

# The Torah's Introduction to the Two Houses of Israel

by Tony Robinson

## Introduction

The doctrine of the Two Houses of Israel has developed into quite a controversial issue. There are those who think the Two Houses doctrine is a *new* development that has sprung up along with the Messianic restoration. In their minds, this doctrine is something its adherents have conceived to justify their "attraction" to things "Jewish". They do not feel that the Scriptures support the Two Houses doctrine and some even think it's a heresy. On the other hand, others who are less dogmatic, either think it is an ancillary issue or that it is true only in some "spiritual" sense.

Is the doctrine of the Two Houses of Israel new? Is it a secondary issue of negligible importance? I am convinced this doctrine is clearly and emphatically taught *in the Torah!* So why does the controversy exist? I think part of the reason is because most Messianic believers do not have a solid Torah foundation for their faith. Although it is probably true that Messianics have a greater understanding of the Torah than the average Churchgoer, it is probably also true that their knowledge of the Torah is not *foundational*. By foundational, I mean that the Torah is the primary basis for their current beliefs and lifestyle. The fact is that most Messianic believers have their foundations rooted in the B'rit Chadashah<sup>1</sup>. This is only natural since most within the Messianic movement have come out of the Church system where the Torah is usually neglected as a *foundational* source for faith and practice. The norm is usually that a Messianic believer is a former Christian, well- or partially-rooted in the anti-Torah doctrines of the Church<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, the average Messianic will have to start some program of study in order to 1) understand that the Torah is applicable to them, 2) uproot all of the anti-Torah doctrines of their past, and 3) consciously make the Torah their foundation for faith and practice. Until a Messianic has finished steps one through three above, they can only judge a doctrine based on their "New Testament" understanding of the Scriptures. Therein lies the problem. The B'rit Chadasha is not the place to start your study of the Two Houses of Israel. Although the B'rit Chadasha contains many teachings on the Two Houses of Israel, they are hidden from most believers because of their lack of a Torah foundation. Therefore, I suggest that a proper Torah foundation would enable most to see the validity of the doctrine of the Two Houses of Israel! Of course, my argument presupposes that this doctrine is taught in the Torah. In the remainder of this article I hope to demonstrate to you how the Torah teaches us about the Two Houses of Israel.

## The Prophetic Lives of the Matriarchs

The Torah is the foundational revelation about the nature of the Holy One and His redemptive dealings with mankind. Therefore, we should expect the Torah to address *every essential doctrine* (II Tim 3:16). There is not one subject pertaining to our faith that doesn't have its

foundation in the Torah. There is one catch, though. Since the Holy One chose to reveal His plan *progressively*, the Torah does not present each doctrine in clear, concise, and complete detail. The Torah uses types, shadows and pictures to teach many of its most important lessons. Furthermore, the details of these doctrines are presented piecemeal, in a seemingly random order—here a little, there a little (Isaiah 28:9-10). For example, although the account of the fall of mankind into sin (Genesis 3) revealed to us the necessity for substitutionary blood atonement<sup>3</sup>, the Torah did not tell us—in Genesis 3—that the fullest manifestation of substitutionary blood atonement would be found four thousand years later in the sacrifice of Yeshua, the sinless Son of God who was born in Bethlehem to a virgin mother. Various prophets supplied these and many other details at different times over a period of thousands of years (Hebrews 1:1). Progressive revelation involves the Holy One's gradual revelation/disclosure of knowledge and understanding over time. We must remember the Torah was a *shadow and pattern* of good things to come. It was written in this manner so that the Holy One could reveal its mysteries on His timetable (Ephesians 3:1-11). Therefore, when we look to the Torah, we must be aware of a few its subtleties.

1. The Torah will teach us its doctrines using its own prophetic methods, of which we must become aware.
2. Many of these doctrines are hidden within the stories/narrative of the Torah.
3. Our ability to see the hidden revelations within the narratives of the Torah will be increased if we learn how to study the Scriptures *thematically*.

