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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



IS MAINTAINING CLEANLINESS AND GOOD GROOMING

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LIVING LESSONS ON ORDERLINESS . . .

FROM THE PAGES OF SCRIPTURE

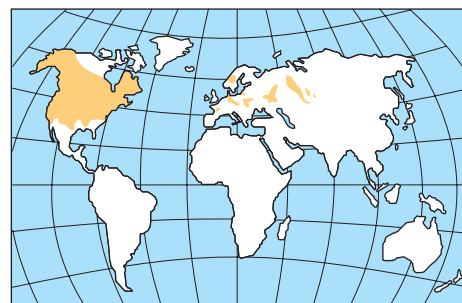
Society's outcast, she hesitatingly came as an uninvited guest. But because she demonstrated faith through an ordinary act of cleanliness, she received a priceless gift and the promise that this act of worship would be spoken of wherever the Gospel was preached.



ILLUSTRATED IN THE WORLD OF NATURE

THE BEAVER *Castor canadensis*

The energetic beaver works from dusk to dawn busily cutting trees for building material and food. The largest rodent of North America, the beaver is not too busy to maintain a comprehensive program of personal grooming and cleanliness.



The range and habitat of the beaver

HOW DOES THE BEAVER ILLUSTRATE ORDERLINESS IN OUTWARD CLEANLINESS?

The beaver's ability to build huge earthen dams, elaborate canals and an underwater home has earned it acclaim for its skillful engineering. But the beaver has another quality which is just as distinguishing if less familiar. The quality is that of orderliness.

The beaver takes great care and spends much time to maintain good grooming and cleanliness. Two techniques which it uses are unusual for different reasons. Both procedures require special tools—one is "built in" and the other is acquired.

The first procedure is the beaver's unconventional way of taking a bath to rid itself of irritating fleas and parasites. It ambles about, looking for a particular mound of earth. Once it finds the mound, it flops on top of it and begins to shuffle in a sprawled position. Soon ants are crawling all over its thick fur.

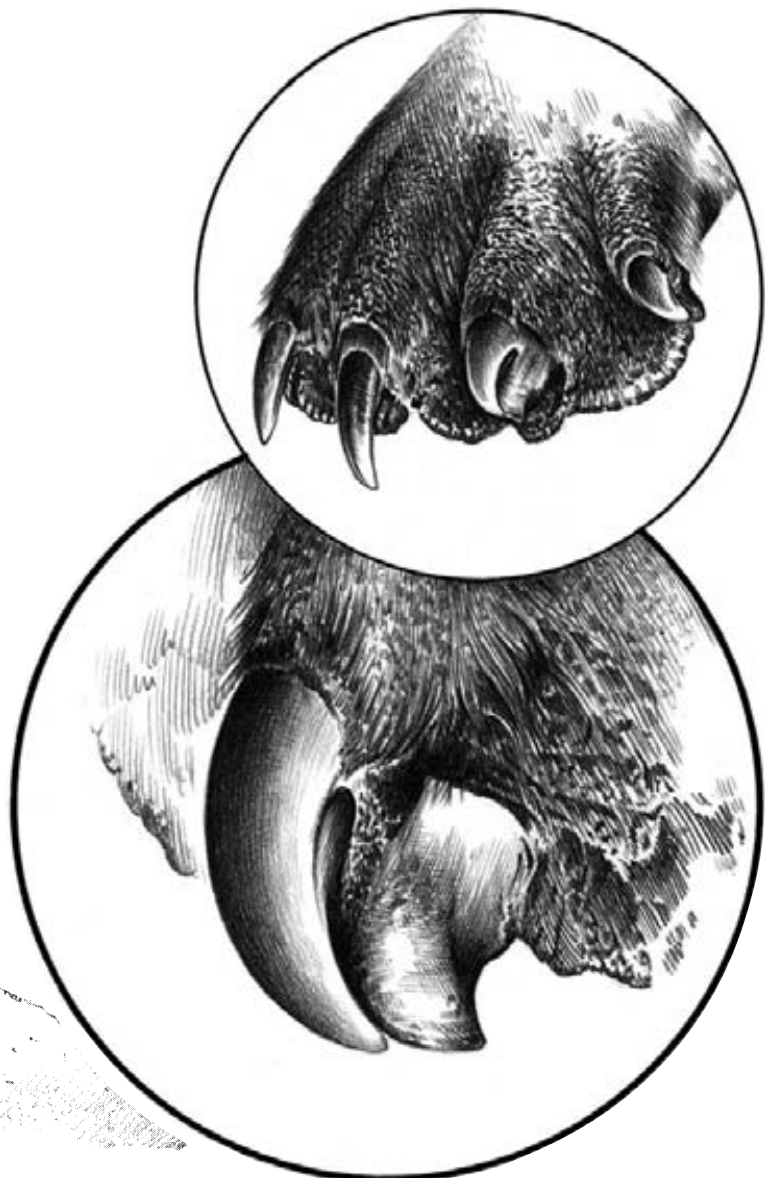
But rather than being irritated by these creatures, the beaver seems to enjoy their attention. To a naive bystander the procedure would be totally incomprehensible, but the beaver's actions make perfect sense to him. The ants are having a holiday as they scurry through the fur of the beaver, ferreting out and eating annoying parasites. Both parties benefit.

