



Parasha Shoftim

August 15, 2026

Torah: Deuteronomy 16:18-21:9

Haftarah: Isaiah 51:12-52:12

Ketuvim Shlichim: Matthew 1:1-17

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Messianic Judaism 7

Shabbat shalom, Mishpacha. The sound of the *shofar* during the month of *Elul* serves as a spiritual wake-up call for those seeking the King, reminding us to open our hearts to repentance, renewed faith, and anticipation of the Messiah's return. The acronym for *Elul* is *Ani L'dodi V'dodi Li*, אֲנִי לְדוּדִי וְדוּדִי לִי, meaning "I am my beloved's, and he is mine." This comes from Song of Songs 6:3, where a young maiden speaks to her beloved, a picture of each of Yeshua's followers expressing their love for Him. While our hearts should be repentant all year long, we join with the Jewish tradition and our Jewish brothers and sisters in this month-long renewal, praying not only for ourselves but also for them, that during this *Elul* they would meet their Messiah Yeshua and that their *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur* prayers would be prayers of commitment to Him.

Currently, however, religiously observant Jews do not consider Jesus the Messiah but rather regard him as a fable, a dream of Gentiles. Their idea of *Mashiach* is an ordinary mortal man, born to human parents and a direct descendant of King David. Conflicting reports about him persist: some say he is alive on Earth today, while others say he is a future human leader who has not yet arrived because the world remains filled with war, suffering, and a lack of universal peace. But among Jews, there has long been a hint of two Messiahs: one called *Mashiach Ben Yosef* (Messiah, son of Joseph), the "suffering servant Messiah," and another called *Mashiach Ben David* (Messiah, son of David), the one depicted in Scripture as "the conquering king." But as we know, they are one and the same, with Yeshua coming first to cut His New Covenant with Israel and will return soon as the "Conquering King." They believe the Messiah is metaphorically "at the doorstep" because his arrival can happen at any moment, the result of human repentance, *Torah* study, and acts of goodness. We yearn for the day when they will see Yeshua, as prophesied by Zechariah. Of that future day, ADONAI says: 10 "Then I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication, when they will look toward Me whom they pierced. They will mourn for him as one mourns for an only son and grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for a firstborn." (Zechariah 12:10 TLV). He will do it! In the meantime, we continue to pray for individual Jews to hear from the *Ruach* the truth about Yeshua, and become included in the "firstfruits of Israel."

There is no question that the Bible is a Jewish document and that it contains many Hebraic grammatical constructs that contribute significantly to the richness of the events it portrays. Understanding the Jewishness of the Bible also helps to fight anti-Semitism within the Church and brings greater understanding of the Nation of Israel that ADONAI has resurrected in the latter days. The writings of Yeshua's disciples are a witness to the Messiah, not only to the Gentiles of the world but also to Jews. Many Jews have noted the Jewishness of the Book of Matthew, even in its Christian form. How much more will they recognize their Messiah if He is permitted to wear Jewish clothing? In Egypt, Joseph was dressed as an

Egyptian, wearing not only the clothing but also the eye makeup of the Egyptian rulers of that era, and his brothers didn't recognize their own brother. Today, Yeshua is largely clothed in Gentile garb, making it difficult for His Jewish brothers and sisters to recognize Him. Our goal is to present Yeshua as the Jew He is and His disciples as the Jews they were. This connects the modern nation of Israel to the promised Israel of God, which ADONAI will soon establish. That will happen after all Israel is saved and Yeshua returns as the Messiah, Son of David. We also pray that the Church will seek to learn more about the Bible's Jewishness. Page 2

To illustrate the initial impact of the Book of Matthew on some Jews when they first read it, I would like to begin by telling the story of *Moshe Imanuel Ben-Meir*, who was born and raised in Israel, lived there, and died there. His story is told in the book *Jerusalem to Jerusalem*. Born in Jerusalem in 1905, he met his Messiah in the 1920s and served Him all his life. He lived through World War I, World War II, the war for the independence of Israel in 1948, in which he served, and also the Six-Day War in 1967.

