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...Lazarus at the gate

Lazarus

by haRold Smith
a citizen of the Commonwealth (Ephesians 2:19)

"There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen, **gaily living in splendor every day**. At his gate had been laid a beggar named El'azar who was covered with sores. He would have been glad to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table; but instead, even the dogs would come and lick his sores. In time the beggar died and was carried away by the angels to Avraham's side; the rich man also died and was buried.

"In She'ol, where he was in torment, the rich man looked up and saw Avraham far away with El'azar at his side. He called out, 'Father Avraham, take pity on me, and send El'azar just to dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, because I'm in agony in this fire!' However, Avraham said, 'Son, remember that when you were alive, you got the good things while he got the bad; but now he gets his consolation here, while you are the one in agony. Yet that isn't all: a deep rift has been established between us, so that those who would like to pass from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

"He answered, 'Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father's house, where I have five

brothers, to warn them; so that they may be spared having to come to this place of torment too.' But Avraham said, 'They have Moshe and the Prophets; they should listen to them.' However, he said, 'No, father Avraham, they need more. If someone from the dead goes to them, they'll repent!' But he replied, 'If they won't listen to Moshe and the Prophets, **they won't be convinced even if someone rises from the dead!**'"

Luke 16:19-31

Throughout the *Tanakh* (renamed OT) events and circumstances are often described using a form of phrasing called "figurative imagery" - language used to represent objects, actions and ideas in such a way that it appeals to our physical senses. Since the word "imagery" is associated with mental pictures, imagery makes use of particular words that create visual representation of ideas in our minds. So it is we find the continued usage of figurative imagery in the Messianic Writings (NT) of these Hebrew authors drawn from a Hebrew mindset influenced by Hebrew culture who understood how wording could invoke a mental image to convey the sense of what they were writing about. The Hebrew Yeshua frequently used this Hebrew technique in His parables to illumine a particular truth He was trying to convey as He is in this parable of Lazarus. What is amazing to see is how, because this is the only parable recorded in which Yeshua places a proper name upon one of the characters, people read into it as though it actually happened to support the uniquely Christian theological stance of there being a **Heaven** a **Hell** and an **Immortal Soul** ([click on highlighted words to view content](#)). This theological stance can be seen in most of our modern translations that insert the word "Hades" into the text **in verse 23** when it should simply end with "*the rich man died and was buried*". By adding this phrase, we see the danger of *eisegesis* (reading *into* the text) rather than *exegesis* (reading *out of* the text - reading what the words actually say) when we project our own preconceived ideas onto the text and call the process "Biblical interpretation." Metaphor, allegory and symbolism are problematic when approaching scripture because the *Tanakh* does not speak in purely symbolic, abstract concepts - there is always a literal reality at the core of the

subject, which is only then interpreted in a symbolic way to underscore and enhance the truth contained in that reality. In fact, without any explicit statement from the text telling us otherwise, any attempt to override what the words actually say and mean will inevitably be found to simply be the opinion of the translator. The paradigm the translator brings to the text will lead him to find exactly the evidence he needs to support his opinion (metaphor, allegory or symbolic approach). Why do we suspect that the text has been tampered with? Several reasons bring us to that conclusion. First of all, as mentioned earlier, **"Hades"** was added to the text. We can be assured of this fact because "Hades" is a Greek mythological god of the underworld - not found anywhere in Hebrew scripture. Secondly, Thayer's (New Testament Greek-English Lexicon) reveals that part of its definition of Hades is "unseen" - which is the precise definition of the Hebrew word, **she'ol**, as unseen "in the grave" without any reference to punishments or rewards (in spite of Strong's insistence otherwise). **Job** certainly entertained no hope of revivification.

Third, there is the involvement with **necromancy** which is a method of divination through alleged communication with the dead. Because Christians are taught that everything west of the book of Matthew is no longer applicable, they read into the parable of Lazarus an endorsement of being able to connect with others who have died. However, communing with the dead is strictly forbidden in scripture. It is one of those things considered unclean - "an abomination unto YaHoVeH" (**Deuteronomy 18:10-12**). The scriptures do not come right out and say that communing with the dead is impossible to do (**1Samuel 28:9-11**) but when people THINK they're communing with the dead, they are actually being deceived by demons using the familiarity experienced with the deceased human while they were alive to fool those seeking to communicate with them by mimicking them. However, when looking at the scripture from **Deuteronomy 18:11**, it refers to BOTH "a consulter with familiar spirits OR a necromancer". The fact that it refers to BOTH of them could be seen as meaning both those that pretend or think they're communicating with the dead AND those that actually ARE. Whether it is actually possible or not, scripture doesn't specifically say; but it IS most definitely strictly forbidden - from both sides of the Book (**Exodus 22:18**, **2Corinthians 11:14-15**, **1Timothy 4:1**). Yeshua's use of **the parable** of Lazarus and the rich man is not an endorsement of the practice of necromancy, but an illustration of the separation between **the Kingdom of Light** and darkness. Finally, there is no Hebrew thought in the Original Writings of a person's soul or spirit being separated from the rest of what it means to be **human**. The division of man into "body-mind-soul (spirit)" is a thoroughly Greek invention elaborated on by the Greek philosopher, Plato, in his book "*the New Republic*". The Hebrew word, **nephesh** has been translated into the English "soul" because of the influence of the Greek word **psyche** introduced into the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew *Tanakh* (OT) known as the LXX).

