

מָשַׁל שֶׁל שְׁנֵי בָנִים

Parable of Two Sons

Yeshua was a great Teacher in Israel. As our Master, He is our Teacher, and we follow His teaching and His *halachah*. Often, our Master taught in parables. A parable is called a *מָשַׁל*, *mashal*, meaning a story that teaches an important lesson. The reason that a good teacher uses stories to teach important lessons is because we remember stories very well. When you hear the parables of our Master, it helps you remember His teachings, and the important things He wants us all to remember and to practice.

There is another reason that Yeshua used parables to teach His lessons. He told us that not everyone would be His disciples, and that He used parables to teach His lessons because they were for the disciples He had chosen. One day His talmidim asked Him, “Master, why do You teach in parables?” He answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him” (Matt. 13:11f). When we listen to Yeshua’s parables, and understand them and follow what our Master has taught us, we show ourselves to be His chosen talmidim.

One day Yeshua told a *mashal* about two sons. Their father had already decided what each of them would inherit from his wealth. One day, the younger son came to his father and said, “Father, give me the share of the estate that falls to me.” So the father divided his wealth between the two of them. It wasn’t more than a few days later that the younger son took what his father had given to him, and went on a trip far away from his home. After he left home, he started spending his money on worthless things, becoming friends with bad people and living in a way that he knew was wrong. Very soon all of his money was gone. The “friends” he had made because he had lots of money no longer wanted to be his friends. What is more, a famine came to the land where he was living, and it was very difficult even to get enough food to eat. So he began to work for a farmer who raised pigs. His job was to feed the pigs, and because he didn’t have any food himself, he started to eat the pig’s food, because no one was giving him even enough food to live on. Finally he realized he had made a very bad decision to leave his father and home. He decided he would go back home, and tell his father, “Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; please, just make me one of your hired hands.”

So he traveled home, wondering how he would face his father and his family, when they found out how he had foolishly lost all of his money, and lived a bad life. As he was coming close to his house, his father was looking out of the window, and saw him walking up the road, so he ran out of the house, and met his son on the road, and threw his arms around him. His son told him everything, but the father responded, “I’m so happy to have you home! Oh how I have missed you!” Then the father told his other servants to bring new clothes for his son, and to make a wonderful feast to celebrate his homecoming. He said, “This son of mine who was so poor that he almost died, has come back to life! This son of mine who was lost has now been found!” So they had a great party! But the older son felt left out. After all, he had remained faithful to his father, and had been a good son. Why wasn’t there a party for him? When the father realized how his oldest son felt left out, he said to him, “Son, you have always been with me, and everything of value that I have is yours! But look, your brother who was almost dead has come back to life! He was lost and now he has been found! Come, and rejoice with me and with him.”

What did this story teach us? The father represents God. The younger son represents those who disobey Him and go their own way. The older son represents those who remain faithful and obedient to Him. And the main point of the *mashal* is this: even when we have disobeyed God, He always calls us to repent and to confess our sins. When we do, He is ready and happy to forgive us of our sins, and to welcome us back to His community. Repentance and restoration should always be received with joy by everyone.