When *Moshe Ben-Meir* was born, Israel was called Palestine and was under the rule of the Ottoman Turks. During World War I, the Turks were allied with Germany, and both German and Turkish soldiers were stationed in Jerusalem. Food was scarce, and many people were starving. He recounts how Turkish soldiers would break into their house and steal their food. When his family began hiding food, the soldiers beat them until they revealed where it was hidden. *Moshe's* grandmother died of starvation during that time. But he was also privileged to watch Jerusalem be liberated. He wrote that the British General Allenby began by sending up two-winged, open-cockpit airplanes to fly over and around Jerusalem, buzzing around and around. Seeing them, the Turks all fled, and General Allenby captured Jerusalem in December 1917 without firing a shot.

While walking in Jerusalem one day, *Moshe* found a little book on the ground. It was a New Testament. Either ADONAI allowed someone to lose that book so *Moshe* could see it, or someone purposefully placed it there, hoping the right person would find it. When he first read Matthew, he was immediately struck with the idea that this was a Jewish book. It was not in English but in Hebrew, titled *Sefer ha-Brit ha-Chadasha* ("The Book of the New Covenant"). The first line he read shocked him. It said: *Eleh toledot Yeshua ha-Mashiach Ben-David Ben-Avraham*, "These are the generations of Yeshua the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Reading that there were 42 generations, *Moshe Ben-Meir* sought a Biblical understanding of what he was reading, and he related the 42 generations in Yeshua's genealogy to the 42 stops, or resting places, from Egypt to *Eretz Yisra'el* as recorded in Numbers 33. At the beginning of the 42 stops, he noted that *Moshe* (Moses) took them out of Egypt and that *Yehoshua* (Joshua) led them into the Promised Land. At the beginning of the 42 generations, he also noted that Abraham received what *Ben-Meir* called "the promise of the Blessed Seed." In his spiritual eyes, he saw that at the end of the 42 generations is a greater *Yehoshua*, a more outstanding Joshua, *Yeshua*, in whom all the promises culminate and are fulfilled. Yeshua was the "blessed seed" he saw. The very Jewishness of the Book of Matthew led *Ben-Meir* and countless other Jews to Yeshua, their Messiah.

Yeshua, the Son of G-d, was born into the world as a Jewish man, the son of a Jewish virgin. It was a miraculous event brought about by ADONAI, who incarnated His Son in *Miryam's* womb. After Yeshua's birth, *Miryam* had sons and daughters, including his half-brothers *Ya'acov* (James) and *Yehudah* (Jude), both of whom wrote letters that were included in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of Yeshua's Apostles. Yeshua's tribe, *Yehudah* (Judah), was foretold in the *Torah* by His ancestor Jacob, who said: 10 "The scepter will not pass from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs will come. To him

will be the obedience of the peoples.” (Genesis 49:10 TLV). It was not a secret that ADONAI planned to send a *Mashiach*, an Anointed One, to Israel. The Prophet Micah identified Him as an eternal being, a deity: *1 But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah— 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 TLV). Even the Magi, the kings from the east, who later came to worship the infant Yeshua in *Beit Lechem* (Bethlehem), knew by reading the *Tanakh* that a *Mashiach*, an anointed One, was to come.

The first seventeen verses of Matthew chapter 1 deal with the genealogy of Yeshua. This is one of two genealogies found in the Gospels. The other is in Luke, and the two differ significantly. Why would ADONAI give two different genealogies? The simplest explanation may be that He shows that both of Yeshua’s earthly parents were descended from King David. Matthew’s genealogy shows Yeshua’s descent through his legally adopted father, *Yosef* (Joseph). At the end of Matthew’s genealogy of Yeshua, he wrote: *16 ... “and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Miriam, from whom was born Yeshua who is called the Messiah.”* (Matthew 1:16 TLV). He didn’t say that Joseph was Yeshua’s father but that he was the husband of Yeshua’s mother. Joseph was not Yeshua’s biological father, but his legal father through his marriage to Yeshua’s mother, *Miryam*. Joseph took Yeshua as his son, naming Him Yeshua according to the Angel Gabriel’s instructions.

