

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 9, The Parable of The Two Debtors, Part V. 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. 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.
2. 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.
3. 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.”*

4. 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.
5. 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

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.

In the traditional translation

(“her sins...have been forgiven
 for she loved much”):

a. An outpouring of love, is *first*.

b. Then comes forgiveness as a reward.

6. 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!

7. Jesus is pointing out that this woman is not a defiling sinner, but a forgiven woman who knows the extent of her evil and God's grace, freely given to her. This awareness has motivated her lavish outpouring of grateful love. Jesus concludes with a reference that Simon needs to carefully consider.
8. To Simon, Jesus says, "He who is forgiven little loves little." There are two ways to consider this; One way is Simon you are a righteous man, and your sins are few that thus very little of God's grace is needed to cover to cover these 'debts' so you have loved little. Much more, "You, Simon have many sins (some we have just recounted) and have not repented and you have been forgiven little, and hence you love little. Jesus had just listed in graphic terms of some of the failures and debts of Simon. They reflect far more the inadequacies of a host, but they indicate deep levels of pride, arrogance, hard-heartedness, hostility, a judgmental spirit, slim understanding of what really defiles, a rejection of sinners, insensitivity, sexism, and a misunderstanding of God's grace.
9. Simon witnessed the woman's dramatic action and still labeled her a sinner. He refused to accept her repentance and has determined to reject her as a sinner. Ibn al-Tayyib, shares some unique insight into this; "The two debtors are two types of sinner, one is great, like the woman and the other is a little sinner like the Pharisee. By the phrase, 'a little sinner,' either he means in reality or he refers to Simon's conceit at his own perfection. His conceit robs him of virtue and awareness that the one who is forgiven more, loves more. Jesus told this p to Simon for the purpose of reproving the Pharisee for the feelings he has harbored against any contact with sinners and to demonstrate to him that this woman's love for Him is greater than his love, because of the overflowing of grace."
10. Ibn al-Tayyib continues, "The one who is forgiven little, loves little, means that the one who has many sins experiences a sincere repentance, followed by a sincere love of God. But the one who has few sins boasts of his uprightness and things he has little need of forgiveness, so he has little love for God."
11. With this, we understand the text to present to the reader a picture of two great sinners; one sins w/o the L the other with the L. The first responds and accepts forgiveness and responds with much love. The second, Simon, has no real awareness of the nature of evil in his life. He sees himself with few spiritual debts and thus in little need of grace. Consequently, receiving little grace, shows little love. This can be seen with the 99 sheep, of course,

Jesus really knows that the 99 other need to repent in the p of The Lost Sheep. Or is he laughing at the Pharisaical assumption? (Bailey). The sons in the p of the Prodigal Son and the two men in prayer at the temple, in Luke 15 and 18, offer similar contrasts. The rebuke to Simon is stunning. The prophet (Jesus) not only reads the women's heart, but Simon's as well. Simon becomes the accused. The drama is with Jesus under scrutiny, the tables turn and Simon is exposed. What is affirmed by Jesus Himself?

12. The drama's affirmations of Jesus are profound. Simon thought that Jesus may be a prophet or 'the prophet,' foretold in Deut. 8:15, some see this in Luke 7:39. In the drama Jesus demonstrates the inner nature of the woman and Simon. This goes beyond just a simple affirmation of Jesus as He surfaces as a unique agent of God through whom God announces forgiveness and to whom a grateful response of love is demonstrated. The woman loves for her redemption, Simon fails to do the same. Such functioning affirmations about the person of Jesus are calculated to evoke from the reader/listener a response of recognition, affirmation, obedience, accusations of blasphemy against the imposter who acts as God's unique agent. The drama does not leave us in doubt regarding the assembled guests at this banquet.

CONCLUSION: The PHARISEE, JESUS and THE WOMAN: (Scene 7).

13. The beginning of this study shows the three and a concluding glance looks back at some of these same characters. The other diners are not impressed. They only speak 'among themselves.' Other versions translate more literally, 'in themselves.' Like Simon, they are a bit nervous about verbalizing their criticism (They saw the withering attack Simon took). Jesus has not forgiven this woman, even though this is not beyond Him, see Luke 5:17-26. He has only acted in God's stead in announcing forgiveness and receiving gratitude. The Pharisees are puzzled or offended. In the Syriac and Arabic, we prefer to read, "Who is this who also forgives sins?" As in with other outrages, Jesus ALSO forgives sins. (Plummer). Finally comes the concluding remark to the woman, "Your faith has saved you, go in peace!" Her faith (Not her works of love) saved her.
14. The Biblical author uses the inversion principal that the major theme is in the middle and then repeats this at the end. (Bailey). The feature occurs here. The themes of God's freely offered love and accepted forgiveness!