

25 Then the kingdom of heaven will be compared to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. ²Five of them were foolish and five were wise. ³The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. ⁴The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps.

commentary

25:1 ten virgins – Several scholars^a have attempted to discuss this parable from a historical point of view, debating whether their lamp was a torch – *lampad*, למפד – or an indoor oil lamp – נר (as in *Luke 12:35*), whether the virgins were in the bride’s house as her guests, or somewhere else coming out to greet the groom and the bride. They miss the point of the parable, whose historical background is nearly irrelevant. Since its content is rich in mystical imagery, to understand the story one does not necessarily need to take all the elements of a traditional Jewish wedding into account. The main factor is the prophetic wedding between Israel and God (cf. *Isa. 62:5*) together with the topic presented in the previous chapter: the coming of the son of man and the end of the world. Therefore, in this allegory, the ten women are not waiting for the bride; notice the bride is not mentioned at all. They are either servants who are with the bride or part of the bride herself, i.e., the Shekhina. Their entrance to the wedding house makes them all partake of the very wedding as part of a collective bride. The bridegroom is a king, for only a king can marry as many as ten women (cf. *Yevamot 44a*). He is a metaphor for the coming of the judgment at the end of this world, when the righteous will receive their reward by means of the connection between those who compose Malkhut (the bride) and Heaven (the son, the bridegroom). The word virgins is *betulot* בתולות, in Armaic *betulan* בתולן. It can mean young maidens as it denotes this age group (cf. *Yoel 1:8; Esth 2:17*), but it usually connotes women who have known no man and are ready to marry (cf. *Gen. 24:16; Lam. 2:10*). In a wedding the benediction of the bridegroom and the wedding require ten people to be present (*Ketuvot 7b*); however, they are usually men, not virgin women (cf. *Khizquni on Gen. 24:10*). Here the number ten represents the sefirot, the combining forces that compose a whole unity. Clearly, the ten virgins allude to the entirety of Israel, and the two groups represent two types of *Bnei-Israel*. Two additional facts indicate that this is so: The entrance to the wedding house with the bridegroom and the oil in the lamps. The pagans would not go out to meet the bridegroom (would certainly not be marrying him) and they would not have any oil at all. Going outside at night represents coming to this world, waiting for the groom is the hope in salvation, for God is concealed from us in this world, in the aspect of what is written, “Where has your beloved gone, o fairest of women?” (*Songs 6:1*). The coming of the groom at midnight represents salvation in the moment of biggest darkness.

25:3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them – There is a parallel story in the Talmud: “This can be compared to a king who summoned his servants to a banquet without appointing a time. The wise ones adorned themselves and sat at the door of the palace... the foolish ones went about their work... Suddenly the king called for his servants” (*Shabbat 153a*). *Qohelet Rabbah (9:8)* has the same parable but the king commands his servants to bathe and anoint themselves with oil first. Seeing those who disobeyed, the king made them stand outside and observe in shame those who entered and enjoyed the banquet. These parables are given as an explanation to the Talmudic saying: “Repent one day before dying” (*Shabbat 153a*). Be present and with oil one minute before the bridegroom shows up.

^a cf. Wenham, *Rediscovery*, p. 80-81; R.H. Smith, *the ancient household lamps of Palestine in the New Testament times*, pp. 2-27.

⁵Since the bridegroom tarried, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. ⁶At midnight there was an outcry: Behold the bridegroom! Come out to meet him! ⁷Then all the virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. ⁸The foolish ones said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out. ⁹But the wise ones replied, There may not be enough for both us and for you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves. ¹⁰But while they went to buy, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding house. And the door was shut.

commentary

25:5 the bridegroom tarried – In Rambam’s thirteen principles of faith, which can be found in any modern Siddur, it says: “I believe with perfect faith in the coming of Messiah, and though he may tarry, I will anticipate daily his coming” (*Principle #12*). It is thus written, “the lord whom you seek will suddenly come” (*Mal. 3:1*). Waiting for the coming of the messianic era is commanded in the prophets, as it says, “Therefore, wait for me, says Hashem, for the day that I arise to the prey... etc” (*Zeph. 3:8*). “Though he may tarry wait for him, for it will surely come... it will not be late” (*Habakkuk 2:3*). Since it is a command, one of the questions we will face in the final judgment is “Did you look forward to salvation?” (*Shabbat 31a*), for “God is good to those that hope in him” (*Lam. 3:25*). “If you ask, until when should we hope? It was already said (*Psalms 131:3*): Let Israel hope to God, from this time and forever... If this is done, you will be saved, as it is said (*Isa. 49:23*), Those that hope in me will not be ashamed... and (*Psalms 37:9*)... will inherit the land” (*Midrash Tehilim 31:113*).