In the Hebraic perspective, however, human beings are one homogenized entity - the person, the **nephesh**. When the Hebrew apostle *Sha'ul* (Paul) cites the Hebrew **Habakkuk 2:4** in **Romans 1:17** and **Galatians 3:11**, he is not speaking as if the soul could be saved while the body could not, but is talking about the entire person, the **nephesh**. Notice that in **1Thessalonians 5:23** *Sha'ul* does not say that our "souls" are being preserved. He includes all three Greek words that are the equivalent of the one Hebrew expression **nephesh**. You as a whole person are the subject of this process. You are not going to end up as some kind of purified spirit in a ethereal place called heaven. You are going to end up as a person without blame in this lifetime if you keep **the Words of YaHoVeH**. The same distinction is seen in **Hebrews 4:12** where all three are addressed as being subject to the discernment of thoughts and motives originating within a person. We have to keep reminding ourselves that these words were written by Hebrews from the perspective of the *Tanakh* without the benefit of the Messianic Writings (NT) - which had not yet been written.



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"Reading the scriptures in a translation is like kissing your new bride through a veil" (Haim Nachman Bialik, Jewish Poet, 1873-1934). Greek metaphysics is built around the duality of the material and the spiritual. OK, I know, that was a bit scholarly - but bear with me. What it means is that the Greeks thought of existence in terms of two levels. One was the level of the material world, where all the stuff we see and deal with exists. The other was the spiritual world, where the divine resides with Truth, Beauty and Goodness. This dual nature of reality has affected Western civilization for thousands of years. In fact, it is the fundamental philosophical principle behind the Christian idea of getting to heaven. Our proclamation of "escape" from this world, whether through divine intervention, rapture, other-worldly orientation or a heavenly gate pass is really the affirmation that the "spiritual" world is the preferred existence and getting out of this lousy life is the real goal. "Where will you go if you die tonight?" is an evangelistic approach that is rooted in Greek metaphysics. This assumption of

"getting to heaven" is the goal of Christian belief. It sounds nice. Who wouldn't want to leave all their problems behind? But it's not scriptural. This dualism is still with us in all of our English translations. Every time you hear someone speak about the evil world, the bliss of heaven, the desire to depart, the anticipation of the rapture or anything that suggests that our purpose is departure, you are treading on Greek philosophy. It has been part of "the church" since the third century. But it is not found in the original language of scripture. *Nephesh* is all of me, all homogenized together. I am not body-mind-soul as advanced by the Greek philosopher Plato. When I embrace the manifestation of the Life exemplified by Yeshua, I am the manifestation of YaHoVeH's breath embodied. And that means that I am entirely under His sovereignty. Life does not belong to me. It belongs to Him. He gives it as a *loan* to me. Unlike the Greek concept, I am not on a path to ascend to my true calling in the spirit world. I am me right here, breathing the *nephesh hayah* (Breath of Life) that YaHoVeH has given me, designed to do His will on this earth today. When the author of **Hebrews 4:12** calls the Word of YaHoVeH "living", he uses the Greek word *zao*. With all this Greek metaphysics in the background, why would he use such a loaded term? The answer is that he uses the term as it is found in the Septuagint, where it is influenced by the Hebrew concept of *nephesh*. But *nephesh* is not separate from physical life. In fact, it is essentially linked to life as we know it in this world. Why? Because the world is the creation of YaHoVeH and *it is good!* There is no dualism, no separation between spiritual and physical. YaHoVeH created the world a wonderful, full, significant place where we are to discover **His Glory** in our embodiment. Getting to heaven is definitely not the goal! Enjoying His Kingdom on earth, and seeing it manifest, is the goal. That's why **Yeshua prays** that we will not be taken out of this world. We are to experience life in all its fullness right here, right now - today.

