

Mattityahu Levi

Matthew's Account

Part One



Sh'ma! Chazak! Bible Studies

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Let thy house be a meeting-place for the wise; powder thyself in the dust of their feet, and drink their words with eagerness.

Yose ben Yoezer

A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher.

Yeshua (Luke 6:40)

Prologue

In the first third of the First Century, in the bustling commercial crossroads in the region around Lake *Kinneret*, a young Teacher-of-the-Torah began to teach others. He did the normal things that a Torah teacher did in that time: He surrounded himself with followers called *talmidim*; discussed Torah; and attracted crowds as He went from town to town preaching the repeated message, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!” His message was not unlike the teachings of many teachers of the Second Temple period – but people began to notice something very different about Him. He did not simply repeat what the Sages said regarding Torah – He spoke in such a way, and with such authority it was as if the Sages had learned Torah **from Him** – and everyone knew – He had not been the student of any Sage Himself.

Of course, those who knew Him from the days when He was growing up in *Natzeret* knew that He was an exceptional Torah scholar. The religious authorities sent men to question and test Him, as they often did when a new rabbi gained attention. This Teacher from *Natzeret* said many of the same things that many of the other teachers of His day said... but very soon after He began teaching, everyone knew... He was different. And then there were the miracles...

His followers knew He was different right away. They spoke to each other about Him possibly being *HaMashiach* – the Promised One. He certainly fit the description of the One of Whom the Prophets, the *Navi'im*, had written. He spoke with authority like the Prophet, the *Navi*, that *Moshe Rabbeinu* said would come and explain all things. Maybe He was **the Navi**. Maybe He was **the Mashiach**. Maybe this was the time. Maybe now, once again *Adonai* would restore all things to His people – and establish *Y'srael* as His scepter to rule the nations.

Little did His *talmidim* know that their Teacher was not only **the Navi**; not only **the Mashiach**; and not only **the** promised King for David's throne – He was King of the Universe.

Although this Teacher-of-the-Torah was sometimes referred to as *Yeshua ben Yosef*, He became known as *Yeshua HaMashiach*. His *talmidim* did not know at the time, that the Kingdom He was announcing was not quite what they had anticipated – their Master was going to die. And they never would have guessed that after He died, He would rise again on the third day. Never would they have guessed that when they followed Him around the hills of the *Galil* region, they were walking in the footsteps of *the Holy One*. But when their eyes were opened... it changed their lives.

Mattityahu HaLevi was one of those *talmidim* of *Yeshua*. He wanted everyone to not only know Who His Master was and what He taught him – He wanted them to know that Torah spoke of Him. This is *Mattityahu's* account of the coming of *Mashiach*. You may know this Teacher-of-the-Law as “Yeshua” – and maybe you too are one of His *talmidim* – one of His disciples.

If this account sounds a little bit different from the book of Matthew you thought you knew, then you should know it is not just the unfamiliarity of the Hebrew words. About 1,800 years of western and Greek bias have all but erased the context of the book of Matthew for most readers; and some of His teachings are simply too controversial for some religious leaders today. It is easier for some to say that, “Jesus' came and started a new religion” – but we know Him... and we know that is not true. This study will attempt to place us in the time and setting of the First Century – so that we too can see our Master as a young Levite named Mattityahu saw Him, and wrote of Him while under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit – so that we can reexamine His teachings, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His work on our behalf – and so we will **know** Him as He is revealed in Matthew's account.

Step right this way... we are now going back together...

Study Overview

Beloved, we are going to study the book of Matthew together with the goal of seeing it through the writer's eyes. We are going to try to recapture the historical context; the language; and the theology of the time when Mattityahu Levi wrote the book of Matthew.

Contextual and Analytical Format

We will be studying a chapter of the book of Matthew in each lesson. Each lesson will have a historical context section to set the stage for our study. The historical context will use archeological data, historical documents, and extra-Biblical texts to help us establish the frame for each lesson.

After setting the context, we will then dig into the text and examine it, examine it, and then reexamine it. We will look at original languages and many cross-references. We will try to analyze the book of Matthew and establish its purpose, and discover why it truly does belong at the head of the Apostolic Scriptures. Don't be afraid or intimidated by any of this – we are going to all learn together. None of His first *talmidim* were scholars – but He taught them unsearchable truths – and so it has been with all of His disciples. The requisite is simply to follow Him.

What makes this kind of study important is to hopefully see our Master in a way that compels us to not only know His words, but to live by His life. This should not be simply an intellectual exercise, but a practical one.

We will not use archeological data, or other extra-Biblical sources to establish authority – that can only come through Scripture. Rather, we will simply use them to help us to gain context for what we are reading. As well, the use of an extra-Biblical text **will not be an endorsement** of these texts, because many historical sources do not have the same view of Scripture that we do.

Likewise, we will never diminish the simplicity of the text. We know that God is not the author of confusion; but rather, He speaks and His people hear His voice – in whatever language they need.

Word and Language Conventions

We will strive toward making Biblical things more clear, but also to be more correctly understood. Because of that, we will use certain word and language conventions. Sometimes a word will be used in this study that is unfamiliar to the average reader, in which case it will be explained or footnoted. A glossary is also included at the back of the workbook.

Sometimes a word that has lost its meaning or original idea in English will be systematically replaced in this study with a different word. This is not meant to confuse, but rather to bring renewed emphasis on original meaning. Following are some common words and names, how they will be represented in this study, and the reasoning behind this usage.

- ⌘ ***Name of God:*** The use of circumlocution (using a substitute for God's holy Name) is encouraged. We will use the generalized word "God" in place of His most holy Name, this is similar to using "LORD," "ADONAI," or "HaShem" in place of the Tetragrammaton (four letter Name of God). **Please treat this book with care, as it contains references to Him and His Name.**
- ⌘ ***Name of Yeshua:*** We will use the Hebrew Name "Yeshua." The Etymology of this Name in English is convoluted – making excursions from Greek to Latin and even to German – in addition, for some the English name reminds of the horrific persecution that was wickedly done "in the name of 'Jesus'" to those of Jewish descent. And of course, we know His first disciples called Him by His Hebrew Name "Yeshua".
- ⌘ ***Law, Pentateuch:*** We will use the Hebrew word "Torah". As well, the word "Torah" can apply to any Scripture, but it will normally focus upon the first five books of the Bible. Although many believers can read the word "Law" and reflect upon the beauty spoke of God's Law in the Psalms; a significant portion of believers of the past fifty years have been taught profound bias against God's Law. Hence, the use of the word "Torah" although not removed of some bias itself, helps to minimize those preconceptions. The word "Torah" is the word used over 200 times in the Hebrew Scriptures and is incorrectly translated "Law" in modern English usage. It is more correctly seen as "Instruction" – coming from the root verb *yarah* which is closer to "shoot", "direct", "point out", or "aim".
- ⌘ ***Disciples:*** We will use word "*talmidim*". For most believers, this has fairly positive implications – but we are not very good at personalizing this in our thinking and actions. The "Twelve Disciples" often replaces this in our minds. For this reason, the words "*talmidim*" [disciples, plural] and "*talmid*" [disciple, singular] will be used.
- ⌘ ***Christ, Messiah:*** We will use the English transliteration "Messiah". The Greek language takes the Hebrew word "*mashiach*" [messiah] and translates it into the Greek word "*Christos*". English, then borrows and transliterates both the Hebrew and the Greek. Hence, there are two options that translators have in rendering "Anointed One" – the Greek word "*Christos*" and the Hebrew word "*Mashiach*". Although "Christ" is the more common English word, it is often treated by believers as a type of surname of Yeshua, rather than the significant title that it is. It is a title that should always draw us back to the

Promise of a Redeemer, Priest, and King given to the Ancients. Using “Messiah” aids in that reminder.

- ⌘ **Old Testament, Hebrew Scriptures:** We will use the acronym “TaNaKh” (Torah, Nevi'im, K'tuvim = Torah, Prophets, Writings), The implication in “old” is that it is something that has been done away with – which the “New Testament” says has not been done. This was the Scripture of First Century believers.
- ⌘ **New Testament, Greek Scriptures:** We will use the term “Apostolic Scriptures”. Clearly, it is not “new” nor is it a “testament”. God spoke through His Holy Spirit and men were moved to write. By using terms like “New” and “Old Testament”, we may begin to place more validity on the “new” – which is contrary to the very teaching found in the “New Testament”.

My prayer for you and I as we begin this study is that we will hear our Master speak, and upon hearing Him, we will obey. He is calling us beloved, let's go up the mountain and sit at His feet as His *talmidim* – and let us hear as He opens His mouth and teaches us... again.

Many nations shall come and say, 'Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths.'
For out of Zion the Torah shall go forth, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Micah 4:2

Introduction to the Book of Matthew

Author and Language

The author of the book of Matthew is not in much dispute. Even though the book does not directly say, there are numerous extra-Biblical sources that name the disciple of Yeshua named Mattityahu and surnamed Levi, as the human author of the book we are going to study.

Mattityahu Levi was a tax collector in Capernaum on Lake *Kinneret* [Sea of Galilee]. He worked in a Roman customs house which was located in the area because of the bustling trade in the area around the lake. Being a tax collector meant that Mattityahu held a special Roman status; which afforded him societal position, and wealth commensurate with it. His good status with the Romans was offset by the distain that many of his fellow countrymen held for him.

Irenaus¹ is quoted by Eusebius (Fourth Century historian) that the book of Matthew was written by the Apostle Mattityahu. Eusebius also quotes Papias² who also credits the book to the Apostle Mattityahu. Both Irenaus and Papias say that Mattityahu wrote the book in Hebrew. Scholars have long believed that the Hebrew language's close cousin Aramaic was the predominate language spoken in First Century Palestine. When Papias said that Mattityahu wrote the book, "in the Hebrew dialect, and every one translated it as he was able," it was assumed that this was not first-hand knowledge. Recent research has shown that the Jews of the First Century in the land of Israel did indeed speak Hebrew as a first language, as well as Aramaic. They likely did not speak Greek unless their occupation required it. The book of Matthew which we have in our modern Bibles, came from Greek manuscripts. Since Papias does not mention the Greek book, but only that there were ongoing translations, we may assume that the Greek translation did not appear until late in the First Century.

In the Twentieth Century, the language of Hebrew was resurrected as a living language for the first time since the middle ages. It had been relegated to Synagogues and Jewish religious life, but in the Twentieth Century, Jews in Israel began speaking it as a first language again. Renewed interest in the underlying language of some books of the Bible occurred when doing new work in translating the "New Testament" into Hebrew. It became evident to translators that much of what they were translating from Greek into Hebrew, was constructed and phrased like Hebrew. As New Testament scholar, Robert L. Lindsey wrote,

[In translating the book of Mark from Greek to Hebrew]... What first caught my attention was the very Hebraic word order of the Greek text of Mark. Usually, I only need to find correct Hebrew equivalents to the Greek words in order to give good sense and understanding to the text. In other words, the syntax or word relationships were just such as one would expect in

¹ Irenaus (135 CE – 200 CE) was the student of the Polycarp (the student of the Apostle John), born and raised in Smyrna, was bishop of Lyon.

² Papias (70 CE to 153 CE) Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia. He was a student of the Apostle John and a friend of Polycarp.

Hebrew... And now, translating New Testament Greek into Hebrew, I was finding Greek written as if it were Hebrew³.

Scholars have long noted the “Semitic” wording and construction to all the “Synoptic Gospels” (i.e. Matthew, Mark, and Luke).

Even though the book of Matthew appears to have an underlying Hebrew source, that does not diminish the role that Greek played as an intermediate language. Indeed, the difficult Greek syntax shows that the text of Matthew was faithfully received, transmitted, and translated into Greek – giving us even more assurance of its accuracy.

For more historical, cultural, and religious background, see the section entitled, “History and Religious Life in the First Century”, located in the Appendix.

³ See the forward by Robert L. Lindsay to *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* by Bivin and Blizzard

Lesson One – Chapter One

As You Begin

- x Sit down in a quiet place and ask God to speak through His Word, and that the Holy Spirit will be your Teacher.
- x Read the entire book of Matthew, preferably in the New King James Version, New American Standard Bible, or King James Version. Using one of these translations will give a more literal reading than the New International Version (which paraphrases). Try to do this in no more than two sittings.
- x Read chapter one and look for any phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy. Examples might be, “that it might be fulfilled”; or “as it is written by the prophet(s)”; or “was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet(s)”. You should find one of these in chapter one. Mark it in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add them to the chart in the Appendix titled, “Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua.”

Historical Context

Genealogy

Why is a genealogy important, and why does Matthew start his account with the “*genealogy of Messiah Yeshua, the Son of David, Son of Abraham*”? Genealogies are not uncommon in the TaNaKh¹. The people of Israel knew full well that God’s blessings were in many ways connected with their ancestors because of the promises that God had made to men like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Right away in this genealogy, the promises to Abraham and David are invoked. Matthew wants us to immediately conclude that Yeshua is the Messiah – so he needs to show Yeshua to be the object of the promise made to Abraham, and the promise made to David.

The promise relating to Abraham, the father of all Israel, was that all the nations would be blessed in Him and in His Seed. The promise to David was that he would have a “Descendant” forever on his throne.

Judaism had been looking for the “Son of David” for a long time. This is a title found in many Jewish texts referring to the promised Messiah. This title for Messiah focuses on the “Kingship” of Messiah. It is important to note that the majority of Judaism did not see this “Kingship” as something ethereal or “heavenly” – but rather one where Messiah would reign physically from His ancestor David’s throne in Jerusalem. A reading of the Prophets, certainly supports that conclusion.

¹ Torah, Navi'im, K'tuvim = “Torah, Prophets, Writings” TaNaKh is a acronym that denotes the Hebrew Scriptures, also called the “Old Testament”

The word “Messiah” is rarely used in English versions of the TaNaKh, but the Hebrew is used quite often. There were two groups of people “anointed” in TaNaKh: priests, and kings. It becomes clear that the word “*mashiach*” [anointed one = messiah], was connected primarily with Kingship in the minds of the Ancients. The priestly aspect of the word “*mashiach*” that appears in the Hebrew was often overlooked regarding the promised Messiah.

In his account, Matthew makes over fifty-five references to the “Kingdom”. The other Gospels do not make such use of this word. *Mattityahu* was thus making this point in his introduction – that this was the genealogy of *HaMashiach ben David* [the Messiah, Son of David], the promised King Messiah.

Three divisions of fourteen generations are mentioned. There are a few issues with this genealogy that cannot be fully understood; but the point regarding Hebrew genealogies was not to create a family tree – but rather an avenue for blessing to pass – and this genealogy does that. Each Hebrew letter is also a number; so the numerical value for the name “David” is the number fourteen. The three divisions of fourteen appear to be making the declaration, “David! David! David!”

Something highly unusual in any genealogy of the period was the inclusion of women. This genealogy includes five women. Three of the women listed were born as Gentiles (considered Hebrew by faith).

Betrothals

The betrothal between Miriam [Mary] and Joseph was considered simply to be a non-consummated marriage as was the custom then. During the time of betrothal, the couple was to remain chaste. If the couple violated that principle, then any children conceived were considered legitimate. If the woman became pregnant during betrothal, the character of both the man and the woman was brought into question. If a betrothed man was not the father of a child during the betrothal period, then his only recourse to clear his name was to give a *get* [certificate of divorce] to his betrothed wife-to-be – which would thus accuse her as an adulteress. Though the penalty for adultery was death, it was difficult to prove without the necessary two witnesses. The shame of being considered an adulteress, though not provable, was a great burden for any woman of that time. In not giving a certificate of divorce to Miriam, Joseph was not only protecting Miriam, he was giving legitimacy to Miriam's Child, in effect claiming the Child as his own – and enduring the disgrace of being seen as a father prior to the final wedding day. This is another reason that the line of Joseph is used for this genealogy even though Matthew makes the point that Joseph was not the biological father.

Joseph's plans to quietly give a certificate of divorce to Miriam, and then his obedience to the angel in taking her for his wife, shows that Joseph was indeed a just man who live by God's Torah.

A Name

The Name of the Child was given by the angel to Joseph. The normal way a child was named was by the mother. The giving of the name “*Yeshua*” [“*HaShem* saves”] is a play on words that the English does not reveal: “... *you are to name Him Yeshua, because He will yoshia [save] his people from their sins.*” The Hebrew word *yoshia* is not used in TaNaKh in connection with being “saved from sins”, although the concept of God saving His people from all types of

calamity and evil is present. This points back to someone not listed in the genealogy of Yeshua in this account – another woman – someone who received a promise of a Seed indirectly. God, in cursing the serpent of Genesis 3:15, told Eve indirectly that a Seed would come through her and crush the head of the serpent; and that account surely deals with sin. But... we are getting ahead of ourselves.

“Im anu El” [Emmanuel = “God with us”] is not a name that Yeshua was called at the time. It is a reference to Isaiah 7:14. This is a form of the Hebrew interpretation concept of *remez*. *Remez* is the usage of a familiar phrase which takes the reader to other usages and multiplies the text accordingly. This is a Messianic title.

Analyzing Chapter One

The Messianic title, “Son of David” may not mean a lot to many of us. You may have no problem seeing Yeshua as the “Suffering Messiah” prophesied of in Isaiah 53 – but you need to see Him as the “Reigning Messiah” that Matthew wants us to see.

