



Matthew Lesson 11

June 30, 2020

Scriptures from TLV

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

8:1-34

We continue to study Matthew as a thoroughly Jewish book; or a scroll as it would have been when it was originally written. Logically, it could be called the *Megillah* of *Mattityahu*, the Scroll of Matthew. It was Yeshua’s disciple Matthew’s account of the events which took place during his walk with Him, from his calling at the tax booth near Capernaum to Yeshua’s ascension to the Father on the Mount of Olives, forty days after his death on the stake.

Yeshua’s message on the mountain ended. *1 When He came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him* (Matthew 8:1). There was quite a crowd which gathered to listen to Yeshua on the mountain and it seems that many of them followed Him when he left there. We have visited one of the traditional sites for Yeshua’s sermon, maybe even the leading contender for the location. It’s not really a mountain, but a small hill rising up from the Sea of Galilee, with the top of it about 575 feet in elevation above the lake. It does have amazing sound properties. You can stand down near the lake and speak facing the hill and be clearly heard far up it. The area has the sound properties of the amphitheaters constructed in Israel by the Romans. When we visited amphitheaters, we would always go down to the stage and speak normally. We could always be heard high up in the seats. When Yeshua left the mountain, according to what we will read in a few minutes, He seems to have been headed toward Capernaum. It is probably a little less than a mile away as the crow flies.

2 And a man with tza'arat came to Him and bowed down before Him, saying, “Master, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” 3 Yeshua stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing. Be cleansed.” Immediately his tza'arat was cleansed. 4 And Yeshua said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go show yourself to the kohen and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them” (Matthew 8:2-4). As Yeshua was walking, a man with leprosy, a form of skin disease, but not the modern leprosy which is caused by the bacteria *Mycobacterium leprae*, approached Him and asked that he be made clean. The Greek *katharizó* (kath-ar-id'-zo) means to cleanse or make clean. Literally, it means “to take away any unclean thing.” Yeshua touched the man and spoke the words “be *katharizo*,” “be cleansed,” but not in Greek, in Aramaic, and the man was clean. Yeshua then said, “don’t tell anyone, but present yourself to the *kohenim*, the priests,” so that they can see with their own eyes that you are clean, healed. And, then offer the gift, the *dóron*, the sacrifice commanded by Moses. Much is often made of Yeshua fulfilling the *Torah* so that His followers and us today would not have to follow *Torah*. But, we don’t believe that is true. We continue to follow *Torah* when it is possible. In this case, the man with *tza'arat* was instructed to follow *Torah*. Leviticus 14:1-32 gives the instructions. *1 Then Adonai spoke to Moses, saying: 2 “This is the Torah of the one with tza'arat in the day of his cleansing. He shall be*

brought to the kohen, 3 and the kohen is to go to the outside of the camp. The kohen is to examine him, and behold, if the mark of tza'arat is healed in one with tza'arat, 4 then the kohen is to command that two clean living birds, cedar wood, scarlet and hyssop be brought for the one being cleansed" (Leviticus 14:1-4). To learn about the rest of the procedure, read verses 5-32. Today, these commands are some of those presently inactive. Even if we were to contract biblical leprosy, we have no Levitical priesthood which can officiate these events and this Torah is inactive for us.

5 Now when Yeshua came into Capernaum, a centurion came begging for help. 6 "Master," he said, "my servant is lying at home paralyzed, horribly tormented." 7 Yeshua said to him, "I'll come and heal him." 8 But the centurion said, "Master, I'm not worthy to have You come under my roof. But just say the word and my servant will be healed. 9 For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I say to this one, 'Go!' and he goes; and to another, 'Come!' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this!' and he does it." 10 Now when Yeshua heard this, He marveled and said to those who were following, "Amen, I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith" (Matthew 8:5-10)! A centurion, a Roman army officer, was in command of a group called a "century" which was made up of about 80 men. Century here does not derive from one hundred, but from a word meaning "company." The centurion was equivalent in rank to today's army captain who also commands a company. That Yeshua had not found anyone in Israel to this point, any Jew, with that great faith, is surprising. Although it seems that Yeshua had just commenced His ministry prior to teaching on the mountain in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7, quite a lot had happened. 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 (Matthew 4:23-24). Yeshua had possibly healed thousands before encountering the centurion. He had already been throughout all of Galilee teaching and healing in synagogues, and even healed many Syrians, Gentiles. But, the faith of this one Roman Gentile was greater than any which He had encountered even among His own people. The centurion had authority over 80 men whom he could tell to go here or go there or lift this or drag that and he understood how authority worked. It is amazing that his faith was so great that he knew that all Yeshua had to do was speak the word, say "be healed," and his servant would be healed.

