



Parasha Chayei Sarah

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Torah: Genesis 23:1-25:18

Haftarah: 1 Kings 1:1-31

See message notes beitshalom.us for parasha specific messages

Ketuvim Shlichim: Matthew 2:1-23

Specific to today's message

Disciples of Yeshua 5

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha. Today, we continue our topic, Disciples of Yeshua, session 5. Before we begin, please allow me to philosophize for a moment. Why are you here? That's a rhetorical question leading up to me getting on my soapbox. Recently, much has been said about the decline in the body of Yeshua's followers in the United States. One way that is evaluated is by church membership. Likely, many of those who left were never His followers, but there is another group that went, which is Yeshua's followers. They continue to interact with Christian friends and serve Yeshua as individual Christians. But they have left the organized church for various reasons, supposed hypocrisy being one. Whether you call it a church, a synagogue, or a congregation, these organized bodies of Yeshua's followers follow the Scriptural example. The mother congregation of Yeshua's followers was in Jerusalem and led by Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov*. After the elders sent out *Sha'ul*, congregations were organized in the places he visited. He told Timothy how to organize a congregation (1 Timothy 3), something unnecessary if congregations are unnecessary. Today, if the body of Messiah is weak, we must attribute some of the weakness to its divided nature. To restore the strength and vigor of Yeshua's body in the United States, the revival must include the return of the lone followers to congregations. That is a worthy prayer. Everyone who has called upon the name of Yeshua, whether as Jesus, *Jesús* (hay-soos), *Jésus* (Je-zu), *Gesù* (Gesù), *Jesus* (Yesus), or any other name should be in a congregation under proper authority under ordained leaders, themselves under authority. Some of you here today are appropriately attached to other congregations and are visitors to our congregation and you are welcome here. Most of you are members of *Beit Shalom* while some have only recently come. We welcome new members. My final point is that ADONAI calls us to where He wants us. If you ask, the *Ruach* will tell you where He wants you to be. Each of us should be where Yeshua is calling us to be. The Hebrew word *shuv* means return. *Shuv* is urgently needed in Yeshua's body. Pray for restoring His body in the United States by the return of those who have left the organized body. There is no perfect congregation and we must determine to go where the Holy Spirit leads us.

Last *Shabbat*, we examined Yeshua's birth, His covenant of circumcision, and His redemption as a first-born Son. Yeshua's parents followed the *Torah's* commands regarding everything required perfectly. Then we read this: 39 *When Joseph and Miriam*

had completed everything according to the Torah of Adonai, they returned to the Galilee, to their own city of Natzeret. 40 The Child kept growing and became strong, filled with wisdom, and the favor of God was upon Him. (Luke 2:39-40 TLV). This is another case of the different Gospel writers focusing on different things. They didn't immediately go to Nazareth but returned to Bethlehem, where Matthew took up the story, and the visit of the Magi took place, after which the family fled to Egypt. But in Luke's story, the next event he wished to tell about occurred about twelve years later in Nazareth.

But now, we are going to Matthew chapter 2 to continue the story. The characters in this chapter are, in order, Herod, the Magi, the ruling *kohanim* (priests), the *sopherim* (the *Torah* scholars, scribes), Yeshua, His mother *Miryam*, the Angel of ADONAI, and lastly, Joseph. Who was King Herod, the person so infamous for killing the innocent male children in Bethlehem? His nationality was Idumean, also known as Edomite, a descendant of Esau, Jacob's brother. He is said to have been born in *Maresha*, a city of Idumeans in Judea, about 34 miles south of Jerusalem. During two of our trips to Israel, we had the privilege of joining an archeological dig in *Tel Maresha*, the remains of that ancient city. We climbed down ladders into pits about ten feet deep and dug out buckets of soil, which we took to the surface and screened for artifacts. Our group found much broken pottery and even a complete oil lamp. There was a cave crawl for the hearty in which I took part. Going down into a hole, we crawled on our bellies for about two hundred yards, actually squeezing through in several places. About fifty pounds heavier than I am now, I wasn't claustrophobic before that jaunt, but I can't say that anymore. I was never so glad to get out of a place. Herod's father, Antipater (an-tip-a-ter), was a convert to Judaism and an official appointed by Julius Caesar to handle the affairs of Judea. Herod, who had also converted to Judaism, was appointed Governor of Galilee through his father's influence. Later, he led a revolt against the Hasmoneans, the descendants of Judah Maccabee, who ruled Israel. He was politically savvy and talked the Romans into proclaiming him as King of Judea. The Magi visited Herod and asked this question, "Where is the one born King of the Jews?" This question caused him great concern; actually, fear. They were seeking the newborn King of Jews, and Herod thought that he was the King of the Jews. To him, this newborn was a political rival.