Read the following passages and comment on how they relate to the title Matthew gives to Yeshua: “Son of David”. Pay special attention to the usage of the word “Branch”.

2Samuel 7:12-13,16:

Psalms 89:4-5; 36-37:

Psalms 132:11:

Isaiah 11:1-5:

Jeremiah 23:5-6:

Ezekiel 37:24:

Amos 9:11-12:

Zechariah 3:8:

Matthew 1:1 also calls Yeshua, “Son of Abraham”. This is not making the same point that all Jews of the day could make – namely, that they were “of the covenant”. No, this is referring to something else. Read these passages (in the listed order) and comment on the relationship you see between Abraham and the Messiah. Pay special attention to the word “Seed” – it is sometimes rendered “descendants” in the plural, but the word is a singular or a singular collective.

Genesis 15:5-6:

Galatians 3:16:

Genesis 12:3:

Genesis:13:14-15:

As You Finish

- x Thank God for the things He has shown you. Thank Him that He keeps His promises – even after thousands of years. Whether you are of Jewish or Gentile descent, thank Him that He has blessed you in the Promised Messiah – Son of Abraham, and Son of David – and that He told Joseph to name Him, “Yeshua” for He would save His people from their sins. Amen!

Lesson Two – Chapter Two

As You Begin

- x Sit down in a quiet place and ask God to speak through His Word and that the Holy Spirit will be your Teacher. Ask Him to help you see this book in a fresh way – not with preconceptions or biases.
- x Read chapter two and look for any phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy. You should find four of these in this chapter. Mark them in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add them to the chart in the Appendix titled, “Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua.”

Historical Context

A Star

The *barachot* [the blessings] that Jacob pronounces over his sons in Genesis 49 were the prophetic statements for each of the Twelve Tribes. These, in effect, had become descriptions of the Tribes and were well-known by those who studied Torah. The prophetic blessing spoken over Judah was identified as Messianic by the scholars of Israel in ancient times. In Genesis 49:10-11 we read:

“The Scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh comes; and to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people. Binding his donkey to the vine, and his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes.”

The mention of the “Scepter” is repeated by the Gentile prophet, Balaam in Numbers 24:8:

“I see Him, but not now; I behold Him, but not near; a Star shall come out of Jacob; a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and batter the brow of Moab, and destroy all the sons of tumult.”

All the Sages¹ knew that the Messianic King would come out of the Tribe of Judah. They also knew that He was associated with a “Star”.

“King” Herod was an Edomite. His “kingship” was illegitimate. He was the son of Antipater, who had curried favor with Rome and been “awarded” the rulership over the land of Israel, which was a buffer between the Parthian Empire and the rising Roman Empire. Herod was married to a daughter of the Hasmonean royal line (which itself was not a legitimate royal line in Israel), and was notably sensitive about not being Jewish, and not being considered a legitimate king by the Jewish people. He was unusually paranoid, which led Him to murder his wife among other

¹ One who studied Scripture and commented upon it was called *chakam* [wise]. It is common to refer to these Jewish scholars as “sages”. The period before 70 CE predates the Rabbinic “Sage”.

family members. When the Sanhedrin² could not give him a Scriptural right to the throne, he had all but one killed. In a more penitent mood, Herod then undertook the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem which was in disrepair. Herod's massive building projects earned him the name, "Herod the Great".

When *magi*, likely from the competing Parthian Empire, showed up in Jerusalem looking for the "King of the Jews" – it is understandable that not only would Herod be interested, but all of Jerusalem, for fear of Herod's viciousness. He summoned the scholars in Jerusalem to inquire about the prophecy of a Jewish King rising. They no doubt quickly repeated Micah 5:2 and revealed that the tiny town of *Bet Lechem* [Bethlehem = house of bread], from where David himself had come, was the place from which the Messianic King would come.

The Gifts

The gifts that the magi brought to Yeshua were gold, frankincense, and myrrh. A Jew of the First Century, would have identified these as pertaining to the priests and the Temple. Frankincense was a main ingredient in the incense that was prepared for the Tabernacle and Temple. Myrrh was part of what went into the anointing oil for the priests. Gold, of course covered the furniture in the Holy Place and Holy of Holies in the Tabernacle and Temple.

Allusion to Moses

The picture of infant Hebrew children being cast into the River Nile, and the Great teacher, prophet, and redeemer Moses being spared by God's hand – then being kept safe in the courts of Egypt, clearly foreshadows the Greatest Teacher, Prophet, and Redeemer of all – Yeshua, the Messiah. Like Moses, Yeshua's life was in danger, but was kept safe in Egypt.

Midgal Eder – Watchtower of the Flock

The killing of the children in Bethlehem on Herod's orders was a prophetic event on several levels. The prophecy about "Rachel weeping for her children", alludes to a "Priestly" and "Suffering" Messiah. It also alludes to Messiah being both the Shepherd – and the Sacrificial Lamb.

Genesis 35 records that while still a distance from *Ephratah*, Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin. She was buried there at a place called *Migdal Eder* [Watchtower of the Flock]. In the Mishnah³ (Shekelim 7:4) there are rules for where animals slated for sacrifice could be put to pasture. *Midgal Eder* was the place mentioned as being the furthest point from Jerusalem. The fields around Bethlehem were fields for sacrificial lambs where they were watched by Temple priests. This region was also known as *Bat Tzion* [Daughter of Zion], and *Bat Y'rushalayim* [Daughter of Jerusalem].

This was where Rachel "weeps for her children" – and foreshadows their redemption. The prophet Micah uses the term *Midgal Eder* as a Messianic phrase. The Sages called the

² Jewish ruling council

³ Oral "Torah" of the Pharisees who protyped the rabbinic tradition. The Mishnah [meaning "Repetition"] was the written form of this oral tradition, and was compiled about 190 CE. Prior to writing these teachings down, scholars, rabbis, and their students memorized and repeated what they said was the "tradition of Moses". They thus were known as *tannaim* [repeaters].

prophecies of *Midgal Eder* and Rachel's weeping, "The Birth Pangs of Messiah". They saw the coming of Messiah as a time preceded by hardship and pain.

Analyzing Chapter Two

In chapter two, Matthew continues the theme of "Son of David", as he tells the account of Yeshua's birth and escape to Egypt. He continues to use prophecy to set this theme. Read the following passages and comment on the relationship, if any, of Bethlehem to the title, "Son of David".

Genesis 35:16-21 (note usage of "Tower of *Edar*" = "Watchtower of the Flock"):

1Samuel 16:4; 13:

Micah 4:8-10a:

Micah 5:2:

Read Exodus 30:22-25; 30-32 and comment on the significance of myrrh. Could just anyone use this spice as it was represented in the anointing oil? Note: "anointing oil" is *mishchah* from which the word *Mashiach* [Messiah] is derived.

Read Psalm 45:6-8 and comment on the relationship to the scent of the King's garments (note: this passage is quoted in Hebrews 1:8-9 in relation to Yeshua).

Read Exodus 30:34-37 and comment on the use of frankincense in the incense for the Tabernacle. Was this permitted for any other use?

Read Luke 1:5-11 and Revelation 8:4 and comment on the relationship between incense, the priest's duties, and prayer.

Read Hebrews 7:25 and relate this back to the priest's duties, prayer, and the Tabernacle incense (this passage is referring to Yeshua):

Matthew 2:23 makes a rather odd statement at first glance.

“And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene.’

What makes this appear odd on the surface is that there is nowhere in the TaNaKh is this said in quite this way. The inhabitants of *Natzeret* [Nazereth] would have known the answer to this riddle. *Natzeret* comes from the root verb *netzer* (note: this is not related to Nazerite vows – that is a different word, and Yeshua was not a Nazerite during His earthly ministry).

The word *netzer* is rendered in Isaiah 11:1 as “branch” or “root”. Read Isaiah 11:1-2 and Revelation 5:5-6. Comment on how *Netzer* is a Messianic title.

As You Finish

- x Thank God for the things He has shown you. Thank Him for the intricate detail He has given to us, so that we might know Yeshua our Messiah and King. Remember, no matter how well you think you know Him – He wants you to know Him better. Amen!

Lesson Three – Chapter Three

As You Begin

- ✘ Ask God to speak to you through His Word – ask Him to let you “hear His voice”.
- ✘ Read chapter three and look for the one occurrence of the phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy. Mark it in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add it to the chart in the Appendix titled, “Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua.”
- ✘ Read Matthew 4:17, and then in your Bible, next to Matthew 3:2 write, “Matt 4:17”.
- ✘ Find any references in chapter three to the word “Kingdom”. Mark it in your Bible with a blue pencil.

Historical Context

Baptism and T'vilah

Many wrongly assume that “baptism” is uniquely Christian. The fact that it is considered a “Christian sacrament” by many adds to the myth that, “Yeshua started a new religion.”

The word “baptize” is a transliteration of the Greek word *baptizo*. It is rendered in English as “baptize”, or “wash”.

There were specific instructions in Torah for *rachatz* [ritual washing] at various times; so it is no surprise that because of this, Judaism of the Second Temple period¹ had developed a series of practices around it. The Hebrew word *t'vilah* [immersion] made its way into the vernacular; and the place where *t'vilah* usually took place was in a specially constructed bath called a *mikveh* [gathering of waters]. The Mishnah records six specific requirements for a *mikveh* to be constructed. The requirement of water that was not stagnant, and the fact that the land of Israel did not have a lot of year-round flowing streams made it nearly impossible in the mind of pious Jews to keep the requirements of Torah regarding washings, without constructing a *mikveh*. The wealthy had them in or near their homes, and the rest of the people had them in their synagogues, towns, and at the Temple.

The need for *t'vilah* [immersion] fell into these basic categories:

- ✘ Signifying personal purity
- ✘ Signifying priestly station

Essentially, *t'vilah* [immersion] showed a **change in status**. Normally, the status change was from being *tamei* [unclean, or un-whole] to being *t'hor* [clean, or whole]; or from being *chol*

¹ 516 BCE to 70 CE.

[common] to being *k'desh* [sanctified]. It is important to note that this change of “status” **preceded** immersing in a *mikveh*, and *t'vilah* [immersing] only signified the change had taken place. *T'vilah* was not seen as something in itself as making one “clean” [*t'hor*].

Some examples of *t'vilah* [immersion] signifying personal purity:

- x Following a cure of what is called “leprosy”
- x For a woman, following the birth of a child
- x After being in contact with a dead body

Some examples of *t'vilah* [immersion] signifying a change in priestly station:

- x When a Levite began service in the Temple
- x When the High Priest prepared to go into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement

From the Second Temple period onward, one of the requirements for a Gentile who wished to “convert” to Judaism was for *t'vilah* in a *mikveh*. Modern observers might see this through western eyes as something similar to “Christian baptism” – but it predates it by quite a bit. Such importance was placed upon immersion [*t'vilah*], that in the generation before the birth of Yeshua, Rabbi Hillel declared that it was more important than circumcision for a proselyte because of the way it signified repentance and a turning to God's ways, thereby showing a renewed life.

The *mikveh* [place for immersing] and *t'vilah* [immersion], because they symbolized a change in status, and were associated with renewal, became symbols of death giving way to new life. This was most evident in the monthly ritual for women of childbearing age in using *t'vilah* to symbolize a return to the status of “life-giving”.

The Essene sect of Judaism was known for their more strict adherence to these washings. They also used immersion for entrance into their sect. Some believe the Essenes were the inhabitants of the Qumran community (Dead Sea Scrolls community). The Qumran community had very prominent *mikva'ot* [ritual baths].

We know that First Century Judaism understood an overall meaning for immersion to be a **change of status**. It was very important that when someone repented and began to live a life consistent with God's requirements that he symbolize this with *t'vilah* [immersion]. However, there is clear evidence that there was confusion over some of the other washings and what they symbolized. Evidence of that is in Mark 7:1-9, where Yeshua reveals that the Pharisees somehow had formulated a belief that unless hands and bowls etc. were washed in a traditional manner, the person was rendered “unclean” [*tame*]. Yeshua, although not disputing their tradition, pointed out that it could not take precedence over God's Word. This misapplying of the “washings” may have contributed to later misunderstandings regarding “baptism” in the early fellowships of Believers, especially in Gentile cities.

We can see that when *Yochanan HaMatvil* [John the Baptizer] began preaching, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” that it was not unusual to also be immersing people in the Jordan. Thus, we see the “Baptism” of John was symbolic of one who wanted to make a public sign of repentance.

The Jewish and Roman historian Josephus made an interesting point about John.

Now some of the Jews thought that the destruction of Herod's army came from God, and was a very just punishment for what he did against John called the baptist [the dipper]. For Herod had him killed, although he was a good man and had urged the Jews to exert themselves to virtue, both as to justice toward one another and reverence towards God, and having done so join together in washing. **For immersion in water, it was clear to him, could not be used for the forgiveness of sins, but as a sanctification of the body, and only if the soul was already thoroughly purified by right actions.** And when others massed about him, for they were very greatly moved by his words, Herod, who feared that such strong influence over the people might carry to a revolt -- for they seemed ready to do any thing he should advise -- believed it much better to move now than later have it raise a rebellion and engage him in actions he would regret. ²

Josephus, in his comments about the Essene sect of Judaism also points out the significance of immersion as part of their requirements for membership:

There is no immediate **initiation** for those who are eager [to join the Essene] party. Rather, they give one a small axe, the loincloth mentioned above, and white garments, putting him under a **discipline** for one year while he remains outside.

And if during this examination period he gives evidence of his **self-control**, they lead him nearer to their discipline, letting him participate in cleaner **waters for purification**. But he is not yet received into their common life. For after proving his endurance, his character is tested for two more years. And then, if he appears worthy, he is admitted to the community.³

The Spirit Descending Like a Dove

The picture of Yeshua being immersed “by” John, and then the “Spirit of God descending like a dove” was a profound picture to Jews of the First Century period and beyond, as it should be to us.

"and the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the water [Genesis 1:2] – this is the Spirit of King Messiah, as it is written, ‘And the Spirit of the Lord will rest upon Him [Isaiah. 11:2].’ By what merit will it [the Spirit of the Messiah] come? By the merit of repentance.”⁴

Jewish thought does not automatically connect the “dove” to the “Spirit of God”, or the “Holy Spirit.” However, the connection of the Flood in Genesis 8 and the waters of Creation, are certainly related in the minds of the Sages, because they saw the relationship between God’s Creation and the renewal after the Flood. As well, Genesis 8:9 (a dove finding no place to rest because of the waters – but returning with a branch when finding a suitable “resting place”) was used by Jewish mystics to relate back to the Creation account. They also saw this in Messianic terms. In the same way, they saw the Flood as a type of *t’vilah* [immersion] denoting a change in status – from a corrupted, to a sanctified state.

They also saw the “passing through the waters” in escaping Egypt in the Exodus account as a type of *t’vilah* – once again showing a change in status from slave to free.

² Flavius Josephus (37-ca 100 CE); *Antiquities* 18.5.2 116-119

³ Flavius Josephus (37-ca 100 CE); *Jewish War* 137-138

⁴ Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish (230-270 CE); *B’reshit Rabbah* 2:4

Analyzing Chapter Three

To understand why the Matthew account so quickly focuses on the immersion of Yeshua, it may be helpful to look at some of the Scriptures that defined First Century thinking about immersion and washings. Beloved, remember as you read these instructions in God's Word, not to think of them as archaic and outdated. Remember, God is unchanging...

Read Leviticus 14:1-9. Comment on the following:

When was the "leper" healed?

What did the priest do with water?

When was the leper pronounced "clean" [*t'hor* = "whole"]?

What was the former "leper" himself to do after the priest had sprinkled him and declared him clean? Hint: watch the word "wash" [*rachatz*] in verse 9.

There is an interesting account in the Book of Ruth, where Ruth is told by Naomi to wash herself and to go to where Boaz was. We see this account as a picture of the "Bride" making herself ready for the "Bridegroom". Read Ruth 3:1-5 and comment on what personal things Ruth was to do to present herself to her future husband. How does that relate to you?

The account of Naaman going to Elisha to be healed of "leprosy" is very important in understanding John's "baptism". Read 2Kings 5:1-17 and then answer these questions:

Where was Naaman from?

What did Elisha tell him to do regarding his "leprosy"?

How was Naaman healed? Answer this carefully – you may want to compare verses 12, 14, and verse 17 in formulating your answer.

Now read 1Peter 3:2-21 and comment on how this relates to what you have read regarding “baptism” [immersion].

John was preaching “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” Sadly, we have all been exposed to the “Greek” model of “Repentance” – which is to “have a change of mind”. That is **not** what John was talking about in Matthew 3:2; but to better see that, let’s dig deeper into John’s message, and his purpose.

The prophecy in Matthew 3:3 quotes Isaiah 40:3. Read Isaiah 40:1-10 and answer these questions:

Is the message of the “preparation” for the “way of the LORD” one of good news, or calamity? Include some phrases as examples for your answer.

What is the relationship to sins, and this “voice of one crying in the wilderness”?

Can you see a relationship between verses 5 and 9, and Matthew 3:16-17?

In verse 6, this “voice” (of one crying in the wilderness) is supposed to “cry out” – what was it supposed to say, and what do you think that means? Hint: read verses 7 and 8 in formulating your answer.

Based upon what you read in Isaiah 40 and Matthew 3:2, what do you think is the relationship between “prepare the way of the LORD” and “repent”?

John told exactly what “repentance” means. Read Matthew 3:6-10 and then write how repentance is described.