Yeshua's next words apply to those who have similar faith. He said: 11 *Moreover, I tell you that many will come from the east and the west, and they will recline at table with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. 12 But the sons of the kingdom will be driven out into the outer darkness; in that place will be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" (Matthew 8:11-12). Yeshua was proclaiming that what He was offering was, indeed, open to Gentiles and that many Gentiles after their death would be in heaven with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But, this was not an exclusion of the "sons of the kingdom," as some interpret it. This was a comparative statement relating this Gentile's faith to the faith of the sons of Israel which he had encountered thus far. 13 *Then Yeshua said to the centurion, "Go. As you have believed, be it done for you." And the servant was healed in that same hour* (Matthew 8:13).

14 *And when Yeshua came into Peter's house, He saw Peter's mother-in-law lying down, sick with a fever. 15 Yeshua touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and began to take care of Him* (Matthew 8:14-15). After He left the centurion, Yeshua continued to the home of Shimon Kefa. Found by archeologists about 25 years ago, the house is located

about 30 yards east of the synagogue of Capernaum, a building constructed several hundreds of years later on the foundation of the 1st century one. The archeologists found Peter's house was underneath an octagonal church which had been built over it by the Byzantine Christians about 1800 years ago. Although *Kefa's* house was slightly larger than most of the houses of that period, it was very simple with a roof of earth and straw. It had a few small rooms around two open courtyards. It was there that Yeshua found Peter's mother in law ill and with a fever. After he touched her hand, the fever left and she got up and began attending to Him, washing His feet or whatever else the custom to welcome guests would have included.

16 When evening came, the people brought to Him many who were afflicted by demons. He forced out the spirits with a word and healed all who were sick. 17 So was fulfilled what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, "He Himself took our sicknesses and carried away our diseases" (Matthew 8:16-17). Whenever the sick came to Him, Yeshua's compassion always caused Him to heal them. Matthew quoted Isaiah as a fulfilment of prophecy: *4 "Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our pains" (Isaiah 53:4).*

There is another encounter with the sick in Mark 2 when a sick man was let down through the roof because they could not get in the door because of the crowds. This does appear to be a parallel with this event in Matthew. In Mark, the word *keramos* rendered as "tiles" in the TLV and other Bibles can also be singular and mean roof. Since the roof of the 1st century house discovered was of straw, it would have been easy to open a hole through which to lower the man.

18 Now when Yeshua saw a crowd around Him, He gave orders to go to the other side of the sea. 19 Then a Torah scholar came to Him and said, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." 20 Yeshua tells him, "Foxes have dens and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head." 21 Then another of the disciples said, "Master, first let me go and bury my father." 22 But Yeshua tells him, "Follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead" (Matthew 8:18-22).

The words "when Yeshua saw a crowd around Him" does not fully explain why He decided to leave. Perhaps it was because all had been healed or maybe it was to prompt those two men to follow Him and ask their questions. The *Torah* scholar, called a Scribe in other Bible versions, was a Pharisee. When he said: *"Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go,"* he essentially asked if he could become a disciple along with the others. Yeshua did not necessarily refuse him, but merely stated the situation of the 1st century itinerant rabbi. They travelled all about accompanied with their disciples and found lodging wherever they could. When in Capernaum, Yeshua had a home at Peter's house, but that wasn't very often. I think it's possible that the *Torah* scholar may have joined Him.