The second technique which the beaver employs involves its own grooming or "louse catching" claws. These claws, located on the two

inner toes, are like combs. The combs are specialized—one is used for coarse combing, the other for fine. Running these claws through its fur, the beaver rakes out harmful parasites and untangles snarls which would slow its streamlined speed in the water.

These claws also aid the beaver in water-proofing its coat as it redistributes natural oils by repeated combing. At the base of the tail are two glands which provide the animal with additional oils. When a beaver leaves the water, it spends much time wiping, combing and water proofing its fur.

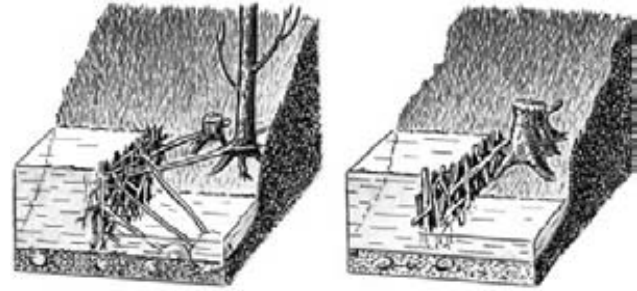
Because it maintains such a vigorous program of cleanliness and good grooming, the beaver is remarkably free from the parasites which plague less fastidious animals.





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DAM CONSTRUCTION



The beaver forms a rough substructure by pushing heavy sticks into the bottom of the stream and anchoring others to the shore. Then it interweaves branches and applies huge quantities of mud. Patching small holes with reeds, twigs and other material, the beaver makes its construction watertight.

CHARACTERISTICS AND PHYSICAL FEATURES OF THE BEAVER

Just as the beaver is specially equipped for its unorthodox methods of maintaining grooming and cleanliness, so it is also unique in the manner in which it goes about its everyday business of eating and providing shelter. Because of its remarkable engineering abilities, the beaver is able to alter its environment and lifestyle.

HOW IS THE BEAVER ABLE TO CHANGE THE TERRAIN OF THE LAND?

Through strategic placement of logs and interwoven sticks packed with mud and stones, the beaver builds a structure which can withstand great amounts of pressure. The dam is securely anchored to the shore and river bottom. With remarkable engineering ability the beaver blocks up a stream or river and in so doing, floods the surrounding land.

HOW DO DAMS BENEFIT THE BEAVER?

The lifestyle of this animal is such that it depends on water for nourishment and protection. By flooding the land new sources of food are made accessible. The beaver is vulnerable to the attack of predators but is neither equipped nor inclined to fight. A docile and trusting animal, its only refuge is the deep pool of water created by the dam where it dives to elude pursuit.