Thematic analysis of Scripture involves gaining an understanding of the overall *theme* of a passage of Scripture. By theme, I mean the underlying (usually unwritten), topical subject of the passage. We search for the general topic, the underlying message, the overall subject, and/or a summary of the passage instead of focusing in on the details. Earlier, I stated that the Torah addresses every *essential doctrine* either explicitly or implicitly. If the Torah doesn't teach it, then it's not important. Remember, the Torah is our foundation, whereas the remainder of the Tanakh and the B'rit Chadasha find their basis in it. Therefore, if the doctrine of the Two Houses of Israel is true and important, then it will have its foundation in the Torah, not the fertile imaginations of men of the twenty-first century. By way of example, let's consider one of the most important doctrines of Scripture—the descent of Am Yisrael (the people of Israel) into Egypt, their redemption by the Holy One and their ascent to the Promised Land. One would be hard-pressed to find anyone who would not agree that Am Yisrael's slavery and deliverance from Egyptian bondage is not an important event and doctrine. Well, did you know that the basic themes of Am Yisrael's descent into Egypt, slavery and deliverance is taught **BEFORE** the book of Exodus even begins? That's right. Please read Genesis 12:10-20—the account of Abram's *descent* (hint) into Egypt. Why was this story recorded? Although this story stands alone as a true historical event of the past, it also had *prophetic significance*. This event in the life of Abram was 1) a prophetic picture of the future descent of his descendants into the land of Egypt, 2) their enslavement and 3) their redemption. To see this revelation, you need to study its major themes. If you simply view Abram as a Torah Picture of the Holy One and Sarai as a Torah Picture of Am Yisrael, you will easily be able to see this prophetic picture.

- Just as Abram is *married* to Sarai, The Holy One is *married* to Am Yisrael.

- A *famine* in Canaan caused Abram to *descend* with Sarai *into Egypt*. In Genesis 42:5 it is a *famine* in Canaan that led Jacob to send his sons to Egypt and which ultimately caused the entire family to *descend into Egypt*.
- Abram went to Egypt to *sojourn* there. The children of Israel "*sojourned*" in Egypt.
- The famine of Genesis 12 and Genesis 42 were both characterized as very *severe*.
- Before arriving in Egypt, Abram convinced Sarai to change her identity. Thus, when they arrive, the Egyptians *do not know Sarai is Abram's wife*. In the story of the Exodus, initially, the Egyptians *do not know that Am Yisrael are the people of The Holy One, married to Him*.
- Just as Pharaoh tried to *take Sarai for his own possession* by forcing her to marry him, eventually it was Pharaoh who *took the Am Yisrael as his possession* by enslaving them.
- The Holy One sent *plagues* on Pharaoh and his household *because of his possession of Sarai*. In the Exodus account, the Holy One used *plagues* against Pharaoh and the land of *Egypt because he possessed [through slavery] Am Yisrael*. In both cases, the result was the release of the bride.
- When Abram left Egypt, he *left with much wealth* which he had acquired because of Sarai. When the children of Israel left Egypt, *they left with much wealth which they had taken from the Egyptians*.

The thematic connections between Genesis 12:10-20 and the story of the Exodus are so clear and complete that they are virtually irresistible and quite conclusive—the story of the Exodus was foreshadowed in Abram's descent into Egypt. The thematic connection between these two stories is very important because it is one of the clearest examples demonstrating *that events in the lives of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs were prophetic shadows of future events in the lives of their children*. The parallels between the story of Genesis 12 and the story of the Exodus are too numerous to be purely coincidental. This is a perfect example of how the Torah will teach us a foundational truth (the descent of Abram's descendants into the land of Egypt, their enslavement and their redemption) through a narrative/story. In other words, the narratives of the Torah are not isolated historical events, cut off in time from the future. To the contrary, the greatest wisdom of these stories pertains to their prophetic and Messianic significance. Therefore, it is imperative for us to understand that the Torah's narratives have more to do with the *future* than the past! Understanding that the lives of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs are prophetic glimpses into the future events of their descendants, let us see how the Torah teaches us the *foundational* truth about the division of Am Yisrael into Two Houses and their eventual reconciliation.