The Magi had seen Yeshua's star in the east and traveled far to worship Him. Who were these men? The title Magi is a word taken from the Greek word *magos* (mag'-os) - meaning astrologer, magician, or wise man. According to the Complete Jewish Study Bible, the Magi were not sorcerers, magicians, or astrologers, although they did observe the stars. And they would have had to have done that to observe the star in the east, which led them to seek the King of the Jews. According to recent Jewish scholarship, they were sages, possibly wise men of Persia who came from either the Medo-Persian Empire or were sages from Babylon. Jews had lived in those areas since the time of the Prophet Daniel. It is possible that these Magi were Jewish sages, later-generation scholars, or maybe even descendants of those who trained under Daniel some four hundred years earlier. An interesting side point regarding where they came from is that at the time of Yeshua's birth, more Jews lived in Babylon than in the Land of Israel. There were many Jews there and many Jewish scholars who did not return to Israel after the captivity. Babylon had remained an important center of Judaism and the Babylonian *Talmud* was written there some 200-400 years after Yeshua's time.

A means of Scriptural interpretation, *remez*, is the primary Hebraic teaching method featured in Matthew Chapter 2. It is one of four methods of teaching that were in use

during Yeshua's day and before. He, Himself, used *remez* frequently in the things which He said. Many hundreds of years later, *remez* and the three other related approaches were given the name *PaRDeS* to describe them. *PaRDeS*, as a Hebrew word (*pardes*), means "garden," but here, it is an acronym formed from the first letters of these four methods. *PaRDeS* refers to four spiritual gardening tools, which are four different approaches to biblical exegesis. The first and simplest method is *p'shat*, פְּשָׁט, the Pa in *PaRDeS*. It is the literal or direct meaning of a Scripture passage. Second is *remez*, רמז, the R in *PaRDeS*, and it hints at a hidden meaning, often by linking it with an earlier Scripture. Next is *d'rash* or *midrash*, דְּרָשׁ, the De in *PaRDeS*. It means to inquire and is an allegorical application of a text. Last is *sod*, סוד, the S in *PaRDeS*. It means secret and is a mystical or hidden meaning arrived at through the numerical values of the Hebrew letters, unusual spellings, transposing letters, etc. You could say that Matthew's use of *gematria* in arranging Yeshua's ancestry, which we discussed in Lesson 1, was a form of *sod*.

The first use of *remez* in chapter 2 is found in the inquiry of the Magi: 2... *"Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him"* (Matthew 2:2b). Focusing on the word "star" in this verse is *remez*. It hints back at Balaam's prophesy in Numbers: 17 *"I see him, yet not at this moment. I behold him, yet not in this location. For a star will come from Jacob, a scepter will arise from Israel"* (Numbers 24:17a).

When Herod heard their question, it upset him so greatly that he called the head *kohanim* and the *Torah* teachers to find out what they knew. He asked them where the Messiah would be born, and they replied, "In Bethlehem." What they said to Herod was a paraphrase of what the prophet wrote: 6 *"And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel."* (Matthew 2:6). The prophet is Micah who wrote: 1 *But you, Bethlehem Ephrata— least among the clans of Judah— from you will come out to Me One to be ruler in Israel, One whose goings forth are from of old, from days of eternity* (Micah 5:1). Not only does this prophecy identify the ruler who will be the shepherd, the king over Israel, but also identifies Him as deity, one who is eternal. This Word from ADONAI came to Micah some 700 years before Yeshua's time. After asking the Magi when the star first appeared, Herod sent them to Bethlehem with instructions to return and tell him when they found the baby. When the Magi arrived in Bethlehem, they found Yeshua with his mother, *Miryam*, and they worshipped Him, 11 *And when they came into the house, they saw the Child with His mother Miriam; and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they presented to Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. 12 And having been warned in a dream not to go back to Herod, they returned to their own country by another way.* (Matthew 2:11-12 TLV).

