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writings by Beth Ann Phifer



In His Dust – The Parable of the Lavish Father

He is eager to love us!

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Dear friends,

Our eyes are open to the gravity of these days and the nearness of Yeshua's (Jesus) return. We know He is the Only One Who can save us! Our most important needs dim in the light of our need to *know* Him.

The word *know* in the Bible means *intimate knowledge through ongoing, personal interaction in a relationship*. The Father knows us and invites us to know Him. Yeshua beckons us, "Come to Me all who are weary..." (See Psalm 139, 1 Corinthians 2:10-13, and Matthew 11:28-30.)

In *The Parable of the Lavish Father*, Yeshua paints a beautiful portrait of the nature of God's inviting love that ministers to our deepest need! I was blown away as I pondered it all! Before diving in, I'll start with a quick summary about Jewish parables and a few things I learned about the culture from Dwight Pryor.

The Nature of Jewish Parables

- Parables are unique to the Jews. The Hebrew word *mashal* from which the Greek *parabolé* was translated means *shadow*. Parables are analogies that use word pictures from everyday life to reveal God. They reach the listener's imagination.
- Parables were designed to drive home a point. Their meaning was clear and illuminating. They were not like worldly allegories with hidden symbolism and messages that needed to be decoded.
- Yeshua taught with parables in the context of many different situations and audiences. He masterfully chose each parable for each situation and used them to invite and invoke a response.

The Parable of the Lavish Father Please read Luke 15:11-32 first.

Yeshua had been "passing through from one city and village to another, teaching, and proceeding on His way to Jerusalem" (Luke 13:22). His audience included both "sinners" and Pharisees (Luke 15:1-2).

The Jewish Context and Culture

- Within the Jewish community, it is unprecedented to give your wealth before you die or to ask for your inheritance. When the younger son asked his father for his inheritance, he was basically saying, "Drop dead." His action was shocking in a culture that highly esteemed the elderly. This unprecedented and extreme act of the son kept Yeshua's audience captivated!
- The older son should have taken his brother aside and rebuked him to protect his father's integrity. Instead, the father "divided his wealth between them." The father gave his wealth to both sons! Since his wealth would have included all his property, he put himself at great risk! (Typically, a father would have beaten the son and cast him out!) This unprecedented and extreme act of the father kept the listeners in rapt attention!

- And so, the younger son left home, completely squandered his inheritance, and ended up in a pig sty. In desperation, he returned to his father with partial repentance, willing to be a hired hand. The entire community would have come out to jeer him. **But the father ran to him** – a humiliating act for an old man. The father didn't wait for his son to come to him and fall at his feet. He didn't even hear his son's explanation so he could assess the true nature of his heart. Rather, the father welcomed him, kissed him, clothed him, and invited him into the community with a party! Once again, Yeshua's audience is amazed by the father's actions!
- We don't know how the older son finally responded to his father's words in the last verses of this parable. Yeshua leaves the listeners hanging with questions and with a wide-open space to contemplate their own lives.

Yeshua's Message about God and Us

In *The Parable of the Lavish Father*, Yeshua taught the true character of God. At every juncture in the parable, the Father went against cultural expectations and his legal right. He put Himself in jeopardy and humiliated Himself to extend mercy to His children.

Our Father God is eager to pour out *hesed*, grace, favor, and mercy to us. Even when He is insulted and abused, His love overshadows His justice!

This *is* the true nature of the God and Father of our Lord Yeshua Messiah!

Yeshua invites the *sinners* and the *Pharisees* to the Father's heart; i.e., He invites those who see their sin and those who do not see their sin to receive the Father's love.

- *To the sinners* (perhaps the younger brother in the story), He beckons, "Will you come home to me and find immeasurable mercy and healing?"
- *To the Pharisees* (perhaps the older brother in the story), He beckons, "Will you give Me your heart? Will you let go of your pride? Will you receive My mercy?"

A Prayer

Lord, You put Yourself in jeopardy for us. You were insulted and abused beyond recognition and still spoke words of grace. Your blood flowed to pay our debt, to cover our shame, and to give us eternal life. Your unmerited favor is complete, free, and hard to believe. But we believe and are in awe!

We were blind, rude, controlling, proud, and selfish. But we have come home to You and experienced every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah! You adopted us as sons and daughters because of Your kindness. In our complete undeservedness, You eagerly lavish Your love on us every day!

Give us revelation to know You better. Strengthen us in Your resurrection power for the days ahead! We lift our hands in praise and adoration to You!