Verse 21 then tells about one of His disciples, one already following Him, who seemed to have had a change of mind. He was doing what we might call "begging off." He didn't seem to want to follow Yeshua all over Israel. It wasn't that his father had just died, but that he was old and the man wanted to stay with him until he died. Yeshua's response was not unsympathetic, but urgent. He knew the time frame required for His ministry and only those totally committed were accepted. "Let the dead bury the dead" was a reference to the spiritually dead, those who remained at home, those who had not taken up Yeshua's call to "follow me." We don't know what the disciple's response was.

23 As He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. 24 Suddenly a great storm arose on the sea, so that the boat was being covered by the waves. But Yeshua kept on sleeping. 25 So they came and woke Him up, saying, "Master, save us! We're perishing!" 26 He said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became totally calm. 27 The men were amazed, saying, "What kind of person is this? Even the winds and the sea obey Him" (Matthew 8:23-27).

It was just a few hundred yards from *Kefa's* house to the lake. The distance to the south end of the lake at Gadara was about ten miles from Capernaum and would have been a journey of possibly two and one half hours by sail and rowing. But, the location of Gedara is not certain. The other possible site is almost directly across the lake to the east, near Hippos. It would have been a shorter journey there, possibly an hour and a half.

They left early in the evening and the weather was clear. But, on their way a sudden storm arose with large waves. It has been suggested that with Yeshua and His disciples in the boat, along with two crewmen to operate it, the weight of 15 men would cause the boat to sink down in the water to the point that there would have been only about one foot of freeboard left between the water and the top of the gunnels. If that was true, it would mean that water could have already been coming into the boat from the crashing one to two foot waves. The crashing waves of the storm didn't wake Yeshua. He was sleeping peacefully. And, it's amazing that His disciples had so little faith. Most of them had seen Him heal thousands from all kinds of diseases and cast out demons, but ye, they did not recognize His great power. It kind of reminds us of Israel in the wilderness after seeing the many miracles of ADONAI. Yeshua's actual disciples didn't even have the faith of the centurion. And, even after Yeshua calmed the storm, they were incredulous. "What kind of man is this?" This pattern would continue even until Yeshua died on the stake; they knew, yet they didn't know.

28 When He came to the other side, into the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-plagued men coming from the graveyard met Him. They were so violent that no one could pass by that way. 29 And they screamed, "What's between You and us, Ben-Elohim? Have You come here to torment us, before the appointed time?" 30 Now a large herd of pigs was feeding some distance away from them. 31 The demons kept begging Him, "If You drive us out, send us into the herd of pigs." 32 And He told them, "Go!" So they came out and went into the pigs, and the whole herd rushed down the cliff into the sea and drowned. 33 The herdsmen ran away, went into the town, and told everything, including what had happened to the demon-plagued men. 34 The whole town came out to meet Yeshua. And when they saw him, they begged Him to leave their region (Matthew 8:28-34).

Because it says "the other side," the site near Hippos directly across the lake might be the best choice. In Matthew's version, we find two demon possessed men while in Mark's and Luke's, there is only one. It is clear that each of these versions is discussing the same incident because of the calming of the storm and casting out demons into pigs at Gadara. We don't know why Mark and Luke only mentioned one man while Matthew says there were two. But, there seems to be no contradiction because Mark and Luke did not say that there was only one man. *2 As soon as Yeshua got out of the boat, a man from the graveyard with an unclean spirit met Him (Mark 5:2). 26 They sailed over to the country of the Gerasenes, which is on the opposite side of the Galilee. 27 A demon-plagued man from the town met Yeshua as He was coming out onto the land (Luke 8:26-27a).* Why they didn't tell about the other man is unknown, but there is no contradiction. They didn't say that there was only

one. And, Luke's version also lends credence to the location being near Hippos on the eastern shore of the lake when he says that it is "on the opposite side of the Galilee."

