



Matthew Lesson 1, 2020

March 24, 2020

Scriptures from TLV

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”  
“Introduction and Verses 1-17”

I have entitled our study “The *Megillah* of Matthew,” the Scroll of Matthew. As you will soon see, it is a very Jewish book. In its earliest form, it most likely would have been written on a scroll made from animal skin. Our purpose tonight is twofold. First, to show who Yeshua is and second, to show the Jewishness of the Book of Matthew.

Before we begin to study it, it will be interesting to learn something about the man, Matthew. First, his name. Matthew is the English transliteration of the Greek transliteration of his Hebrew name. His name in Greek is *Matthaios* (mat-thah'-yos). The Complete Jewish Bible renders his Hebrew name as *Mattityahu*.

The name *Levi ben Chalfai* (Levi the son of Alphaeus), is the name which Mark gave for him in his Gospel. Mark 2:14: *14 As He was passing by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. He said to him, "Follow Me." And he got up and followed Him.* In the Book of Matthew, we find that the author identifies himself as Matthew, possibly a second name. He was sitting in a tax collection booth working as a tax collector in Capernaum when Yeshua first met him. Matthew 9:9: *9 As Yeshua was passing by from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. He said to him, "Follow Me." And he got up and followed Him.*

At his station on the road passing by Capernaum, Matthew collected taxes from local merchants, from farmers, and also from caravans that were shipping goods along this main highway. Because he was an employee of the Romans, he was looked upon as a thief because many of the Roman tax collectors took taxes for their own personal gain. And he may have been a thief before his heart got changed.

Matthew's reason for being in Capernaum may give us some insight as to why Yeshua chose this small town for his headquarters. In that day, it was not as unimportant as you might think and was a pretty busy town. Matthew's tax collection booth was there because the highway that passed through Capernaum was a major route linking Egypt with Syrian

and Mesopotamia. It was known as the *Via Maris*, Latin for “Way of the Sea” the I 95 of that day. The *Via Maris* along with the *Via Rex*, the “King's Highway,” the I 85 further inland, which went due south from Damascus along the eastern shore of the Jordan River, were the two highways upon which goods could be transported between these major areas in Yeshua's



day. The amount of tax money which Matthew took in would have been sizeable since the *Via Maris* was a major trade route between Egypt and Syria. Capernaum, *K'far Nachum*, the village of Nahum was and still is, situated on the NW shore of the *Kinneret*, the Lake of Galilee. In Yeshua's day, it was a fishing village and possibly also a garrison of Roman troops. This information could suggest one possible reason for Yeshua's choosing of this small town as His new hometown. It had a very strategic location and many people passed through it.

The events of Matthew's Gospel took place approximately between the years 26 and 30 CE, but it was written much later. And, there is considerable disagreement about how much later. Some authorities say after the year 80 CE. However, many Hebraic scholars dispute that because the narrative ends some forty years before the destruction of the Temple in the year 70. Hebraic scholarship would put it sometime between 58 and 68 CE. None of the Gospels, Acts, or the letters tell of the destruction of the Temple. This would suggest that everything in the *Ketuvim Shlichim* with the exception the Book of Revelation was written before 70 CE. Revelation is the one book that most agree was written sometime much later, possibly between 90 and 100 CE when John was an old man. Why Matthew took so long to write his Gospel is unknown. I have my own theory on that. It is that he didn't. He wrote it much sooner. The problem is that that Matthew apparently went through several evolutions of writing, beginning in its Hebrew form before finally arriving in its Greek form. Papias, the Bishop of Hierapolis who wrote sometime between 125 and 150 CE was likely the earliest to say that “Matthew collected the oracles in the Hebrew language.” Iranaeus and Origen both said a similar thing 25-35 years later between 175-185. And, Jerome said it in 382 CE. It is very possible that these latter three copied Papias's statement, but all essentially said that

“Matthew was originally written in Hebrew.” Others say, no, not Hebrew: they meant Aramaic. I believe that he did mean Hebrew. Hebrew was and always has been the religious language of the Jewish people. While Aramaic was a commonly spoken language after the Jews returned from Babylon, Hebrew continued to be the spiritual language. What Pilate wrote on the sign at Yeshua’s crucifixion is additional evidence: *19 Pilate also wrote a sign and put it on the execution stake. It was written, “YESHUA HA-NATZRATI, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” 20 Many Judeans read this sign, because the place where Yeshua was executed was near the city; it was written in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek (John 19:19-20).* The Greek text says *Hebraisti (heb-rah-is-tee)*. I’m going to believe that that means Hebrew and not Aramaic. Those who say it was Aramaic have done so with the assumption that Aramaic was the only language used by the Jews. There is much more evidence about how was Matthew was written available. If you want to look into it, you can consider the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. Their website is <https://www.jerusalemerspective.com/>

