

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 8, The Parable of The Two Debtors, Part IV. Luke 7:36-50

1. There are 7 scenes;
 - a. Introduction
 - b. Outpouring of woman’s love. (in action)
 - c. Dialogue. Simon judges wrongly.
 - d. A parable.
 - e. A Dialogue. Simon judges rightly.
 - f. The outpouring of the woman’s love (in retrospect).
 - g. Conclusion. The woman/Jesus/Pharisees).

IN THE HOUSE OF A PHARISEE: A WOMAN ACTS: (Scene 6)

1. In the ME these expectations are solidified in unwritten law. The host is to downgrade the quality of his offerings as inadequate for the rank and nobility of the guest. No matter what is set before him, the guest must say that what is extended to him, he is unworthy. Burton, a 19th century traveler and Orientalist, writes the following in his record of his famous trip to Mecca; “Shame is a passage in the East.” Your host would blush to point out to you the indecorum of your conduct, and the laws of hospitality oblige him to supply every want of the guest, no matter he bet a ‘*detenu.*’ Burton doesn’t even mention a guest pointing out the indecorum of a host’s action. Yet in this passage it happens! Edersheim, documents for us the traditional expectations of a noble guest, a guest will acknowledge the trouble the host went through for them. An evil will remark sarcastically, “What trouble he has taken!”
2. Nelson Gluek, the famous Middle Eastern archeologist, records a modern illustration of the ancient social interchange of guest and host. Gluek was entertained by an Arab family living in the ruins of Pella in Jordan. “We were entertained at lunch by the ‘headman’ of the village.” It didn’t matter how poor all were. We were exchanging polite amenities with the Prince of Pella. We drank his coffee and ate his bread and eggs. We couldn’t refuse

his hospitality with disdain or pity for his slender provision. I have forgotten splendid feasts, I shall never forget the bread broken with him. The invitation to his board was a royal summons, and we commoners had no choice, but to obey.”

3. Glueck’s experience is repeated hundreds of times across the ME from the Sudan to Syria. To attack the quality of hospitality is an unknown in fact or fiction and in experience or traditional story. Yet in this drama such an unprecedented attack on the inferior quality of the begrudging hospitality does take place. After such an outburst the listening company is pressed to make a decision regarding the speaker. The terms of this decision will be examined at the close of the final speeches of this drama, to which we now turn.
4. The form of the language is Hebrew parallelisms of the OT as Jeremias and Plummer note. We saw it in the woman’s first act. We are not to be surprised to see parallelism in the woman’s deeds. These are just not artistic, but as we will note to clarify a centuries old mistranslation of the text.
5. We must notice that Jesus turns to the woman and addresses Simon. It is in praise of her kindness and worth. Imagine the harsh words for Simon and possible accusations for all of his failures. Facing the woman, Jesus gives a tone of gentleness and gratitude expressed to a woman in need of a kind word. The entire speech concludes with a dramatic climax that her sins have been forgiven!
6. The introduction of this speech begins with a question, “Do you see this woman?” Simon collected negative evidence against Jesus. He is now asked to give attention to the woman and her actions. Jesus begins the confrontation, “I entered your house.” The clear argument, “I entered your house, I became your guest, but you refused!” The details state it clearly, the woman you maligned compensated for your failure. The precise language reads, “You gave me no water for my feet.” It would have been presumptuous to assume that Simon should have taken the role of a servant. Jesus only speaks of the water! Had Simon given water, Jesus could have washed his own feet. By contrast this woman washed Jesus’ feet, not with water, but with her tears and wiped them with her crown and glory, her hair! Foot washing is a courtesy afforded to guests in The ME up until the 1900’s.

7. Jesus continues, "You gave me no kiss!" What he was to kiss is not given in humility and deference. The parts of the body are not mentioned, she washed feet. In the following illustration head and feet are mentioned. But what should have Simon kissed? Equals kiss on the cheek, the student kisses his Rabbi's hands, the servant his master, and the son his parents' hands. In the garden Judas certainly kissed Jesus' hand (Contrary to popular opinions!) In the p of the Prodigal Son the son is forbidden to kiss the father and the father's unprecedented falling on his son's neck and kissing him. It is a sign of reconciliation, not equality and is done to keep the son from kissing the father's hand or feet according to Bailey. Simon greeted Jesus as Rabbi, but refused to kiss his hand. Simon should have kissed the hand, but with great sensitivity, Jesus does not address this, but states that there was no kiss of greeting. By contrast the woman covered his feet with kisses.
8. As said before feet and shoes are signs of degradation in the ME. Both contrasts are made; Simon, no kisses, the woman, many kisses (The kissing of feet is rare, but not unprecedented). In the Talmud Hama kisses the feet of Rabbi Papi in gratitude for the latter's successful defense of the former's legal case as stated by B.T. Sanhedrin.
9. The third action is a double contrast. Olive oil was used to anoint the head of a guest. Such oil was cheap and plentiful, and a main Palestinian export stated by Applebaum. The head being the crown is worthy of anointing, by contrast the woman has anointed his feet which no one anoints not even with Olive Oil. She used an expensive perfume. Thus the woman's action of anointing feet has a double impact according to Tristram. In three clear actions the woman demonstrates superiority to Simon, and in poetic speech, Simon has stated what will be remembered.
10. After this scathing rebuke the conclusion is entered. "For the sake of this, I say to you." The intent is ambiguous There are options, one may be "in light of this the exposure of your many failures, I say to you...." Then comes the much debated final pairs of couplets, which translated are;
*"Her sins, which are many, have been forgiven.
Therefore, she much loved.
But he who is forgiven little
Loves little."*

11. Jesus does not forgive her sins on the spot, even though He is misinterpreted by the hostile guests Jesus does announce a forgiveness that has happened in the past, “Your sins have been forgiven.” The passive avoids the divine name, Jeremias. The perfect tense indicates a present condition that results from a past action. (Her sins have been forgiven is the same as her sins are forgiven!) Ibn al Salibi, a 12th century Syrian scholar comes to the same conclusion; “Her actions show that her sins have been forgiven her.” Jesus announces what God has done and confirms that action to the woman.
12. Then comes the much discussed phrase, “Therefore she loved much!” For more than 1000 years this was translated as “For she loved much.” This latter version has been in unnumbered translations throughout the years in spite that it contradicts what precedes and follows the text. The question is what is first? The forgiveness of sins or the outpouring of love. When we look at the concluding couplets of the series, now under examination the following can be seen.

The Text

The Relationship between Love +Forgiveness in Text

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| The P of 2 Debtors: | a. Forgiveness is first.
b. Then a thankful response of love. |
| In the concluding couplet
("He who is forgiven little,
Loves little!") | a. Forgiveness is first.
b. Then a thankful response of love. |

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| <u>In the traditional translation</u>
<u>("her sins...have been forgiven</u>
<u>for she loved much"):</u> | a. <u>An outpouring of love, is <i>first</i>.</u>
b. <u>Then comes forgiveness as a reward.</u> |
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13. It's amazing that this clashing contradiction has stood centuries in many translations, too much to count. Major revisions are beginning to correct the mistake, one simply must examine the internal integrity. The Catholic Jerusalem Version is correct, her sins are forgiven, if not she would not have loved like this. The New English Bible is good, however the Revised Standard maintains the woman receives forgiveness due to her actions in direct contrast with the p.. One must be able to understand and highlight the word 'for!' Grammarians call this a consecutive use and translate that word, "Therefore!" This brings verse 47a into harmony with the p!