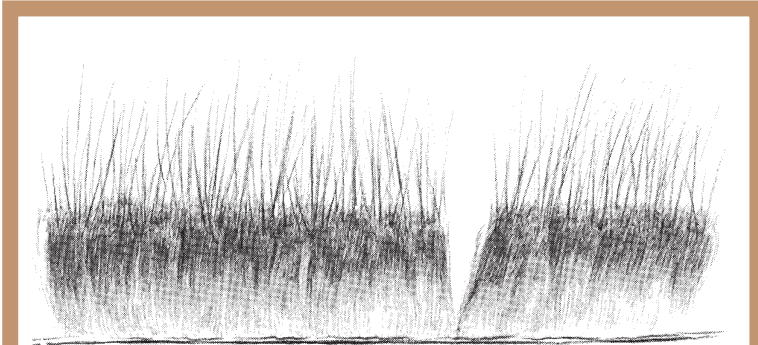
DOES THE BEAVER REALLY HAVE AN ALARM SYSTEM?

Yes. Beavers warn each other of danger by bringing their tails up over their backs and then slamming them down on the water with great force. Any beaver hearing the sound of this crack—which may travel for half a mile on a quiet night—quickly dives beneath the surface and remains there as long as it possibly can.

The beaver's tail has several functions. On land it supports the beaver's body while felling trees. In the water it acts as a rudder and a warning device.



CROSS SECTION OF BEAVER'S FUR



The beaver's fur coat provides the animal warmth and protection. Long guard hairs form a protective covering and shorter insulating fur retains body heat. Oil from oil glands is distributed enabling the fur to shed water quickly.

HOW LONG CAN A BEAVER STAY UNDERWATER?

The beaver is equipped with large lungs and an oversized liver. As it dives, its heartbeat slows and requires less oxygen. Blood vessels which supply the extremities constrict so the oxygen supply to the brain area is not affected. By drawing on the reserve in tissues and lungs, it relaxes its muscles and slows its heartbeat, sinking to the bottom of the pond. After hearing an alarm, the beaver can remain underwater for as long as seventeen minutes without surfacing for air.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE POND FREEZES?

Once ice covers the surface, the beaver lowers the water level of the pond by deliberately making holes in the dam which allow the water to flow out. This creates a gap between the water and the ice providing sufficient air and space for the beaver to breathe and swim on the water even though the surface is solidly frozen.

WHERE DOES THE BEAVER LIVE?

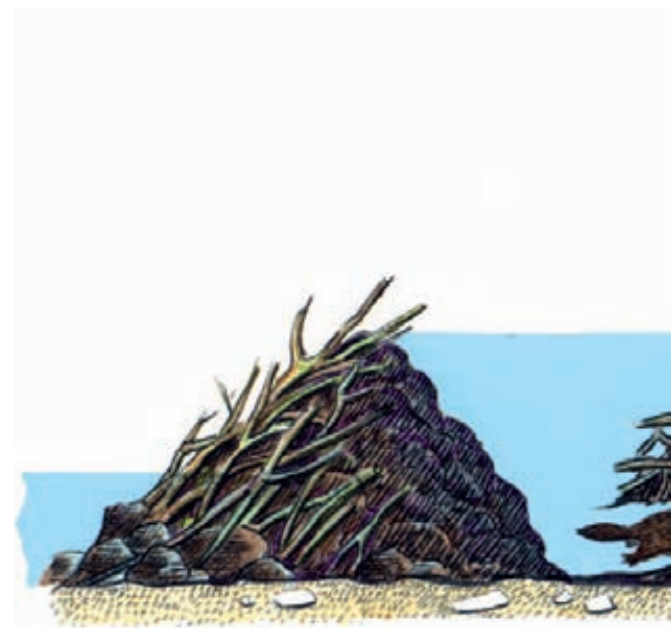
Usually out in the center of the pond, protected by water on all sides, the beaver builds a lodge by constructing a pile of sticks, mud and vegetation. It chisels out a tunnel and chamber above the water level.

