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Torah: Genesis 37:1-40:23

Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

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Ketuvim Shlichim: Matthew 5:13-20

Specific to today's message

Disciples of Yeshua 9

Shabbat shalom mishpacha! Last *Shabbat*, we concluded our message with a study of the Beatitudes, the nine statements of Yeshua in Matthew chapter 5. Here is a follow-up from a more Jewish perspective. Rabbi Pincus Lapide (1922-1997), of blessed memory, was an Israeli theologian and the author of more than thirty-five books, many about Christian subjects. In his book, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A Jewish Perspective*, Rabbi Lapide accepts Jesus as the Messiah of the Gentiles, yet he remained an orthodox Jew. In his book, *The Sermon on the Mount, Utopia or Program for Action?*, his conclusion regarding the Beatitudes is that they are all a call for the “absolute fulfillment” of the *Torah* in its original meaning. He believes that the original meaning of the *Torah* is concentrated on two things: the all-encompassing love of *HaShem* and the love of neighbor. These two loves are linked by the statement: “Be holy, for I, the L-rd your G-d, am holy!” This statement is found in the 19th chapter of Leviticus and is at the very center of the 5 books of Moses: 2 “*Speak to all the congregation of Bnei-Yisrael and tell them: You shall be kedoshim, for I, Adonai your God, am holy.*” (Leviticus 19:2 TLV). ADONAI said to Israel, “You shall be *kedoshim*, ‘holy ones.’” Did ADONAI purposefully place this statement in the very center of His *Torah*? Being at the very center points out that everything that ADONAI commanded, whether under the Sinai Covenant or the New Covenant, points to His powerful message of holiness. We are called to be holy, and our goal is to be increasingly set apart for ADONAI. As we seek Him daily, our love for Him and our neighbor increases. This call to “be holy” was blasphemy in Greece and Rome but understood in Judaism as the highest of all commandments. According to Rabbi Dr. Lapide, the bottom line is not that “whoever believes will be happy” but that “whoever believes, sincerely and unshakably, is already happy.” This agrees with our suggestion that the word Blessed in the Beatitudes be replaced with *Ashrei*, meaning “how happy.” According to Rabbi Lapide, “How happy are those who persistently seek holiness.” Don’t you agree?

In Matthew chapter 5, Yeshua continues the Sermon on the Mount, 13 “*You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt should lose its flavor, how shall it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.*” (Matthew 5:13 TLV). The word translated as “earth” is the Greek word spelled *ge'* and pronounced “ghay.” It also means “land” or a specific location on the earth. A Messianic understanding of the *p'shat*, the plain meaning of Yeshua’s words, is that He refers to His disciples as “the salt of *Eretz Yisra'el*,” the Land of Israel. He told them, “You are salt for Israel.” His three

and one-half years on earth were spent in Israel, teaching and training His disciples. Now, at the beginning, sitting on the Mountain, He began His disciple's training. The crowds around Him also heard Yeshua's words and they became words for them and also for us today. But His focus then was on teaching His disciples regarding their upcoming ministry to the people of Israel. Just as salt adds flavor to food, his disciples were to add flavor to what happened in the Land of Israel for three and one-half years. But after He sent them out in Matthew 28, they were to be salt to the whole earth, a force promoting righteousness and opposing the falsehood of *HaSatan*.

In Yeshua's day, salt was used as a preservative. Just as salt flavors and preserves, Yeshua's disciples were to be the flavoring force that corrected problems in their world but also preserved the good. As Yeshua's modern disciples, we have been given that responsibility. We are to be about our Master's business, preserving and restoring the section of the world in which we live. As individual disciples and also as members of the whole Body of Messiah, we follow Yeshua's teaching and instruction to do our part in preserving and repairing a broken and hurting world.

Yeshua warned His disciples, and a warning for us today, that we are not to lose our saltiness. (Matthew 5:13). But can salt lose its saltiness? No, salt can't lose its saltiness and still be salt. If it loses its saltiness, it becomes something chemically different. That was Yeshua's point. He warned us not to lose our saltiness. If we do, we are no longer salt, but something else. You can't make salt flavorless. There is no middle ground. Salt cannot be "slightly salty." Something that appears to be salt but lacks its nature is useless and not good for anything. If we claim to be followers of Yeshua but lack His nature in our lives, we are good for nothing. Yeshua was playing on the ridiculousness that salt could lose its flavor. His point was not that "salt could lose its saltiness" but that just as salt without saltiness would serve no purpose, disciples who fail to live according to his teachings would no longer serve their purpose. That's the saltiness that we are called to have, to live according to His teachings.

