



Matthew Lesson 14

August 11, 2020

Scriptures from TLV

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

11:1-30

At our last meeting, Yeshua sent out his disciples to teach, preach, heal and deliver. *1 When Yeshua had finished instructing His twelve disciples, He went on from there to teach and preach in their towns* (Matthew 11:1). Temporarily without the twelve, He continued his mission of teaching and preaching. He had no disciples with him, but was probably not alone. Crowds continued to follow Him. Verse 1 tells us that He was doing this in their towns. This probably means that His ministry was taking place in Capernaum and Bethsaida and also Cana, Thaddeus’ home. All of Yeshua’s disciples were from the Galilee except *Yehudah* who was from *K’riot*. We know which ones came from Capernaum and Bethsaida, but the others are just said to be from the Galilee. But, the actual home towns of Jacob the son of Alpheus, his brother Jude Thaddeus, Simon the Zealot and Thomas are unknown.

2 Now when John heard in prison about the works of the Messiah, he sent word through his disciples 3 and said to Yeshua, “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another” (Matthew 11:2-3). In Luke 3, verses 18-20, we are told that Herod had *Yochanan* put in prison, presumably because he had criticized him for marrying his brother Phillip’ wife Herodias and eventually will have him put to death. We don’t know a lot about John’s death, but from a combination of sources, Scripture (Mark 6) and the historian Josephus, we are told that he was imprisoned at the Machaerus fortress which was located on the east side of the Dead Sea. It was about 9 miles inland from the Sea, having been built around 90 BCE. It was destroyed in 57 BCE and then rebuilt by this Herod’s father, Herod the Great, in 30 CE as a military base to protect his eastern territories. In the center of the fortress was a palace and it was there on a visit by this Herod, Herod Antipas, and following his birthday celebration that John’s death took place. Herodias wanted John put to death for criticizing her marriage to Herod, but she had no way to do it until an opportunity arose. When her daughter Salome’s dancing pleased Herod and he vowed to give her whatever she wanted, prompted by her mother, she asked for John’s head to be brought on a platter. Herod’s mixed emotions are recorded: *20 For Herod was in awe of John and kept him safe, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When he listened to John he was confused, but he still listened gladly* (Mark 6:20). Although, Herod probably did not want to kill John, he felt he could not back down before his guests and he had John beheaded and his head brought to the girl. John had been in prison about 10 months.

At the time of the events of this chapter, John is alive and his disciples had continued to have access to him to him in prison and have now brought a message from him to Yeshua. In response to John’s question: “Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another,” Yeshua answered: *4 ... , “Go report to John what you hear and see: 5 the blind see and the lame walk, those with tza’arat are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised and the poor have*

good news proclaimed to them. 6 Blessed is the one who is not led to stumble because of Me” (Matthew 11:4b-6). Yeshua said: “Look around and see what is happening and then go back and tell John. He mentioned six different things which they could witness and return to tell John. The blind were receiving their sight, the lame walking, people being healed of *tza’arat*, leprosy, the deaf receiving their hearing, dead people being raised to life and people were hearing the “Good News.”

But, why at this time did John question Yeshua about being the *Mashiach* after he had made such a strong presentation about Him at the Jordan River? It may have been that he felt that something was missing? These five things are prophesied in Isaiah to be done by Messiah.

Make the blind see – (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5).

Make the lame walk – (Isaiah 35:6; 61:1).

Cleanse lepers – (Isaiah 61:1).

Make the deaf hear – (Isaiah 29:18; 35:5).

Bring good news to the poor – (Isaiah 61:1-2).

And, Yeshua added one more - raise the dead.

But, these things were not what John seemed to be looking for.