But, there is much more to consider than how the Gospel of Matthew was written. It is essential that every Bible student know that all of Scripture, Genesis to Revelation, has a Hebraic background. For a correct understanding of the things Yeshua taught and the things which His disciples taught, we must tap into Hebraic understanding. All of Scripture was written by Jews using Jewish methods of writing and teaching. Even Luke, if not a Jew, was at least a G-d-Fearer like Cornelius who followed *Torah* and possibly a convert to Judaism.

Regarding the Jewishness of the Gospels, we also have to consider the possibility that Yeshua is presented in them as the prophet like Moses, the second Moses. In John 1, those who came to John to be immersed by him asked if he was “the Prophet.” John replied no. This is a reference to Deuteronomy 18 in which Moses states: *15 “Adonai your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your midst—from your brothers. To him you must listen”*. In John 6 Yeshua performed a miracle and fed the 5000. Afterward, John reported: *14 When the people saw the sign that Yeshua performed, they began to say, “This is most certainly the Prophet who is to come into the world!”* The people at least thought that Yeshua was the Prophet of Deuteronomy 18. You and I know that He was. We can call Him the second Moses because he fulfilled the requirements given by ADONAI to Moses: *17 “Adonai said to me, “They have done well in what they have spoken. 18 I will raise up a prophet like you for them from among their brothers. I will put My words in his mouth, and he will speak to them all that I command him. 19 Now whoever does not listen to My words that this prophet speaks in My*

*Name, I Myself will call him to account.*” Yeshua is also said to be, like Moses, a prophet, a priest and a king. He is a prophet because He prophesied when He was on the earth. He is a king who is currently in a distant land, Heaven, who is waiting to return to earth and claim His kingdom. And, He is a priest, a *kohen*. At his death, He assumed His office as a priest after the order of *Malkitzedek*. The Book of Hebrews shows us that He ascended to Heaven to perform His priestly duties in the Tabernacle there. When come to Matthew 5 and the Sermon on the Mount later, we will examine this event as a parallel with Moses on Mount Sinai. We see that Yeshua also fully lived the *Torah* and taught others to do so. In Matthew 5, He said: 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. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* To best understand the Gospels and all of the letters and writings in the *Ketuvim Shlichim*, the writings of the Apostles, we must read them through Jewish eyes. In the selection of Bibles available to us, the Tree of Life Version and the Complete Jewish Bible are the best equipped to help us understand the Hebraic background.

The first seventeen verses of Matthew chapter 1 deal with the genealogy of Yeshua and that will be our focus tonight. Verse 1: *1 The book of the genealogy of Yeshua ha-Mashiach, Ben-David, Ben-Avraham:* Yeshua the Messiah, Son of David, Son of Abraham. Matthew begins by entitling what he is about to tell us, "the book of the genealogy of Yeshua the Messiah," or in other words, the record of the lineage of Yeshua, His family tree. He identifies Him as "Son of David," an explicit term which identifies Him as Messiah and from the royal house of David. By calling him "Son of Abraham," Yeshua is identified as a son of the father of the Jewish people; He is Jewish!

Let's look for a moment at the king relationship. Isaiah prophesied in his chapter 10 about the captivity of Israel, but said that a remnant would return. The reigns of the descendants of David, the kings of Judah of that era are ending. In chapter 11, Isaiah began with this: *1 Then a shoot will come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch will bear fruit out of His roots.* By saying this, Isaiah was prophesying by implication that the family tree of

David, the rulers of Judah, would be chopped down. There would be no more Davidic kings. Here in chapter 11, he prophesies that from the tree stump of Jesse, David's father, will come a living shoot and it will become a branch which will bear fruit. This, of course, is Yeshua who will bear fruit, not only as Messiah, but also as the prophesied king. Isaiah was saying that one day the dynasty founded by King David would fall. He compared this line of kings to a tree which was cut down and leaving just a stump. But he also said that one day the stump would sprout and grow again. It would be a miraculous thing, miraculous because this stump had long been dead and dried up. This sprout from the trunk of *Yishai*, Jesse, David's father, would be the *Mashiach*, the Anointed One. Kings are anointed ones. That's what *mashiach* means; anointed. The Prophet Samuel anointed David with oil to symbolize the anointing of ADONAI's Spirit upon him to rule even as ADONAI actually anointed David with His Spirit. David and all kings who descended from him were *Mashachim*, Anointed Ones. Understanding "anointed one" we can say that *Yeshua HaMashiach* also implies "Yeshua the King."

