

# The Story of Two Sisters

(Luke 10: 38-42; John 12)

Now while they were on their way, it occurred that YAHSHUA entered a certain village, and a woman named Martha received and welcomed Him into her house. And she had a sister named Mary, who seated herself at the Lord's feet and was listening to His teaching (vs.38-39). Bethany was the village where Martha, her sister and her brother lived. It was located on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, about two miles from Jerusalem according to John 11:18. Today Bethany's name is el- Azariyeh, meaning the place of Lazarus and it is a ruinous village; a village separated by wall where tourists no longer have access to it. But it remains with a beautiful and silent past, for our Savior often visited it and had supper with His friends, Martha, Mary and Lazarus. Lazarus was brought to life there and many came to believe in YAHSHUA. Bethany will always shine its past!

After the death and resurrection of Lazarus, YAHSHUA was invited to supper with them. While Martha served, Mary anointed Him with a pound of ointment of pure liquid nard [a rare perfume] **six days before His death**. Spikenard or nard, according to Wikipedia, is "a class of aromatic amber-colored oil. **It was offered on the specialized incense altar** in the time when the tabernacle was located in the first and second temples." This perfume-oil was very significant in the action of Mary when she anointed the Savior six days before His death. It speaks volume concerning Him as the Lamb of God being prepared for the Passover sacrifice. Mary had no idea of the prophetic meaning her action had. She was only expressing her gratitude to Him, but at the same time, she was being part of the fulfilling of God's plan for His Son. The Lord defended her action against those who criticized her and confirmed the purpose for her action by saying, Let her alone. It was [intended] that she keep it for the time of My **preparation for burial** (John 12:a). The Lord blessed Mary in return. Her action did not go unnoticed. He rewarded her by saying, Surely I tell you, wherever the good news is proclaimed in the entire world, what she has done will be told in memory of her (Mark 14: 9). This rare and expensive perfume-oil existed for thousands of years. In the Song of Songs, Solomon included it in one of his dialogue with his bride:

A garden enclosed and barred  
is my sister [promised bride]  
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed  
Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates  
With pleasant fruits,  
Fragrant henna with **spikenard**  
**Spikenard** and saffron  
Calamus and cinnamon

With every kind of incense tree,  
With myrrh and aloes  
And all the finest spices.

She answers Him:  
OH, I pray that the cold  
North wind and the south wind  
May blow upon my garden  
That its spices may flow out  
[in abundance to you in whom  
My soul delights]  
Let my beloved come into  
His garden and eat its choicest fruits.

Spikenard was a symbol of love and affection in Solomon's expression of admiration toward his bride. Mary in her love and devotion for the Lord is a picture of what the bride of Christ should be. The bride of Christ's priority should be Him and He alone. Her desire should be to know Him; give Him the best she has, so that her gift will rise to Him in a sweet and pleasing aroma.

While Mary's heart was leaned toward the spiritual, Martha's was toward the physical. Her love for the Lord was shown through her doing for Him. She did not make time to be still before Him; she was more concerned with having things done, than to sit and listen. She was hospitable; a doer and a leader in her own rights and performed well in whatever she did. People like Martha are those who make things happen; they are type A personality and make great leaders. But their focus is not always on the spiritual. Martha, in spite of her leadership strength, she was also a servant. But because of her worries coupled with anxiety

about things the Lord YAHSHUA cautioned her and did not praise her works. He said, Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; there is need of only one or a few things. **Mary has chosen the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her** (Luke 10: 41-42). Because Martha chose the temporal aspect of life, her life was not spiritually enriched as her sister's was. In Matthew 6:33 we find the secret of a successful life: seek first the kingdom of God and the rest will fall into place or will be added unto us. YAHSHUA also expressed that food was not the only meaning for life, but every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Luke 4:4). He is the bread of life from Whom all spiritual nourishment are derived; He is the bread of life that came down from heaven and gave life to the world. In her worries, Martha did not perceive that the man standing in her presence, eating from her table, was God Himself; the Sustainer of life. All her worries concerning His needs were of no value. Although Martha believed YAHSHUA and confessed her belief that He was the Christ, the Son of God, Who was to come into the world, she was still very much tied to her physical ways of worrying. I believe that in the body of the bride of Christ there are more Marthas, than Marys. Many of us struggle to sit at YAHSHUA'S feet to learn from Him; and fellowship with Him. It is easier for many of us to be moving about, being busy about nothing than to be still in the presence of the Lord. YAHSHUA commended Mary for having chosen to be with Him, but warned Martha of her business of worries.

YAHSHUA desires that His bride be free from worries. He calls us to pay attention how creation is maintained and sustained and dressed by Him: the birds of the air, the lilies of the valley, and the grass of the fields. He said, if God clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and green and tomorrow is tossed into the furnace, will He not much more surely clothe you, O you of little faith?... Do not worry... But seek first of all His kingdom and His righteousness and then all these things taken together will be given you besides (Matt. 6: 26-33). He calls His bride to rise up to come away with Him. He wants to bless us in His presence with words of comfort and wisdom and spiritual discernment and knowledge of Him.

Martha made the choice that was temporal and of no spiritual significance; but "Mary chose the good portion, which shall not be taken away from her!" 40 percent of Martha and 60 percent of Mary will be a good percentage to adopt in our Christian way of living. I believe that embracing Martha's productivity without her worries and anxiety and mixing with Mary's devotion to the Lord will

balance our spiritual life in ways that will please the Lord. We must be doers, not only hearers of the Word. Nothing lasts in this world that does not carry the weight of eternity. Only things that was done in faith, love and devotion to the Lord!