25:5 they all became drowsy and fell asleep – Including the wise ones. This is in the aspect of the son of man consciousness, which is asleep in Malkhut, as it is written, “Hashem God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam” (*Gen. 2:21*). With the coming of the messianic era the consciousness will be awakened.

25:8 Give us some oil – “Torah is compared to oil” (*Qohelet Rabbah 9:8*). It is written, “Let your clothes be always white and your head never lacking oil” (*Ecc. 9:8*). The midrash explains: “Your head never lacking oil means never cease to perform commands and good deeds” (*Midrash Qohelet*).

25:9 buy some for yourselves – This is like what is written, “Hoi, all who are thirsty!... even if you have no money... buy food without money” (*Isa. 55:1*). The food and drink mentioned in this passage refer to the wisdom of the Torah (cf. *Ibn Ezra, Rashi*). In our passage the concept is the same, except that the Torah is being compared to oil. The foolish virgins are expecting to achieve union with the Creator through the merits of the wise ones. The wise ones are warning them that ultimately the redemption of the soul is personal; nobody can perform good deeds for you to achieve unity if you neglect your part. You must, at the very least, repent on your own, as it says, “the righteousness of the righteous will be upon him alone and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon him alone” (*Eze. 18:20*). Learn from this that it is permitted for a spiritual person to approach someone in a lower level in order to elevate them, like the wise virgins did by offering advice. However, the spiritual person cannot afford to lower himself to other people’s level, as it does not benefit anyone; on the contrary, they will be dragged down, which is the parable’s imagery of one’s oil being wasted.

25:10 while they went to buy, the bridegroom arrived – This is like the parable in the previous chapter where a servant said to himself, “My master has delayed his coming” (*Matt. 24:48*) and he began to misbehave towards his fellow servants. We could say he was spilling his lamp’s oil. The judgment caught these virgins on their way to repentance – did not repent on time – hence they did not partake of the wedding. This is why our sages taught: “Repent one day before dying” (*Avot 2:10*), which implies a continuous repentance, since we do not know the day or the hour of our death. One of the questions we will face in the final judgment is: “Did you designate times for Torah?” (*Shabbat 31a*). If we do not designate time for Torah, it is like the virgins who neglected their lamps until they ran out of oil.

¹¹Later the other virgins also came, saying, Master, master! Open to us! ¹²But he answered and said to them, Amen I say to you, I do not know you. ¹³Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. ¹⁴For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵To one he gave five talents, to another two talents and to another one – each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶He who had received five talents went and traded with them and gained five more. ¹⁷Likewise, the one with two gained two more. ¹⁸But he who had received one went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them.

—commentary—

25:11 master! Open to us! – In a similar manner the Talmud teaches: “This world can be compared to the antechamber before the world to come. Prepare yourself in the antechamber so that you will be able to enter the banquet hall” (*Shabbat 152-a-b*).

25:14 man going on a journey – This parable of the talents and in Luke the so-called parable of the minas (cf. *Luke 19:12-27*) share a common source, even though each author offered their own version of it. It is worth noting that Luke's adaptation of this parable tries to fix the apparent overinflated measurement of wealth distributed in Mattai, hence the talents are replaced by minas, so that the verse 23 will make better sense to its audience. As far as the gospel of Thomas is concerned, saying 41 is parallel to Mattai's verse 29: “Whoever has something in hand will be given more, but for him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away” (*Thomas #41*). Generally speaking, the parable speaks to two different kinds of religious people, those who perform good deeds and those who simply believe but disregard the commands.

25:15 five talents – A talent (in Latin, *Talentum*, in Hebrew *Kikar* ככר) was a Roman measurement of gold or silver, corresponding to 60 minas, about the same value as 3600 sheqels of the old days. The modern English word “talent” derives precisely from this parable, since it is highly implied that the talents of the story are metaphors for abilities or gifts.