HOW ELABORATE ARE THE BEAVER'S LIVING QUARTERS?

The design of the beaver lodge is simple and utilitarian. Each chamber has two sections, basically a dining room-bedroom division. The first floor, approximately four inches above water level, is used as a feeding area. Here the beaver eats, letting the bare twigs float away in the current. It also stands here to allow the water to drain from its coat before climbing to the second shelf, several inches higher, for sleep.



Valves over the beaver's ears and nostrils close automatically when the animal submerges. Eyes are covered by a transparent membrane.



Earthen Dam

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE WATER LEVEL RISES?

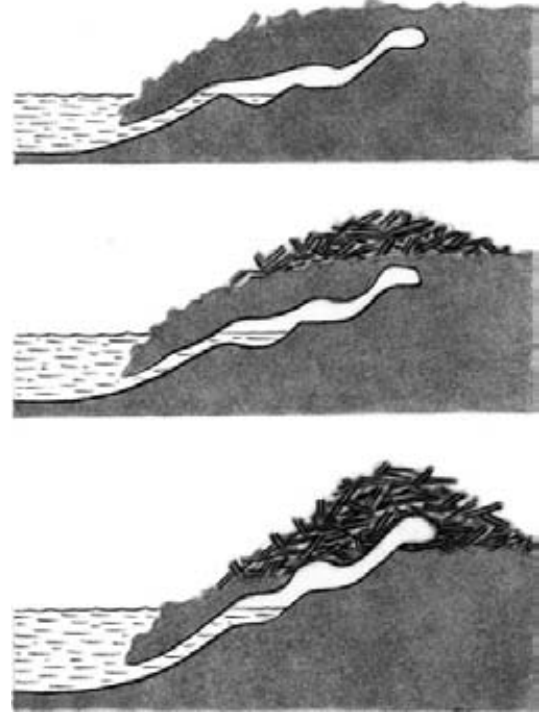
If a sudden storm or melting snow causes the water level to rise dangerously, the orderly beaver gnaws soil from the ceiling of its chamber and replaces it along the lower level of the den, building up the floor. If the ceiling construction suffers and becomes too thin, additional twigs and soil are gathered and replaced on top.

HOW DO BEAVERS MANAGE TO MAKE A DRY BED UNDER WATER?

The soft grasses which would seem the most likely choice for beaver bedding cannot be used in an underwater den. Because the grass would become wet when being brought to the lodge, it would mold and rot inside. Instead, small sticks must be selected and then split into long fibers. Each bed of broom-like composition is positioned separately against the wall.

DOES THE BEAVER GO WITHOUT FOOD IN THE WINTER?

An average beaver requires twenty-two to thirty ounces of bark each day. Beavers fell between two hundred and three hundred trees a year. In late autumn the beaver begins storing its food for the winter. It busily retrieves branches and anchors them by ramming them into the bottom of the pond. This maze of sticks and twigs becomes a storehouse of food. When the ice freezes over, the beaver swims to its cache, chews off a hunk and returns to its lodge to eat the bark with a revolving, corn-on-the-cob technique.



ABOVE As the water rises, the beaver cuts away the ceiling of its chamber to raise the floor level. When the roof structure begins to weaken from this procedure, additional material is added.

