the Lord your God

And have scattered your favors to the strangers under every green tree,

And you have not obeyed My voice,’ declares the Lord.

14 ‘Return, O faithless sons,’ declares the Lord;

‘For I am a master to you,

And I will take you one from a city and two from a family,

And I will bring you to Zion.’

15 “Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding. Jeremiah 3:11-15

The House of Ephraim will return and take up residence once again in the family home and obey the Father’s instructions. The Father will pour out His love and mercy and pronounce Ephraim/Israel more righteous than treacherous Judah. This is the equivalent of the father putting the robe, ring on the hand and sandals on the feet on the younger son in our parable from the book of Luke. One other important point not to miss is the fact that when Ephraim repents [Teshuvah] and comes home the Father will then give them shepherds who are faithful to Him, shepherds who will feed them on the beauty of the Torah. The Torah is the path to knowledge and understanding. The Torah is actually a living “organism”; it is life and provides life. Yeshua HaMoshiach is the Living Torah, and it is none other than He who is calling “Lost Ephraim” home. He is leading the way. Ephraim would do well to actually follow in His footsteps, the footsteps of Torah, instead of just talking about it.

When Ephraim does Teshuvah [returns home] we are told they will be seen by the Father as more righteous than treacherous Judah. To grasp the importance of this statement let us explore the expanded meanings of the words: Righteous and Treacherous.

Righteous/Tsadeq/Tzedeq – The Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew tells us the root meaning of this word is: Satisfy objective justice. The word is also used to describe: Complete restoration, declare right, vindicate. It is worth noting that present day Judah

uses the word Tzedeq to describe one who is righteous through application of Torah. It is also worth noting that a few in the House of Judah are beginning to call Yeshua a Tzedeq.

Treacherous/Bagad – The Etymological Dictionary of Biblical Hebrew tells us the root meaning of this word is: Cover, present outer appearance.

We now ask why Ephraim [upon Teshuvah] is considered more righteous than Judah, who is called treacherous? I would suggest it is because Ephraim's Teshuvah, when done, is genuine. There is no cover up; there is circumcision of the heart, not just a shallow outward appearance. On the other hand, Judah who resides in the Father's House, looks the part, performing the rituals, dressing in the correct uniforms, and speaking with well a trained tongue. Judah is called bagad because underneath the outer appearance of righteousness lies a proud haughty heart. This is exposed when Ephraim returns home and is called righteous and given a place of authority. Make no mistake the Father still loves Judah as much as Ephraim and no doubt appreciates the aspects of loyalty that Judah has displayed over time. Yet both sons/Houses fall well short of following in the perfect instructions and example of the Father.

For us today the story is yet to be played out. Ephraim is beginning to question the move away from the family home. None the less Ephraim is far from performing Teshuvah, as there is still a considerable amount of his share of the estate to squander. However there are those few from Ephraim that are breaking away from the majority and wanting to return home. No doubt the Father can see them coming up the hill from "Egypt". The Father is running out to embrace them in His loving arms. The Father rejoices, but the older brother [Judah] is scowling somewhat in the back room. Judah is showing signs of jealousy by questioning the actions of the Father. How dare a "fatted calf" be killed to welcome this wayward son/Ephraim home and Judah has declined to come and eat of this calf.

Stop for a moment and view what we have before us. We have a younger son/Ephraim returning to the household, a loving and happy father/HaShem who rejoices with this return, and a jealous older son/Judah who refuses to partake in the celebration. Remember the main "players" in the parable that I listed earlier – The family [The whole House of Israel], the father [HaShem], the older son, [Judah] and the younger son [Ephraim]. Well there is one more – The "fatted calf". I am persuaded this calf represents HaMoshiach Yeshua in type. Allow me to briefly explain this thought.

Is it not the death of Yeshua that has allowed Ephraim to celebrate their return to the Father's House? Ephraim cannot celebrate this return and therefore take part in the "feast" until it has completed Teshuvah. They may eat other calves outside of the Father's House, thinking they are actually partaking of the "fatted calf", but in fact on close inspection it has flecks from a golden calf embedded in the flesh. To partake of the "fatted calf", supplied by the Father, Ephraim has to come home upon repentance, and embrace the Father's instructions. Then the Father will greet Ephraim with a loving royal kiss and openly state, "for this son of mine was dead, and has come to life again; he was lost, and has been found."

Judah has no interest in coming to eat of this "fatted calf" supplied by the Father. Judah is jealous of the position the Father has given Ephraim and wants the "status quo" to continue. Judah will not accept the Father's decision to supply this "fatted calf" and stubbornly refuses to join in this wonderful celebration of returning Ephraim. The situation is the same today. Judah shows very little interest in the return of Ephraim. Judah is very jealous of those from Ephraim who have undergone Teshuvah, and have embraced the Torah. Judah wants nothing to do with Yeshua, and refuses to come to the family celebration. Judah lacks the love of the Father and wants the current status quo to continue. Sadly, except for the very few, most of Judah wants to push returning Ephraim out of the House. Judah appears threatened by this return. It must be said this is somewhat understandable, considering the problems Judah has had with Ephraim over the years. Yet, if the Father embraces the return of Ephraim, [which He does], then should not Judah also?

A fully repentant Ephraim, circumcised of flesh and heart, embracing the Father's instructions [Torah], is desperate to reconcile with brother Judah. Ephraim is not responsible for the Father's choice in restoring its authority and choosing the "fatted calf". Ephraim is responsible for their behaviour towards the Father and their brother Judah and Judah is responsible for their behaviour towards the Father and their brother Ephraim. Both "sons" need to look to the Father for example of leadership, taking more than one leaf from His book [Torah] and applying it to our lives.

If it wasn't for our proud hearts and stiff necks we could bend forwards in prayer and humility seeking the way forward for reconciliation between all family members. Unfortunately instead of being full of the Father's love, we [both Houses] find our hearts uncircumcised and full of pride, displaying rigid and stiff necks bent on doing our own

will instead of the Father's will. This is going to change as it must, but we have a journey to travel before we reach that point. Thankfully regardless of our present position we can agree that:

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,

Rabbi, [Prof] Philip Hammond. PhD.