After the Magi had gone, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream: 13 *"Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of Adonai appears to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the Child, to kill Him"* (Matthew 2:6 TLV). Joseph took his family to Egypt and remained there until after Herod died. The next verse is the next incidence of *remez* in this chapter: 15 *This was to fulfill what was spoken by Adonai through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called My son"* (Matthew 2:15b TLV). This is a hint back to something said by the Prophet Hosea: 1 *"When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son"* (Hosea 11:1 TLV). The naysayers don't like this and say that this only refers to Israel being called out of Egypt and not to Yeshua. Yes, it is referring to Israel as a people, but

there is also a larger perspective to be seen here. ADONAI also called Israel, the nation, His son. He said to Moses: *22 You are to say to Pharaoh, "This is what Adonai says: 'Israel is My son, My firstborn'"* (Exodus 4:22 TLV). To understand what Matthew is telling us, we must bring together related Scriptures. In Matthew chapter 1, we read that the angel called Yeshua, G-d's Son. Gabriel's message to Joseph indicated that Yeshua was ADONAI's Son by the *Ruach Kodesh*, His Spirit. He also told Joseph in the dream: *23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and give birth to a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which means "God with us"* (Matthew 1:23). The Son born to *Miryam* was and is "G-d with us." We also have to connect Isaiah 9 to this train of thought: *5 For to us a child is born, a son will be given to us, and the government will be upon His shoulder. His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God My Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:5 TLV). There are similar Messianic verses in Psalm 2 and Proverbs 30. *7 I will declare the decree of Adonai. He said to me: "You are My Son— today I have become Your Father"* (Psalm 2:7 TLV). *4 "Who has gone up into heaven, and come down? Who has gathered the wind in the palm of His hand? Who has wrapped the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is the name of His son—if you know"* (Proverbs 30:4)? You have to connect the dots to understand fully. This is the way that *remez* works. It hints at a particular thing or event, which then causes you to understand that it is connected to the original statement. Matthew connected Yeshua with Hosea's Scripture about G-d's Son being called out of Egypt because he saw Him as the fulfillment of what ADONAI did the first time in physically bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt. From this, we can derive something more: that Yeshua, whom we also know as the second Moses, is the one who will bring the people of Israel out of spiritual Egypt, the personification of sin. Looking at "Out of Egypt, I called my Son," as referring to Yeshua, we acknowledge it as truth.

After a while, Herod realized that the Magi were not returning to give him any information. In a rage, he gave orders to kill all boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or less. He determined that age range from what the Magi told him regarding when they first saw the star. Yeshua was not a newborn when the Magi came to Jerusalem and the family was now in a house. Very likely, they came much later, maybe up to two years later. Presumably, Yeshua had just been born when they first saw His star and He would have been between an infant and two years old when they visited Him.

16 Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became furious. And he sent and killed all boys in Bethlehem and in all its surrounding area, from two years old and under, according to the time he had determined from the magi (Matthew 2:16). In Herod's murder of the young boys of Bethlehem, we find a third incidence of *remez*, hinting at an earlier Scripture: *17 Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 18 "A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and loud wailing, Rachel sobbing for her children and refusing to be comforted because they are no more"* (Matthew 2:17-18). To understand Matthew's statement, we must realize that Rachel weeping for her children was actually about something else. Jeremiah's words are about Rachel weeping for her actual children, her son Benjamin and her grandsons Ephraim and Manasseh. *14 Thus says Adonai: "A voice is heard in Ramah —lamentation and bitter weeping— Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children because they are no more"* (Jeremiah 31:15). This is about Babylon's assault against the Kingdom of Judah in Jeremiah's time. The captives, Rachel's descendants, were assembled at Ramah, a town in the Territory of Benjamin north of Jerusalem. Some of these were killed, and the others were taken to Babylon. Jeremiah was speaking symbolically because Rachael didn't

actually weep for her children. She had been dead for hundreds of years when this happened. Here is the connection between Herod's murder of the baby boys in Bethlehem and Rachel's weeping for her children in Ramah. We know from Genesis 35 that Rachel, Jacob's wife, died after giving birth to Benjamin just outside Bethlehem. *19 Then Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrat (that is, Bethlehem)* (Genesis 35:19 TLV). Today, her tomb remains just outside the town. Here is the *remez*, the connection. Though she had been dead for 1,700 years at the time that Yeshua was a baby, Rachel was prophetically connected to two different events, both of which occurred long after her life ended. She was seen to be symbolically weeping for her physical children who lived during the Babylonian invasion more than 600 years before Yeshua's day, but also weeping with the mothers in Bethlehem for the children whom Herod killed at the doorstep of her tomb. These two events had no actual connection at all but were the use of *remez* by Matthew to emphasize the deep mourning which took place in Bethlehem.