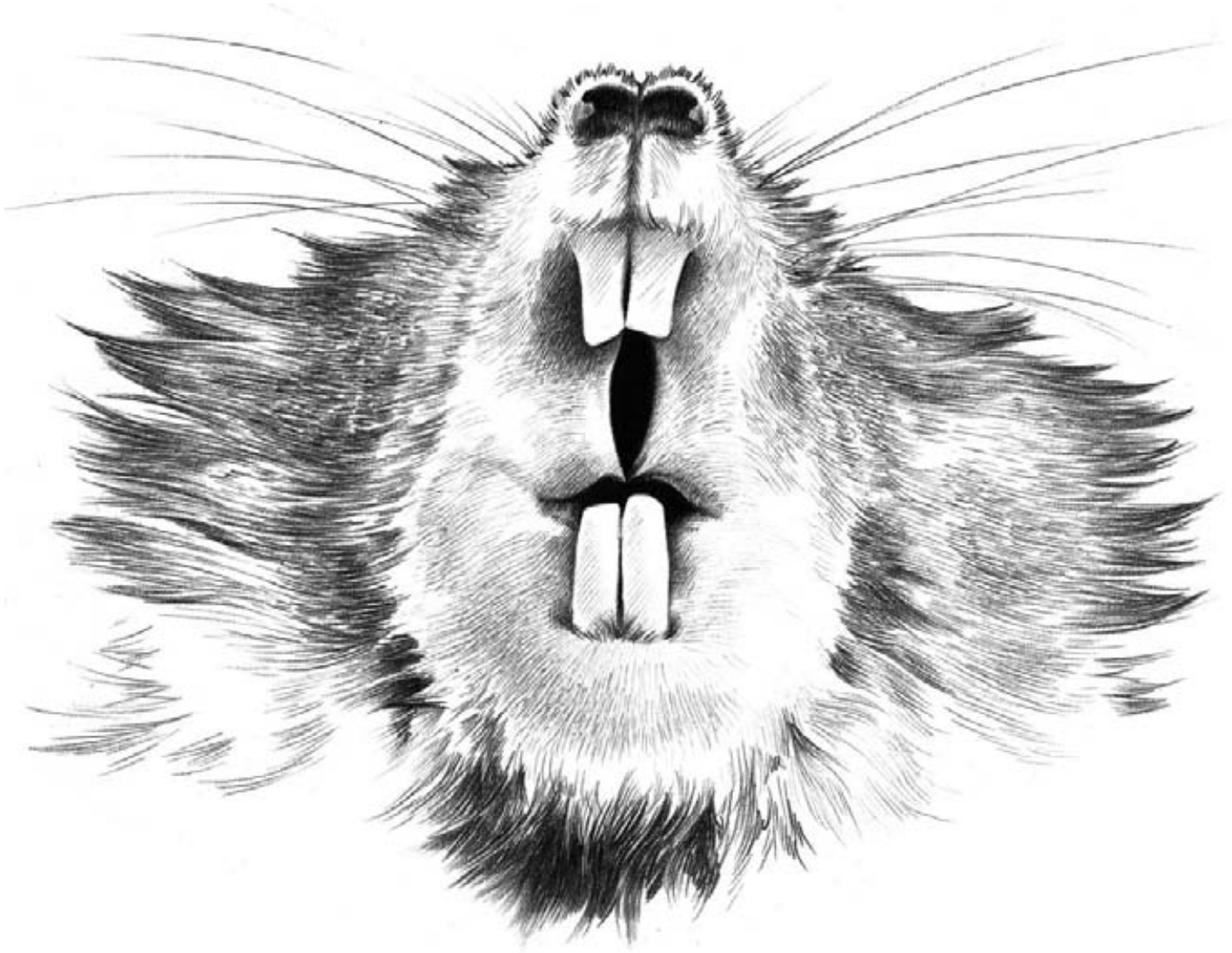
BELOW The beaver's comfortable quarters are ventilated by an air shaft in the ceiling. Only a food shortage would force a family to abandon their lodge.

Air vent



Lodge

Food source for winter



ABOVE Two flaps of skin behind its front teeth prevent wood chips from entering the beaver's mouth.

BELOW Three to five-inch wood chips are made when the beaver chisels through a tree by gripping the trunk with its upper teeth and tearing out the wood with its lower incisors.



WHY WILL THE BEAVER DIE IF IT DOESN'T SHARPEN ITS TEETH?