Parashat Vayeitzei (Genesis 28:10-32:3) is the story of 1) Jacob's flight from Esau, 2) the establishment of his seed through his two wives, 3) his sojourn with his oppressive uncle Lavan and 4) his flight from Lavan to Canaan. According to the sages of Israel, Jacob's flight from Canaan because of the murderous intents of Esau is seen as an *exile* from the Land. If this is true, then the ending of the story—when Jacob returns to Canaan—should be seen as a return or redemption similar to the return of Am Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael after the Egyptian bondage. In fact, one could suggest that Lavan's oppression of Jacob was similar to the oppression of Am Yisrael by Pharaoh. Can we find more thematic evidence to support this prophetic analogy. Yes, we can. Note the following thematic connections between the story of Parashat Vayeitzei and the redemption from Egypt noted by Rav Michael Hattin of Har Etzion Yeshiva in Israel<sup>4</sup>.

- Jacob **worked** for Lavan (Genesis 29:20) just as Am Yisrael **worked** for Pharaoh (Exodus 1:13).
- The Holy One **saw** Jacob's bondage (Genesis 31:12) just as He **saw** Am Yisrael's subjugation in Egypt (Exodus 3:7).
- Jacob's family **multiplied greatly** (Genesis 30:43) in Charan just as Am Yisrael **proliferated abundantly** in Egypt (Exodus 1:7).
- Jacob **fled** from Lavan (Genesis 31:21) just as Am Yisrael **fled** from Pharaoh (Exodus 14:5).
- Lavan is **told** that Jacob fled (Genesis 31:22) just as Pharaoh is **told** that Am Yisrael had fled (Exodus 14:5).
- Lavan **pursued** after Jacob (Genesis 31:23) just as Pharaoh **pursued** after Am Yisrael (Exodus 14:5). According to Jewish tradition, Pharaoh learned of Israel's failure to return on the **third day after their exodus** and finally **caught up with them at the Red Sea on the seventh day**. Lavan found out that Jacob had fled on the **third** day after his departure **and pursued him a distance of seven days** (Genesis 31:23-24)!

As you can see, amazing parallels are uncovered when we analyze Parashat Vayeitzei and the story of the Exodus thematically! This time though, we have been prepared to understand the prophetic significance of the parallels. Quite obviously, the Torah has used the story of Jacob's exile to teach us that Am Yisrael will one day be exiled and experience Egyptian bondage! Here is a perfect example of progressive revelation. Although the story of Abram's descent into Egypt also teaches us that his descendants will experience exile, the narrative of Parashat Vayeitzei fills in more details of the exile than Genesis 12:10-20. The Torah emphatically states that Am Yisrael reproduced exceedingly abundantly while under cruel Egyptian bondage (Exodus 1:7, 12, and 20). Knowing that Jacob's ordeal with Lavan was a prophetic picture of the Egyptian ordeal under Pharaoh, should we not also understand that the proliferation of Jacob's children under the cruelty of his uncle Lavan is a prophetic picture of the rapid proliferation of Am Yisrael under the cruel affliction of Egyptian slavery? Lastly, since we know that Am Yisrael was "born" in Egypt as they multiplied into a mighty nation from a mere seventy souls, should we not see that *Jacob's wives and children represent a prophetic picture of this "birthing" process*? The themes of exile, rapid proliferation and redemption/return are clearly seen. I believe this is exactly the prophetic message of the story of Jacob and his family in exile under Lavan. Even the names of Jacob's children become the basis for the tribes of the future nation; therefore, we should expect all aspects of this story to have prophetic relevance to their descendants. In other words, the lives of Jacob and his family are the Torah's prophetic pictures of the lives of their descendants!

Therefore, the account of the struggle between Rachel and Leah is not just about their own personal struggle, it is a latent picture of the future struggles of the nation. And what words best characterize the relationship between these two women? Without a doubt, their struggle for the affections of Jacob led to hatred, jealousy, envy, strife and competition. Prophetically speaking, this is a foreshadow of events to occur within the lives of their descendants. The fulfillment of the *prophetic* discord between Jacob's wives was quickly played out through the actions of the sons of these two women and their handmaidens. We are soon introduced to pride, jealousy, and hatred as we read the account of Jacob's sons in Genesis 37. Immediately, the lines of conflict are drawn between the children of Leah and the two handmaidens versus the firstborn child of

Rachel—Joseph. All that characterized the relationship between the two sisters has somehow begun to dictate the relationships between their children. As we follow the narrative in Genesis, note that two of the twelve brothers become the dominant personalities. Judah, the son of Leah, and Joseph, the son of Rachel, soon begin to dominate the narrative. In fact, a major portion of the remainder of the book of Genesis revolves around the theme of reconciliation of the family. In this reconciliation, it was Judah who emerged—as the representative for all the other brothers—to be reconciled to Joseph.<sup>5</sup> Is it a coincidence that the internal strife of the fledgling nation was played out between Judah and Joseph, sons of Leah and Rachel? I think not. The strife between the two sisters was a type of prophetic determinism, laying the foundation for strife amongst their two sons, Judah and Joseph.