The demons in the men recognized Yeshua as *Ben Elohim*, the Son of G-d. They were very familiar with Him and also knew about the coming day when they would be judges and which they called "the appointed time." The reason that they asked Yeshua to send them into the herd of pigs was so that He would not send them into the Abyss. Luke 8:31 tells that "they implored Him not to send them into the Abyss." The Abyss was the underworld, a bottomless space somewhere to which the demons, the fallen angels, to were eventually to go. Some were already there: *6 And the angels—who did not keep their own position of authority but deserted their proper place—He has kept in everlasting shackles under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great Day* (Judah 6). *Shimon Kefa* also refers to these angels: *4 For God did not spare angels when they sinned, but threw them into Sheol. He put them in chains of gloomy darkness, to be held until the judgment* (2Peter 2:4). So, *Sheol* is another name for the Abyss. Yeshua could have sent these demons into *Sheol* as those spoken of by *Yehudah* and *Kefa* had been, but He didn't. He allowed them to continue to wander the earth seeking men to inhabit. When you think about it, having demons seeking people to inhabit is no different than living in a forest full of grizzly bears. You can learn to avoid them and you can also avoid demons or get rid of them if you have them.

What this encounter of Yeshua shows us, and all of the other encounters during which Yeshua cast out demons, is that demons are real. They are here today and can inhabit human beings. They seem to be attracted to sin and those who continually sin are more likely to have them. In most cases, the people who have a demon or a few demons are in a condition described as "demon obsessed." This means that the demons don't control you, but can and do strongly influence some of your actions. I can testify that they are real. Years ago I had multiple demons and they influenced my actions and even brought me almost to the point of being "demon possessed." It was only by the grace of G-d that I was able to have enough control to break free and drive three hours to a pastor friend who cast them all out. Those who are "demon possessed" are actually controlled by demons, just as those two men at Gadara were. In Mark 5:9, Yeshua asks the demon possessed man his name. He replied, "Legion, for we are many." There were four to six thousand soldiers in a Roman army legion. Probably, there were not that many demons in these men, but that it was a symbolic number signifying many, many demons.

In the *Tanakh*, demons are referred to as *shedim*, שְׂדִיִּם. They aren't shown to inhabit people as such, but are the underlying spirits of idols and false gods. Referring to the people of Israel, Psalm 106 says: *37 They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons* (Psalm 106:37). This was particularly true with their worship of the Canaanite god *Molech*. Even after the holy Temple was built, the Judeans sacrificed their children to a goat demon in the Hinnom Valley just outside Jerusalem, the place to which Yeshua later referred to as Gehenna. And apparently, even in the wilderness after leaving Egypt, Israel was still sacrificing to goat demons. Once the Tabernacle was constructed, ADONAI commanded against it: *7 They are no longer to offer their sacrifices to the goat-demons after which they play the prostitute. This will be a statute forever to them throughout their generations* (Leviticus 17:7).

34 The whole town came out to meet Yeshua. And when they saw him, they begged Him to leave their region (Matthew 8:34). All of the people wanted to see the one who had just restored these two wild men, but they apparently weren't happy that He had caused a whole

herd of pigs to be killed. If He had stayed around much longer, He would have wrecked their economy. In Gadara, no one else was delivered from demons, no one healed of diseases and no one asked to follow Yeshua. During Yeshua's three plus years of ministry in Israel, He healed some Gentiles, but His primary purpose there was to train disciples. When a Canaanite woman asked for healing for her daughter who had a demon, Yeshua initially resisted, but then relented and healed her. During this encounter, He said: 24*"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"* (Matthew 15:24b). With regard to Gentiles, we have seen in this chapter that Yeshua healed some Syrians and two Gaderene men. But, He was sent by ADONAI to Israel to call disciples and to prepare them to take His message to the whole world. In Matthew 28 shortly before He ascended to His Father, Yeshua said: 19 *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Ruach ha-Kodesh, 20 teaching them to observe all I have commanded you. And remember! I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19-20). We today, the disciples of the disciples of the disciples are now at the end of the age. And, Yeshua is with us. His Holy Spirit inhabits us and guides us into all righteousness. That is, if we listen. *Shalom aleichem!*