



Parasha Vayishlach

December 14, 2024

Torah: Genesis 32:3-36:43

Haftarah: Obadiah 1:1-21

See message notes beitshalom.us for parasha-specific messages

Ketuvim Shlichim: Luke 4:14-21

Specific to today's message

Disciples of Yeshua 8

Shabbat shalom Mishpacha! Today, we continue with Disciples of Yeshua, session 8. Last *Shabbat*, we spoke about Yeshua's and John the Immerser's relationship and their encounter at the Jordan River. John identified Yeshua as "the Lamb of G-d who takes away the sins of the world," the revelation of Him as the Messiah, ADONAI's anointed One. Yeshua then encountered and resisted *HaSatan* in the wilderness for forty days and forty nights. Continuing with the events of Luke chapter 4, we usually think of Yeshua going directly to His home synagogue in Nazareth. Still, Scripture tells it differently: *14 Yeshua returned in the power of the Ruach to the Galilee, and news about Him went out through all the surrounding region. 15 He taught in their synagogues, and everyone was praising Him.* (Luke 4:14-15 TLV). He did go back to the Galilee, but He taught in various synagogues there for some time before He went to His hometown of Nazareth. We are not told the ones in which He taught, except for Capernaum. Based on the large number of events in the Gospels that took place there, it seems to have been Yeshua's home base. *Shimon Kefa*, Simon Peter, lived there, and several Gospel verses show that Yeshua taught in the synagogue there.

He eventually got to His hometown: *16 And He came to Natzeret, where He had been raised. As was His custom, He went into the synagogue on Shabbat, and He got up to read.* (Luke 4:16 TLV). We can only imagine the mood of the synagogue men when Yeshua finally got there. They had heard quite a bit about Him as His reputation of teaching and healing diseases in neighboring synagogues may have preceded Him, as the verse (4:15) says, "everyone was praising Him." When Yeshua entered the synagogue in Nazareth on that *Shabbat*, He was well known to them, having grown up there from childhood. He had participated in the synagogue *Torah* Service many times in the previous 17 years. Having become an adult at 13 years, He had spent the last 17 years as an active part of the congregation. During that time, He also worked with His father Joseph as a *Tecton*, usually interpreted as "carpenter," but something more like a master builder today. Nazareth was a tiny town with probably no more than two to three hundred residents. Everyone knew Him.

But even though He would have been considered a member of the synagogue, He didn't take it upon Himself to get up to read. There was a protocol to be followed. Just as in synagogues today, Yeshua was invited to read, an honor for Him, just as it is considered to be today. What happened in the *Torah* service in 1st century Israel was likely similar to

