



Matthew Lesson 2

March 31, 2020

Scriptures from TLV

“The Megillah of Matthew”

“Verses 18-25”

Tonight we are continuing our study of Matthew chapter 1. As was pointed out last week, Matthew is the most Jewish of the four Gospels and it is extremely likely that it was originally written in Hebrew. For that reason, I have entitled our study “The *Megillah* of Mathew,” the scroll of Matthew. It retains many Jewish idioms such as the well-known good eye/evil eye verses in chapter 6, verses which we understand to be about monetary giving and contrasting stinginess and generosity. This, and the other Hebrew idioms, is an indication that Matthew was a rote translation through several generations of writings and that the basic Hebrew sentence structure was not changed. It is essential that every Bible student know that all of Scripture, Genesis through Revelation, has a Hebraic background. For a correct understanding of the things which Yeshua taught and the things which His disciples taught, we must tap into our available Hebraic understanding. Please keep this in mind and use one our Messianic Jewish bibles as your primary bible. By all means, consult other versions, but also consider checking the Hebrew or the Greek through a source like *Bible Hub* if you find a conflict between versions.

After we are given Yeshua’s Jewish genealogy, Matthew tells us about His birth. We begin with verses 18 and 19: *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 (Holy Spirit). 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).* All of our Scripture quotations are from the Tree of Life Version unless otherwise noted. Understanding something about ancient Jewish marriage customs will give us insight as to what was actually taking place and allow us to read somewhat between the lines of these verses. By saying that *Miryam* was engaged to *Yosef*, this meant that they had had *kiddushin* (sometimes called *erusin*), the betrothal ceremony. One of the primary parts of *kiddushin* was the *ketubah*, sometimes called the marriage contract, which would have been read during the service. It would have described all of Joseph’s promises to *Miryam* in their marriage. In the 1st century, the betrothal period was usually a period of up to one year. We have no way of knowing how long they had been betrothed when Joseph noticed *Miryam*’s pregnancy, but it would have had to have been at least a few months.

I can’t let this opportunity pass without speaking about the implications of the *ketubah* for us, the followers of Yeshua. The story began at Mount Sinai when ADONAI gave the *Torah* to Israel through Moses. Israel’s deliverance, their salvation from Egypt, was a complete act of grace on our G-d’s part just as is our salvation through His Son Yeshua. After delivering Israel from Egypt, ADONAI offered to establish a relationship with them in which He agreed to be their G-d and they agreed to be His people. In this relationship, ADONAI is the *chatan*,

the groom, and Israel, the *kallah*, is the bride. The *ketubah*, the marriage contract, was the *Torah*. It was read in the presence of the bride, the people of Israel, at Mount Sinai. Israel accepted ADONAI's covenant and that relationship has never changed. Even though we were not yet born, that promise back then meant that we were betrothed to ADONAI then and are still betrothed to Him now.

Now, He has now given us a New Covenant and has sent His Son Yeshua to be our *Chatan*, the groom, and we, the Body of Messiah, are his *kallah*, His waiting bride. We had our *kiddushin*, our betrothal to Him at Mount Sinai and we are now in the waiting period before our groom returns for us. As in the parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) who are admonished to be ready for the coming of their groom, we, the *kallah*, the bride, must be ready for Yeshua's return. When the last *shofar* sounds, He will return to take us to Himself when we rise to meet Him in the air. Then in Heaven, He will complete the agreement of marriage made at Mount Sinai. We will participate in the *nissuin* ceremony, the actual marriage ceremony and become the wife of Messiah. And, we will live with Him forever, not only as husband, but as righteous King, Son of David.

Getting back to Joseph and *Miryam*, another interesting thought hiding between the lines makes us wonder about how they came to decide to get married. How did they meet? There would have been, a *shadchin*, a matchmaker. My guess is that it was ADONAI Himself who acted as *shadchin* and put them together. He had obviously chosen *Miryam* to be the mother of His Son, but I believe that He also chose Joseph. Verse 19 says that Joseph was a righteous man, something which ADONAI said about Zechariah and Elizabeth some six months before this time in the circumstances surrounding Yeshua's cousin John's birth. Yeshua's adopted father could not have been other than a righteous one.

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). We aren't told who this messenger was; it could have been Gabriel, the one who spoke to *Miryam* in Luke chapter 1. In speaking to Joseph in his dream, the angel verified, by addressing him as son of David, that he, Joseph, was in David's royal line. This would have been one of the reasons why ADONAI chose him to be the legal father of Yeshua along with his being a righteous man. The next thing that Joseph was told is very important. The angel said that he, Joseph, was to name the child, and to name Him Yeshua.

The final statement in verse 21, *and you shall call His name Yeshua, for He will save His people from their sins*, is extremely important and we will examine it in Hebrew. Since we've already made the assumption that Matthew was originally written in Hebrew, why not examine it in Hebrew? Have you wondered how Messianic Jews in Israel, Hebrew speakers, read the *Ketuwim Sh'lichim*, the writings of Yeshua's followers? They read it in Hebrew and there are several Hebrew versions available. I am using the Transliterated Hebrew New Testament program from Hebrew Heart Media for this study.

Here is verse 21.