As Yeshua compared his disciples to salt, He also compared them to light. 14 *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on a lampstand so it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men so they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* (Matthew 5:14-16). Yeshua portrayed His disciples as oil lamps, the light used in all the homes of Israel. Just as salt without saltiness does not fulfill its purpose, a lamp under a bowl is also useless. The interior walls of first-century houses had niches in which an oil lamp could be placed. A small lamp could light the whole house from its high point. Yeshua pointed out that lighting a lamp and covering it with a basket was absurd. The basket He described, *modios* (mod'-ee-os), is a measure equivalent to about ¼ of a bushel. Yeshua would have used Hebrew measurements with the equivalent size for *modios* being the *eifah*. To get the perspective, the *eifah* basket was about ten times larger than the *omer*, a measure slightly larger two quarts. Multiply that by ten and you have the size of the *eifah*, about 25 quarts. It would have been a large basket over a tiny oil lamp. Yeshua's point was that this was ridiculous. Why have a lighted lamp and then cover it with a large basket? Just as salt without saltiness is absurd, so is the idea of placing a cover over a light. It defeats its whole purpose of giving light.

Just as a city on the top of a hill is visible from a distance, Yeshua's disciples should also be conspicuously apparent to everyone. These two qualities of His disciples, salt and light, correspond. If we keep our saltiness, we let our light shine before men. If we lose our saltiness, we hide our light under an *eifah*. Yeshua said 16 *.... let your light shine before men so they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."* Our saltiness and light

are our good works, the way we obey and carry out Yeshua's commands. He told his disciples that if they followed His teaching, they would retain their saltiness, and their light would shine before men, bringing honor to ADONAI, our heavenly Father.

Yeshua continued with the Sermon on the Mount. These two verses are some of the most misunderstood among Yeshua's body today. 17 *"Do not think that I came to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. 18 Amen, I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or serif shall ever pass away from the Torah until all things come to pass."* (Matthew 5:17-18 TLV). The way that most of Yeshua's followers understand these verses is the opposite of their true meaning. They believe that in saying this, Jesus is telling them they don't have to obey the *Torah*, the Law. His words about the *Torah* and Prophets prompt us to consider who Yeshua, who issued this statement, is. We will come back to the meaning of His words later.

Who is Yeshua that He has the authority to make such a statement? Yes, of course, we understand that Yeshua is the Messiah. He is ADONAI's anointed One, the One born of a virgin whose name means ADONAI is salvation; more explicitly, *YHVH* is salvation. But what else do we know about the Son and His relationship with the Father? We have been told that G-d is omnipotent, "all-powerful," omniscient, "all-knowing," and omnipresent, "present everywhere." But there is much more that we can know about *Yod Heh Vav Heh*, the Father, Yeshua the Son, and *Ruach HaKodesh*, the Holy Spirit, but we must limit it to what we are told in Scripture and not conjecture beyond what we reasonably know. That is the challenge today with so many isms and schisms among Yeshua's followers.

As we progress through our message series, we continue to build information upon information. Let's begin our understanding of the Godhead with the creation: 1 *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* (Genesis 1:1 TLV). G-d is *Elohim* in Hebrew, but who is *Elohim* who created the heavens and the earth? *Yochanan* gives us the answer: 1 *In the beginning was the Word. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 All things were made through Him, and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being.* (John 1:1-3 TLV). *In the beginning, God* from Genesis 1 and *In the beginning was the Word* in John 1 are markedly similar. Who is the Word? He is Yeshua. From John's description, we know Yeshua is the Word who created everything. We can correctly say, "In the beginning, Yeshua created the heavens and the earth." *Sha'ul* confirms this and adds more: 15 *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created—in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen, whether thrones or angelic powers or rulers or authorities. All was created through Him and for Him. 17 He exists before everything, and in Him all holds together.* (Colossians 1:15-17 TLV). We learn a lot from these verses. What does it mean that Yeshua is the image of the invisible *Elohim*? The best understanding of the Greek *eikón* (i-kone') is "likeness." From this, we understand that Yeshua, when on the earth, was the likeness of G-d, *Elohim*. More than that, He is the Creator Who existed with the Father before anything was created. From this, we know that G-d, *Elohim* in Genesis 1, who created the heavens and the earth, was Yeshua, the Son of G-d. That John speaks of Yeshua as the *Logos*, the Word, is significant. *Logos* means word, speech, message, account, reason, or doctrine and comes from the verb *legō*, meaning "to speak or to say." Referring to Yeshua as "the Word," demonstrates how He is the Creator. As the Word, He spoke the universe into existence. 3 *Then God said, "Let there be light!" and there was light.* (Genesis 1:1 TLV). It was Yeshua, G-d, the Word, who spoke everything into existence. As John said: 3 *All things were made through Him, and apart from Him nothing was made that has come into being.* (John 1:3 TLV). This is confirmed by *Sha'ul*: 16... *All was created through Him and for Him.* (Colossians 1:16b TLV).