Read Luke’s account in Luke 3:7-14, where John detailed what some of those “fruits worthy of repentance” are – list them. Does the list surprise you? Where did these come from?

Three times in Matthew 3:7-12 the word “fire” [*pur* in Greek] is used. What is the message in these verses regarding “fire”? What two “choices” or “destinations” are revealed in these verses?

If John’s purpose was to prepare the way for the coming Messiah – how did he do that?

Do you think that since Matthew 3:3 [quoting Isaiah 40] is seen as “good news”; is Yeshua's message in Matthew 4:17 “good news” as well? If so, is it “good news” for everyone?

Now for some connections – you now know that John’s message was one of preparation for the Kingdom of God. You know that it was a message of repentance, and you have seen that he used immersion as a sign of repentance – denoting a change in status. Read Matthew 3:13-17 and comment on why Yeshua, the sinless One “needed” to be “baptized”. What “change of status” is there?

As You Finish

- x What a powerful thing God's Word is! He is the giver of truth, if we seek **Him** with all our heart. Thank God for the things He has shown you. Thank Him that you have heard the "Good News".
- x Commit yourself to Him anew, to live a life of repentance... for,

"All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever."⁵

Amen!

⁵ Isaiah 40:6-8

Lesson Four – Chapter Four

As You Begin

- ✘ God's Word provides a nourishment that goes beyond simple "spiritually feeding" for us. From a Hebraic mindset (Biblical perspective), there is a "whole person" approach to God's working in our lives. As you begin this week's lesson, sit down and ask God to feed you. My prayer for you is that you be fed, and that you be full and still wanting more – satisfied, and yet desiring to gaze more upon Him.
- ✘ Read chapter four and look for the one occurrence of the phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy (do not include Yeshua's "it is written" phrases, we will deal with those separately). Mark it in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add it to the chart in the Appendix titled, "Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua."
- ✘ Find any references in chapter four to the word "Kingdom". Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

Historical Context

Testing

Jewish *aggadah* [legend] has many accounts of the patriarchs being tested. These stories have similar themes. The Enemy is pictured as one who desires to thwart God's purposes for His chosen ones. Although these stories tend to make the patriarchs into more than they were, they serve as a historical backdrop to the testing of Yeshua – except the account in Matthew is no legend. What we see in common in these "testings" is a proposal of a shortcut, or "different paths to achieve similar results." This is sobering, because it shows that God's people have long known that it was not only **what** was to be done, but **how** – namely **God's way**.

The testing of Yeshua followed forty days of fasting. The number "forty" drew First Century Jews to the numerous places in TaNaKh where it was also used. First in their mind however, would have been where *Moshe Rabbeinu* [Moses our Teacher], was called up to Mount Sinai and where he fasted day and night of food and water – and received Torah, written with the finger of God¹. This was the pinnacle of God's grace to Israel – where He gave His Torah to His servant – and then sent him down the mountain to teach all Israel about God. This theme of comparing Yeshua to Moses will continue into chapter five.

Where the Enemy tempted Yeshua, we find clear Messianic teaching that the Sages spoke of regarding Messiah. There was a connection between "bread" and Messiah which the Ancients saw in Scripture and expounded upon them. The Micah 5:2 reference to the *Bet Lechem* [Bethlehem = house of bread] and the belief that, just as Moses "gave them bread" in the wilderness, so the Messiah would give them bread when He came. Miracles and bread were a

¹ Exodus 31:18; Exodus 34:28

Messianic sign. The Enemy's suggestion of making bread from stones was the suggestion of a shortcut for Yeshua to be publicly seen as Messiah – but it was not God's way.

Likewise, when Yeshua was challenged to throw Himself from the roof of the Temple, this was a shortcut to being recognized as Messiah. There was a Jewish tradition about the Temple and Messiah:

Our teachers taught, at the time when King Messiah will appear, He will come and stand upon the roof of the Temple. He will proclaim to Israel and say to the humble, 'the time of your redemption has arrived...'” *Pesikta Rabbati 36*

Interestingly, it is *Ya'akov HaTzadik* [Ya'akov the Righteous] who ends up on the roof of the Temple, some thirty years later. He was put there by some who wanted him to declare to the crowds below that Yeshua was not the Messiah. He disappointed them – He declared that Yeshua was the Messiah, and for that he was thrown down from the roof (about 150 feet). Miraculously, he lived – but was subsequently stoned to death. *Ya'akov* was an early martyr for faith in Yeshua. He was Yeshua's half brother – you may know him as “James” who wrote the Epistle of James.

Lastly, the temptation where the Enemy “offers” the kingdoms of the world to Yeshua, also has Messianic implications. All the Sages of Israel recognized that Messiah was going to rule the world from David's throne.

Each of the temptations that were thrown at Yeshua were “other paths” to Messianic recognition – and each was an attack upon the character of God.

Repent, the Kingdom of Heaven is Near!

This phrase is so common in some circles that it may have lost its true meaning in modern times. We see that this is the same message that John the Baptizer came with. Now we see Yeshua also using this phrase. We saw that the word “repent” that John used was to call the people back to obedience to God's Law. The Hebrew hearers of Yeshua's words in Matthew 4:17 would have thought “*shuv*” [repent]. *T'shuvah* [repentance] was well understood in Judaism to mean, “Return to obedience of Torah!”. It was **action** – not mere **declaration** of intentions, as we tend to use the word today.

The “Kingdom” clearly has the same Messianic flavor as “Son of David” – but in this regard, it is the “Kingdom of Heaven”. To the western reader, this almost makes the “Kingdom” that is being talked about as an ethereal, spiritual type of “Kingdom”. This is not the language being used. The use of the word “Heaven” is called circumlocution, and was prevalent in Second Temple times. Circumlocution is the substituting of God's Name for another word. In order to treat His name in a more reverent way, other words were substituted in conversation – and in this case, even in teaching. Using “Heaven” in place of God's holy name is not uncommon even in more recent times. The phrase, therefore means, “Kingdom of HaShem [the Name]”.

The word “near” here seems to imply that it had not yet come. In western thinking, “near” means “not here”. That is not true in Hebrew. “Near” in Hebrew, means “here” and in the context of Yeshua and John's declaration – it meant “now!” John, in “preparing the way” was declaring that the Kingdom of God had come and was **now** – because King Messiah was here. Yeshua, as well, was letting His hearers know that: He was here, He was the King, and that meant that it was past time for people to turn to God and begin acting like He was in their midst.

The notion of a King over all of Israel has interesting beginnings. A royal dynasty, and a government as other nations had, was not part of the Torah as one might expect. Hundreds of years before Israel's first king, God had given instructions to the kings of Israel, but indicated that having a king was something the people would want – to be like those nations around them. In desiring a human king, God said that they were rejecting Him as their King. It was Israel's second king, David, to whom the Sages ascribed a Divine blessing, as does Scripture. Mysteriously, they considered the Davidic Kingdom as God-ordained although it was still a kingdom with a human king. The numerous "Kingdom" prophecies tied to David further ensure the prophetic connection to King Messiah.

Messiah Performs Miracles

The Scholars of Torah in the First Century would, just like later Jewish Sages, declare that a definite sign of Messiah was the presence of miracles. The Scriptural definition of the identifying of Messiah understood by First Century Judaism held that Messiah would be:

- x From David's line
- x Would be a Prophet (like Moses) and a King (like David)
- x Would call the people to repentance, and obedience of Torah
- x Would reveal the deeper things of Torah
- x His coming would be accompanied by miraculous deeds and signs like Elijah and Elisha²
- x He would rule the world from Jerusalem – and turn all the world to God's Torah

Analyzing Chapter Four

Before the division of Scripture into chapter and verse, there was no break between Matthew 3:17 and 4:1. Go back and read 3:16-17 and keep reading through 4:1.

What "Spirit" led Yeshua into the wilderness?

The number "forty" is meant to get our attention and look at other places that forty is used. In Genesis 8:1-11, we read that after forty days, Noah sent a raven out of the Ark. The raven "kept going to and fro" (cross reference Job 1:7) and did not return to Noah. At the same time, Noah sent out a dove, which returned to him, finding no place to rest. After seven days, he sent the dove again, which returned with an olive branch [*aleh* = branch or leaf]. Beloved, the Spirit of God, in the form of a dove, found a place to rest on Yeshua – finding Him alone to be worthy. Ah, and there is that "Branch" again – the Kingly Messiah picture. Ponder that for a moment.

² Moshe ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides, or "Rambam" (1135-1204 CE), was a great teacher about what Scripture says about Messiah – although He claimed that Messiah's coming was not to be seen as a time of miracles, he contradicts himself later. Most Jewish "Messiah-watchers" knew that miracles were an important identifier.

In Matthew 4:3-4, the Enemy tempted Yeshua to make bread from stones. Yeshua always responded with Scripture. In this case His response came from Deuteronomy 8:3. Read Deuteronomy 8:1-6, and then answer the following questions:
Where did the manna come from?

Where did the “word” come from (verse 3)?

The word “word” in verse 3 is not in the original Hebrew. A more literal reading would be “man lives by what proceeds from God’s mouth”. What has God spoken? Go to verse 1 and answer that question.

Seeing that the “manna” (bread from heaven) came from God, and His “word” also comes from Him – what was the point of Deuteronomy 8:3 – and the subsequent point of what Yeshua said in Matthew 4:4?

Again, what “word” from God’s mouth was Deuteronomy 8:3 talking about? What “word” from God’s mouth was Yeshua speaking of? Note: remember, when Deuteronomy was written, this was the only Scripture revealed. Also, remember that when Yeshua said this, the only Scripture was TaNaKh [known by some as the “Old Testament”] – so how exactly is a man to live?

After Yeshua's use of Scripture to counter the Tempter's challenges, the Enemy resorted to the misuse of Scripture (i.e. out of context, and to cause one to break God's Law instead of obeying it). Yeshua answered the next temptation, and the misuse of Scripture (Matthew 4:6), with more Scripture. In Matthew 4:7, Yeshua quoted from Deuteronomy again. Go to Deuteronomy 6:16-17 and comment on the contrast between “tempting the LORD your God” and what is found in Deuteronomy 6:17.

Read Exodus 17:5-7 and then answer this question: How did the children of Israel “tempt” God at Massah (hint, verse 7 – what was their question)?

Based upon what you have seen in Deuteronomy 6:16-17, and Exodus 17:7 – comment on what Yeshua's answer really meant (hint: focus on how Exodus 17:7 defined “tempting God”).

In Matthew 4:8-9, the Enemy told Yeshua to fall down and “worship” him. Yeshua's answer once again comes from Deuteronomy. Read and comment on Deuteronomy 6:13-14 (notice, Yeshua did not quote from verse 14, but it is clearly the context that He intended – this is *remez*³).

Please comment upon Yeshua's use of the word “fear”. What word is used in Deuteronomy 6:13?

In Matthew 4:17, we are reintroduced to the Kingdom message – the “Gospel” – the “good news”. It is, “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand”. Read Matthew 4:23 and answer the following questions:

What three things did Yeshua do in this verse?

Do you think that those three things could be prefigured in anyone from the TaNaKh [Hebrew Scriptures, “Old Testament”]?

It says, “preaching the Gospel [good news] of the Kingdom.” Write out again what this “Gospel” [good news] is (verse 17):

What Kingdom was He speaking of? The first direct reference to a king for the people of Israel is in Deuteronomy 17:18. Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20 and answer the following questions:

What did God say would be their motivation for wanting a king?

³ *Remez* is the interpretational method of using small phrases to teach a more lengthy teaching – multiplying the teaching, with few words. *Remez* is thus “hinting” at a deeper, more extensive meaning than *p’shat* (face value, literal).

Having expressed their desire for a king, God gave specific instructions who that king should be (God would choose from among their brethren), and how that king should behave. List the instructions for the king to obey.

How was the king to treat the “Law” [Torah] of God? Can you see a relationship between the words “Repent” and “Kingdom” from this?

Read 1Samuel 8:4-9; 8:18-21; and 9:18-19 and comment on the how this relates to the “Kingdom of Heaven”:

In 1Samuel 13:13-14, we learn that after Israel's first king disobeyed God's Law, his kingdom was taken away. Comment on how this relates to God's instructions for kings in Deuteronomy 17:14-20:

In 2Samuel 7:4-17: God sent the *navi* [prophet] Nathan to David to answer his request to “build a house” for God. This key passage is called by some, “the establishment of the “Davidic Covenant” – for it is here that God **reestablishes** His Divine dynasty (God reigning over them as King), mysteriously through the human line of David. Read this passage and comment on how you think this relates to the Kingdom message in Matthew 4:17:

Read David's response to God's unilateral covenant in 2Samuel 7:18-29. Now read Deuteronomy 4:4-8 and comment on how it relates to the Kingdom message in Matthew 4:17:

Sadly, Solomon, later in his life disobeyed the instructions given to kings in Deuteronomy 17. So why did God anoint the throne of David through Solomon? Read 1Kings 11:34 and comment upon Solomon's and also David's obedience to Deuteronomy 17:14-20:

Not all the scholars of Israel understood or believed in the Divine nature of the coming King Messiah – but some correctly saw this. Beloved, can you see and understand the significance of Yeshua the Messiah being both Heir to David's throne, and God in the flesh? Beloved, the message is the same today. **Repent, for the Kingdom of God is now!** Will you repent, and bow to His Authority, and obey His Kingly Decrees?

As You Finish

- x Determine to live by every word that comes from the mouth of God. Tell God that you want to follow Him as Yeshua modeled. Ask Him to show you how – and then expect Him to answer such a prayer.
- x Determine to bow your knee to the only true King – King Messiah – *Yeshua HaMashiach* – Yeshua, the Messiah. He has written God's Torah down as God declared He would. He lived by His Divine Law – and He desires subjects who will live as He lived, and evermore lives!
- x Memorize Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Lesson Five – Chapter Five

As You Begin

- ✘ We are going to dig into the first of five major teaching sections of the book of Matthew. There is so much here, and we can only see so much of the panorama at a time – so ask God for a special revelation of His Word as you begin. Ask Him for just one thing that He wants you to really hear – and then listen for it.
- ✘ Read Matthew chapters five, six, and seven in a single sitting. They comprise a single teaching, so it is helpful to keep them together in your mind as we begin.
- ✘ Find any references in chapter five to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

Overview of Five, Six and Seven

We start chapter five with the phrase, “and seeing the multitudes, He (Yeshua) went up on a mountain.” What we need to see is that Yeshua went up the mountain and sat down because He saw the multitudes following Him. Then we need to ask the question, “Why sit on a mountain to teach?”

There are five didactic teachings in Matthew. Chapters five, six, and seven comprise the first of those “sermons”. This teaching is traditionally referred to as the “Sermon on the Mount”. Of all of Yeshua's teachings, this one is likely the most memorized because of the “Beatitudes” as they are called where Yeshua declared, “*Blessed are those...*”

The account of this significant teaching by Yeshua in the book of Luke places it at about the same time that He chose His disciples. In the Luke account, Yeshua spent the nights in prayer on the mountain prior to the multitude coming.

So far in the book of Matthew, we have seen Yeshua portrayed as the “King” like David. We have seen Him as a babe rescued from the persecution of an evil ruler in the same way Moses was persecuted and rescued. We have seen an oblique comparison to Abraham in the wilderness temptation. At the end of chapter four there was an allusion to Elisha (we will deal with this later in this study).

What Mattityahu wants his readers to immediately picture when he speaks of the “mountain” is Moses and Mt. Sinai. Indeed, the early assemblies of believers in the First Century made exactly this connection – and we would do well to follow their example.

The problem of course, is that many people who have a low regard for God's Word as expressed in the first five books (i.e. Torah) have sought occasion in Matthew five, six, and seven to make a case that Yeshua was giving a “new Law”. This is simply not true, and is contrary to Yeshua's own words in Matthew 5:17:

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”

Beloved, as we study Matthew five, six, and seven, we are about to hear Torah taught again; but this time... from the very mouth of God.

Historical Context

Torah Interpretation

As westerners, we like all our discussions and arguments to end with a conclusive bang – where the hearers can choose sides based upon the most conclusive logic used. The Hebrew way of discussing Scripture is quite different. For thousands of years, Jews have been wrestling with Scripture in running commentary where rabbi quotes rabbi – and each offer what, in our minds, would be diametrically opposing arguments – and all of this presented to the average reader without finality. Finding closure in Rabbinical commentary is sometimes difficult. There is good and bad in this. The good is that the reader is encouraged to go back to the Scripture with possibly new perspectives in search of God's illumination. The bad, of course, is that answers are sometimes difficult to come by without years of study.

The common method seen in Jewish commentary on Scripture is to use a variation of this type of rhetoric:

“You may understand this to mean...” followed by, “Rabbi x teaches this is what is meant by that...”

Generations of scholars and their subsequent *talmidim* [disciples] are thus building upon each other in their understanding of Scripture. Each *talmid* [disciple] of a rabbi then teaches “in the name” of their teacher. The principle of a cumulative and chronological authority in teaching and interpretation is born out in the way the Mishnah begins in its opening section. The ascribed history of the passing of Torah from Sage to Sage, beginning with Moses, is interspersed with sayings of the Sages themselves. An example is found in Avot 1:12; 15-17 and mentions Sages whose influence was felt in the First Century:

Hillel and Shammai received the Torah from them [Shemayah and Avtalion]. Hillel used to say: Be of the disciples of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing peace, loving others and bringing them close to the Torah... Shammai said: Make your study of the Torah a fixed habit. Say little and do much, and receive all men with a cheerful face. Rabban Gamaliel said: Provide yourself with a teacher and remove yourself from doubt, and do not make a habit of tithing by guesswork...