As we follow the history of Am Yisrael, it is interesting that they never seemed to be able to overcome their sectarian tribal interests. Theirs was a history of internal strife and contention. This rivalry reached its highest level when the nation literally split into two separate kingdoms. And who were the two tribal leaders between which the other tribes divided themselves? Gad and Levi? Simeon and Benjamin? No, it was Judah (the House of Judah) and Joseph (the House of Joseph/Ephraim), the sons of Leah and Rachel! Should we be surprised? Of course not. The story of Leah and Rachel is the story of the House of Judah and the House of Joseph/Ephraim. Is there any other thematic precedent for this type of prophetic scenario in which the rivalry of two siblings is actually a picture of the inevitable conflict between their descendants? Remember Jacob and Esau? You may also remember that these two individuals struggled with each other in their mother's womb. The Torah informs us that this struggle was a prophetic picture of the future struggle of their descendants (Israel versus Edom)! Therefore, we should not find it strange that the division of Am Yisrael into two houses was already prophetically symbolized through the struggle of two sisters. We can even find another pair of sisters thematically related to the role of Rachel and Leah as types of the divided kingdoms—the sisters, Oholah and Oholibah of Ezekiel 23. Oholah and Oholibah are *not* related to Rachel and Leah by character, since Rachel and Leah were righteous, which could hardly be said of Oholah and Oholibah. They are related because Oholah represented the House of Joseph/Ephraim and Oholibah represented the House of Judah (Ezekiel 23:1-22)! Thematically, we have found significant evidence that the foundation for understanding the division of Am Yisrael into two, separate, warring kingdoms is presented in the Torah. Next, let's see another method the Torah uses to teach us about the Two Houses of Israel.

### ***The Prophetic Lives of Judah and Joseph***

One of the main ways the Torah teaches us its lessons is by placing seemingly unrelated stories next to each other in chronological sequence. Many times the Torah will interrupt the logical flow of a narrative to introduce a passage that seems terribly out of place. This is usually done to emphasize a specific connection between the two apparently unrelated texts. For example, Leviticus 10 records the tragic deaths of Nadav and Avihu. Then, Leviticus 11-15 talk about numerous subjects including clean and unclean animals, childbirth, sexual emissions and lepers. Then, amazingly Leviticus 16:1 begins with the phrase, "And YHVH spoke to Moses *after the death of the two sons of Aaron...*" What? Their deaths occurred back in Leviticus 10. Why were chapters 11-15 inserted between the actual event of their deaths and the Holy One's statements to Moses concerning their deaths? Well, in Leviticus 16, Moses describes Adonai's

rules pertaining to *how* and *when* the High Priest could *draw near to Him*. It just so happens that Leviticus 11-15 has a common theme, which is similar to the theme of Leviticus 16—who can and cannot *draw near to Him*. Those chapters were placed between Leviticus 10 and 16 to teach this important lesson so that others would not suffer the same fate as Aaron's sons.