Why did ADONAI specifically choose *Yosef* to be *Miryam*’s husband? Two reasons we know of. One reason was that the Davidic line descended through Solomon, and Joseph was a descendant of Solomon. A second reason was that, as Matthew attested, Joseph was righteous, the man ADONAI chose as the earthly father of His Son. Because descent was passed from father to son, not from mother to son, Yeshua had to have a legal earthly father.

The genealogy in Luke chapter 3 considers Yeshua’s descent through his mother, *Miryam*, a lineage that comes from David’s son Nathan. Given in reverse order, it begins: *3 “Yeshua was about thirty years old when He began his ministry. He was the son (as was supposed) of Joseph, the son of Heli,”..* (Luke 3:23 TLV). Although Joseph was Yeshua’s adopted father, the people in the town likely believed he was Yeshua’s biological father, as that was how the family was presented until Yeshua began His ministry and it was time for everyone to know the truth. *Heli* would have been *Miryam*’s father, Yeshua’s grandfather. *Miryam* was descended from King David through his son Nathan, Bathsheba’s fourth son by David: *31 ..., the son of Nathan, the son of David:”* (Luke 3:31b TLV). Yeshua is identified as “the Son of David” through both of His earthly parents: through His son Solomon via His adopted and legal father, *Yosef*, and through His son Nathan via His mother, *Miryam*.

Yeshua’s genealogy in Matthew chapter 1 is an example of a type of Hebrew exegesis, a way of expounding something significant in the text. Most people reading verses 1-17 know this is an incomplete list. Matthew did not intend this listing of ancestors to be Yeshua’s actual genealogy through Joseph. The complete list of Joseph’s ancestors appears in 1st and 2nd Kings and 2nd Chronicles, including the four left out of this list. Critics of these verses ask why Matthew did not list Joseph’s ancestors accurately. Matthew was not being dishonest because it was never intended to be an accurate list. By limiting the number of ancestors in Joseph’s genealogy, Matthew conveyed a hidden Hebraic message, using symbolism to emphasize his point while Yeshua’s other ancestors remain between the lines, unwritten. Matthew knew about the others in Joseph’s ancestry but chose to leave them out, writing it so the remaining names would form a pattern and make his point.

He wrote Yeshua’s genealogy in three sets of generations. We won’t read the full list, just the result: *17 “So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations,*

from David until the Babylonian exile are fourteen generations, and from the Babylonian exile until the Messiah are fourteen generations.” (Matthew 1:17 TLV). Three sets of fourteen generations total 42 generations. Four generations were omitted: (1) Ahaziah, the son of Jehoram and Athalia; (2) Queen Athalia, who reigned but was not a descendant of David; (3) Jehoash (sometimes called Joash), another son of Ahaziah; and (4) Amaziah, the son of Jehoash. Each of these men was a descendant of Athalia, the daughter of Omri, King of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, who worshipped *Ba'al* and other false gods.

There are actually 46 generations from Abraham to Joseph. By reducing the 46 generations to three sets of 14, totaling 42 generations, Matthew could use *gematria* to encode a message. *Gematria* is a Hebrew system that uses numbers to suggest an underlying message. It assigns a numerical value to a name, word, or phrase based on its Hebrew letters. Something similar emerged fifteen or twenty years ago. Known as ELS (Equidistant Letter Sequence), proponents believe G-d has encoded specific messages in the Hebrew of the *Tanakh*. They made wild claims, such as finding the name Hitler and many modern events encoded in the *Tanakh*, but most theologians have debunked them. The system of *gematria* that Matthew and other Jews used was not like that. It is an accepted way of making a *midrash*, which, in its pure form, is not connected to *Kabbalah*, Jewish mysticism.