Yeshua's teaching in Matthew five, six and seven does **not** follow the model of passing teaching and authority from Sage to Sage. Yeshua, the author of the Torah that Moses wrote down, is not the *talmid* [disciple] of any previous Sage.

Contrary to the most common view in some circles, it is not **what** Yeshua said in the “Sermon on the Mount” that stuns the listeners – it is **how** He said it.

The phrase “and He opened His mouth and taught them” (Matthew 5:2) seems redundant in English. It is in the Greek as well. We are being told something in this sentence that my not be readily apparent to us reading it, removed by over 1,900 years. The use of the Greek words

aniogo and *stoma* in the phrase “opened His mouth”, when rendered to Hebrew are a descriptive phrase seen in rabbinical and proto-rabbinical commentary. The Hebrew phrase, *patah piv*, is in essence an announcement that what follows will be this teacher's comments upon Torah. We are reminded of Luke 24:27 and how He opened the Scriptures “beginning at Moses and all the prophets” and showed how they spoke of Him.

God spoke to Moses, and over the ages spoke to other men to reveal to them His intentions and purposed behind His words. It should not therefore be a surprise that many of Yeshua's words in Matthew five, six, and seven were not new to the hearers. Yeshua's repeated use of the “you have heard it said... but I say to you,” phrases does not mean He is contradicting Torah as some modern commentators insist, but rather that He is revealing the purposes behind Torah's commands – and where He agrees or disagrees with the rabbinical views of the day.

The Talmud Bavli (compilation of teachings of the Pharisees) has some interesting commentaries of Torah that sound familiar to those familiar with Yeshua's words:

- ⌘ One who shames the face of his fellow, it is as if he has murdered him. *Bava Mezia 58b*
- ⌘ Yom Kippur atones for all sins, but first you must reconcile your conflict with others. *Yoma 85b*
- ⌘ One who gazes lustfully upon the small finger of a married woman, it is as if he has committed adultery with her. *Kallah 1*
- ⌘ A righteous yes is a yes; a righteous no is no. *Bava Batra 49b*
- ⌘ They who are insulted but insult not back; who hear themselves reproached but answer not; who serve out of love and rejoice in their affliction--of them it is written in Scripture: They that love God are as the going forth of the sun in its might. *Yoma 23a*

The occasion of the teaching by a young Teacher-of-the-Torah would not have been unusual immediately following the choosing His *talmidim* [disciples]. What we read in Matthew five, six, and seven provides a recognizable setting for First Century believers... but One greater than Moses is being introduced into the rich Scriptural environment.

Matthew 5:17-19 says something that it would be well for us to understand in light of First Century understanding:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law [Torah] or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.¹

These verses have been used to teach that Yeshua gave a “new Law” – a “Law of grace” and not of “stone”. This not only contradicts Yeshua's own words in these three verses, it is inconsistent then with the standards He spoke of in the verses that follow.

¹*The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982 (Matthew 5:17-20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

The focus is on Yeshua's words, “destroy” and “fulfill”. The Greek words are *kataluo* and *pleroo* respectively. They have Hebrew equivalents: *batel* and *kiyem*. These words would have been understood by First Century people as rabbinic terms for how one should treat Torah. To *batel* Torah would be to cancel it out in the understanding of the hearer. The word *kiyem* on the other hand is to make a passage of Torah “to stand” or “to place it on a firm footing”. These words are used in rabbinical writings to speak about the correct handling of Torah and correct interpretation. In other words, Yeshua was telling His followers that He did not come to make the Torah of no effect, but rather that He would correctly teach **what it means**, in order that it stood firmly for them. Not surprisingly, this is absolutely consistent with what it says in the verses that follow; and this is also consistent with belief that Messiah would explain the deeper meanings of Torah when He came.

An interesting word is used in the King James Version in 5:18 – it is the word “verily”. Yeshua began verse 18 by saying, “Verily, I say unto you.” Other translations use “assuredly”, or “truly”, as well as similar words. The “verily-s” are very common in Yeshua's speech in the book of Matthew. What makes this word interesting is how common it is to those who have read this word so often and maybe not understood what was being said when Yeshua began a sentence with the word “Verily”. The underlying Greek word is a borrowed word from Hebrew. Most languages of the world, borrow this word from Hebrew as well. It is the word *amein* [believe]. It is pronounced: *am-ane*. When Yeshua used this word at the beginning of a sentence, it meant, “believe this”. Faith, beloved, is what He is calling for. When you read “verily”, or “truly”, or “assuredly” in Yeshua's speech, know that He is telling you (pardon the paraphrase), “You **must believe** this – because **I have said it**.”

Before telling His *talmidim* [disciples] what Torah truly meant on some important issues, Yeshua made a remarkable statement to those listening. Matthew 5:20:

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

The First Century listener needed to rethink what “righteousness” was. The “scribes and the Pharisees” had taken Torah, and developed highly detailed *halachah* [literally “path” or “walking” = meaning ways to live out what was written]. Those *halachot* [plural form] are often what is at issue between various factions in Judaism portrayed in the book of Matthew. The *halachah* of the Pharisees, although not the strictest, was certainly the most detailed. What was missing of course from some of the discussions of a way to obey a particular instruction in Torah was the intention behind God's words – which was always relational in some way – either to God, or to man. The men became viewed as “experts in the Law” – and their ability to account for every circumstance in response to Torah made them the standard setters of the First Century. Verse 20 cannot be separated from the verse that precedes or from the verses that follow. Yeshua was showing the correct way of looking at God's Torah. The listener was encouraged to remember that Torah provided a righteousness **for** God's people (namely, in the Person of Messiah, and then lived out in imitating Him) – Torah was not about **achieving** a righteousness **by** God's people; and most importantly, that obedience to Torah was **about relationship** – not a list of rules and regulations.

Analyzing Chapter Five

The “Beatitudes” comprise the first twelve verses of chapter five. They are the “blessed are” statements. The Hebrew word used by Yeshua would have been the word *asher*. Read and comment on how the following Scripture passages relate to Matthew 5:3-12:

Psalms 1 (what is the contrast?):

Isaiah 57:15; 66:2 (what is “My Word” in verse 2?):

Isaiah 61:2; 66:10,13:

Psalms 37:11; Isaiah 66:11-12:

Psalms 18:26:

Psalms 22:4:

Isaiah 66:5:

What is a “peacemaker”? In Numbers 25:6-12, we are told about a “peacemaker”. Who is it that received a “covenant of peace” from God – and what did he do?

What came from Phinehas' actions? Read Psalms 106:30-31?

In Matthew 5:13, Yeshua used the picture of His followers being like salt. Much has been made of this verse, but we need to understand salt from the perspective of the hearers in the First Century.

Read the following passages and comment on the relationship between them and Yeshua's words about salt (His followers):

Leviticus 2:13:

2Chronicles 13:5:

Read Matthew 5:17-19 and answer these questions.

What are “these commandments”? (Hint: the thought is carried from verses 17 and 18)?

Who did Yeshua say will be called “least” in the Kingdom of Heaven?

Who did Yeshua say will be called “great” in the Kingdom of Heaven?

Since the First Century, people have accused Yeshua of “abolishing the Law” – even though Yeshua plainly said that He did not come to do that. In fact, in the First Century, He and His followers were **falsely** accused of this. Read Acts 6:8-14 and answer the following questions:

What was Stephen accused of?

What did they say that Stephen was teaching from Yeshua of Nazareth (note: “the customs of Moses” is a euphemism for Torah, or the first five books of the Bible)?

In verse 13, are these accusations true?

Fill in the following chart regarding Yeshua's "You have heard... but I say to you" phrases. Pay special attention to what Yeshua told them is behind those instructions (or where He differs with the common interpretation of them). The first one is filled in for you.

You have heard	What was written	What it meant
vs. 21: whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment	Ex 20:13: You shall not murder	... angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment
vs. 27:	Ex 20:17:	
vs. 31:	Deut 24:1-4:	
vs. 33:	Lev 19:12:	
vs. 38:	Ex 21:22-24:	
vs. 43:	Lev 19:18:	

As You Finish

- ✘ As you close your workbook today, go to your Heavenly Father in prayer and thank Him for His revelation.
- ✘ Honestly tell God that even though you may not understand all that He has spoken, you will obey Him. Purpose in your heart to be a “doer” of His Word, and not a hearer only.

Beloved, we have only scratched the surface. You are continuing on a journey of discovery – and we will not reach our destination until we see His face. Rest well – you have worked hard.

Remind *them* of these things, charging *them* before the Lord not to strive about words to no profit, to the ruin of the hearers. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.**

2Timothy 2:14-15

Lesson Six – Chapter Six

As You Begin

- x Beloved, as we continue to examine Yeshua's teaching commonly called, “the Sermon on the Mount”, understand that the words spoken by Yeshua are not often dealt with as a whole. It is because in some cases, Yeshua's words when read together seem hard. Yeshua is calling His disciples to a different life. A life that follows Him completely.
- x Sit quietly for a moment, and then ask God to bring these words alive for you. Ask Him again for that “one thing” you need to hear most clearly – and then trust Him that He will speak to you.
- x Determine to “hear” and obey Yeshua – regardless of the cost.
- x Read Matthew chapter six again.
- x Find any references in chapter six to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

Historical Context

Alms, Prayer, Fasting

Alfred Edersheim details the way that collections were taken in the Second Temple period in his book, *Temple – Its Ministries and Service*:

All around ran a simple colonnade, and within it, against the wall, the thirteen chests, or 'trumpets,' for charitable contributions were placed. These thirteen chests were narrow at the mouth and wide at the bottom, shaped like trumpets, whence their name. Their specific objects were carefully marked on them. Nine were for the receipt of what was legally due by worshippers; the other four for strictly voluntary gifts. Trumpets I and II were appropriated to the half-shekel Temple-tribute of the current and of the past year. Into Trumpet III those women who had to bring turtledoves for a burnt and a sin-offering dropped their equivalent in money, which was daily taken out and a corresponding number of turtledoves offered. ... Trumpet IV similarly received the value of the offerings of young pigeons. In Trumpet V contributions for the wood used in the Temple; in Trumpet VI for the incense, and in Trumpet VII for the golden vessels for the ministry were deposited. If a man had put aside a certain sum for a sin-offering, and any money was left over after its purchase, it was cast into Trumpet VIII. Similarly, Trumpets IX, X, XI, XII, and XIII were destined for what was left over from trespass-offerings, offerings of birds, the offering of the Nazarite, of the cleansed leper, and voluntary offerings... It is probably in ironical allusion to the form and name of these treasure-chests that the Lord, making use of the word 'trumpet,' describes the conduct of those who, in their almsgiving, sought glory from men as 'sounding a trumpet' before them –

that is, carrying before them, as it were, in full display one of these trumpet-shaped alms-boxes (literally called in the Talmud, 'trumpets'), and, as it were, sounding it.¹

Alms and giving were an important part of religious life in the First Century. Such giving was often very public as seen in the Temple example. However, giving privately was not unheard of; and was considered a higher form of giving. This is evident in Maimonides' "eight levels of charity"² – where the sixth and seventh levels of charity are anonymous and private.

Praying was an opportunity for hypocrisy, just as public alms-giving could be. Public praying was something all Jews did, but just as in giving, the truly pious frowned upon overt shows of piety.

There was only one fast mandated in Torah, the fast of *Yom Kippur* [Day of Atonement]. The *Yom Kippur* fast was a national fast, and bathing on Yom Kippur was also forbidden by Scripture – so Yeshua was not speaking of that fast when He emphasized the privacy of fasting. Yeshua was speaking of the numerous voluntary fasts that were common among the religious.

The "Lord's Prayer" in Matthew 6:9-13 has been recast in recent years as a "prayer formula". This may be true to a degree, but to deny its liturgical³ origin is anachronistic. The *Shemoneh Esreh*⁴ ["eighteen", for the eighteen benedictions in it] is a liturgical prayer that had its origins in the Second Temple period. It is a liturgy in which Yeshua likely would have participated.

The *Kaddish* [mourner's prayer] also is ancient in its origins. Numerous books and articles have been written regarding similarities of the *Shemoneh Esreh* and the *Kaddish* to the "Lord's Prayer" regarding structure, words used, and intent. The *Shemoneh Esreh* has been prayed, **silently** for thousands of years. This is comparable to the model for prayer in Matthew 6:6. The abbreviated form of the *Shemoneh Esreh* best shows the similarities to the Lord's Prayer. The original version of this is attributed to Samuel.

Give us discernment, O Lord, to know Thy ways, and circumcise our heart to fear Thee, and forgive us so that we may be redeemed, and keep us far from our sufferings, and fatten us in the pastures of Thy land, and gather our dispersions from the four corners of the earth, and let them who err from Thy prescriptions be punished, and lift up Thy hand against the wicked, and let the righteous rejoice in the building of Thy city and the establishment of the temple and in the exalting of the horn of David Thy servant and the preparation of a light for the son of Jesse Thy Messiah; before we call mayest Thou answer; blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hearkenest to prayer.⁵

The liturgical nature of the "Lord's Prayer" is also seen in early writings of the followers of Yeshua. The *Didache* ["teaching"] is one of the oldest extra-Biblical documents about early believers. It was referenced by the Fourth Century Historian, Eusebius; but there were no known copies until one was discovered in ancient documents in 1883. Since then, numerous fragments and quotes of the *Didache* have been found in various documents. The original title of the *Didache* was *The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, and it served as a handbook in the

¹ Edersheim, Alfred (1825-1889), *Temple – Its Ministries and Service*, Chapter 2

² Moshe ben Maimon, also known as Maimonides, or "Rambam" (1135-1204 CE), *Mishneh Torah*

³ Liturgical, in that it fits the pattern of a planned and ordered religious tradition.

⁴ Also known as the *Amidah* ["standing"]. For thousands of years, Jews have prayed the *Shemoneh Esreh*, the Eighteen Benedictions three times each day (xref Daniel 5:10).

⁵ *Talmud Bavli, Berakot 29a*, Soncino Edition

early gatherings of believers. It contains much practical information regarding conduct etc, which it draws heavily from the book of Matthew. Most scholars date the *Didache* as coming from the mid-to-late First Century. In the *Didache*, the “Lord’s Prayer” is treated as liturgical, and follows the “three times daily” orientation of the *Shemoneh Esreh*.

And let not your fastings be with the hypocrites, for they fast on the second and the fifth day of the week; but do ye keep your fast on the fourth and on the preparation (the sixth) day. Neither pray ye {as the hypocrites,} but as the Lord commanded in His Gospel, {thus pray ye. Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done, as in heaven, so also on earth; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debt, as we also forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one;} for Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever. Three times in the day pray ye so.⁶

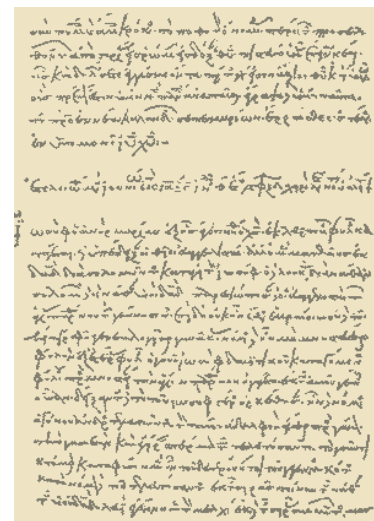
Didache 8:1-11

The request for bread and of thanksgiving for it, should be understood as well in First Century context. This is not speaking of an ethereal sustenance, but rather the real food that one eats daily. The “prayer before eating” in the *Didache* follows the pattern in the Lord’s Prayer as well as the ancient Jewish *barachot* [blessings] before eating “wine and bread”.

The model of prayer presented in the *Shemoneh Esreh*, *Kaddish*, *Didache*, and The Lord’s Prayer, do not follow a modern trend regarding **things** being “blessed”. In that regard, food was not blessed (this would be a pagan concept to Jews living in the First Century) – only the Person of God was blessed in a way of thanksgiving and acknowledgement of His provision.

Specifically patterned after what they saw in the Torah instructions, the thanksgiving for food is said **after** the meal in the *Didache*. This, among other things makes this First Century document remarkably Jewish, reflecting the teaching of the early disciples of Yeshua.

The *Didache* also mentions fasting. The practice of fixed fast days apparently was embraced by early followers of Yeshua, but consistent with His instructions in the book of Matthew, it was patterned somewhat differently from the set fasts for what it calls “the hypocrites”.



Greek copy of the *Didache*

Based upon documents like the *Didache*, it is quite clear that not only was religious life decidedly formal in the First Century, the emerging assemblies of believers in Yeshua did not abandon that liturgy or formality. It is clear that the *talmidim* [disciples] of Yeshua did not hear something new or unfamiliar when they heard Him say the words of Matthew 6:9-13 – rather, they would have understood Him to be both approving of, and disapproving of, certain common elements in Jewish traditional religious life.

⁶ J.B. Lightfoot English translation

A Good Eye

Yeshua's words in Matthew 6:22 contain an idiom that did not translate well into English. Certainly, the First Century hearer, would have easily understood that verse 22 was part of the topic discussed in verses 19 through 24.