what we do today. It included reading from the *Torah*, the five books of Moses, and a *Haftarah* reading from the Prophets. The readings were predetermined for each specific *parashot*, the individual *Torah* portions, and were prescribed for each week of the year. We cannot know what the *Torah* and *Haftarah* portions were on that day, but based upon what Yeshua read, we assume Isaiah 61 was the prescribed *Haftarah* reading. A reader didn't choose what he would read but would read the prescribed reading. *17 When the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him, He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written, 18 "The Ruach Adonai is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free the oppressed, 19 and to proclaim the year of Adonai's favor."* (Luke 4:17-19 TLV). Yeshua read these words from the scroll of Isaiah. But there is a problem. That is not what Isaiah 61, verse 1 in the *Tanakh* says. It reads, *1 "The Ruach Adonai Elohim is on me, because Adonai has anointed me to proclaim Good News to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound, .."* (Isaiah 61:1 TLV). This verse says nothing about opening blind eyes. Is there an error in Luke's writings, or did Yeshua misspeak? There is no error in Luke chapter 4, and Yeshua was correct. His statement about "blind eyes" was not an interpretation of what He read but the actual words he read. There is an explanation. There was a variation in some of the early scrolls of Isaiah, and one version included the words about opening the eyes of the blind. It would have been the same scroll that the translators of the LXX, the Septuagint, had used some two hundred fifty years earlier to translate Isaiah into Greek. This is what the Greek translation of Isaiah, taken from that scroll, says: *1 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,..."* (Isaiah 61:1 LXX). The Greek translation of Isaiah 61:1 says exactly what Yeshua had read in the Hebrew scroll. But He didn't stop there and continued reading in the next verse, verse 2, adding the words, "to proclaim the year of Adonai's favor." And He stopped there. Verse 2 says *2 to proclaim the year of Adonai's favor and the day of our God's vengeance, to comfort all who mourn.* (Isaiah 61:2 TLV). He only read "to proclaim the year of ADONAI's favor" and left out "the day of our God's vengeance, to comfort all who mourn." Yeshua did what was commonly done during that time. He made His *Haftarah* reading into a *d'rash*, a sermon that conveyed His message to them. By leaving out some of Isaiah's words, Yeshua made a statement about His purpose as ADONAI's anointed Son. He read: "to proclaim the year of Adonai's favor and stopped there." He stopped there and didn't read about G-d's vengeance because He wasn't sent to Israel for that purpose. The "day of G-d's vengeance" was something He would bring in His future time on earth. Having completed His message, *20 He closed the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. All eyes in the synagogue were focused on Him. 21 Then He began to tell them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears."* (Luke 4:20-21 TLV). By saying this, Yeshua told His family and the townspeople of Nazareth that Isaiah prophesied these words about Him, describing His purpose in their midst. He effectively stated, "I am the Messiah," but I did not come to bring G-d's vengeance or to be Israel's King." What Yeshua read from Isaiah 61 was His mission statement to the earth during His first coming. *22 All were speaking well of Him and marveling at the gracious words coming out of His mouth. And they were saying, "Isn't this the son of Joseph?"* (Luke 4:22 TLV). The people of Nazareth were happy with Yeshua up until this time, but He seemed to sense their unbelief and it prompted Him to say *23 ..., "Doubtless you will say to Me this proverb, 'Doctor, heal yourself!' and 'What we have heard was done at Capernaum, do as much here also in your hometown.'" 24 But*

He said, “Truly, I tell you, ‘No prophet is accepted in his own hometown.’” Luke 4:23b-24 TLV). He had done miracles in Capernaum, but He sensed their lack of faith. They expected Him to do some miracle here, but instead, He continued to speak, pointing out their unbelief. He told them that Elijah was only sent to one widow and Elisha only to *Na’aman* the Syrian. They got His message and it was then that they became enraged and wanted to kill Him. Who does He think He is, this carpenter? They knew Him as the son of *Yosef* the *tektion*, the local home builder and jack of all trades of Nazareth, and did not receive Him in His present role. Nazareth was built on the side of a small mountain, and they drove Him out of town, planning to throw him off a cliff. But He passed through their midst and left them. Their Messiah, the redeemer of Israel, was in their midst, and the people He had known all of His life wanted to kill Him.

Following this, Yeshua began to call His disciples. Their calling is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. (Matthew 4:18–22, Mark 1:16–20, Luke 5:1–11). When the Sermon on the Mount occurred, most authorities believe this was afterward, and all twelve were present. We will examine a portion of “The Sermon on the Mount” in Matthew chapter 5 today. The whole of the Sermon on the Mount can be found in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7 and an abbreviated portion of it in Luke 6:17-49. Matthew 5, verses 3-11 are referred to as “the Beatitudes,” meaning blessedness. Yeshua’s teaching is introduced by the last words in Matthew chapter 4, 23 *Yeshua was going throughout all the Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and sickness among the people. 24 News about Him spread throughout all Syria. And they brought to Him all the sick—those tormented by various diseases and afflictions, those plagued by demons, the epileptics, the paralyzed—and He healed them. 25 And large crowds followed Him from the Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.* (Matthew 4:23-25 TLV). If you’ve ever watched a golf tournament on TV, you have seen the gallery, a large crowd of people, run from one hole to the next as the favorite golfer plays those holes. We can imagine it was that way with Yeshua. The crowd following Him when He gave the Sermon on the Mount might have been as large as the 5000 He later fed. They were not all Jews. Those from the Decapolis, the ten towns east of the Sea of Galilee ruled by the Roman Governor of Syria, were mainly Gentile. And those from beyond the Jordan were probably a mixed group. They were also there for mixed reasons, some for healing or deliverance, some to listen to Yeshua’s words, and some just for curiosity, just like it is today.