25:15 each according to his ability – This speaks of the different duties within the people of Israel. Some are Rabbis and are required much. Some are priests or kings and are required even more. Some are mere students within the community who are required less than the previous ones. Some are public figures who must exhibit exemplary behavior, and some are only known to Hashem, like David was. Some are given a high measure of wisdom and some are born with difficulty to remember what they have learnt. All of them are servants within the son of man consciousness, and all of them are required to work on the kingdom according to their abilities, as the sages taught: “Know before whom you toil, and that your employer is faithful” (*Avot 2:14*), and “It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at liberty to neglect it” (*ibid. 2:16*).

25:18 dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money – This is parallel to our sage's parable concerning the return of the soul to Hashem, which is compared to “a king who had an orchard which he handed over to a servant. What did he do? He filled some baskets with the fruit of the orchard and put them in display at the orchard's entrance. When the king came and saw it, he said, All this fine fruit is at the entrance, then what must be in the orchard itself?” (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah 7:14*). The servant with one talent had been given little abilities to perform good deeds and mitzvot, but instead of displaying them for the world to see them, he hid them, thus missing his chance to honor Hashem's name in this world.

²⁰He who had received five talents brought the other five, and said, Master, you entrusted me with five talents. Behold, I have gained five more. ²¹His master replied, Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a little, over much I will establish you. Enter into the joy of your master. ²²And he of the two talents came and said, Master, you entrusted me with two talents. Behold, I have gained two more. ²³His master replied, Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over a little, over much I will establish you. Enter into the joy of your master. ²⁴And he who had received one talent also came, and said, Master, I knew that you are a hard man, reaping where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered, ²⁵and I was afraid and went and hid your talent in the earth. Behold, here is what is yours. ²⁶His master replied, You wicked, lazy servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered? ²⁷You should then have put my money on deposit with the exchangers, so that at my coming I would have received it back with interest. ²⁸Therefore, take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. ²⁹For to him who has it will be given, and it will be added more. But for him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away.

commentary

25:21 Enter into the joy of your master – In this verse and in the negative counterpart in verse 30 Yeshua breaks the fourth wall of the allegory by utilizing language that a mere mortal king would not use. Instead, he speaks the language of the spiritual realm to remind us that the king refers to the king the universe.

25:22 I have gained two more – The good servants in the parable earn twice as much as they were assigned. Come and see: Yosef became “second” to the king on account of his righteousness. It is thus written that Pharaoh “had him ride in the *משנה*, *mishne*, second royal chariot” (*Gen. 41:43*). The word used for second, *משנה* *mishne*, also means “double.” From this we learn that by rectifying the ‘*brit*’ and engaging in Torah and righteousness one merits double bounty of what he has invested (cf. *Liqutei Moharan 58:4*). This is a secret in the verse, “the bread will be *משנה* double what they gather daily” (*Exod. 16:5*). This is in line with what is written: “Busy yourselves with Torah so that your reward will be double in the world to come” (*Pereq Sirakh 4*). It is also written, “In their land they will possess double” (*Isa. 61:7*).

25:29 for him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away – As it is written: “And destroy them with double destruction” (*Jer. 17:18*). It is taught: “He [the Creator] created [things in opposites;] Garden of Eden and Gehenna, the righteous and the wicked. Every man has two portions, one in Gan Eden, one in Gehenna. The meritorious righteous takes his portion and the portion of his fellow in Gan Eden. The guilty wicked one receives his portion and the portion of his fellow in Gehenna” (*Hagiga 15a*).

relevant quotes

“As I was conversing with them, behold, angels came bearing baskets full of flowers. ... And the angel said to me, These flowers are the merits of the righteous. ... for those angels who brought full baskets, he filled them with oil, saying, Take it away, reward our hardworking friends a hundredfold... For those who sowed virtuously, also reap virtuously. And for those who brought half-empty baskets, he said, Come you too; take away the reward according to what you brought.”
(3 *Barukh 12-15*)

³⁰And cast that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

³¹When the son of man comes in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

—commentary—

25:31 When the son of man comes – This is probably the author’s elucidation on the above parables, and not necessarily something Yeshua himself said. When Yeshua spoke his parables, he left most of them unexplained. It was through his disciples’ records that we can see how different communities understood them.

25:31 When the son of man comes in his glory – The messianic consciousness, as explained in Daniel 7:13-14.