19 Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 **“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!”** 24 “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.⁷

The “good eye” and “bad eye” idiom is a First Century euphemism for being generous or being stingy. This idiom is used in Proverbs 22:9 as well. The Mishnah uses this idiom for generosity:

A good eye and a humble spirit and a lowly soul, those who have these are disciples of Abraham our Father

Avot 5:9

Analyzing Chapter Six

Beloved, we have much history regarding how we should give to those in need. Even the world around us recognizes the need to give to others. We need to know the Biblical model for giving alms. In modern times, the word “alms” is rarely used. Just the use of the word “alms” implies something other than sincerity in the minds of many believers. This fact is a commentary on how our models of giving have been so tainted by the various influences around us.

First, note that Yeshua in Matthew 6:1, assumed that His followers **will be giving alms**. It was the **how** which was in question. Some assume that if they give to a local congregation, they are fulfilling Yeshua's commands in Matthew 6 regarding giving. Let's look a little deeper into that.

The Greek word for alms used in Matthew 6:1 is the word *eleemosune*. The first usage in the Apostolic Scriptures is in Matthew 6:1. A Greek dictionary will simply tell you that this word means “charitable giving, or alms”. The Hebrew equivalent is found in two words, *chanan* [grace, mercy], and *chesed* [mercy, kindness]. These words are most often ascribed to the Person of God Himself. This establishes an important principle in Yeshua's teaching in giving alms – God has given *alms* to you. Read the following passages that use the word *chanan* and comment on how they relate to Yeshua's teaching in Matthew chapter six regarding alms.

Proverbs 14:21 (who is my neighbor?):

Daniel 4:27:

⁷The New King James Version. 1996, c1982 (Mt 6:19-24). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

We saw that the Temple had a “treasury” for collecting money from the people. We often incorrectly relate this to the “collection basket” at a local congregation. In Luke 21:1-4, it was the poor widow putting money into the treasury of the Temple – not getting something from it. Should we pass our alms through an “organization”? To answer that question, let’s look at how Torah treats the question of the poor, and how they should be provided for. Read the following passages and comment on how they relate to the poor:

Exodus 22:25:

Leviticus 19:10:

Deuteronomy 15:6-11:

Psalms 82:3-4:

Isaiah 58:6-8:

Was there any mention of a corporate provision for the poor? Was the “Tabernacle/Temple” to provide for the poor? Some incorrectly think that the “tithes” of Scripture is to be brought to a central “place of worship”. Some men incorrectly teach God’s people that the “church” or “synagogue” is the modern “Temple”, and is the sole place for tithes. There is much about Biblical tithes that many modern believers simply do not understand.

First, there were three “tithes” mentioned in Scripture. It was the “tithes” of first fruits that was to be brought to the “Temple”. The “second tithe” was **not** to be brought to the central collection place of the Tabernacle and later the Temple. It was to be stored where you live – and then given to the poor Levite, the widow, the orphan, and the poor alien – **where you are.**

Read and comment on Deuteronomy 14:27-29

There is a fabulous example of a man who modeled prayer and alms-giving for us. Read Acts 10:1-35 and then answer the following questions:

According to Acts 10:2, 4, and 31, how did Cornelius stand out? Cornelius found favor in God's eyes – what actions on his part demonstrated this?

In Acts 10:35, the descriptive acts of Cornelius (i.e. fearing God, prayer, fasting, and alms-giving) are placed under a heading "works righteousness". Does this line up with what Yeshua said in Matthew chapter five and six?

We will deal in depth with this next passage later on in this study, but read Matthew 19:21 and comment on the relationship between alms-giving and Yeshua's words regarding treasure in heaven in Matthew 6:1:9-20:

Beloved, too long we have been told that we should give to a central "authority" for distribution to the poor. This is not the model given by Scripture. Yeshua fully expected His *talmidim* [disciples] to give to the poor personally. His followers should give without anyone knowing. Even the receiver's knowledge should be protected from feelings of shame in receiving alms. Rather when you give, "do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." Give freely, without ties, without concern for an organizational "blessing" or a tax deduction.

Now read Matthew 6:19-34 again. Comment on the relationship between what is provided for you, and the way Yeshua began this pericope in 6:1:

Lastly beloved, what do you think Yeshua meant when He said that we should, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (verse 33)? What is "His righteousness"? Read and comment on the following Scripture passages. Be sure to pay close attention to the pronouns and where "righteousness" comes from.

Deuteronomy 6:24-25:

Deuteronomy 9:6:

Psalms 103:17:

Isaiah 56:1:

Romans 1:16-17:

2Corinthians 5:21:

2Peter 1:1:

As You Finish

- x As you close your study in this lesson, go to your Father in prayer. Find a quiet place, stand up, bow your head, and speak Yeshua's words in prayer, "Our Father, Who art in heaven..."
- x Ask God to bring to mind areas where you do not have a "good eye" – and ask Him to give you insights into the needs around you – then prepare yourself to **give** – *personally*.

Lesson Seven – Chapter Seven

As You Begin

- x Some of the most difficult words of Yeshua are in chapter seven, which concludes “the Sermon on the Mount”. We need to know what Yeshua was saying – because what He said in this chapter is so important for our understanding of who it is that Yeshua *knows*, and what He expects of them.
- x As you go to Him in prayer, tell Him that you want to hear His voice – that you want to know that you know Him – and that He *knows* you.
- x Read Matthew chapter seven.
- x Find any references in chapter seven to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

Historical Context

Judging

Certainly, one of the most popular verses in the world today is Matthew 7:1, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” It was no different in the time immediately after Yeshua spoke these words as well. This well-known verse has been misappropriated by subsequent generations to keep from having their sin spoken of. Yeshua's teaching in the next five verses as well have been misappropriated by the world. In the Second Century, Rabbi Tarphon said,

“I wonder whether there be any in this age who will accept reproof? Because if anyone says to another, ‘Take the mote out of your eye,’ he is answered, ‘Take the beam out of your own eye!’”¹

Of course, the criticism of Yeshua's instructions would be better directed toward those who misuse them for escaping scrutiny. Those in the First Century were just as prone to hear what they wanted, and ignore what made them uncomfortable.

The Golden Rule

Several places in the book of Matthew, Yeshua “summed up Torah” [the Law]. It is a common misconception that such a summation of Torah is the same thing as annulling it. In Matthew 7:12, Yeshua said,

“Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

¹ Arakhin 16b

Rabbi Hillel was a Pharisee living in the generation before the First Century. Here is what the Bavli records about Rabbi Hillel and the “Golden Rule”:

“He [Hillel] told him [the convert]: ‘What is hateful to you do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah. The rest is commentary. Go, learn it!’”²

Certainly, Rabbi Hillel was not negating the Torah by summing it up – neither was Yeshua. It is interesting to note that Hillel gave his summation as a negative command – Yeshua of course gave it as a positive command. A rabbinic “rule of command precedence” said that if there were two commands that appeared by circumstances to be in opposition, the person should try to perform both – but if unable, the positive command took precedence³. From any viewpoint, Yeshua's use of the positive makes it a much better summation of Torah.

Analyzing Chapter Seven

Matthew 7:1-5 is a passage about “judging”. In Matthew 7:15-16, Yeshua warned His followers to beware of false prophets, and then described how they can be identified. It is a sad thing that even Yeshua's modern followers often do not correctly understand what Yeshua was saying, and what He was **not** saying in these verses.

Are we not to examine the “fruit” of those who profess to be believers? How can we admonish one another, and yet not “judge”? Let's look deeper into this.

Read Leviticus 19:15-18 and answer the following questions:

In verse 15, what are you not to do “in judgment”?

What are you **to do**?

What does verse 16 have to do with “judging your neighbor”?

What are you not to do in verse 17?

² *Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 31a*

³ *Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 133a*

What are you **to do**?

What is the motivation(s) behind rebuking your neighbor correctly? (verses 17, and 18)

Yeshua brought the Leviticus 19 verses together in John 7:24. Read John 7:24 and comment on how it relates to Matthew 7:1-5:

Read and comment on how the following passages relate to Matthew 7:1-5:

1Corinthians 5:9-13:

Ephesians 4:15:

James 5:15-16:

Yeshua said in Matthew 7:8 that, “everyone who asks, receives”. Does that mean if we simply “ask” we can have whatever we want? First, read Matthew 7:8-11 and then read and comment on the following passages and how they relate to 7:8-11:

Psalms 145:18-19:

Isaiah 55:6-7:

Jeremiah 29:11-13:

Jeremiah 33:3:

Matthew 6:33:

Now, what do you think Yeshua was referring to when He said, “everyone who asks, receives”?

Isn't it interesting that Yeshua's teaching on judging righteously (7:1-5) takes us to Leviticus 19; and in right there in 19:18b, we are told, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I *am* the LORD.” Matthew 7:12 draws upon this passage when Yeshua said, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.” Beloved, there is a connection between judging righteously and loving your neighbor, isn't there?

Does everyone “bear fruit” – and if so, what is that fruit? Yeshua made the point in Matthew 7:15-20 that “fruit” is a natural consequence of living. The question is not whether one bears fruit – but what kind. A popular view among believers is that “fruit” is personal evangelism. Do think that is what Yeshua was talking about here? Give a reason for your answer.

Read Psalms 1 and comment on the relationship to bearing fruit in Matthew chapter seven.

Yeshua's words in Matthew 7:21-27 are some of His most sobering. If they are taken by themselves, they clearly teach the marks of false and true disciples. Do you think that Matthew 7:21-27 is part of the same topic in 7:15-20? Give a reason for your answer.

Fill in the following charts for Matthew 7:21-27. Break the people mentioned into two groups: "Many" and "Few" (for the "few" list those not a part of the "many" of verse 22):

Many		
What they do	What they say	Result

Few		
What they do	What they say	Result

Yeshua mentioned things that the "many" say they have done "in His Name" in verse 22. They mention "good" things. The question is, why then did Yeshua call them "you who practice lawlessness"? What was He saying about them? The words for "practice lawlessness" are *ergazomai* [work out, present tense], and *anomia* [negate, or break the Law]. *Ergazomai* comes from the same root that we get our English word "energy". The fact that it is in the present tense indicates this an on-going lifestyle, or effort. The word *anomia* has the negative participle as a prefix (in English, "anti" is more familiar), and then the base word is from *nomos* [Law]. *Nomos* is the word that is used for "Torah" in

Matthew 5:17: “Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah [*Nomos*] or the Prophets.” The meaning of the word *anomia* is usually hidden from English translations. The closest it comes is “lawlessness” – but even that denotes chaos, not “against God’s Law”. Let’s lookup some places where *anomia* (noun), or *anomos* (adjective) are used in the Apostolic Scriptures. Read and comment on these passages (by the way, this verse is the first usage in the Apostolic Scriptures). The English word will be rendered “wickedness”, “iniquity”, or “lawlessness”.

Matthew 13:41-42:

Matthew 23:28-29:

Matthew 24:12:

Romans 4:7:

2Thessalonians 2:7-8 (the “wicked” or “lawless one” in verse 8 is “*anomos*” – and is reckoned by many to be the “Anti-Christ”).

Hebrews 1:8-9 (this is a quote from Psalms 45:6-7):

Hebrews 8:10-12 (note the reason why there will be no more *anomia* in them – verse 10):

1John 3:4 (“transgression” = “*anomia*”):

Beloved, based upon what you have read, what do you think *anomia* is? How does it compare to “doing the will of the Father” (Matthew 7:21)?

As You Finish

- x You have worked hard. These are things that challenge our commitment to our Master – the One Who Created Heaven Earth. You need to spend a few moments in quiet prayer, and listening as well.
- x We all need to reflect at times upon our obedience to God – our consistency in “doing His will”. Remember, reflection is not enough. “Agreement” is not enough – we must be wise. Yeshua told us what is wise: **hearing** His words – and **doing them**.
- x Resolve to be a wise man or wise woman – **Hearing** the words of Yeshua, and **doing them**.

“And so it was, when Yeshua had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.”

Matthew 7:28-29

Lesson Eight – Chapter Eight

As You Begin

- x Go to the Creator and Lord of the Universe in prayer. Ask Him to let you see His great power in chapter eight. Ask Him to show you the love He has for individuals and how He calls even the most lowly into intimate fellowship with Him.
- x Read Matthew chapter eight and nine.
- x Find any references in chapter eight to the word “Kingdom”. Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.
- x In chapter eight look for the one occurrence of the phrase that indicates something was a fulfillment to prophecy. Mark it in your Bible with a green colored pencil – and then add it to the chart in the Appendix titled, “Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua.”

Overview of Eight and Nine

Sandwiched between the “Sermon on the Mount” (chapters five, six, and seven) and the “Apostolic Discourse” in chapter ten, there are two chapters that many Bibles simply headline, “the Miracles of Yeshua”. The miracles in these two chapters are more than simple miracles (if there can be such a thing as a “simple miracle”). There is a Messianic significance to these miracles of healing, casting out demons, raising the dead, and calming the wind and the waves. We will be looking a several aspects of these miracles and how they were perceived in the First Century. One aspect of these miracles relates to the prophets Elijah, Elisha and Moses. There are cultural, as well as significant religious aspects to these miracles as well.

Historical Context

Miracles

Miracles were something that those in the First Century anticipated. Choni “the Circle Drawer”, lived 50 years before the birth of Yeshua. He was called the “Circle Drawer” because of one of the miracles attributed to him. The Pharisees of his day were disturbed by what they saw as Choni’s presumptuousness in praying for miraculous things from God.

Once they said to Choni the Circle-Drawer, “Pray that rain may fall.” He answered, “Go out and bring in the Passover ovens that they be not softened.”

He prayed, but the rain did not fall. What did he do? He drew a circle and stood within it and said before God, “O Lord of the world, your children have turned their faces to me, for I am like a son of the house before you. I swear by your great name that I will not stir from here until you have pity on your children.”

Rain began falling drop by drop. He said, “Not for such rain have I prayed, but for rain that will fill the cisterns, pits, and caverns.”

It began to rain with violence. He said, “Not for such rain have I prayed, but for rain of goodwill, blessing, and graciousness.” Then it rained in moderation, until the Israelites had to go up from Jerusalem to the Temple Mount because of the rain.¹

The rabbinic writings have many miraculous stories in them. Miracles and reports of miracles was something very common in the cultural perspective of First Century Judaism.

There was a clear Messianic connection to be seen in miracles. This came from two primary understandings by the Sages regarding Messiah:

- ⌘ Allusions to Moses
- ⌘ Allusions to Elijah and Elisha

With regard to Moses, they saw that the time of Moses was a time of great miracles, and that there was a Prophet coming who would be like Moses. This was seen in Deuteronomy 18:18-19:

I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him. And it shall be *that* whoever will not hear My words, which He speaks in My name, I will require *it* of him.

In the case of Elijah, he was seen as a forerunner to Messiah coming primarily from the passage in Malachi 4:5:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.

Elisha, the one who came after Elijah was seen as the one with a “double portion” of the blessing – and following Elijah, he was seen as a picture of the coming King Messiah.

An important distinction between the rabbinical “miracles” and Yeshua's miracles bears pointing out. Throughout the rabbinic writings are numerous processes or prayers for healing. Yeshua performs miracles with just a word, or a simple touch, not “by prayer” etc. The rabbinical sources record numerous “healing instructions” and yet leprosy is not something for which healing was even considered.

Miracle workers in ancient Israel were considered holy and pious men. Someone who worked miracles in a public setting would gather great interest. However, there was not an inevitable acceptance of a miracle worker, or of what he said. There were the well-known instructions in Deuteronomy 13 and 18 to put to death a miracle worker or prophet that led the people away from God or His instructions in the Torah.²

¹ Mishnah, *Ta'anit* 3:8. See also Josephus' *Antiquities* 14 and Brad Young's *Jesus, Jewish Theologian*, p.38

² Sadly, the fact that organized Christianity has systematically and incorrectly taught that Jesus came and annulled Torah meant that a Jew who knows Torah is predisposed to reject Jesus as Messiah. An example is the noted expert on Biblical Messianic thought, Rambam, who said that he rejected

“Clean” and “Unclean”

Throughout the Bible there are references to the English words, “clean” and “unclean”. Often, Bible dictionaries render the words “ceremonially clean”, or “ceremonially unclean”. This is unfortunate, because some profound things are happening in the accounts of Matthew chapters eight and nine that may be missed if you do not understand the Hebrew behind these words and their implications. The Hebrew word for “unclean”, as we learned in lesson three, is the word *tamei*. There is a lot about the Levitical Law that is misunderstood by many, but the issue of *tamei* [un-whole, unclean] is likely one of the most misunderstood concepts. We read in Leviticus 10:10-11 and Ezekiel 22:26; 44:23, a primary purpose for the Levitical priesthood was to teach the people the difference between holy [*k’desh*] and profane [*chol*]; and the difference between clean [*t’hor*] and unclean [*tamei*]. What is often misunderstood is that *chol* [common, or profane] and *tamei* [unclean] **are not sin**, in and of themselves. Better understanding can be gained by using these definitions of *k’desh*, *chol*, *t’hor*, and *tamei*.

- ✧ *K’desh* = set apart for God – God-centered. Usually rendered “holy” or “sanctified” in English.
- ✧ *Chol* = What is not set apart for God – Man-centered. Usually rendered “profane” or “common” in English.
- ✧ *T’hor* = whole, unfragmented, having access and fellowship to God. Usually rendered “clean” or “ritually clean” in English.
- ✧ *Tamei* = cautious state, temporarily fragmented, distracted, limited from access to God through the Temple system. Usually rendered “unclean” in English.

