

PARABLES, “THROUGH PEASANTS EYES!”

Study 38, “The Great Banquet,” Part III, Luke 14:15-24

1. The p. can be even called the p. of “The Banquet of the 7 Speeches.” They fall naturally into 7 stanzas, with ideas in the first four and then other key ideas in the last three;

“And he said to him,

‘A man once gave a GB

And he invited many

(1) And he sent his servant at the hour of the

Banquet to say, ‘Come, all is ready now!’

But they all began making excuses.

(2) The first said to him, ‘I have bought a field

And I must go out to see it.

I pray that you have me excused.’

(3) And another said, “I have bought five yoke

of oxen.

and I go to test them

I pray you have me excused.’

(4) And another said, I have married a bride,

And therefore--

I cannot come.’

(5) So the servant came and reported to the

Master. Then the householder in anger said

To his servant, ‘Go out quickly, into streets

And the lanes of the city, Bring in the poor,

Maimed, blind and lame.’

(6) And the servant said, ‘Sir,’ what you have

Commanded has been done,

and there is still room.’

(7) And the master said to the Servant, ‘go out’

Into the highways and the hedges,

And compel to enter, that my house may be filled.’

GREAT BANQUET

MANY INVITED

DO THIS

BECAUSE OF THIS

EXCUSES

I DID THIS

I MUST DO THIS

EXCUSE ME

I DID THIS

I MUST DO THIS

EXCUSE ME

I DID THIS

THUS I MUST

NOT COME

MASTER_GO

THE STREETS

FILL UP

SERVANT

I WENT

NOT FULL

MASTER_GO

TO HIGHWAYS

FILL UP

For I tell you (plural)

None of those men who were invited

THOSE INVITED

Shall taste my banquet

MY BANQUET

2. Everything was flowing smoothly, the invitations were accepted, the animal butchered, the meat cooked, the guests summoned----and all at once, excuses! This brings us to the 2nd stanza.

3. STANZA THREE-THE REAL ESTATE EXPERT:

(2) The first said to him, 'I have bought a field I DID THIS

And I must go out to see it. I MUST DO THIS

I pray that you have me excused.'

EXCUSE ME

We observe the same reference of themes: I did this, line 1, then I must do this, line 2, therefore excuse me, line 3. No one buys a field in the ME w/o knowing every part of it like the back of their hand. The springs, wells, trees, paths and anticipated rain fall are well known long before the purchase has begun. They must be known, for in the past they're part of the contract. Regarding the purchase of land; Thomson writes, "It is not enough that you purchase a well-known lot; the contract must mention everything that belongs in it, and certify that fountains or wells in it, etc.. are sold with the field. Thus Abraham bought this field and the cave that was therein and all the trees that were in that field, and that were all in the borders around were made sure (Thomson, the emphasis, "his")."

4. The purchaser will also know the human history of the field. He will be able to tell you who has owned it for generations and to recite the profits of that field for an amazing number of past years. The few plots of agricultural land are so crucial to life that in Arab Palestine these plots had proper names. (Lees). The same overall situation has been noted in 1st century Palestine. Applebaum observes the poverty of the Jewish farmer in NT times. He comments; "The great skill and grit of the hard-working Jewish cultivator in wresting production from a minimal plot in the ground. But over population reduced the Jewish peasant unit of cultivation and endangered the cultivator's margin of livelihood" (Applebaum). Thus in a world of increasing population, limited land space, and the growth of a landless tenantry, the host of the banquet is to believe that a field has been suddenly bought sight unseen.

5. A western equivalent to this excuse would be the case of a suburbanite who cancels a dinner engagement by saying, "I have just bought a new house over the phone and I must go and have a look at it and the

neighborhood.” The excuse is paper thin and no one will believe it. Again Ibrahim Sa’id is useful when he says, “What is the point of looking at a field after the finished procedures.” Sa’id writing in the Arabic for ME readers, assumes that the reader knows that the process of buying a field is long and complicated and stretches over a number of years.