This is how we understand it. Each Hebrew letter is assigned a number, with *alef* as 1, followed by the other letters, ending with *tav* as 400. The letter ד *dalet* has a numerical value of 4, and the letter ו *vav* has a numerical value of 6. The word *David*, in Hebrew (דָּוִד), *dalet vav dalet*, has a numerical value of 14: 4 plus 6 plus 4. Having divided 42 generations leading to Yeshua into three groups of 14, Matthew used *gematria* to state boldly: *David! David! David!* This presents Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel, as the “Son of David,” a point many Jewish readers of Matthew readily recognize. The three generations of fourteen is Matthew’s message to the reader, proclaiming: Son of David! Son of David! Son of David! – in other words, “This is the Messiah of Israel!” I learned this around thirty years ago, though I can’t remember where for certain, but most likely from one of the early issues of First Fruits of Zion, which at the time was a newspaper.

This brings us back to what *Moshe Ben-Meir* discovered as he read Yeshua’s genealogy. He saw that at the end of the 42 generations, there is a greater *Yehoshua*, a more outstanding Joshua, *Yeshua*, in whom all the promises culminate and are fulfilled. He also noted that Jehoiachin, also called Jeconiah or Coniah, was included in Matthew’s generation list even though ADONAI had pronounced a curse on him that he would remain childless (Jeremiah 22:28-30). 2 Kings (25:27-30) tells us that Jeconiah was released from prison in Babylon and that he continued to live out his life there.

After giving Yeshua’s Jewish genealogy, Matthew tells us about His birth: 18 *Now the birth of Yeshua the Messiah happened this way. When His mother Miriam was engaged to Joseph but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Ruach haKodesh. 19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, made up his mind to dismiss her secretly.*” (Matthew 1:18-19 TLV). Understanding ancient Jewish marriage customs gives us insight into what was happening and helps us read between the lines of these verses. Saying *Miryam* was engaged to *Yosef* means they had undergone *kiddushin*, the betrothal ceremony (sometimes called *erusin*). In 1st-century Israel, the betrothal period was usually about one year, and sexual intimacy did not occur until the actual marriage, a ceremony called *nissuin*, was performed. *Yosef* and *Miryam* were betrothed but not married when *Yosef* noticed *Miryam*’s pregnancy. Since he knew he had not been intimate with her, he assumed she had been unfaithful and did not

wish to publicly disgrace her by drawing attention to it. *20 But while he considered these things, behold, an angel of Adonai appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Miriam as your wife, for the Child conceived in her is from the Ruach ha-Kodesh. 21 She will give birth to a son; and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins"* (Matthew 1:20-21 TLV). The angel told Joseph to name the child Yeshua. In Jewish tradition, the father names the child. The Greek text says: "You will call the name of him *Iésous* (ee-ay-sooce')." *Strong's Online Concordance* tells us that *Iésous* is the Greek form of Joshua.

The Bible I use is the Tree of Life Version, a Hebraic-oriented translation that restores some of the content's Jewishness. As we read, we understand that even though it is written in English, this is a Jewish document. I believe Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. Nothing in Scripture states that, but several extra-biblical sources indicate that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew. (Papias of Hierapolis, Irenaeus of Lyon, and Jerome). This seems borne out by the different Hebraic ways of teaching we encounter, such as Yeshua's genealogy and numerous Hebrew idioms throughout Matthew. I learned many of these idioms in 1984 while reading the book *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus* by David Biven and Roy Blizzard.

The final statement in verse 21, ...*"and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins,"* is critical, and we will examine it in Hebrew. Several Hebrew versions of the *Ketuvim Shlichim* are available for Messianic Jews in Israel to read today. As we learned, *Moshe Ben-Meir* had a Hebrew-language version in the 1920's. I am using an online version, the *Transliterated Hebrew New Testament*, from Hebrew Heart Media. Here is Matthew 1:21 in three ways: in Hebrew, transliterated Hebrew, and in English.