There were a number of conditions that placed someone in the status of *tamei*. They are listed here in **descending order** of degree of *tamei*:

- ✧ Leprosy (not “leprosy” as associated with Hanson’s Disease)
- ✧ Contact with a dead body
- ✧ Contact with a Gentile (this was traditional only, not a Biblical mandate)
- ✧ Persistent bleeding (women), other persistent fluid discharges (men and women)
- ✧ After childbirth for women
- ✧ Normal (7-day) menstruation for women
- ✧ Seminal discharge

From the list, you can see that being in a state of *tamei* for healthy adults was something of normal consequence. The varying degrees of *tamei* had ever escalating separations prescribed, the most severe being leprosy³ – where one suffering from leprosy was to dwell outside any walled city, and only with others suffering from the state of leprosy. Leprosy, unlike some of the other states of *tamei* was not viewed as a normal occurrence in life. This state of *tamei* had moral implications in the Sages’ view. They believed those stricken by leprosy were guilty of the sin of *l’shon hara* [evil speech, or slander]. Such speech, the Sages reasoned, was speech that causes division between people. Hence in their

Jesus as Messiah because he said Jesus was a “Torah breaker” and Deuteronomy 13:1-5 clearly teaches God’s true prophets always teach clinging to God and to His commands.

³ Many scholars agree with the rabbinical writings on this point – “leprosy” as described in the TaNaKh and Apostolic Scriptures is not the disease called “leprosy” today, namely “Hanson’s Disease” – but rather a particular skin disease known only in Scripture.

reasoning, Torah thus required separation from others as a rebuke of divisive speech. Thus, the one suffering from the state of leprosy was considered as if dead. Edersheim explains:

...enjoining those so stricken to avoid all contact with the living, and even to bear the appearance of mourners. As the leper passed by, his clothes rent, his hair dishevelled, and the lower part of his face and his upper lip covered, it was as one going to death who reads his own burial-service, while the mournful words, 'Unclean! Unclean!' which he uttered, proclaimed that his was both living and moral death. Again, the Old Testament, and even Rabbinism, took, in the measures prescribed in leprosy, primarily a moral, or rather a ritual, and only secondarily a sanitary, view of the case. The isolation already indicated, which banished lepers from all intercourse except with those similarly stricken, and forebade their entering not only the Temple or Jerusalem, but any walled city, could not have been merely prompted by the wish to prevent infection. For all the laws in regard to leprosy are expressly stated not to have application in the case of heathens, proselytes before their conversion, and even of Israelites on their birth.⁴

This may further explain why the rabbinical writings have no treatment, or prayers for the healing of those with leprosy other than repentance on their part. Edersheim goes on to explain:

Rabbinism confessed itself powerless in presence of this living death [leprosy]. Although... the sacrificial ritual for the cleansed leper implies, at least, the possibility of a cure, it is in every instance traced to the direct agency of God... In truth, the possibility of any cure through human agency was never contemplated by the Jews.⁵

There was an almost universal opinion by the Sages regarding the connection between leprosy and evil speech. Here is how Rashi explains Leviticus 13:46, where it mandates separation for those with leprosy:

Our Rabbis said; Why is he treated differently from other unclean persons that he should abide solitary? They replied; Because he, by slanderous statements; (Num:12:10) parted man and wife, or a man from his friend, he must be parted from everybody (Arach:16b).⁶

The issue of separation is an important principle in regard to *tamei*. We see this in the most severe form in the instance of leprosy. As the severity of the state of *tamei* increased, so was the degree of separation.

Since the more minor degrees of *tamei* were part of normal life, the rules associated with *tamei* were well known. A large portion of what the Pharisees called "oral Torah" dealt specifically with issues associated with *tamei* and *t'hor*. The Biblical instructions for those in a *tamei* state to be separate is seen in one of the most minor states of *tamei*, namely a woman's normal menstrual period which was called *niddah* [meaning "separation"]. Interestingly, this is brought into English King James Version, where it is rendered, "the time of her separation".

⁴ Edersheim, Alfred (1825-1889), *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p. 833, Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library

⁵ Ibid, p. 834

⁶ *Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchak, also known as Rashi (1040-1105 CE)*, ArtScroll Chumash

In most cases of the minor degrees of *tamei*, there was a temporary time of separation and then a restoration following *t'vilah* [immersion] signifying a renewed fellowship and life. The Biblical rules (found mostly in Leviticus) regarding *tamei* include:

- ⌘ No one in a state of *tamei* in any degree was permitted in the Tabernacle/Temple. In the case of the more minor degrees, that simply meant that one remained *tamei* until the evening, and then after *t'vilah* [immersion] they were considered *t'hor*, and could then enter the Tabernacle/Temple. This had a practical aspect in that, if one needed to go the Tabernacle/Temple, one could not become *tamei* during the preceding day. To varying degrees (depending upon the severity of *tamei*), one who was in a state of *tamei* was supposed to remain out of touching contact with others. Again, the more serious degrees meant that you could not even be in the same room without entering a state of *tamei* yourself (e.g. leprosy, dead person).
- ⌘ Some degrees of the state of *tamei* required that a “son of Aaron” [Levitical priest] must examine and declare one to be both in a state of *tamei*, and as well afterward, not in a state of *tamei*. This was surely the case for leprosy.
- ⌘ Some degrees of the state of *tamei* required a visit to the Tabernacle/Temple and sacrifices etc. [e.g. leprosy, after childbirth]

From the various instructions that God gave regarding *tamei*, we can see that to be in a state of *tamei*:

- ⌘ One was separated from certain Tabernacle/Temple activities
- ⌘ One was separated from others (to varying degrees)

Fellowship with God in the Temple and with others was a part of the state of *tamei*. One of important aspects of this separate was a “coming away” and a more personal state of fellowship with God. This is why *tamei* is often seen as a time of heightened awareness, or caution if one is not fellowshiping with God. The separations in the more minor degrees of *tamei* are not seen as punishment, but rather opportunities.

As previously mentioned, the Pharisees had a myriad of complex rules regarding *tamei*, for which they were known. The Essenes had even more strict *halachah* [practical rules] regarding *tamei* and *t'hor*. The Essenes' rules are known to us by the Josephus' writings, and the Dead Sea Scrolls⁷. The Pharisees' traditions regarding *tamei* and *t'hor* are known to us in numerous rabbinical writings such as the Mishnah and Talmuds.

One condition not mentioned with regard to *tamei* which is not in the Levitical descriptions, and that is what is called “demon possession”. The way the Apostolic Scriptures often describe this condition is with the phrase, “having an unclean spirit”. The Greek word “unclean” in these instances is precisely the same word used in the Greek Septuagint⁸ for the Hebrew word *tamei*. The Sages and rabbis would surely have agreed that this condition was *tamei*.

⁷ Assuming that the “Dead Sea Scrolls community” was of the Essene sect, or at least close in beliefs.

⁸ The Septuagint was a Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (TaNaKh, “Old Testament”) dating from 270 BCE.

Contact with Gentiles and the Dead

Of course, contact with a dead body was a way to temporarily enter a state of *tamei* [unclean, fragmented]. Burial duties of family members was very important. Fulfilling those duties would certainly render a person *tamei* temporarily (for seven days, and after being sprinkled with the water of the ashes of the red heifer on the third and seventh day), if they touched the dead body. This was expected. The oral traditions however added to this, where even being too close to a house with a dead person in it resulted in becoming *tamei*.

Likewise, the oral tradition [not Scripture] said that being in the same room with a Gentile could also cause one to enter a state of *tamei*. In light of that, it is interesting that in the account of Yeshua healing the centurion's servant in 8:5-13, Yeshua offered to go to the home of this Gentile.

In the case of the disciple who said he would follow Yeshua after he had buried his father (8:21), the phrase "bury my father" is a Hebrew idiom for taking care of family matters. His father had not yet died. Yeshua's response in 8:22 indicated this was the case as well.

Analyzing Chapter Eight

We will be focusing on a series of ten miracles in the next two lessons. In the Appendix, you will find a chart titled, "Miracles of Yeshua". Fill out the chart for chapter eight. Here are a list of the miracles for chapter eight:

- x Healed a leper (8:1-4)
- x Healed the centurion's servant (8:5-13)
- x Healed Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-17)
- x Wind and waves obeyed Him (8:23-27)
- x Drove out demons from two men (8:28-34)

Additionally, in both chapter eight and in chapter nine there are accounts of Yeshua healing multitudes. 8:16-17 tells us one reason why the multitudes were healed – what was it?

Skip ahead to 9:35-36 and read another reason why Yeshua healed the multitudes – what was it?

Read Matthew 8:1-4 (the account of Yeshua healing the leper) and then answer the following questions:

Did the leper asked to be healed, or to be changed to a state of *t'hor* [clean, whole]?

Did Yeshua “pray” to heal and make him *t’hor* [clean, whole]? What did He do?

The text says that, “immediately his leprosy was cleansed.” What **two things** happened for that statement to be true based upon what you now know about *tamei* [unclean, fragmented] and *t’hor* [clean, whole]?

What did Yeshua tell Him to do after he was made whole and healed?

Read Leviticus 13:44-46. This passage is about someone who has gone to a priest and the priest has examined him and declared him to be *tamei* [unclean] because of leprosy. While in a state of *tamei* [unclean, fragmented], this person was to be untouched by anyone lest they too would temporarily be in a state of *tamei*. List the other things that someone who is declared *tamei* [unclean] with leprosy has to do:

In Matthew 8:4, Yeshua told the healed leper to go to the priest as he was instructed from Torah. Why do you think He told him to do that?

Read Leviticus 14:1-20. According to this, the person who has been “healed” of leprosy must be declared “clean” [*t’hor*] by a priest. Does the priest make him well?

From the time the “healed” leper came to the priest, until he left, what had changed in the former leper?

Once declared to be in a state of *t’hor* [clean, whole], what could a former leper now do, that he could not do before, while still in a state of *tamei*?

We have another miracle in chapter eight which involves *tamei* [unclean] and *t'hor* [clean], which we need to look at. Read 8:28-34 and answer the questions that follow. Note that the people of Gergasenes were Gentiles. Nowhere in Matthew, Mark, or Luke are we told why Yeshua went to this region, other than to perform this miracle.

What did the two demonized men say to Yeshua in verse 29?

What did they want Yeshua to do with them?

What do you think the significance is to the following facts: The region was Gentile; the men had “unclean spirits” (Mark uses the term); Yeshua sent them into animals that Leviticus 11 considers *tamei* [unclean] for eating?

Beloved, we need to understand this issue of *tamei* and *t'hor* and these miracles. So often, people are not willing to relate the things from Torah to what Yeshua did, other than to lazily declare that Yeshua simply abolished God's Law. We know that Yeshua, the Perfect Man, wholly God, would never contradict what He said through Moses. If we ignore these connections, we also lose sight of what Yeshua did in these miracles.

Based upon all you have read regarding *tamei* and *t'hor*, write a detailed explanation of the significance of Yeshua's cleansing, and healing the leper, offering to go to the Gentile's house, and casting out *tamei* [unclean] spirits. Specifically address the issue of someone in a state of *tamei* not being permitted in the Tabernacle/Temple, and not being able to touch anyone else.

As You Finish

- ✘ Spend some time in prayer thanking God for the *touch* of His Spirit in your life. Thank Him that He has revealed Himself as the One who can say to that which is *tamei* [unclean], “be *t'hor*” [clean] – and to **touch** such a one.
- ✘ Thank Him, that although you may not understand everything He has commanded, that He does not change, nor does He go back on His word.

Lesson Nine – Chapter Nine

As You Begin

- x Do you long to see the miracles of Messiah? Beloved, the miracles mean nothing, apart from the perfect life of Yeshua, lived by God's perfect standard. Know this beloved, the perfect life and the miracles together shouted to those in that day as well as to us today, "King Messiah is here!"
- x Go to the King of the Universe in prayer and thank Him for this book that He has given you to reveal His Divine and Royal nature. Ask Him to teach you the mysteries reserved for His servants. He delights in such servants as those who seek Him with all their hearts. They **will** find...
- x Read Matthew chapter nine.
- x Find any references in chapter nine to the word "Kingdom". Mark them in your Bible with a blue pencil.

Historical Context

Forgiveness for Sins – A Claim To Deity

Approaching God in the Temple required the protocol of offerings. Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement] provided an annual and national atonement. There were numerous daily and life-cycle opportunities for sin offerings. The offering system in the Jerusalem Temple in the First Century is often not seen in its immense scope. Myriads of animals were offered each year.

Most First Century Jews believed that a person's health was a direct result of obedience, or disobedience to God's commands. Most considered sickness to be directly related to one's spiritual condition. So, in Matthew 9:2, where Yeshua told the paralytic, "Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you," it was a profound, and yet potentially blasphemous thing to say.

Clearly, Torah taught that only God could forgive sin. The fact that Yeshua forgave the man's sin before healing him is further proof that Yeshua was not simply healing people as a "sign" of miraculous power, but with very specific intent, as with the healing of the *tamei* people (the leper, the demoniacs).

Son of Man

Chapter eight is the first mention of the title, “Son of Man” in the Apostolic Scriptures. This is a term used quite often by Yeshua when speaking of Himself. Several references in the TaNaKh make reference to the “Son of Man” in Messianic terms. Daniel 7:13 was often considered by the Sages to be referring to Messiah, and that His coming would be on the clouds. In addition, First Century hearers would have been aware of the extra-Biblical book



Fragment from Enoch Scroll

of 1Enoch¹. 1Enoch has many Messianic references to the “Son of Man”. This book is one of those found in the “Dead Seas Scrolls” community at Qumran, and uses the Daniel 7:13 passage as a starting place for the development of an extensive series of Messianic “prophecies”. Some of the most startling of these passages have had their dating to come into question, because of the apparently accuracy of tying them to Yeshua of Nazareth. Yeshua, of course, quotes Daniel 7:13 in reference to Himself in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Mixing with “Sinners”

The various sects of Judaism in the First Century dealt to one degree or another with the issue of eating and drinking with “sinners”. The Essenes were the most strict. Those in the community at Qumran was the most segregated from society. The Pharisees were less strict in their understanding, which may stem from their coming from the middle strata of First Century society. The Sadducees were only concerned about being placed in a state of *tamei* by someone else, which stems from their association with the Temple priests. It was in this setting that we see Yeshua being criticized for being around people who were not “well”.

New and Old Wineskins

The double parables in Matthew 9:15-16 have elicited all manner of interpretations. The “new wine in new wineskins” has been used by some to teach that Yeshua was starting a new religion – unlike the “old religion”. They equate the “new” with the teachings of “grace” and the “old” with the teachings on “works”. One significant problem with this view is that in the Luke version of the account (Luke 5:35-39), the parables are ended with this statement,

¹ 1Enoch was excluded from most canonical lists. The Qumran community considered it sacred to some degree or other in the century before Yeshua's birth. Interestingly, 1Enoch 1:9 has exactly the same text as Jude 14-15, leading some to conclude that Jude quoted from 1Enoch; or more likely that they shared a common source for this text.

And no one, having drunk old *wine*, immediately desires new; for he says, ‘The old is better.’ ”

There is a better explanation for this passage. The topic being discussed was fasting and Yeshua's choice of companions and *talmidim* [disciples]. Yeshua's response was,

“Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast.”²

The double parables must be understood in light of the “bridegroom” statement. John “the Baptizer” had been teaching the same message (“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!”), but John’s disciples fasted often, as did the Pharisees. The double parables are referring to Yeshua’s disciples. They are the “cloth” and the “wineskins” – but it is not a “new teaching” that Yeshua was referring to when He spoke of a “patch” or “new wine” – rather, it is simply that it will all come in due time for His disciples. In this, He was also prophesying of His death (bridegroom taken) and also of their subsequent hardships (fasting, worn garment, old wineskins). Ah, but the **old is** better! One day, these men would be considered learned and wise – for they had walked with Messiah, and testified to these things. Then the “wine coming from them” would point to the Ancient Paths (Jeremiah 6:16), and they would be seen as wise and understanding men (Deuteronomy 4:5-9). In Acts 4:13, we see the “old wine” and the reason for it being present in these men:

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. **And they realized that they had been with Yeshua.**

More Contact with Tamei

In reading the account of the girl who died and was raised in Matthew 9:18-25 we see the problem and confrontation with death. Going into a home where there was a dead body placed one in the most serious state of *tamei*, where seven days, and the water from the ashes of the red heifer were required to indicate a change of status to *t’hor* [clean, whole]. Surely, this was a normal occurrence for family members, but no one would casually enter the home where a dead person was. Yeshua not only enters, He touches her.

On the way to the visit the home of the dead girl, a woman touched the “hem of His garment”. This woman had an “issue of blood” that we are told went beyond the normal feminine cycle. She was in a state of *tamei*. She was not to touch others in this state, but upon touching Yeshua's “garment” she was healed. In the First Century, most men wore a long outer garment. They adhered to the commandment in Numbers 15:37-39 to wear “fringes” or “tassels” on the corners (hems) of their garments. The garment itself is commonly called a *talit* (pronounced: *taw-leet*). These “fringes” were known as *tzitzit* (pronounced: *tseet-tseet*) and were tied together with a blue thread known as a *techelet* (pronounced: *tek-hehl-et*). The “corner” or “hem” mentioned in Numbers is the word *kanaf* [literally, “wing”] (pronounced *kah-nawf*). The plural is *kanafim*. The *kanaf* and *tzitzit* of pious men were considered to have protective and even healing properties. This woman likely knew of this passage from Malachi 4:2:

²The New King James Version. 1996, c1982 (Mt 9:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings [*kanafim*].