Verses 2-15 describe Yeshua's genealogy. This is one of two genealogies found for Him in the Gospels. The differences in the two leads to considerable confusion and misunderstanding among believers. In addition to this genealogy in the Book of Matthew, there is a second one in the Book of Luke. Why would ADONAI's give two different genealogies? The simplest explanation may be that the genealogy in Matthew shows Yeshua's descent through his legally adopted father, Joseph, *Yosef*, and the genealogy in Luke is His descent through his mother *Miryam* (Mary). After all of the ancestors in verses 2-15 are read, in concluding the genealogy, Matthew says: *16 .. and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Miriam, from whom was born Yeshua who is called the Messiah.* Having not yet come to the Book of Luke, we now only know from Matthew that this was the genealogy of Joseph, who was the husband of *Miryam*, Yeshua's mother. Looking more closely at Matthew's genealogy in verses 2-15 will require us to do some research in the *Tanakh*. With background information from the Books of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles, we discover that there are other ancestors of Joseph whom Matthew did not include in this genealogy. The most common question which comes to mind is: why is Matthew not being accurate in his presentation? Atheists and nay-sayers regularly pounce on this as a flaw in the Scriptures. But, the truth is that Matthew is not trying to be accurate in that way. By managing the number of ancestors in the genealogy, Matthew is sending us a hidden message. Written as it is, we understand that this is not a completely correct genealogy, but an allegory making

a specific point. The other ancestors are still there between the lines, but just understood. It wasn't that Matthew didn't know about the others in Joseph's ancestry, but that he intentionally chose to write it this way. He intentionally left out some generations so that those which remained would form a pattern which would make his point. He actually wrote the genealogy in three sets of generations which is the foundation for his underlying message. Verse 17 says: *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.* We are looking at numbers here which add up to the total Matthew has pre-determined, a total of 42 generations. Four generations were left out; *Ahaziah, Athalia, Jehoash and Amaziah.* There are actually 46 generations from Abraham to Joseph, but that is not Matthew's point. In reducing the 46 generations to three sets of 14, a total of 42, Matthew is using *gematria*. *Gematria* is a well-known Hebrew system which uses numbers to hint at an underlying message. It is a system of letters and numbers which assigns a numerical value to a name, a word or a phrase based on its letters. Or, in Yeshua's Matthew genealogy, it is based on its numbers and then converted to letters.

This is how we can understand it. The Hebrew letter *dalet*, ד, with a d sound, has the numerical value of 4 and the letter *vav*, ו, with a v sound, has the numerical value of 6. The word *David*, in Hebrew, ד ו ד, *dalet vav dalet*, has the numerical value of 14, 4 plus 6 plus 4. Since we have three groups of 14 generations leading to Yeshua, Matthew is using *gematria* to very loudly state: *David! David! David!* This all about Yeshua, Son of David and Messiah of Israel. Matthew's intended message to the reader is: *Son of David! Son of David! Son of David! - Messiah of Israel!*

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 D \quad 4 \text{ ד} \\
 V \quad 6 \text{ ו} \\
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 D \quad 4 \text{ ד} \\
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 14
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Matthew's use of *gematria* is but one example of the many Hebraisms which we see, not only in the Book of Matthew, but all throughout the *Ketuvim Shlichim*. While Matthew plainly states in written words that Yeshua is the Messiah, he also encodes it for emphasis. I believe that he did this so that Jews and other Hebraically oriented individuals would recognize it and realize its Jewish origin. It was a Jewish way of emphasizing Yeshua's genealogy and Messiahship. The testimony of many modern Messianic Jews includes the fact that after reading the Book of Matthew, they immediately recognized that it was a Jewish book and not a Gentile one as they had been told. I believe that we have established both of those points

tonight. The Book of Matthew is a decidedly Jewish book, a *megillah*, and Yeshua is Messiah and King!