If you read Genesis 37-41, you will note it is primarily the story of the trials of Joseph's life. However, there is one textual enigma. If this section of Scripture is primarily associated with the life of Joseph, why does it begin documenting the story of Joseph's life in Genesis 37, interrupt it with a story about **Judah** in Genesis 38, only to return to the story of Joseph from Genesis 39-41 almost as if it had never diverged to another topic? The reason is because the story of Judah and Joseph are thematically related in some manner. The Torah *buried* the story of Judah within the narrative of Joseph's life to emphasize a connection between these two characters. Before looking at these thematic connections, let us take note of Genesis 37:12-14, where it states that Israel sent Joseph to see how his brothers were doing. Genesis 37:14 states that Israel sent Joseph "from the **depth** of Hebron." Rashi<sup>6</sup> notes that Hebron is a mountain; therefore, how could Joseph be sent from the depth of Hebron? The Hebrew word most often translated *depth*, *vale* or *valley* in Genesis 37:14 is, 'eimeq (עִמְק), and it can mean *depth*, as in a *deep mystery*. In other words, Genesis 37:14 is stating that the story of Joseph going to check on his brothers is actually a deep mystery speaking of other things. Most people readily understand that the ensuing story is a *deep* Messianic midrash with Joseph as a foreshadow of the Messiah. The thematic connections and allusions between Joseph and Messiah Yeshua are so bountiful that they are a topic in and of themselves. For example, note how the Torah uses Joseph's coat two times as an object to identify him. The first time is in Genesis 37:29-35 when, after dipping Joseph's coat in goat's blood, his brothers present the blood-stained coat to Jacob asking him, "see if it is your son's coat or not". Jacob immediately recognizes that the coat belongs to his son Joseph. The second time is in Genesis 39:7-18 when Potiphar's wife used Joseph's coat/garment to falsely identify him as one who had tried to rape her. Why does the Torah draw our attention to Joseph's garments by continually using them as a means of identifying him? I think the reason is to help us make the connection between Joseph and the Messiah. For we read in Revelation 19:13 that when Messiah Yeshua returns, He will be clothed "with a vesture dipped in blood". In other words, that which identified Joseph to His father will be that which will identify Yeshua to us—a vesture dipped in blood.

According to Isaiah 53, Yeshua was incarcerated as a criminal even though he had done no wrong. We also know that Joseph was falsely accused and incarcerated. Is there a connection between the two stories? I believe so. Just as the gospels tell us that two criminals were executed with Yeshua, so likewise, the baker and cupbearer were two criminals incarcerated with Joseph. In an amazing foreshadowing, the baker is executed by being **hung on a tree** while the cup-bearer received life; just as one of the criminals executed with Yeshua was condemned to eternal damnation, while the other received eternal life after making a confession of faith in Yeshua on the execution stake! What is the sum of these thematic connections? These connections demonstrate that the story of Joseph is actually a picture of future events concerning the life of the Messiah—truly a *deep mystery*. If we can see that this narrative has *Messianic significance*, is it possible that these events could also have *prophetic significance* for the lives of the descendants of Am Yisrael? I think so.

#### Metzora

**Comment [1]:** During His execution, one criminal is promised eternal **LIFE**, while the other **DIES** in his sins!

#### Metzora

**Comment [2]:** By being hanged on a tree. Get the picture?

#### Metzora

**Comment [3]:** One was a baker and the other a cup bearer. These are pictures of the bread and the wine, which Yeshua used to illustrate His redemption!

This story is also a *deep mystery* concerning the restoration of the Two Houses of Israel. In the first section of this treatise, we saw that the story of Rachel and Leah was a prophetic picture of the *splitting* of the family into two separate houses. Let us now examine how the stories of Judah and Joseph are prophetic pictures of the restoration of these two houses. Judah and Joseph are thematically connected together in many ways. Genesis 39:1 states that Joseph *descended into Egypt*. So likewise, Genesis 38:1 informs us that Judah *descended from his brothers*. At this point, Joseph and Judah are connected by another common theme—the parallel *descents* of Joseph and Judah have separated them from their family, which is hopelessly divided. At first glance, this may seem to be an insignificant matter; however, we must remember the purpose for Abram's calling. He was called to father a nation that would be a witness to all other nations of the Glory of the one and only true Elohim (God). In order to do this, he and his descendants obviously needed to 1) reproduce, 2) remain harmoniously connected, and 3) be an example of justice and righteousness. At this point, all three of the goals mentioned above are far from being fulfilled, and the commission given to Abram in Genesis 12:1-2, is in danger of being completely thwarted!