Chapter 5 begins *1 Now when Yeshua saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain. And after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 And He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,..* (Matthew 5:1-2 TLV). No doubt, Yeshua’s healing of all their diseases had a considerable effect, causing multitudes to follow Him everywhere He went. Yeshua knew who they were, their fears, their hurts, and their troubles. It was His compassion for them that prompted His next words. With Himself seated on a mountain, it is almost sure that Yeshua was presenting Himself as the Prophet Like Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15), and He used this picture to bring to the mind of His Jewish audience the giving of the *Torah* on Mount Sinai and particularly the Ten Words. Although there are only nine Beatitudes, that’s close enough. But, the nine verses of the Beatitudes also present a picture of another event on a different mountain, the reciting of the blessings on Mount Gerizim's blessing after Israel entered the Land of Promise. 26 “*See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse— 27 the blessing, if you listen to the mitzvot of Adonai your God that I am commanding you today, 28 but the curse, if you do not listen to the mitzvot of Adonai your God, but turn from the way I am commanding you today, to go*

after other gods you have not known. 29 Now when Adonai your God brings you into the land you are going in to possess, you are to set the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal” (Deuteronomy 11:26-29 TLV). The actual blessings that were spoken are found in Deuteronomy 28:1-14. The whole picture of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, the blessings presented on a mountain, is a shadow of the blessings that Israel spoke on Mount Gerizim. The author, Matthew, seemed to intentionally form two pictures of Yeshua, “the second Moses.” One was of Mount Sinai and the other was ADONAI’s blessings being spoken at Mount Gerizim. The crowd excitedly gathered around Yeshua may have recalled these words of Moses, 15 “Adonai your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your midst—from your brothers. To him you must listen.” (Deuteronomy 18:15 TLV). And, they listened intently to Yeshua, the Prophet like Moses. We read a moment ago, “Yeshua sat down to teach His disciples.” He was teaching His disciples as all the rabbis of that day did wherever they were, pausing to rest, eat, or pray. But I believe He also wanted the others around Him to hear what He was teaching His disciples. Yeshua’s sitting down to teach was the very Jewish way that rabbis of that day taught their disciples. The words “sitting at the feet of” describe a disciple listening to their teacher.

Verses 3-11 of Matthew chapter 5 are nine declarations spoken by Yeshua. We usually refer to them as “the Beatitudes,” which is said to mean “blessedness,” with the first word of each verse being “blessed.” But He wasn’t speaking Greek; He was speaking Aramaic, the everyday language of Jews after their return from Babylon. He most likely said אַשְׁרִי, *ashri*, the Aramaic for “happy.” Hebrew was also known and used within the synagogues. The Hebrew equivalent for the Aramaic *ashri* is אֲשֶׁרִי, *ashrei*, and the people would have understood. We know that Yeshua most likely said *ashri/ashrei* because the Greek word used for “happy” in the Beatitudes, *makarios* (mak-ar'-ee-os), is found in the Septuagint, the Greek language translation of the *Tanakh*, 68 times, and usually meaning happy or happiness. There is also a possible connection with Psalm 1. Was Yeshua using *remez*, hinting back at a Scripture to make a point, when He said “*ashrei*.” Psalm 1 begins: 1 *Ashrei ha’Ish*, אֲשֶׁרִי הַאִישׁ, “happy is the man.” But happy is not an exact translation of *ashrei* and there is not just one English word available to use in translating it into Hebrew. It is more properly translated as “how happy.” “Blessed” does not adequately convey the deeper meaning of the Hebrew. The Hebrew root, *alef shem resh*, אֲשֶׁר, the root of *ashrei*, conveys the meaning of “walking righteously in joy.” That is what Yeshua seems to have been saying. When these things happen, you are to walk righteously and joyfully, even happily.

Our goal in studying Scripture is to better understand what ADONAI meant when He inspired its writers. In order to try and understand Yeshua’s original meaning for His nine proclamations in Matthew 5, I have used the research of a Christian pastor, Dr. Robert Lindsey and the organization which he founded in Jerusalem, “The Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research.” This is a resource that I discovered more than forty years ago and still frequently find helpful nuggets. This is a scholarly site which has been continuously active since the 1960s.