Although the *tetragrammaton*, the four-letter name, *YHVH*, is not found in Scripture until Genesis 2:5, we understand that ADONAI is there in the beginning with Yeshua, the Word Who was creating. When we read: *26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness!"* (Genesis 1:26a TLV), we understand that "our image" refers to *YHVH*, the Father, and Yeshua, the Son. After Yeshua created light, we read: *5 God called the light "day," and the darkness He called "night." So there was evening and there was morning—one day.* (Genesis 1:5 TLV). This verse also introduces us to how ADONAI set up His calendar. The day begins in the evening, not at midnight, but at sundown. We also see the first use of the Hebrew word *echad*, meaning "one." It refers to a day composed of two parts: night and day. But it also illustrates another important concept: "compound oneness." In Hebrew, the phrase for one day is יום אחד, *yom echad*. This first usage in the Bible shows that the word *echad* does not signify a singular one. It is described as a "compound unity," as we see in the example of "one day," where the two parts of a day make one day. Another example of compound unity is seen in chapter 2 of Genesis. After G-d had created Eve from Adam's body, He said: *24 This is why a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife; and they become one flesh.* (Genesis 2:24 TLV). One flesh is בשר אחד, *basar echad*. In a married couple, we have two persons, a male and a female, but according to G-d, they are "one," somewhat of a difficult thing to explain, but we understand what it means. A married couple becomes one not only by sexually knowing each other but also by becoming spiritually one. But we must understand a more critical usage of *echad*: the oneness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We can visualize this oneness in these words by Yeshua when He was asked: "Which commandment is first of all?" He said: *29 ...Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One.* (Mark 12:29b TLV). This verse is translated from Greek, but Yeshua used *remez* to quote Deuteronomy 6:4 in Hebrew. The word He used for "One" was *echad*. The TLV has added: *'Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai echad* to aid our understanding, but reading in other versions, you would not know what the Hebrew said. Deuteronomy 6:4 is the *Shema*, the ancient confession of Jews for centuries, the bold proclamation that "G-d is One." The TLV substitutes the word ADONAI for *Yod Heh Vav Heh*. ADONAI is the plural form of a word meaning "My Lord" and is used here as a substitution for the Hebrew name of G-d. Rather than pronounce ADONAI's Hebrew name, we use a substitution such as ADONAI or *HaShem*, meaning "the Name," to represent the Hebrew consonants *Yod Heh Vav Heh*. But the Hebrew word ADONAI also appears many times in Hebrew Scripture in conjunction with His Hebrew name, *YHVH*. In Genesis 15:2 of the TLV, Abram refers to G-d as אֱלֹהֵי יְהוָה, "My Lord ADONAI," where "My Lord" translates the word ADONAI and ADONAI is a substitution for *YHVH*. The *Shema* describes G-d as being *echad*, One. Knowing that *echad* is a compound unity, we understand that while ADONAI is One, we also understand that "one" includes Yeshua and *Ruach HaKodesh*, the Holy Spirit. *26 Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness!"* (Genesis 1:26 TLV). G-d in this verse is *Elohim*, and "Us" is not the angels! Us is ADONAI, the *echad* One, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! How these three are "One" is beyond our limited human understanding, but Scripture is unambiguous, and we accept it by faith as truth. Understanding the things of Scripture that we can understand helps to bring us to a point where we can receive by faith those things that man cannot fully understand.

If *YHVH* is a "single One," as Rabbinic Judaism teaches, there is another biblical word for "absolute one" that ADONAI could have used to describe Himself. It is יחיד, *yachid*, a word found twelve times in the *Tanakh*. But, ADONAI didn't use *yachid* to refer to Himself, He used *echad*. However, one particular verse using *yachid*, the one where ADONAI told Abraham to go and sacrifice his son, Isaac, is significant: *2.... "Take your son, your only son whom you love—Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering*

on one of the mountains about which I will tell you.” (Genesis 22:2b TLV). The word only is translated from *yachid*, meaning only, unique, or solitary. This verse explains that Isaac was Abraham’s יָחִיד, *yachid* son, the son chosen by ADONAI to carry on the bloodline, and not Ishmael. As a sacrifice, Isaac is pictured as a “type of Messiah,” a foreshadowing of the sacrifice that Yeshua would become for us. Unsurprisingly, we find the same type of “word meaning” describing Yeshua in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*. John wrote: *16 For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.* (John 3:16 TLV). “One and only Son” is translated from the Greek *monogenes* (mon-og-en-ace’), meaning “only and unique,” the very same meaning as *yachid*. Yeshua is the unique (*yachid*) Son of ADONAI. Most Bible translations say: “His only Son,” which is accurate. However, the translators of the Tree of Life Bible have chosen to use the words “one and only” to translate the Greek term *monogenes*, words that more clearly convey the meaning of *yachid*. ADONAI is intentional in His use of the word *echad* when referring to Himself. He is not *yachid*, a single entity; He is *echad*, a compound unity meaning “One,” understood as “Three.”