The beaver, a member of the order Rodentia, has teeth which grow continually. If for some reason it is unable to keep them worn down, the chisel-like teeth will continue to grow through the roof of the beaver's mouth into the brain cavity, killing the animal.

DOES A BEAVER EAT THE WHOLE TREE?

Although the beaver will cut down any tree, it will not necessarily eat any tree. It keeps its menu fairly limited to birch and aspen. After felling a tree, the energetic woodsman strips and eats only the bark, perhaps using the naked branch for building material. It does not eat the wood fiber.

WHO CLEANS HOUSE IN THE BEAVER FAMILY?

The male sees to it that the lodge is neat and orderly. He also tends to any repairs on the dam. Only if necessary are the other family members recruited to share these responsibilities.

HOW DOES SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATE ORDERLINESS IN INWARD CLEANLINESS?

Her ears were trained by practice to listen to the conversation of the street. Because she knew the pulse of the city she learned of important events such as the dinner that was about to be held.

She had pieced together the powerful teachings of One who was to attend. His words had exposed her secret life and brought deep conviction. The money that had been the object of her shameful life was now a convicting witness of her need to repent.

She took the money, representing her only means of security, and exchanged it for the most fragrant perfume she could buy. What she wanted to do would no doubt give His enemies further cause for ridicule. Religious leaders accused Him of being a friend of sinners, but those in the street quoted Him as saying that He had come to seek and to save those who were lost. These words reassured her as she slipped into the house, an uninvited visitor, and waited for the guests to arrive.

When He came she knelt down, kissed His feet and wept. Her tears splashed over His dusty feet and she wiped them with her long hair. As He gave her a reassuring and understanding nod, the host studied Him and concluded within himself, "He must not be a true prophet, or He would know how sinful this woman really is."

The same depth of understanding that reassured the woman challenged the host. "A certain man loaned two people money. Five thousand dollars was loaned to one and five hundred dollars to the other. Neither one could repay their creditor, so he graciously forgave them both and let them keep the money. Who do you think loved him the most?" The host replied, "I suppose the one who owed him the most."

By now the attention of all was upon the woman and the object lesson which her act of love became. The words brought stinging rebuke to the host and his guests.

"See this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home you didn't offer me any water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You refused me the customary kiss of greeting, but she has kissed my feet again and again from the time I first came in. You neglected the usual courtesy of anointing my head with oil, but she has covered my feet with rare perfume. Her sins, which are many, are forgiven for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same shows only a little love." Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

She transformed a routine act of cleanliness which others minimized into a beautiful expression of love and gratitude—an act which would be remembered for generations to come.

From Luke 7:36-50



HER ACT OF CLEANLINESS GAINED FAVOR AND FORGIVENESS FROM THE LORD

During the Lord's three-year ministry on earth, one of His most obstinate antagonists was a group of men belonging to the religious sect called the Pharisees. Many of these men gloried in their own righteousness and did good works only to be seen by men rather than being motivated by true concern. Because of their tendency toward hypocrisy, Jesus called them "whitened sepulchers" and "blind leaders of the blind" (Matthew 23:27; 15:14). Since they strictly observed external laws, they felt that they were actually fulfilling the full requirements of God's Law. As a result they considered themselves superior to those who did not observe their traditions, and they felt little need for forgiveness of their sins.



A friendly kiss on both sides of the face is a form of greeting still used in many parts of the world.

A KISS, A FOOT WASHING AND A FRAGRANCE

It was to the house of one of these Pharisees named Simon that Jesus was invited. When a person was invited to another's home there were certain duties of hospitality that every good host observed appropriate to that culture. To ignore these duties would be considered an insult. When a guest arrived at the home of his host, he naturally expected to be kissed as he entered. Each placed his right hand on his friend's left shoulder, and the host kissed his friend's right cheek. Then, reversing the action, he kissed the left cheek. It is the Western equivalent of a hearty handshake between two good friends.