Dr. Lindsey, fluent in Hebrew from more than forty years of study and living in Jerusalem, tells us that there is a tense problem between the Greek and the Hebrew of these nine verses. Looking at the Greek text with his (Dr. Lindsey’s) premise that Matthew originally wrote them in Hebrew and then examining them in Hebrew, Dr. Lindsey found no future tenses in the Hebrew text. But, the Greek puts them as either future or past tenses. He theorized that Matthew wrote these verses as present tense but the translation

into Greek put them into either future or past tense. Speaking on a Mountain in Israel, Yeshua was talking about right then, that exact time, His present day and not some future day. He was not talking about inaugurating or setting up His Kingdom sometime in the future; it was already in existence. But many theologians consider Him to be speaking about something coming in the future, and that is what the future tenses in Greek proclaim. However, we understand and believe that the kingdom is now, not a future kingdom.

The first Beatitude is: 3 *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* (TLV). This is in the present tense in Greek, so there is no tense problem here. There is no tense problem, but there is a potential problem with translating the Greek *auton* as “theirs.” Underlying this word is the Hebrew *lachem/lachema*, meaning “theirs.” Dr. Lindsey contends that it should be based upon the Hebrew *meichem/meichema*, meaning “of these.” 3 *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for of these is the kingdom of heaven”* would be a minimal change of the TLV. Dr. Lindsey translates it as: 3 *“Blest are those not dependent on self, for of these God makes up his kingdom.”* He believes this is better word usage because Yeshua’s followers don’t possess the kingdom. The kingdom is not theirs, but they make up the kingdom. That they are not dependent on self also shows their dependence on ADONAI and their faith.

4 *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”* (TLV) Dr. Lindsey also found a tense problem in this verse. The first phrase is present tense, and the second is future tense. He believes both should be present tense and suggests: 4 *“Blest are those who mourn for they get comforted.”* They are being comforted now, not sometime in the future.

5 *“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”* (TLV). Dr. Lindsey also notes a tense problem in this verse, suggesting that the second phrase should be present tense rather than future tense and also suggests that “meek” be changed to “humble.” He suggests: 5 *“Blest are the humble, for they inherit the earth.”* The word humble, speaking of those who have a low estimation of their own importance, seems better suited than meek, those who are submissive. The humble inherit the earth now, not sometime in the future. Speaking in the present tense, Yeshua seemed to be characterizing the multitudes of Israel, the people who were under the oppression of the Romans. He was emphasizing with those who were surrounding Him.

6 *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”* (TLV). Again we have the same tense problem, present tense in the first phrase and future in the second. Both phrases should be present tense. Dr. Lindsey suggests: 6 *“Blest are those hungry for deliverance, for they get satisfied.”* Those who put their trust in Yeshua’s sacrifice are not satisfied in the future, they are satisfied right now. They are satisfied at the time that they place their trust in Yeshua. Yeshua was teaching His disciples, something they would later pass on as teachers themselves, that righteousness was present and available right then. Dr. Lindsey contends that these nine sayings attributed to Yeshua resemble common Hebrew proverbs, though they must be rephrased in the present tense to capture their proverbial nature fully.

7 *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy.”* (TLV). Again, the second phrase should be present tense. Dr. Lindsey suggests: 7 *“Blest are those who extend mercy, for they get mercy extended to them.”* Mercy is now and not in the future.

8 *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”* (TLV). Again, the second phrase should be present tense, not future. 8 *“Blest are the pure in heart for they see God now.”* They are already in a relationship with ADONAI and trust in Him now.

9 *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”* (TLV). The second phrase should be present tense rather than future. Dr. Lindsey suggests: 9 *“Blest are those who make peace, for they get called “Children of God.”* We are called to be peacemakers now, not in the future.