"Now there was a certain rich man, and he habitually dressed in purple and fine linen, gaily living in splendor every day." Luke 16:19

Luke 16 in context, we see Yeshua speaking of the consequences of *not keeping Torah (verses 13-18)* - that, as it is with **light and darkness**, serving self and serving others can not exist in the same space at the same time. In the middle of this discussion with the Pharisees, after proclaiming it easier for the heavenlies and earth to pass away than for one iota of Torah to become void, we find in verse 18 a seemingly unrelated statement about divorce. If we are not reading these words from the Hebrew perspective scripture is being presented in, we fail to see it as a scolding of the Pharisees that Yeshua was addressing for divorcing the Words of YaHoVeH to favor and uphold their traditions. The *only thing* Yeshua ever pointed to that would nullify and make void the Words of YaHoVeH is the **tradition of men** - thus, His statement was a support of the Torah. It is only then that we come to the parable of Lazarus. So, with that context in mind, let us look again at these words. The translation "*gaily living*" disguises a man whose life displayed a disdain for the Torah, but we would never know that unless we read the words as they would have been understood from the Hebraic perspective they were written in. Most, if not all, modern bibles translate the Greek phrase *euphraino lampros* as "feasted sumptuously" instead. This textual change is important. Why? Because in Hebraic context this man *violates the Sabbath!* He does not honor this one day set aside by YaHoVeH differently than any other day. He does not provide rest for his servants (since they must attend to him *every day*). Every day is about his own needs and desires. But, if we have dismissed Torah as YaHoVeH's standard for living - we will fail to see this is a man of **lawlessness**. And just to make sure we get the picture, Yeshua characterizes him as dressing in purple robes and fine Egyptian cotton (underwear) *every day!* Purple robes were extremely expensive and a sign of royalty. While they might be worn on special occasions, this man displayed himself and his wealth on *every* occasion. His ego was much bigger than his stomach.



...the rich man

This is the only parable where a person has a name - Lazarus. In Hebrew his name is pronounced **E'l'azar** which means "the one *Elohim* helps." But it certainly doesn't seem to be the case in this story. The rich man lives a life of ego mania while Lazarus wastes away at the rich man's outer gate. Where is YaHoVeH when it matters? Ah, that's the point of the story, isn't it? This parable is not about the place Lazarus occupies - but the rich man. What matters is the compassion shown while the opportunity presents itself in this life to show it. This is the chasm that separates us from the Nature of YaHoVeH, which is self**LESS**ness - and eternity is where the Nature of YaHoVeH abides, dwells, makes His abode (**Isaiah 57:15, John 14:23-24**). The rich man had the opportunity to be the hands and feet of the

compassionate YaHoVeH, to manifest the Nature of Spirit. He could have acted as YaHoVeH acts. But he chose to serve himself instead. And in the end, he is no longer capable of being served. The phrase, "I'm in agony in this fire!" is indicative of his keen understanding of his separation from YaHoVeH as scripture often associates the Words of YaHoVeH with flames. The "**fiery law**" of **Deuteronomy 33:2** appeared as " **tongues of fire**" upon those faithful waiting on the Promise at the Hebrew feast of **Yom Shavu'ot** (renamed Pentecost) - the same earthshaking day the Words of YaHoVeH's Nature had first been given **in fire** to the family of Jacob (Israel) at Sinai.

Measure for measure - as you give, so it will be given to you (**Matthew 7:2**). There are many, many opportunities to show grace toward someone in need, today, in this life. These opportunities are not always convenient, not always encouraged, not always recognized by others. But YaHoVeH sees them because they are the acts of **His servants** - those who display His Nature. The question is only this: Do we see them as He does? Are we concerned with the image of our lives, the outward display of our status and importance, or are we looking for the one at the gate, hoping that YaHoVeH will be gracious enough to provide us with a chance to heal, to comfort or to feed **our brother in need?** (not "**the world**"). Today we may not dress in purple robes, we may not feast sumptuously every day; but if we are consumed with what we think is good only for us instead of looking upon the things of my brother as being more important than that of my own, then it is this distinction that will separate us at **the Day of Reckoning** from the Presence of the Spirit of YaHoVeH (**Philippians 2:3-5**). It is difficult to look past the outer gates of our lives and see the need lying before our feet. Our eyes are clouded with self-concerns - some of them quite legitimate. But eternity, where the Nature of YaHoVeH dwells, hangs in the balance here - a lesson that the rich man learns too late. To serve is to be served. To ignore is to one day be ignored - measure for measure. At the end of the parable is the point of the whole chapter - if we will not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will we be convinced by one who is raised from the dead and the tradition of men will become our standard.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah." Yeshua in Matthew 5:17-18



???Questions???

Please feel free to email me at harold@hethathasaneer.com. While not claiming to have all the answers, it would be an honor to partake with you of what Spirit is uncovering.

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