While our minds are still on Bethlehem, we consider another prophecy by Micah. The one we read a moment ago about the King of the Jews being born in Bethlehem is from chapter 5. There is a second connection of Messiah and Bethlehem by Micah: *8 But you, watchtower of the flock, are the hill of the Daughter of Zion. To you she will come. Even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the Daughter of Jerusalem* (Micah 4:8). Watchtower of the flock, *Migdal Eder* מִגְדַּל-עֶדֶר in Hebrew, was a very significant place. There *Talmud* speaks about it and identifies it as the watchtower that guarded the fields where lambs were being raised for slaughter in the Temple. We are mixing our story in Matthew with the Gospel of Luke a bit here, but the connection is that Bethlehem, where Yeshua was born, is a prophetic place regarding Him in more than one way. This is just a possibility, but consider it: Was Yeshua born in an animal feeding trough inside a *sukkah*, a cattle shelter, on fields where shepherds kept watch over their flocks, a place with a guard tower known as the Tower of the Flock, the place where the High Priest raised lambs for sacrifice in the Temple, including those intended for slaughter during Passover. Was Yeshua, the Lamb of G-d, slain for our sins, born in the very place where sacrificial lambs were raised? It could be true. ADONAI is very specific about prophetic events. Otherwise, why would Micah even mention it?

Meanwhile, Joseph and his family were in Egypt, having fled following the warning by an angel in a dream that Herod was going to try and kill the Child. (Matthew 2:13-14). After Herod died, an angel appeared to Joseph in Egypt *9 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of Adonai appears in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those seeking the Child's life are dead."* (Matthew 2:19-20 TLV). And he did. Before Joseph returned with his family to Israel, he heard that *Archelaus* had become king after his father Herod's death. Being afraid he would continue with Herod's retribution, Joseph did not take his family back to Bethlehem. Instead, He went to the Galilee to Nazareth, where he and Miriam had lived before going to Bethlehem. *23 And he went and lived in a city called Natzeret, to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that Yeshua shall be called a Natzrati* (Matthew 2:23).

וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּעִיר הַנְּקָרָא נְצָרֶת לְמִלְאֵת הַדְּבָר הַנֶּאֱמָר עַל־פִּי הַנְּבִיאִים כִּי נְצָרִי יִקְרָא לוֹ:

*Vayavo vayashev ba'ir hanikret Natzaret limlot hadavar hane'emar al-pi hanevi'im ki **Notzri** yikarei lo.*

This is how Messianic Jews in Israel read this verse in Hebrew. And in it is the final incidence of *remez* in Matthew chapter 2. Matthew tells us that Joseph took his family to Nazareth so that Yeshua would fulfill what was spoken by the prophets, that He would be called a *Natzrati*, someone from Nazareth. Don't let this confuse you, but *Notzri*, the term used in the modern Hebrew version of Matthew 2:23, is the modern Hebrew term for Christian. The Greek is *Nazóraios* (nad-zo-rah'-yos), which corresponds well with the Hebrew *Natzrati*. By saying Yeshua would be a *Natzrati*, Matthew tied Him to Isaiah's prophecy: *1 Then a shoot (הֶחָר) will come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch (נֶצֶר) will bear fruit out of His roots* (Isaiah 11:1 TLV). Isaiah says that a shoot, a *choter*, הֶחָר, will come from the stem of *Yishai*, David's father, and a branch, a *netzer*, נֶצֶר, will grow out of his roots. Yeshua is both the *netzer*, the branch from Jesse, and a *Natzrati*, a man from Nazareth. And, *remez* connects the two. The English term Nazarene could have been easily transliterated from the Greek *Nazóraios* (nad-zo-rah'-yos) or the Hebrew *Natzrati*. And that's why ADONAI sent them back to Nazareth rather than Bethlehem so that Yeshua would be called a Nazarene.

This concludes Matthew chapter 2. Matthew's use of *remez* continues to demonstrate the Jewishness of his Gospel. Or, should we say, the "Yehudahness," the "Judahness". That is what it says in verse 2: *2... "Where is the One who has been born King of the Judeans?"* (Matthew 2:2b). In Hebrew, it is: *Melekh haYehudim*, מֶלֶךְ הַיְהוּדִים. This means King of the Judeans, the citizens of *Yehudah*, the southern kingdom of Israel. This agrees with the Greek term *Ioudaios* (ee-oo-dah'-yos), Judeans. When it is about the Land of Israel, it should be translated as *Yehudim*, Judeans. But for simplicity, we like the English, King of the Jews, just as well!

Context is essential, and we should be nit-pickers regarding detail. We all need to forget the images of Mary riding a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and three kings at baby Jesus's manger. None of this is in the Scripture. We must be like the Bereans. *10 As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. Upon arrival, they made their way to the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica because they received the message with goodwill, searching the Scriptures each day to see whether these things were true* (Acts 17:11). Even as we receive the Gospel message with goodwill, we should also be like the Jews of Berea and search the Scriptures daily to confirm that these things are true. Don't just take my word for it. Search for yourselves! *Shabbat shalom!*