10 *“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* (TLV). There is also a tense problem here. The first phrase should be present tense rather than past tense. Again, Dr. Lindsey disputes using the Greek *auton* translated as “theirs” and prefers “of these.” We see the same situation in Matthew 5:3. By saying “of these,” rather than “theirs,” we do away with the idea that Yeshua’s followers own the kingdom and correctly state that the kingdom is made up of them. Dr. Lindsey’s associate and friend, Professor David Flusser, an orthodox Jew, Professor of New Testament Studies at Hebrew University, and a student of the Essenes, the residents of Kumran, argued that “persecuted” is incorrect and that the underlying Hebrew was *nirdefei tzedakah*, meaning “to pursue righteousness.” He believed that the meaning of this beatitude was that the people of the Kingdom were inwardly driven to get the saving power of God by pursuing righteousness. Dr. Lindsey suggests: 10 *“Blest are those who cry for the redemption of the world, for of these God makes up His kingdom.”* That is our cry today: *Hoshia’na Yeshua!* Save us now! Save all of “us,” the people of the world. The Kingdom of Heaven is not futuristic. It is now! In this Beatitude, Yeshua does not discuss persecution at all. He describes people whose chief desire is for ADONAI to redeem the world. Thinking this way, the nine beatitudes describe the people who make up the Kingdom of Heaven, Yeshua’s body of followers. They are those, us, who are submitted to Yeshua and fit in with his plans. That’s where we want to be!

11 *“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me.”* 12 *“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great! For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”* (TLV). Again, we see in the traditional readings the promise of reward for being persecuted which Dr. Lindsey did not believe was Yeshua’s intent. The primary understanding that we get from him is that the Kingdom is not future, but is now. *HaMalchut haShemayim*, “the Kingdom of the Heaven,” is not futuristic, but is a present reality wherever ADONAI is ruling. His Kingdom is present in each of us whose hearts He rules. Dr. Lindsey suggests: 11 *“Don’t be discouraged when you are cursed or slandered on account of Me, 12 but rejoice, realizing that the prophets before you faced the same kind of persecution.”* The understanding of the Greek text, as translated in most Bibles, is that the Kingdom is near, but it has not yet come. But, if you put the passages dealing with the Kingdom back into Hebrew, it is apparent that the Kingdom has already arrived, almost the exact opposite of the Greek meaning.

Here are the Beatitudes based upon the scholarship of Dr. Lindsey with our suggestion of the English translation of *ashrei* in bold.

(5:3) *“Blest (**How happy**) are those not dependent on self, for of these God makes up his kingdom.”*

(5:4) *“Blest (**How happy**) are those who mourn for they get comforted.”*

(5:5) “Blest **(How happy)** are the humble, for they inherit the earth.”

(5:6) “Blest **(How happy)** are those hungry for deliverance, for they get satisfied.”

(5:7) “Blest **(How happy)** are those who extend mercy, for they get mercy extended to them.”

(5:8) “Blest **(How happy)** are the pure in heart, for they see God.”

(5:9) “Blest **(How happy)** are those who make peace, for they get called “Children of God.”

(5:10) “Blest **(How happy)** are those who cry for the redemption of the world, for of these God makes up His kingdom.”

(5:11) “Don’t be discouraged when you are cursed or slandered on account of Me,
(5:12) but rejoice, realizing that the prophets before you faced the same kind of persecution.”

A more Hebraic understanding of Matthew 5 teaches us that Messiah brought His kingdom to earth from heaven when He came down as the Jewish man Yeshua. His kingdom is not future, but is here now. We are sitting at Yeshua’s feet today, and He is saying to us, “I see your pain, your discouragement, and your fears. Take heart! I am with you, and I have overcome the world.”

Our website Statement of Faith regarding Scripture is that the Bible is true and correct as originally written. But, the problem facing followers of Yeshua today is that what is written down as this Bible version or that Bible version is man’s interpretation of the Hebrew or Greek words. All Bible versions claim to be true, but that is an impossibility because they are so different. I give, as an example, the Contemporary English Version of Peter’s vision of the sheet: ¹³ A voice said to him, “Peter, get up! Kill these and eat them.” ¹⁴ But Peter said, “Lord, I can’t do that! I’ve never eaten anything that is unclean and not fit to eat.” ¹⁵ The voice spoke to him again, “When God says that something can be used for food, don’t say it isn’t fit to eat.” (Acts 10:13-15 CEV). Man’s interpretation of Scripture does not always express our Father’s intent. ADONAI did not tell *Shimon Kefa* to kill and eat unclean animals. There is no way that He did! We know that He was talking about people, Gentiles. These statements in this Bible version completely disavow ADONAI’s truth as written in the *Torah*. This underscores the need for all of Jesus’s followers to be careful what they read and to search for the truth diligently. *Shabbat shalom!*