וְהָיָא יֵלֶדֶת בֶּן וְקָרָאתָ אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יֵשׁוּעַ כִּי הוּא יִשְׁעֵי אֶת־עַמּוֹ מִחַטָּאֵיהֶם:

21. *Ve'hi yoledet ben v'karata et sh'mo Yeshua ki hu yoshia et-ammo me'chatoteihem.*

21 *She will give birth to a son; and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins.*" (Matthew 1:21 TLV).

In this verse, we find another Hebraic method of teaching, in which one word is linked to a similar word to make a point, essentially a Hebraic pun. In the King James Version, this verse reads: *21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for (Greek: gar, meaning for or because) he shall save his people from their sins.* (Matthew 1:21 KJV). There is no semantic or logical connection between the two underlined words, Jesus and save, because the Greek-to-English translation ignored its Hebrew meaning. The "for" in both the TLV and the KJV indicates that the second phrase is linked to and related to the first. Written this way in the KJV and other Bibles, "Jesus" and "save" don't have a logical connection. Yes, Jesus does save, but the name Jesus doesn't have the same semantic relationship to the verb "save" that Yeshua has. The problem is that this phrase was originally written in Hebrew, and when read in that language, it's quite different. Yeshua in Hebrew means salvation, but more specifically, it means "YHVH is salvation." Yeshua is a shortened form of *Yehoshua*, Joshua; both names mean ADONAI is salvation. By putting "Jesus" and "save" back into Hebrew, we read: "Name him *Yeshua* for he will *yoshia* his people." Here, we do see the connection.

Yeshua = ADONAI's salvation

yoshia = save

Yeshua and *yoshia* are related words: salvation and save. The TLV causes verse 21 to say what Matthew intended: *21 She will give birth to a son; and you shall call His name Yeshua,*

for He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21 TLV), meaning, “ADONAI who is salvation will save His people from their sins.”

Understanding Scripture is important because it shapes our walk, *halakh* in Hebrew. How we walk, our *halakha*, is what we do based upon our interpretation of Scripture. Our obedience to ADONAI is extremely important. Our salvation is by grace through faith, trusting in Yeshua and recognizing His sacrificial death as the *kapparah*—the sacrifice that atoned for our sins. Trusting in Yeshua gives us the promise of eternal life and makes us covenant partners in the New Covenant cut by His blood. But after trusting in Yeshua, we wish to please ADONAI by obeying His commands. To be able to do that, we must learn what He wishes us to do. That is the primary objective of each of us who are actively seeking to become *talmidim* (disciples) of Yeshua. Page | 6

It’s all about Yeshua. He is *Mashiach Ben David*, the Messiah, the Son of David. While Matthew chapter one focuses on His genealogy and His name Yeshua, He is also known by many other names. In fact, the Bible uses almost 200 names to describe Him. Isaiah called Him *Immanu’el* עִמָּנוּאֵל (“God with us”) (Isaiah 7:14); *Yochanan* identified Him as “The Lamb of God” (John 1:29); Yeshua calls Himself “The Alpha and the Omega” (Revelation 1:8, 1:11, 21:6, and 22:13); *Sha’ul* calls Him “King of Kings” (1 Timothy 6:15, also Revelation 19:16 and 17:14); and Isaiah calls Him “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). While traditional Judaism focuses on *Mashiach* as “The King in the Field” during this season, Yeshua is always in the field. His *Ruach HaKodesh* is always near, in our hearts, encouraging us to serve Him more completely. He is even near to those who are seeking the truth but don’t yet know Him. If you don’t know Yeshua and are seeking the truth, pray this simple prayer: Yeshua, are you *Mashiach Ben David*? Speak to my heart and tell me if you are. And He will! *Shabbat shalom*!