25:31 and all his holy angels with him – This is dependent on Zechariah, which says, “Behold! A day of Hashem is coming... ..and Hashem Elohai will come, all the holy ones, with you” (*Zech. 14:5*). The midrash interprets the holy ones to be saints and prophets who would resurrect in the future (cf. *Qohelet Rabbah 1:11; Shir haShirim Rabbah 4:11*). The commentators interpret the holy ones, or holy beings, as angels (*Rashi on Zech. 14:5*). The meaning is that God’s presence, through the holy Shekhina, which would descend via angelic forces, will come and become evident (cf. *Ibn Ezra on Zech. 14:5*). Those who say it will be saints and those who say it will be angels, both are saying the same thing from different perspectives. The Shekhina is being brought by the good deeds of the saints and the good deeds bring about defending angels for the day of judgment – angels meaning messengers of the Divine Presence – as it is taught, “he who performs a mitzva acquires for himself a defending angel” (*Avot 4:11*). This is a secret in the verse: “a matter is by the decree of the Watchers and the sentence by the word of the holy ones” (*Dan. 4:14*).

25:31 sit on the throne of his glory – As it is written, “I beheld until thrones were placed” (*Daniel 7:9*). According to Aqiva, one throne represents God and the other is David, i.e., the Messiah (cf. *Sanhedrin 38b*), which is the messianic consciousness that will dominate earth. Then, one throne is for judgment and one is for mercy. Another interpretation: every man will be given a ‘throne’ according to his own glory, like the Talmud says, “every righteous man is given lodging according to his glory” (*Shabbat 152a*).

25:33 the sheep on his right and the goats on his left – Like a shepherd who herds sheep and goats together, but at the end of the day he separates them, either by allowing the sheep to sleep under a roof or for milking purposes. In the apocrypha, the Messiah summons all nations, then “he spares some of them and some of them he slays” (cf. *2Barukh 72:1-3*), as it is written, “he will judge the poor justly, and he will chastise with equity the humble of the earth and he will smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the spirit of his lips he will put the wicked to death” (*Isaiah 11:4*). Through his speech and teachings, the Messiah will separate the people of the earth. The wicked will be revealed as wicked, the righteous will be revealed as righteous. Isaiah’s verse reveals a third group of people: those intermediate, who have measures of both righteousness and wickedness. Although they are judged with mercy their reward will match the quality of their good deeds – as it says: “chastise with equity the humble.” Nevertheless, the sages teach they will have to be purged in Gehinom for a cycle of time before entering the joy of the Lord (cf. *Rosh haShana 17b-17a*), for it is written “I will bring the third in fire and refine them as one refines silver” (*Zech. 13:9*).

³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, ³⁶I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, Master, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? ³⁸When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? ³⁹When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? ⁴⁰The king will answer and say to them, Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.

commentary

25:25 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat – The king in the story tells of six acts of kindness: feeding the hungry, giving water to the thirsty, hospitality toward strangers, clothing the naked, taking care of the sick and visiting the prisoners. In Judaism we call it “bestowal of kindness” or **גמילות חסדים**, *Gemilut Hasadim*, which is the physical demonstration of “love your fellow as yourself” (*Lev. 19:18*). One who performs bestowal of kindness is manifesting the attributes of the Blessed Holy One (*Sotah 14a*). These are elements of the Divine Image within humanity. Feeding the hungry, as it is written, “the ravens gave him bread and meat” (*1Kings 17:6*); also, “It is the bread that Hashem has given you to eat” (*Exod. 16:15*). Giving water to the thirsty, as it is written, “God opened Hagar’s eyes and she saw a well of water” (*Gen. 21:19*). Accepting strangers, as it is written “Hashem watches over the stranger” (*Psalms 146:9*), “father of orphans” (*Psalms 68:6*), and also, “Come now and let us reason together” (*Isaiah 1:18*). Clothing the naked, as it is written, “Hashem God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin” (*Gen. 3:21*). Visiting the sick as it is written, “Hashem appeared to him [after his circumcision]” (*Gen. 18:1*). In addition he also consoled mourners (cf. *Gen. 25:11*) and buried the dead (cf. *Deut. 34:6*). Hospitality toward strangers is considered greater than hosting the Shekhina (*Shabbat 127a*).