Next, the guest took off his shoes or sandals before proceeding into the room. Since feet became grimy with dirt and perspiration on the hot, dusty roads a servant assisted the guest in washing his feet by pouring water upon them over a basin, rubbing them with his hands, and finally wiping them dry with a soft towel. Another custom was to anoint the head of an honored guest with oil. Inexpensive olive oil was usually used, but often it was mixed with fragrant spices. This fragrance would provide a pleasant contrast to ordinary odors of the streets which were traveled by various animals. The guest was given a drink of fresh water as a symbol of friendship and finally escorted to his place at the table.

DINNER—A COMMUNITY AFFAIR

In the time of Jesus, the Roman custom of reclining on couches had been adopted in some Jewish homes. Three couches were located on three sides of the table with the fourth side free so that a servant had access for serving. The guests reclined with the upper body resting on one arm, head raised, and the lower part of the body stretched in a reclining position. On such occasions, hospitality required that the door be barred to no one. It was customary to have the eating area open to the outside for better ventilation. For people to come in from the streets and stand around quietly observing the occasion and enjoying the conversation was quite common.

INSULTED BY THE HOST

When the Lord entered and Simon refused the customary kiss of greeting, he was saying in effect that his guest was his social inferior. When he failed to have his servant wash the Lord's feet, he insulted his guest. When he offered no oil to anoint the Lord's head, he indicated that his guest was not worthy of any special honor.

A CONTRAST BETWEEN HUMILITY AND PRIDE

Immediately after this disgraceful neglect of common hospitality on the part of Simon the Pharisee, "a woman . . . who was a sinner . . . stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment." (Luke 7:37,38) It would have been difficult to design a greater contrast between the actions of Simon the self-righteous Pharisee and the repentant woman.



The sandal worn in the warm climate of Israel left the exposed feet covered with a dusty film. Every guest looked forward to having his feet washed after entering his host's home.

THE PENITENT WOMAN CHARACTER SKETCH

WHY DID THE WOMAN WANT TO KISS AND ANOINT THE LORD'S FEET?

This was a sign of deep affection and reverence. To kiss a person's feet was not unusual among the Jews. It was also customary among the Greeks and Romans. For a person to kiss the feet of royalty was interpreted as a token of subjection and obedience. The woman had more spiritual discernment than Simon by recognizing that Jesus was more than the son of a carpenter from Nazareth. The ointment in her alabaster container may well have represented the better part of her savings. To pour this costly perfume on the Lord's feet indicated that she had come to the conclusion that this Man was worthy of all honor.

WHY WAS SIMON SO INDIGNANT?

When Simon noticed the woman at Jesus' feet he said to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him; for she is a sinner." (Luke 7:39) The expression Simon used is often used for a woman known for her gross immorality. Such a woman was considered ceremonially unclean according to the traditions of the Pharisees, and to come in contact with her would cause defilement and create the inconvenience of purification rites. In fact, a strict Pharisee would not come within six feet of another woman in public for fear of becoming defiled. For this woman of known ill-repute to actually touch the feet of a guest eating at his table filled Simon with contempt. If Jesus were just a man, Simon's logic would have been correct, but because he was the Son of God He was able to cleanse the sinner and remain undefiled.

WHY DID THE LORD FORGIVE THE WOMAN AND NOT SIMON?

Every gesture of the woman indicated complete humility and a sense of unworthiness in the presence of a person who was worthy of her total devotion. She knew that she was a sinner and she recognized her need for deliverance from bondage. She came to Him not with boasts of good works but with her faith that Jesus' word of forgiveness was no less than God's. The Lord forgave her by His grace, through her faith, and sent her away in peace. Simon, on the other hand, did not see himself as a bankrupt sinner for he looked on the woman with contempt. He didn't even believe the Lord was a prophet much less the Son of God. Since he felt no need for forgiveness, he felt no need for a Forgiver and so he remained in his sin.



"And, behold, a woman in the city, who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment."



THE PENITENT WOMAN