וְהָיָא יְלִדָת בֶּן וְקָרָאתָ אֶת־שְׁמוֹ יֵשׁוּעַ כִּי הוּא יוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־עַמּוֹ מִחַטָּאתֵיהֶם:

Let's read it together: 21. *Ve'hi yoledet ben v'karata et sh'mo Yeshua ki hu yoshia et-ammo me'chatoteihem*. In this version of the Scripture, verses are translated very literally and this

verse also demonstrates a very Hebraic way of writing. One word is linked to a very similar word in order to make a point. "And, she (will) give birth (to a) son and call (his) name Yeshua." Will, to a, and his are understood words. What this verse says in the KJV is: *21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.* With apologies to King James and his translators, there is no logical progression here. The "for" should indicate that the second phrase is linked to and related to the first phrase. Written this way in the KJV and other bibles, "Jesus" and "save" don't have any logical word connection. Yes, Jesus does save, but the name Jesus does not have the semantic relationship with save as Yeshua does with save. The problem is that this phrase was originally written in Hebrew and when read in Hebrew, it's quite different. You all know that yeshua in Hebrew means salvation. It's a word found throughout the *Tanakh*, the Hebrew Bible. The Hebrew says "Name him Yeshua for he will yoshia his people."

Yeshua = salvation

yoshia = save

The Tree of Life Version puts it this way: *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). The Complete Jewish Study Bible also tries to help us understand by rendering it as: *21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to name him Yeshua, [which means 'ADONAI saves,'] because he will save his people from their sins* (Matthew 1:21 CJSB). Jesus is a very valid name for our Messiah and this is not an attempt to denigrate it. Various forms of His name are spoken in the many languages of the earth. But, our point here is that unless we understand the Hebrew background of the Scriptures, we are missing some of the good information which the writers put in there. That is, under ADONAI's inspiration of course.

22 Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by Adonai through the prophet, saying,

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 1:22-23). <The prophet is, of course, Isaiah. *14 Therefore Adonai Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin will conceive. When she is giving birth to a son, she will call his name Immanuel.* (Isaiah 7:14). Some think that this is referring to Isaiah's wife, and it's one good possibility. But, because Isaiah's son was never called Immanuel, this term, meaning "G-d with us" leaves open the possibility of extended application. We agree that a future application is not only possible, but very plausible and refers here to the future birth of Yeshua. Immanuel is not His name, but tells us that He, Yeshua, is G-d in the flesh with us. Traditional Jews attack our interpretation on the ground that the Hebrew here for young woman, *almah*, does not mean virgin. The naysayers say that *betulah* is always used to refer to a virgin and that *almah* can't be a virgin. The arguments given could keep us here all night, so I will try to tie this up fairly quickly. A similar example is found in what happened when Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac after the servant reached the city where Abraham's relative, Laban, lived. The servant prayed that ADONAI would send the right girl for Isaac to water his camels. A young woman, whom he later found out was Rebecca, Abraham's relative, approached the watering trough: *16 Now the young woman was very good looking, a girl of marriageable age, and she was a virgin.* *She went down to the spring and filled her jar and came up* (Genesis 24:16). *43 look, I'm standing by the spring of water. So let it be that the unmarried girl who is going out to draw water, to whom I'll say, "Please give me a little water to drink from your jug"* (Genesis 24:43).

The word used for virgin in verse 16 is *betulah*, בְּתוּלָה. When the servant is invited to the house and is recounting the story to Laban, Rebecca's father in verse 43, the word *almah*, אַלְמָה, is used to describe her as "maiden." That may be a little confusing to you, but the long and the short of it is that both *betulah* and *almah* are used here in Genesis 24 to refer to a maiden, a virgin, an unmarried young woman. The Hebrew Septuagint, the LXX, a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible made by Jews and written about 200 years before Yeshua's day, chose to translate *almah* in Isaiah 7:14 into Greek with the word *parthenos*. Its meaning is a maiden, a virgin. A maiden is described as: "a girl or young woman, especially an unmarried one." This would refer to a virgin. Girls or young women of that day did not have sex before marriage. Just one more thing- in Isaiah 7:14, the *Torah* doesn't say "a virgin," but "the virgin," הַעַלְמָה, *ha'almah*, which would seem to refer to a very specific virgin. And, it did! It referred to *Miryam*, the *almah* chosen to be the Son of G-d's mother.

Continuing with the story, we read: *24 When Joseph woke up from his sleep, he did as the angel of Adonai commanded him and took Miriam as his wife. 25 But he did not know her intimately until she had given birth to a Son. And he called His name Yeshua* (Matthew 1:24-25). From this, it sounds like Joseph didn't wait until his wedding at the end of the traditional betrothal, but immediately married *Miryam* after finding her pregnant in order to spare her embarrassment. Their marriage would have been the *nissuin* service which officially made them man and wife, which meant that they could now have intercourse. But, as verse 25 says, Joseph did not know her intimately until after Yeshua was born. So much for Mary's perpetual virginity.

The last statement in verse 25 says: *And he called His name Yeshua*. Joseph was obedient to the instructions given to him by the angel in verse 21. Everything was done in accordance with *Torah*. It all started with Abraham. ADONAI told Abraham that He was giving the Land of Canaan to his descendants and that the sign of the covenant was *b'rit milah*, circumcision. *10 This is My covenant that you must keep between Me and you and your seed after you: all your males must be circumcised. 11 You must be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and this will become a sign of the covenant between Me and you. 12 Also your eight-day-olds must be circumcised, every male, throughout your generations, including a house-born slave or a slave bought with money from any foreigner who is not of your seed* (Genesis 17:10-12). We have to go to the Gospel of Luke to confirm that Joseph did what he was told by the angel to do: *21 When eight days had passed for His brit-milah (circumcision), He was named Yeshua, the name given by the angel before He was conceived in the womb* (Luke 2:21). There is more that we could bring in about Yeshua's circumcision and also His dedication at the Temple 30 days later in accordance with *Torah*. This is only a small part of what Yeshua did during His earthly life. He perfectly fulfilled the Laws and customs of His people as a sign for us. He is our example. But, we'll stop for now.

This concludes our study of Matthew chapter 1. As we have seen, Matthew is a very Jewish book and it is worthy of being called a *megillah*, G-d's words written on a scroll by one of His servants.

Shalom aleichem! Peace be upon you!