25:40 whatever you did for one the least of these brothers of mine – The prophet enumerates part of these attributes between man and man as signs of a truly righteous person, and he who performs these deeds “will surely live” (*Ez. 18: 7-9*). Iyov enumerates the following as evil deeds both against the fellow man and against the Creator himself: to strip your brother naked, not giving water to the faint, withholding bread from the hungry, sending widows away empty-handed and crushing orphans (*Iyov 22:5-9*). Isaiah enumerates the bestowal of kindness as the true fasting chosen by God: “to share your bread with the hungry, hosting the moaning poor and clothing the naked” (*Isaiah 58:7*), and it adds: “From your flesh you must not hide,” meaning, every human being is flesh of your flesh and whatever you do to them, you are ultimately doing it to yourself, because in the higher sphere, we all are sparks of the same soul: Adam’s soul. A man who performs these acts of kindness will “surely live” (*Ez. 18:9*), because Heaven’s judgment is measure for measure (cf. *Sotah 9b*). A person who shows compassion towards his fellow will be shown compassion in his final judgment, as it is written (*Isa. 58:8*), “Your righteousness will precede you [in the judgment].”

25:40 You did it to me – A person who performs bestowal of kindness is in obedience to the command: “love your neighbor as yourself.” The connection between everybody’s unifying soul (i.e., the Yekhida) is manifested in the aspect of empathy. A person who awakens the messianic consciousness is necessarily empathic towards the rest of humankind and understands every act of kindness as being done to himself, in the aspect of “love your neighbor as yourself.”

⁴¹Then he will say to those on his left, Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the accuser and his angels. ⁴²For I was hungry and you did not give me to eat, I was thirsty and you did not give me to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not receive me, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not visit me. ⁴⁴They also will answer, Master, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you? ⁴⁵He will answer and say to them, Amen I say to you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. ⁴⁶Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

—commentary—

25:41 Eternal fire which has been prepared for the accuser and his angels – or “Satan and his messengers.” The final destruction of Gehenna, which is known as *Avadon* (*Prov. 15:11*), was created for those *qlipot* which exist only for the sake of human correction, but once their mission is completed they no longer serve any purpose whatsoever, neither can be redeemed in any kind of form because although they served a holy purpose they only operate through purely evil means. Therefore, that which – due to its existential nature – cannot be transformed into good is headed for the utter destruction of Gehenna, as it is written, “For behold, your enemies will be lost, every worker of violence will disintegrate” (*Psalms 92:10*). Satan’s messengers can be anything, from demons to wicked people. Contrary to those who have no aspect of benevolence, the intermediate people – who have a balance of both good and bad deeds – will be purged until they can have a share in the world to come (cf. *Berakhot 7a*).

25:42 For I was hungry and you did not give me to eat – To the question: “Why do poor people exist” Aqiva responded, so that we act as God’s agents and through helping them we ourselves will be saved from the judgment of Gehenna (*Bava Bathra 10a*).

22:44 when did we see you hungry – The Messiah represents the communal soul of Israel, for the leader represents the entire people (*Ramban on Deut 7:12*), as the sages taught, “Moshe is equated with Israel and Israel is equated with Moshe” (*Mekhilta d’Rabbi Yishmael 18:1*). Come and see: the six aspects of *gemilut Hasadim* enumerated by Yeshua represent the six aspects of redemption. The messianic consciousness is hungry and thirsty for Torah, as it says, “Whoever has no money, go, buy and eat, and go, buy milk and wine [to drink] without a price” (*Isaiah 55:1*). Messianic consciousness is exiled as a stranger, as it has been taught “Oh, hope of Israel... why are you like a stranger in the land?” (*Jer. 14:9*). Messiah “sits at the gates of Rome... sitting with the lepers” (*Sanhedrin 98a*). It needs to be clothed in sanctity, as it is written: “Awake! Awake! Clothe yourself in splendor!” (*Isaiah 51:9*). It is counted among the sick, as it is written, “Our illness he did bear and our pains he endured, yet we did esteem him injured, stricken by God and afflicted” (*Isaiah 53:4; Sanhedrin 98b*). Messianic consciousness will “sit in prison” (*Heikhal haBerakhot*), trapped – imprisoned (*Qinat Hashem Tzevaot 2*) – in the realm of the Sitra Akhra waiting to be rescued. Hence, about the son of David it is written, “he is righteous and saved” (*Zech. 9:9*). Learn from this that by multiplying the acts of kindness in this world we are contributing to the hastening of the final redemption and the correction of the earth.

—relevant quotes—

“A not a completely righteous person; because he does have some transgressions, he is punished in this world so that he will receive a complete reward in the world to come... The wicked who suffers is a completely wicked person. Since he performed absolutely no mitzvot and deserves no reward, he receives only punishment both in this world and in the world to come.”

(*Maharsha on Berakhot 7a*)