A third theme connecting Judah and Joseph is that both of them were seduced by a woman—Judah by Tamar (Genesis 38) and Joseph by Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39). It is **very important** you realize that Jacob's sons had to **reproduce** in order to fulfill their Divine calling. Therefore, every event that prevented them from establishing seed is seen as a hindrance to the Divine plan! Judah had already lost two sons, Er and Onan. In Judah's case, the seduction was planned by *Tamar in order to ensure that Judah's seed would continue*. Her birth of twins replaced the two sons Judah had lost, thus ensuring the growth of the nation. One of the more important thematic lessons to learn from Joseph's trials heretofore is that they have prevented him from establishing seed! However, through an amazing turn of events, Joseph is promoted to viceroy, given a wife, and has two sons of his own—Ephraim and Manasseh. This brings us to the fourth manner in which Judah and Joseph are thematically related. They both had two sons. In fact, as you analyze Genesis 38 you will note that the climax of the story is simply the establishment of seed for Judah through Tamar. Then, as you read Genesis 39-42, the climax of the story of Joseph's trials are his promotion to viceroy and the establishment of his seed, Ephraim and Manasseh (Genesis 41:50-52)! Amazingly, it is not until **after the establishment of the seed of Judah and Joseph** that the Torah begins the saga of the *reconciliation* of the broken family (Genesis 42-50). We know that all twelve sons of Jacob need to establish seed in order for The Holy One's plan for a holy nation to succeed. So why doesn't the Torah devote equal time to discussing how the other ten brothers established their seed? Why does it only focus on the establishment of seed for Judah and Joseph before it switches to the story of reconciliation? Because the Torah is using the lives of Judah and Joseph as pictures of the future of Am Yisrael when they will be divided into two houses—the Southern Kingdom/House of **Judah** and the Northern Kingdom/House of **Joseph/Ephraim**! This is how the Torah teaches us about the Two Houses of Israel!

As I've noted before, the primary theme of the remainder of the book of Genesis (Genesis 42-50) is the story of *the reunification of the family*! And who are the two principle characters who facilitate the reconciliation? Judah and Joseph! Why does the Torah act as if the reunification of the family pertains only to Judah and Joseph? Why is Genesis 44 the story of *Judah's* repentance? Why is Genesis 45 the story of *Joseph's* forgiveness? What about the other

brothers? Weren't they also involved in the breakup of the family? Is this yet another coincidence or is it also a *deep mystery* of prophetic significance? It is not a coincidence. We know that Am Yisrael eventually split into two houses—the House of **Judah** and the House of **Joseph/Ephraim**. This is a historical fact (I Kings 11-12). Therefore, I suggest that the Torah uses the lives of Judah and Joseph as prophetic foreshadows of events which are to occur in the lives of their descendants—specifically, the reconciliation of Judah and Joseph/Ephraim. Furthermore, the fact that the Torah teaches this so clearly through its own prophetic style is proof that it is *not a new doctrine*. The controversy of the Two Houses of Israel is a foundational issue, clearly taught in the Torah. Those who oppose the message going forth in these days of the need for reconciliation between the House of Judah and the House of Joseph/Ephraim do so mainly in ignorance. They aren't aware that the Torah uses the lives of the Matriarchs (Rachel and Leah) to clearly teach us Am Yisrael would divide into two houses. Furthermore, they also aren't aware the Torah uses the lives of the Patriarchs (Judah and Joseph) to clearly teach us that the two divided houses of Israel would one day be reconciled. May the Holy One hasten the day when we all see that He truly tells us the end from the beginning.

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<sup>1</sup> B'rit Chadasha—New Testament Scriptures.

<sup>2</sup> Doctrines such as 1) we're free from the Law, 2) the dietary laws were abolished when Yeshua died, 3) the Torah was for the Jews, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Through Remez (hint) interpretation, we realize that an innocent animal was slain to provide skins to cover the guilt and shame that resulted from Adam and Chava's sin.

<sup>4</sup> From an article entitled, *Parashat Vayeitzei, Leah, Rachel and the House of Israel* by Rav Michael Hattin, The Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash of Har Etzion Yeshiva, <http://www.vbm-torah.org/>.

<sup>5</sup> Read Genesis 44-45. The reconciliation takes place in these two chapters. Note how it was Judah (Genesis 44) and Joseph (Genesis 45) who expressed the repentance and forgiveness, respectively, necessary for the reconciliation to occur.

<sup>6</sup> Taken from Rashi's commentary on Genesis 37:14.