6. Derrett suggests a series of legal justifications for the guests’ excuses. The land may be depreciating in value and the buyer may want (after examination) to retract the sale. He may need a written conveyance to acquire the property. He may need to assert his title by physically taking possession. Or finally, there may be religious questions regarding cultivation that relate to the keeping of the law. (Derrett). However, banquets were held in late afternoon (Jeremias). In Luke 17:8, the dinner is held clearly after the day’s labors are over! Why, we must ask is the “real estate expert,” suddenly busy with these details? What is the dear man doing all morning? Derrett translates the excuse; “I am obliged to go out of town to view it.” So, are we to believe that he is preparing for out of town travel shortly before dark? If these complicated legal requirements were taking up his time, why did he accept the invitation to the banquet? After the meat was cooked and the banquet spread, at the end of the working day he suddenly discovers a long list of pressing business details? (Black) points out that the word, “ananken,” carries the idea of “statutory custom or pressure.” (Black). Marshall interprets this as a “legal obligation.” But in the timeless ME (East) one day is as good as another. What is wrong for the next morning for legal obligations, if there were such? The field will be there the next morning as real estate does not walk away. The buyer did accept the banquet. Marshall recognizes that a “refusal to respond to the banquet at this point is an act of great discourtesy.” We find compelling reasons to see this refusal as a clear case of the same, “great discourtesy.”
7. Finally, if the man wants the host to believe him, he can say, “I have been negotiating for a field for months and the owner has suddenly insisted that we settle tonight.” Such an excuse would save the honor of the host and preserve the relationship between the guest and host. But this is not his purpose. He is intentionally insulting the host by offering an obvious false excuse. (We noted that the banquet scene in Luke 7:36-54 also began with an intentional insult). In addition to the possible legal aspects of the term, when the guest says, “I must go and see it,” he is affirming that the

field is of greater importance to him, than his relationship to the host. In the ME where personal relationships are of utmost importance this equation strikes with special force. The speaker only partially covers this break in relationship by his courteous request for permission to be absent. (In passing, we observe that the close identity of the master and his servant is apparent in these two speeches). He is talking to the servant and addresses the master, the 3rd stanza maintains same pattern.

8. STANZA THREE—THE PLOWING EXPERT

(3) And another said, "I have bought five yoke
of oxen.
and I go to test them
I pray you have me excused.'

I DID THIS
I MUST DO THIS
EXCUSE ME

The main ideas (noted on the right) are repeated now a 3rd time. Again, the excuse is ludicrous. Teams of oxen are sold in the ME village in two ways. In some places the teams are taken to the market place. At the edge of a market place, there is a small field where prospective buyers can test the oxen. IF they cannot pull together that of course worthless as a team. In the smaller villages the farmer owning a pair for sale announces to his friends that he has a team available and will be plowing with them on a given day. Word spreads quickly in the oral tradition community. Prospective buyers make their way to the seller's field to watch the animals working and, of course, to drive them back and forth across the field to be assured of their strength and evenness of a pull. All of this obviously takes place before the buyer even begins to negotiate a price. Again the excuse offered her is the transparent fabrication.

9. If we can reuse our modern suburbanite as a cultural parallel, in this case he calls his wife and says, "I cannot make it home tonight for dinner, because I have just signed a check for 5 used cars, which I bought over the phone, and I am on the way to the used are lot to find their age and model and see if they will start." On hearing this, even the most devoted wife will worry about their husband's sanity.

10. Jesus highlights his point by mentioning 5 pairs of oxen and specifically states that the agent is going to *test* them. As in the case of the real estate expert, the transparent nature of the excuse is unmistakable. Again Sa'id, our Arab Christian commentator who grew up in a small ME village catches this point. He writes, "this excuse is not reasonable, because the testing of the oxen takes place before they are bought and not after."