Who are the three, and what do we call them? We call Yeshua, the Son, by His name Yeshua. There is no problem here unless it is changed to something not found in Scripture. Some use Yashua, believing that “the Father’s name must also be in the Son’s name.” However, there is no such word in the *Tanakh*. Yeshua, meaning “ADONAI is salvation, is the name that the Angel Gabriel gave Joseph for Him. ADONAI’s *Ruach*, His Holy Spirit, is *Ruach HaKodesh* in Hebrew. The Spirit, the *Ruach*, is sent to dwell in us who have trusted in Yeshua. No problem here. But what do we call *YHVH*? There is a problem here. What He may have once been called is unknown to us today. In Yeshua’s day, the High Priest uttered “the Name” about eight times on *Yom Kippur*. Other than that, it was not spoken, and the pronunciation has since been lost. When Moses was at the Burning Bush, ADONAI said *15 ...: “You are to say to Bnei-Yisrael, Adonai, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My Name forever, and the Name by which I should be remembered from generation to generation.* (Exodus 3:15b TLV). The Hebrew underlying ADONAI is יהוה, *Yod Hey Vav Hey*, the *tetragrammaton*. We know His name is *YHVH*, but not how or if we are to pronounce it. Over the centuries, some people have believed that it is necessary to pronounce His name, and some make calling Him by His name in Hebrew necessary for ADONAI to answer prayers. But the question is, what is the pronunciation of His name? There are many suggestions but no general agreement. *Yahweh* is probably the most frequently used. *Strong’s Online Concordance* uses it, but that doesn’t make it right. We also hear *Jehovah*, *Yehovah*, *Yehovih*, *Yehowah*, *Yehuwah*, *Yehuah*, *Yuwah*, *Yihweh*, *Yoah* and others. Most who insist that we must pronounce ADONAI’s name are not Jewish, neither traditional Jews nor Messianic Jews. Do you know which of these names is correct? I don’t know and am unwilling to speculate. Rabbinic Judaism’s use of substitutions for *YHVH* is good for us, too.

We know that *YHVH* is ADONAI’s name because it is written so many times in the *Tanakh*, but we never find it written in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*. You would think Yeshua would call His Father by His name, and some Greek word would indicate that, but there isn’t, and He never did. He used substitute words throughout the Gospels to refer to some aspect of *YHVH*. We’ve all read some of the names Yeshua and His disciples used to refer to *YHVH* and not consistently recognized them as such because they are hidden in plain sight. Written in English, they are hidden because they are not recognized as names. The “Kingdom of Heaven” occurs 32 times in the Book of Matthew. Heaven, *Shamayim* in Hebrew, is a substitution for *YHVH*, ADONAI’s name. The “Kingdom of God” is used 68 times in ten

different books of the *Ketuvim Shlichim*. G-d, *Elohim*, is also a substitution for YHVH. A substitution that Yeshua also frequently used to refer to YHVH was *Abba*. This is an Aramaic loan word to Hebrew and means Father. These are pretty straightforward. But what about some others?

Here is a sampling.

Matthew 2:6: Yeshua calls YHVH “the Mighty One.” The CJB translates it as *HaG’vurah*.

Mark 14:62: The High Priest asks Yeshua if He is “the Son of the Blessed One.” CJB- *Ben-HaM’vorakh*. *M’vorakh*, the Blessed One, is a name for YHVH. In this verse, the High Priest also calls YHVH “the Power.” CJB- *HaG’vurah*.

Hebrews 8:1: The Greatness- *HaG’dulah*

Hebrews 1:3: The Greatness on High *HaG’dulah B’M’romim*.

Mark 5:7: The Most High- *HaElyon*.

1 John 2:20: The Holy One- *HaKadosh*.

Orthodox Jews usually refer to YHVH as *HaShem*, meaning “The Name,” and we sometimes use it as well. Surprisingly, this substitution is found in the *Ketuvim Shlichim* used by *Yochanan*. In the NASB, we read: *For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.* (3 John 1:7 NASB). The CJB says: .. *since it was for the sake of HaShem that they went out without accepting anything from the Goyim.* *Yochanan*, Yeshua’s disciple John, used the substitution *HaShem* to refer to YHVH. It’s not new today, but it was used almost 2000 years ago and probably much earlier than that. We continue this practice today and refer to YHVH as Our Father, ADONAI, or *HaShem*.

We began this study section with Yeshua’s words in Matthew 5:17-18. Their placement in the Sermon on the Mount has allowed us to examine some of the most basic tenets of our faith regarding the Godhead. There are more that we will take up on January 2nd, and also find out if Yeshua “abolished the *Torah* or the Prophets.” We will leave this subject next *Shabbat* to have a *Chanukkah*-specific message. *Shabbat shalom!*