The *tzitzit* serve a unique role. They remind of the commands of God when they are seen.

And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the LORD and do them, and that you *may* not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined, and that you may remember and do all My commandments, and be holy for your God. ³

Nothing Like It Before

And the multitudes marveled, saying, “It was never seen like this in Israel!”⁴

This is allusion is once again to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15-16, regarding a Prophet to come who would be like Moses. “One like Moses” was a First Century Messianic hope.

Analyzing Chapter Nine

We have been focusing on the ten miracles in chapters eight and nine. In the Appendix, you will find a chart titled, “Miracles of Yeshua”. Fill out the chart for chapter nine. Here are a list of the miracles for chapter nine:

- x Healed the paralytic man (9:1-8)
- x Healed the woman with the flow of blood (9:20-22)
- x Raised the dead girl (9:23-26)
- x Healed the two blind men (9:27-31)
- x Healed the mute/demonized man (9:32-33)

We have been looking at the fact that Yeshua healed people with specific reasons in mind. We have seen how He alluded to His role as both Priest and Sacrifice in the healing of some, and in others we see direct correlation to Moses, Elijah, and Elisha. Read Matthew 9:35-36 and comment once again on another reason for Yeshua's healing miracles.

Read Luke 4:24-27. Here, Yeshua brought up Elijah and Elisha – how did He compare Himself to them and their time?

³*The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982 (Nu 15:39-41). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴*The New King James Version*. 1996, c1982 (Mt 9:33). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

To fully appreciate the significance of Yeshua's words, "your sins are forgiven you" in Matthew 9:2, let's look at some key passages.

Read Leviticus 4:35 and comment on how atonement (covering, redemption, forgiveness) was gained:

Read and comment on how Leviticus 17:11 relates to the sacrificial system. Is there forgiveness or atonement without blood?

Comment on how Hebrews 9:22 relates to this subject:

In Matthew 9:2, by what sacrifice do you think the paralytic's sins were atoned?

In Matthew 9:12-13, Yeshua presented a challenge to the Pharisees,

When Yeshua heard *that*, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what *this* means: '*I desire mercy and not sacrifice.*' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

Yeshua was quoting from Hosea 6:6 when He quoted, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice". Why did Yeshua say that He did not come to call the righteous to repentance? Were the Pharisees "righteous"? Hosea chapter five and six hold the answer. Yeshua was using the interpretative method called *remez* to remind them of a passage and to draw additional meaning from it. He was drawing them back to Hosea five and six. Read Hosea 5:13-15 and answer the following questions:

What was wrong with Ephraim and Judah? Note: "Ephraim" is a euphemism for the Northern Kingdom of Israel and "Judah" for the Southern Kingdom.

In verse 15, God said that He will return to His place until they acknowledge their offense. What does it say will happen after that?

In this passage, Ephraim and Judah were sick and wounded – and yet they did not receive healing until they “acknowledge their offense”. Now read the verses that follow from Hosea 6:1-6 and answer the following questions:

In verse 1, in what would “returning to the LORD” result?

In verse 3, what should have been the correct focus of Ephraim and Judah?

In verse 6, we read what Yeshua quoted in Matthew 9:13. Based upon the context, of this passage, and the context of Matthew 9:12-13, what do you think Yeshua was saying to the Pharisees?

Let's skip ahead in Matthew for a moment. Read Matthew 12:7, where Yeshua spoke of their inadequate response to His previous challenge in Matthew 9:12-13.

But if you had known what *this* means, ‘*I desire mercy and not sacrifice,*’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. Matthew 12:7

Now, from Hosea 5:15, we read:

I will return again to My place till they acknowledge their offense. Then they will seek My face; In their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.

What do you think that Yeshua was telling the Pharisees? Were they “sick”? Had they acknowledged their offense? Was Yeshua negating the need for a sacrifice for sin? Summarize what you have learned from this exercise.

In the account of the dead girl that Yeshua raised, the issue of touch comes up again in relation to *tamei* and *t'hor*. In Matthew 9:18, the man asked Yeshua to come lay His hand on his dead daughter. Read Leviticus 19:11-14 and comment on this:

In Matthew 9:24, Yeshua told the crowd that the girl is not dead, but sleeping. Do you think that Yeshua was using the word “sleep” as a euphemism for “dead”, or do you think Yeshua raised the girl before He arrived at the house? Give Biblical reasoning for your answer.

In Matthew 9:20-22, we read of the woman who had an issue of blood for twelve years. For background, read Leviticus 15:25-31 and then answer these questions:

Was the woman in a state of *tamei* [uncleanness, fragmented, separated]?

Was anyone permitted to touch her without entering a state of *tamei* themselves?

Based upon Leviticus 15:31, what had this woman been forbidden to do for twelve years?

Why do you think she thought that touching Yeshua's *tzitzit* (on the hem of His garment) was permissible, and why do you think she thought it would heal her? Do you think she thought this was some sort of charm that by touch would bring healing? Give a Biblical reason for your answer.

In Matthew 9:27, two blind men cried out, “Son of David, have mercy on us!” Based upon what you have learned in your study on the book of Matthew, what were they calling Yeshua?

When Yeshua asked if they believed that He could heal them, they replied, “Yes Lord”. The word for “Lord” is the Greek word *Kurios*. In First Century Israel, the word they would have used was the Hebrew word, “*Adonai*”. In the centuries since then, our language has used the word “Lord” in a generic, as well as specific sense. The generic sense of the word, is to reference to anyone who is in authority over someone else. Some very similar Greek usages occur in the Apostolic Scriptures, but normally the word *Kurios* is reserved for God. What makes the use of this word by Hebrew speakers unique is that the name *Adonai* was reserved for God, and was used in the First Century as a form of circumlocution⁵. Saying “*Adona*” was a way to refer to God’s Holy Name, the Tetragrammaton, the four letter Name of God. The Septuagint, which was a Greek translation the Hebrew Scriptures from 270 BCE, consistently uses “*Kurios*” as a replacement for the four-letter Hebrew Name of God.

⁵ Circumlocution is the method of using a different word in place of something too sacred to say. Examples: *HaShem* [the Name], or ADONAI [LORD] in place of the Tetragrammaton. English Bibles do this as well, the word LORD (all capitals) is a circumlocution for the underlying Hebrew text which uses God’s four-letter Name.

Now, what do you think these two blind men **believed** about Yeshua? What was the result?

Read Matthew 9:35; Matthew 3:2; Matthew 3:8; and Matthew 4:17 and comment in detail what the “Gospel of the Kingdom” is.

As You Finish

- x Spend a moment quietly reflecting upon Yeshua's words to the Pharisees regarding “*mercy and not sacrifice.*” Are you sick or afflicted, and do not acknowledge the fact? Have you gone through the motions of religion, not understanding the significance of the great truths given in Scripture? Have you, by not trusting in His mercy, in essence told Him that you do not accept His Kingship? If so, Beloved, repent now. The Kingdom is at hand!
- x Thank God for His Perfect Sacrifice – Yeshua, “the Lamb Who Was Slain”. Thank Him that Yeshua's sacrifice was effectual, and has forever atoned for the sins of those who place their trust in Him, and bow their knee to His throne.

Lesson Ten – Chapter Ten

As You Begin

- ✧ Beloved, chapter ten of Matthew is pivotal for understanding your calling as a *talmid* [disciple] of Yeshua. Begin by asking your Lord and Master, Yeshua, to teach you what you need to know to be the disciple that He wants you to be.
- ✧ Read Matthew chapter ten.
- ✧ Find the reference in chapter ten to the word “Kingdom”. Mark it in your Bible with a blue pencil.

Overview of Ten

We have seen Yeshua speaking in “sermon” form in chapters five through seven. Now in chapter ten, we find the second of Yeshua's sermons. It is commonly called the “Apostolic Discourse”, because it is where Yeshua commissions His *talmidim* [disciples] to go and teach in His Name. The role of a *talmid* [disciple] is an important concept that we must understand to continue any further in our study.

Historical Context

Disciples

Familiarity with the term “disciple” has diminished its actual First Century meaning; and thus made some of the elements of discipleship in the Apostolic Scriptures unclear to some. We must recognize that the principles of discipleship are introduced in the Hebrew Scriptures first. We see numerous examples in the Prophetic books of the use of disciples. In many ways, the Biblical model of the *talmid* [disciple] is that of a son. The meaning of the word “*talmid*” (plural, “*talmidim*”) carries much of the purpose and role of the disciple. “*Talmid*” (pronounced: *tawl-meed*) comes from the root verb *lamad* (pronounced: *law-mawd*) which is an shepherd's term, and refers to the shepherd's staff. It both protects, and guides the flock. Deuteronomy 6:6-7a uses this word and in English is rendered “teach”.

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall **teach them** [these words] diligently to your children...

A *talmid* was to be taught the Torah, just as a son was taught. Torah is the very words of God. The common mistranslation of the word “Torah” to mean “Law” in both Greek and English has introduced much confusion in the minds of God's people. The word “Torah”, we have seen is best translated “instruction” or “teaching”. Torah comes from the root verb *arah*, which is an archer's term meaning “to aim”.

The normal English usage of the word “law” is best seen in the Hebrew word “*dat*”, which is a loan word from Persian. *Dat*, is a word that expresses cold finality – and is a word never used in TaNaKh for God’s commands.

Likewise, the English word “disciple” brings with it confusing and contradictory meanings. First, to be one the “Twelve Disciples” is seen as being a “leader”. Although the Twelve did become leaders among the followers of Yeshua, that is not what is being conveyed in Scriptural usage of the word “disciples”. Next, the word “disciple” reminds us of the word “discipline” – which in itself is something from which many recoil.

If we trace the word “*talmidim*” (pronounced: *tawl-mee-deem*) back to its source, we learn the reason for having *talmidim* [disciples]. It is all about teaching God’s Word. The Mishnah begins with this:

Moses received the Torah from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua; Joshua to the elders; the elders to the prophets; and the prophets handed it down to the men of the Great Assembly. They said three things: Be deliberate in judgment, raise up many *talmidim* [disciples], and make a fence around the Torah.¹

Judaism is rich with the principles of discipleship. There are many passages in extra-Biblical Jewish sources that deal with *talmidim* [disciples] – illustrating their purpose, role, and practice. From them we can learn much regarding the First Century *talmidim* of Yeshua.

In the First Century, there were four things² a *talmid* [disciple] must do:

- ⌘ Memorize the teacher’s words. The tradition was for a great teacher’s words to be transmitted orally. Thus a *talmid* [disciple] must first be a *tanna* [repeater]. The plural for “*tanna*” is “*tannaim*”. This oral tradition was something that was remarkably effective; and is evidenced by the volumes of quotes of Sages recorded hundreds of years after their deaths. Through constant repetition, the *talmidim* memorized the words of the teacher verbatim.
- ⌘ Learn the teacher’s traditions and interpretations of Scripture. Since Scripture often did not explain “the how” of a command, it was important to learn how something was to be obeyed from the teacher. An example is to learn how and when a teacher prayed. It was also important to know how a teacher understood various Scripture passages.
- ⌘ Learn to imitate the teacher. It was important for a *talmid* to perfectly reflect his master in speech, action, and mannerism.
- ⌘ When fully trained, to raise up *talmidim* of his own. Seeing the model for *talmidim* in the picture of father and son shows the importance of this. The “V’ahavta” (from Deuteronomy 6) was constantly on the lips of First Century Jews with the command, “You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise

¹ Mishnah, *Avot* 1:1

² Lancaster, D.T., *Torah Club Volume Four* (Littleton, Colorado: First Fruits of Zion, 2002), p41

up.”³ This principle is seen in *talmidim* – always, to pass Torah onto the next generation.

Once trained, a *talmid* was given authority to speak on behalf of the teacher, and the phrase “in the name of” was used to reflect that the *talmid* was not acting on his own.

Apostles

Matthew 10:2 is where the Twelve were first called “apostles”. This English word is a transliteration of the Greek word “*apostolos*” (pronounced: *awp-os-tol-os*), which simply means “messenger” or “sent one”. The Hebrew word used would have been “*shaliach*” (pronounced: *shaw-lee-akh*), which comes from the root verb “*shalach*” [send]. There is a common misconception about “apostles” – namely that they are those who have been given miraculous powers, or those who have been given a special position etc. The Biblical usage, however, simply means “someone sent out to perform a task”.

Analyzing Chapter Ten

Many believers are familiar with what they call the “Great Commission” from Matthew 28, where Yeshua sent His *talmidim* out into all the world to “make disciples”. Not as familiar is the “sending” recorded in Matthew 10. We will deal with Matthew 28 much later in this study, but it will be an important exercise to compare the two “sendings”.

Read Matthew 28:18-20 and then record your thoughts in the chart that follows. Make note of similarities and differences.

Matthew 10	Matthew 28

Matthew 28:20 says, “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” – can you find any correlation in Matthew 10? What message did Yeshua send them out with in Matthew 10?

³The New King James Version. 1996, c1982 (Dt 6:7-8). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Matthew 10:7 records the main message of the book of Matthew once again. Read Matthew 3:2, 4:17; and Luke 3:8-14 and comment on detail what this message is, and what it means to us today.

Mark and Luke record that the *talmidim* were sent out in groups of two. To a Hebrew, the number “two” had extraordinary significance when it referenced “messengers”. Let’s look at some other important places where two messengers were used.

Read Genesis 18:16-19:3 and comment on how it may relate to what Yeshua sent His *talmidim* to do in Matthew 10:11-15:

Read Exodus 4:1-9 and answer the following questions:

In verse 9, God referred to “these two signs” – what are they, and what is their purpose?

What was Moses being sent [*shalach*] to do?

Exodus 31:18: Why two tablets?

Deuteronomy 19:15:

Matthew 18:16:

2Corinthians 13:1

1Timothy 5:19:

Hebrews 10:28:

Revelation 1:3-11:

Maybe you are getting an idea why the Twelve were sent out in groups of two. Let's look a bit deeper into what Yeshua told them to do in Matthew 10. Fill in the statements that follow by reading Matthew 10:5-15:

Where they are **to go**:

Where they are **not to go**:

What they are **to** "preach":

What **not to** take with them:

What **to do** when entering a town:

What **to do** when entering a home:

Based upon what Matthew 10:40-42 says, when a town received His *talmidim*, they were receiving Him. Does the opposite stand true (i.e. rejecting Him)? Give a reason for your answer.

Verses 34 and 35 seem to indicate something completely different than the way Yeshua's ministry is usually portrayed. Did He come to bring peace or not? Explain your answer.

Based upon the Scriptures you have been studying, do you think the “mission”, on which the *talmidim* were sent, was effective in adding great numbers to “the Kingdom”? Give a reason for your answer.

Yeshua gave His *talmidim* the cost for being His disciple in verses 16 through 39. Summarize what His disciples could expect:

Now, personalize Matthew 10:38-39. Write it in the space that follows – placing “I” and “my” etc. in place of the generic pronouns. I'll start it for you:

Yeshua said that if I don't take up my cross....

As You Finish

- ⌘ You are not one of the Twelve sent out, but maybe you are one of His *talmidim*. There is much in this chapter for us to personalize. Have you considered the cost of following Yeshua? Have you dedicated yourself to be the type of *talmid* [disciple] that He demands?
- ⌘ Determine to follow Yeshua completely – to be His faithful *talmid* [disciple]. Decide to memorize His words, to learn His traditions, to imitate His actions, and to raise up other *talmidim*. Now, go to Him in prayer and tell Him that you have answered His demands upon you, and that you will follow Him as a *talmid* should.
- ⌘ Memorize Matthew 10:38-39, and Luke 6:40.

Beloved, we have finished Part One of Mattityahu Levi. What a marvelous place to stop and summarize our study – with Yeshua sending His *talmidim* to do what He was doing.

We have seen that the forerunner, John the Baptizer, came and taught that Israel should repent – because King Messiah was in their midst. We saw that repentance is evidenced by a return to God's ways and His commands.

We saw that when Yeshua began teaching, His message was the same, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" His Kingdom message was not new, but the same one that God had always presented to them: to attach themselves to Him, and to never wander – loving Him, and obeying Him. He presented Himself to Israel as the Prophet and Priest. Would they listen? Would they repent and return to God?

Yeshua sent His *talmidim* to teach the same Kingdom message. Would they have success in convincing Israel to repent – to turn their hearts toward the God of their ancestors?

Beloved, as we close, we must continue to remind ourselves that the message that Yeshua sent His *talmidim* out with is the same for us today. Will we bear the fruit of repentance, and the deeds that follow true faith? Believe, beloved – and then act.

If you will receive His Word, then just like you read in Matthew 10:13, His *shalom* is upon your household. His peace is upon you and your family.

Shalom, beloved.

Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 14:27

Appendix – History and Religious Life in the First Century

History

In understanding the complete history of the Hebrew people, one must start with the Creation account in Genesis. For the sake of this study however, the seventy years spent in Babylon from 605 to 536 BCE by the “Southern Kingdom” of Judah is a good beginning point. The Southern Kingdom went into captivity for not giving the Land its mandated sabbatical rests and for idolatry. When the small band of faithful returned to the Land in 536 BCE, they had once-and-for-all put an end to idolatry. During this time, Ezra the Scribe had a profound impact upon Judaism in returning Jews to the God and faith of their forefathers. From here on, the Israelites would be called “Jews” living in the region of “Judea”. They returned back from captivity, and began to once again fill up the Land.

Their return was made possible by the decree of the Persian King Cyrus, just as had been prophesied by the prophet Isaiah. The Greek empire then challenged Persia, and after numerous wars, Greece overran all those former Persian territories. The land of Israel was then under Greek influence.

After the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek Empire was divided between his four generals. The Land of Israel was between the Syrian Seleucid Greeks, and the Egyptian Ptolemaic Greeks. These two former regions of the Greek Empire constantly vied for regional influence for several hundred years. Israel found itself dominated by both of them at various times. The most significant was during the reign of the Seleucid king, Antiochus “Epiphanes” IV.

The reign of Antiochus “Epiphanes”, the king of the Greek Seleucid Empire was a turning point in the history of the Jewish people. The Seleucids were very effective at assimilating conquered peoples into their culture. The term “Hellenization” refers to this practice. The Greek culture and language was often times readily accepted by the new provinces. In the case of the Land of Israel, this was only partially true. Over time, many Jews had become Hellenized – speaking Greek, reading Greek philosophy, and participating in Greek culture. In 173 BCE, the High Priest in Jerusalem further encouraged the Jewish people to embrace Hellenism, and the society of Jerusalem began to resemble any other Greek city.

In 168 BCE, Antiochus launched an invasion of the Southern Ptolemaic Greek Empire in an effort to reunify the greater Greek Empire. Through a series of misunderstandings and palace intrigue, Antiochus was led to believe that there was a revolt ongoing in Judea and Jerusalem. He launched an attack against Jerusalem and killed thousands. He then began a program of forced Hellenization. This is when a minority of the Jewish people began to revolt. Antiochus forced the Jews on penalty of death to abandon the “ways of their fathers, and the “Laws of God”.

Just as the Prophet Daniel had predicted, Antiochus named himself “Epiphanes” for he saw himself as a god. In the month of Kislev in 167 BCE he set up a statue of Zeus in the Holy of Holies in the Temple in Jerusalem, and in doing so, the prophecy of Daniel 11:31 was fulfilled.

A Levite priest named Mattityahu from the village of Modin not only refused to offer a pig as a sacrifice, he killed the priest and the Greek official who did. The Jewish revolt thus began from the actions of a small minority of Levites. Mattityahu's son, Judah became the leader of the

revolt. He was also known as *ha-Makkabi* (“the hammer”). The Greek word “*Maccabee*” comes from this, and today, Judah is known as “Judah Maccabee.” Judah was an extraordinary military leader and quickly won three important battles against Antiochus’ forces. Upon capturing Jerusalem on Kislev 25, 164 BCE, his first action was to reestablish the Temple as a place for service to the God of Abraham, Isaac and, Jacob. The Temple was rededicated according to the pattern of Solomon’s dedication, including an eight day time of commemoration. This instituted the celebration of Hanukkah [“Dedication”].

The family of Mattityahu established a government over the now independent Jewish nation. A renewed interest in the Torah, and the ways of their fathers, caused Hellenism to be largely discredited; and the cultural slide was dramatically slowed.

In the generation after Judah and his brothers, the new dynasty began to turn away from its noble beginnings. The new royal dynasty was made up of descendents of Mattityahu who was a Levite. Not being from the Tribe of Judah (the line of David) placed the dynasty on a poor footing. The Hasmonean dynasty, as it was called, is largely marked by corruption in both government and the management of the Temple; seeing that the Hasmonean “king” acted as both High Priest and king.

Civil war broke out in 67 BCE in a fight over the rights to the throne. In the midst of the strife, the Roman general Pompey laid siege to Jerusalem and the Temple Mount in 63 BCE. After conquering Jerusalem and the surrounding country, Pompey entered the Holy of Holies in the Temple and robbed the Temple treasury.

In 40 BCE, Rome’s eastern territories were attacked by the Parthian Empire (Persia). Herod, who had been appointed governor of Galilee sided with the Romans, and fled to Rome. With the help of Rome, Herod returned and conquered Samaria, Idumea, and Galilee. In 37 BCE, Roman forces once again captured Jerusalem and Herod was rewarded by being established as the Roman governor of Judea and given the title of “king” although he was neither Jewish nor Roman. Herod was the ruler at the time of Yeshua’s birth. He died in 4 BCE.

During the time of Yeshua’s life in the Land of Israel, it was under the authority of Rome, and administered through Syria and local governors. Herod’s sons were given various provinces to govern. Rome was often disturbed by Palestine, the most eastern of its territories. Nervous about the competing Parthian Empire, it never completely trusted the Jews’ loyalties.

Religious Life and Sects of Judaism

The Jewish and Roman Historian, Josephus, records much regarding the religious parties in First Century Judaism. All of the religious power was held in the hands of the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The third main religious sect was the Essenes, who had washed their hands of the Temple system, which they considered corrupt beyond hope.

Pharisees

The Pharisees saw their origins just before the Maccabean Revolt. They claimed a heritage from Ezra the Scribe who provided spiritual leadership immediately following the return from the Babylonian Captivity. The Pharisees were noted scholars of the written Torah, and kept a tradition that the “Oral Torah” was handed down to them. They believed that the Oral Torah gave the means by which the people of God could keep God’s commands. The traditions of the Oral Torah gave guidelines on how to keep God’s commands. An example would be the

Sabbath. Where Torah simply forbade common work, the Oral Torah went to great lengths to explain what common work was. By following the rules of Oral Torah, one would always be assured that they were not breaking the written Torah itself. They called the traditions of Oral Torah, a “fence around Torah”.

Pharisees, sought to wrestle power away from the Sadducees, who were largely involved in the Temple service. Hence, the synagogue system was a means to undermine the authority of the Sadducees by providing a place for spiritual exercise in localities. Since the Sadducees were made up of Levites, and the Pharisees were not necessarily, they were not always treated favorably by the Hasmonean kings. The Pharisees were supportive of the Maccabean revolt and were in favor for a while thereafter. However, soon thereafter, they were persecuted by the Hasmoneans.

The Pharisees were from the middle class of Jewish society. Following the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, the Pharisee party gained influence until it became the dominant sect of Judaism. In the centuries that followed, it gave way to what is known today as “Rabbinic Judaism” or “Orthodox Judaism” which endures to this day. First Century Pharisees were known for piety, and were revered by later Judaism. A summary of their beliefs would be:

- x High regard for Written Torah.
- x Maintained a “fence around Torah” with the Oral Torah.
- x Strongly believed in the coming Messiah, and Messianic signs.
- x Sovereignty of God and also the freewill of man.
- x Man was responsible for his deeds – and hence his deeds should please God.
- x High view of God, as all-wise, all-powerful, merciful, and loving.
- x That God was intimately involved with the affairs of men – that God was personal and relational.
- x Since God was everywhere, He could be worshiped anywhere.
- x Resurrection of the dead – eternal life for God’s elect, and punishment for the wicked.
- x Belief in angels and demons.

Sadducees

The Sadducees were largely from the priestly caste. Being fellow Levites, they were highly favored by the Hasmonean kings. They were normally from wealthy families and made up the majority of the ruling council of the Sanhedrin. Although considered by some to be more religiously liberal than the Pharisees, this is not necessarily true. The focus of the Sadducees was the Temple service itself, and had a high regard for the Written Torah and the sacrificial system itself.

There was a constant struggle for power and authority between the Sadducees and Pharisees in Jewish life in the Second Temple period (516 BCE to 70 CE). The main dispute between the two factions was over the role of the Oral Torah – those traditions handed down from generation to generation. The Sadducees believed that unless Torah instructed, the matter was open to dispute. They required an absolute literal reading of Torah. So literal, that when they read “eye for eye, and tooth for tooth,” (Exodus 21:24), instead of seeing it as a limitation of monetary damages as the Pharisees did, they saw it as literal. Their justice was thus very harsh.

The fact that the Temple itself was firmly in the hands of the Sadducean priests assured their power until the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, after which the Sadducees disappear from Jewish religious life. A summary of their beliefs would be:

- x High regard for Written Torah.
- x Rejected Oral Torah and other traditions not directly drawn from Torah.
- x Discounted miracles and Messianic signs.
- x Men's choice alone affects the outcome of events. God is not involved.
- x The focus of men's religious deeds should center around the Temple system.
- x God should be brought down to men.
- x That God was not concerned with human affairs.
- x The only site for worshipping God was the Temple.
- x No Resurrection of the dead – man has no eternal soul.
- x No supernatural beings – no angels, no demons.

Within the Sadducees, there was a group known in the First Century as “Herodians”. These Herodians were thoroughly Hellenized and were considered almost completely secular.

Essenes

There are numerous branches of minor sects that are associated with the Essenes. No doubt this would include the sect that lived in the “Dead Sea Scrolls” community of Qumran. The Essenes began about the time of the Pharisees, following the Maccabean Revolt. Theologically, they more closely resembled the Pharisees. They were considered the pious ones, which likely, is the origin of their Greek name: coming from the Hebrew *Hasidim* [the pious ones]. They had an extremely high regard for the Written Torah, as well as many other religious writings. The Dead Sea Scrolls indicate that they were serious scholars. Where the Pharisees were known as “separate ones” as they went throughout the flow of society, the Essenes withdrew from that society, which they considered irreparably tainted. They lived in sectarian communities or “brotherhoods” and were extremely monastic. They were very concerned with ritual purity and would immerse in water several times each day for various reasons. A summary of their beliefs would be:

- x High regard for Written Torah
- x Treated many books as sacred, including Aramaic Targums, Pseudographia, and Apocryphal books.
- x Believed that they were the true Israel – the “Remnant”.
- x Strongly believed in the coming Messiah, and Messianic signs – a highly developed study of “End Times”.
- x Sovereignty of God.
- x Righteous deeds were a constant concern, as was ritual cleanness.
- x High view of God, as all-wise, all-powerful, merciful, and loving.
- x That God was intimately involved with the affairs of men – that God was personal and relational.
- x Since God was everywhere, He could be worshiped anywhere.
- x Eternal soul in man – but no Resurrection of the dead.
- x Belief in angels and demons.

Other Groups in the First Century

Scribes

Scribes were in essence, “Jewish Bible teachers”. These were ordinary people not necessarily associated with the Temple system. They were considered the “lesser teachers” below rabbis. They had less authority, and taught only what they were taught.

God Fearing Gentiles

Because of the conquering and influence of the Jewish people in the regions surrounding the Land during the Hasmonean dynasty (also known as Maccabees, 163 BCE to 37 BCE), there were a number of Gentiles who were drawn to Judaism. These Gentiles adopted the lifestyle and customs of Jews, as well as the Scriptures. For various reasons, they had not become proselytes of Judaism (which would have made them full-fledged “Jews”), so they were often denied contact with Jews. To varying degrees they were accepted by the neighboring Jews, but sharing meals, and entering their homes was still considered defiling to most Jews. Interestingly however, they are often seen as participating in synagogue life and were considered by many Jews very pious – and yet still Gentiles.

Proselytes

Proselytes were Gentiles who had gone through the formal conversion process to become Jewish. This was not only a religious process, but considered an ethnic one as well. A proselyte was considered fully “Jewish” and an Israelite. Theoretically, they were to be given full Covenant membership just as any natural-born Jew. In practice, this was not always true. To become a proselyte required various ritual exercises including:

- ✘ Circumcision (as a sign of the Covenant)
- ✘ Immersion in water (as a sign of repentance and turning to a Torah lifestyle)
- ✘ Monetary offering
- ✘ Renunciation of all forms and associations with idolatry

Even rabbis could be proselytes. Rabbi Akiva, the most famous of the rabbis immediately after the destruction of the Temple, was a proselyte.

Zealots and Sicarri

Because of the constant tension in Roman-occupied Palestine, there were some Jews who took a more violent political perspective. Largely from the Pharisee sect, they adhered to Pharisaical beliefs, to which they added a firm belief that God's people should not be dominated by an idolatrous Empire, and national independence should be sought by violent means if necessary. The Sicarri were the more violent of the activists. They engaged in kidnapping, and assassination to achieve their aims. Both Zealots and Sicarri are mentioned in Scripture. There has been conjecture by some that Judas Iscariot was either a Zealot, or Sicarri (the name Iscariot has been tied by some to the Sicarri).

Appendix – Prophecies Fulfilled in Yeshua

Ref	What fulfilled	How fulfilled	How relates to Messiah
1:20-23	<i>virgin with child, bear a Son, Immanuel – God with us</i>	Miriam, virgin, a Son, call Him "Yeshua" – saves His people from sins	Messiah is Savior

Ref	What fulfilled	How fulfilled	How relates to Messiah

Appendix – Miracles of Yeshua

Ref	Miracle	How healed	Reactions of others

Ref	Miracle	How healed	Reactions of others

Ref	Miracle	How healed	Reactions of others

Glossary and Pronunciation Guide

Adonai (<i>awd-o-neye</i>)	Hebrew: "Lord, master". Also used in place of the Tetragrammaton
Apostolic Scriptures	Scriptures written in the First Century. "New Testament"
Bavli	Babylonian Talmud
Chanan (<i>khaw-nawn</i>)	Hebrew: "grace"
Chesed (<i>khe-sed</i>)	Hebrew: "mercy"
Chol (<i>khoh</i>)	Hebrew: common or profane
Circumlocution	The use of other words or names to avoid vainly using God's holy Name
Dead Sea Scrolls	Found in 1947 in Qumran, most dating to First Century or earlier
Didache	Early document of the Apostles
Essenes	Austere sect of Judaism in the First Century
Galil (<i>gawl-ee</i>)	Hebrew: "Galilee region"
HaShem (<i>ha-shem</i>)	Hebrew: "The Name" – used as a circumlocution for God's holy Name
Hellenization	The practice of replacing a culture, with the Greek culture and language
K'desh (<i>k-desh</i>)	Hebrew: "holy, sacred, God-centered"
Kanaf (<i>kaw-nawf</i>)	Hebrew: "wing". This is the garment also known as a <i>talit</i> .
Kinneret (<i>keen-er-et</i>)	Hebrew: "Sea of Galilee"
Levi (<i>lev-ee</i>)	Hebrew: of the tribe of Levi. Matthew's surname.
Mashiach (<i>maw-shee-awkh</i>)	Hebrew: "Messiah, Anointed One"
Mattityahu (<i>maw-teet-yaw-hu</i>)	Hebrew: "Matthew" – means "Gift from God"
Mikveh (<i>meek-vaw</i>)	Hebrew: "gathering of waters". A place for ritual immersion.
Mishnah	Oral Torah edited and written
Moshe Rabbenu	Hebrew: "Moses our Teacher"
Natzeret (<i>nawt-zer-et</i>)	Hebrew: "Nazareth"
Navi (<i>naw-vee</i>)	Hebrew: "prophet"
Navi'im (<i>naw-vee-eem</i>)	Hebrew: plural, "prophets"
Pharisees	Conservative sect of Judaism
Pseudographia	Writings from the Inter-testament times written under assumed names
Rachatz (<i>raw-khats</i>)	Hebrew: "washings"
Remez	Ancient teaching method which uses allusion.
Sadducees	Temple-centered sect of Judaism
Sage	An ancient Hebrew scholar
Septuagint	Greek version of the "Old Testament" circa 270 BCE
Shaliach (<i>shee-lee-akh</i>)	Hebrew: "sent one"
T'shuvah (<i>teh-shoov-aw</i>)	Hebrew: "repentance"
Talit (<i>tawl-eet</i>)	Hebrew: "prayer shawl, or outer garment" – had <i>tzitzit</i> at corners
T'hor (<i>ta-hor</i>)	Hebrew: "clean, whole"
Talmid (<i>tawl-meed</i>)	Hebrew: "disciple"
Talmidim (<i>tawl-mee-deem</i>)	Hebrew: plural, "disciples"
Talmud (<i>tawl-mood</i>)	Hebrew: "teaching" – a sort of commentary on Torah
Tamei (<i>taw-may</i>)	Hebrew: "unclean, fragmented, divided"
TaNaKh (<i>tawn-awkh</i>)	Acronym for Torah, Nevi'im, K'tuvim – "Old Testament"
Targums	Aramaic commentaries of Torah
Techelet (<i>te-khel-et</i>)	Hebrew: "blue" – this is the blue thread in the <i>tzitzit</i> .
Tetragrammaton	The four letter Name of God. Not normally pronounced.
Torah (<i>tow-raw</i>)	Hebrew: "instruction". First five books of the Bible. All Scripture.
T'vilah (<i>teh-vee-law</i>)	Hebrew: "immersion"
Tzitzit (<i>tseet-tseet</i>)	Hebrew: "tassels" – tied on the corners of a garment
Yeshua (<i>yeh-shoo-aw</i>)	Hebrew: "Yeshua" = "Salvation"
Yochanan (<i>yo-khawn-awn</i>)	Hebrew: "John"
Yoshia (<i>yo-shee-aw</i>)	Hebrew: "save"

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There are an abundance of good sources for this type of historical study of Apostolic Scripture. Listed are some sources used for this study.

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