To get a better understanding of what seemed to be going on between Yeshua and John, we need to go back to Yeshua’s synagogue visit in Nazareth which took place not long after His forty days fasting in the wilderness. There, He was called to read the *haftarah*, the reading from the prophets which went along with the *parasha* of that week. On that day, it just happened to be from Isaiah 61. Here is what Yeshua read in Luke 4 side by side with Isaiah 61. 18 “The Ruach Adonai is on me, because He has anointed me to proclaim (1) Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim (2) release to the captives and (3) recovery of sight to the blind, to (4) set free the oppressed, 19 and to (5) proclaim the year of Adonai’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19). 1 The Ruach Adonai Elohim is on me, because Adonai has anointed me to proclaim (1) Good News to the poor. He has sent me to (?) bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim (2) liberty to the captives, and the (4) opening of the prison to those who are bound, 2 to (5) proclaim the year of Adonai’s favor and (?) the day of our God’s vengeance, to (?) comfort all who mourn... (Isaiah 61:1-2). We see that what Yeshua said in the Nazareth synagogue does not fully match with Isaiah’s prophecy. Number 3 in the synagogue, recovery of sight to the blind, does not appear on Isaiah’s list. Isaiah has the other four which Yeshua listed at Nazareth, but also three more which Yeshua did not list. What we have to understand is that Yeshua made a *midrash*, a Jewish method of textural interpretation, based upon Isaiah 61. I would think it likely, although Luke doesn’t say so, that He first read Isaiah 61 from the scroll according to what it actually said and then gave His *midrash*. What He did not read from Isaiah 61 and did not include in His *midrash* was what was possibly bothering John. It was this: 2... to proclaim ... the day of our God’s vengeance... (Isaiah 61:2b). This was because it wasn’t the time for the wolf to lie down with the lamb reflecting Isaiah’s prophecies about the coming era of peace. Yeshua was to come back a second time to take care of that. But, John apparently thought that Yeshua should be getting on with business and dealing with Rome and ushering in His physical kingdom. After telling John’s disciples what to tell John, Yeshua concluded with this: 6 Blessed is the one who is not led to stumble because of Me” (Matthew 11:6). I think that Yeshua was saying to John, “You will be blessed

if you don't take offense at what I am doing and don't turn away from me." But, John's actions were also confusing. After proclaiming Him Messiah at the Jordan River, John continued with his own ministry of proclaiming and immersing. He didn't follow after Yeshua.

7 "Now as they were leaving, Yeshua began to talk to the crowd concerning John. "What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 No? So what did you go out to see? A man dressed in finery? Look, those who wear finery are in the palaces of kings!9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, even more than a prophet" (Matthew 11:7-9). This may be Yeshua's explanation of why John did not follow Him. He said that he was a prophet, but even more than a prophet. Prophets weren't perfect. They sometimes saw in part and partially failed. As more than a prophet, John was the last prophet proclaimed in Scripture and his importance was due to the duty and honor of personally and physically declaring the *Mashiach*. But, he lacked some spiritual vision.

Regarding what Yeshua said about John, the Complete Jewish Study Bible tells of a 1st century parable called "The Reed and the Oak Tree." Yeshua said: "What did you go out to the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? The parable is that a giant oak tree and a reed were planted by a river. Whenever a storm came, the deep roots of the oak tree would allow it to resist the strong winds. The reed, on the other hand, would bend to the right or left in even the slightest breeze. But, there was nothing compromising about the great oak, it would not bend and when the greatest storm came, its roots could not hold it and it fell. Yeshua seemed to be saying, "did you expect John to be a reed blowing in the wind? Did you think that John was a weak compromiser?" No, he isn't and his steadfastness has landed him in Herod's prison. John could have apologized to Herod and Herodias about the statement he made and possibly stayed out of prison. But, he wasn't a reed which swayed with the wind. He was an oak.

10 "This is the one about whom it is written, 'Behold, I send My messenger before You, who will prepare Your way before You.' 11 "Amen, I tell you, among those born of women, none has arisen greater than John the Immerser. Yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he" (Matthew 11:10-11). 'Behold, I send My messenger before You, who will prepare Your way before You.' By saying this, Yeshua was using *remez* and hinting back at Malachi 3: 1 "Behold, I am sending My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me" (Malachi 3:1). "My messenger" is a reference to Elijah whom ADONAI says will precede, announce and clear the way for *Mashiach*. When Yeshua said: "Amen, I tell you, among those born of women, none has arisen greater than John the Immerser. Yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he," He wasn't saying that John was not in ADONAI's will. He had performed the ministry of Elijah to announce the Messiah. But the difference was, that he was not a part of the kingdom of heaven, Yeshua's movement. Yeshua considered John the greatest prophet born of women, possibly because he had the privilege of personally announcing the Messiah, but the least in His movement, the Kingdom of Heaven, was greater than he. By saying this, was Yeshua saying: "John should have followed me and become my disciple?" We don't know. But, we do know that the least of Yeshua's followers by virtue of their being a follower of Yeshua and a part of His movement, the Kingdom of Heaven, he or she was now greater than John. John continued to immerse for repentance while Yeshua's disciples immersed people into Yeshua; quite a difference.

12 "From the days of John the Immerser until now, the kingdom of heaven is treated with violence, and the violent grasp hold of it" (Matthew 11:12). This verse is very difficult to

understand. Over the years, there have been many different interpretations of it. I see it as trying to interpret what an evil eye and a good eye means in Matthew 6 without realizing that this is a Hebrew idiom. Reading it in the NASB makes it even more difficult to understand: *12 "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force"* (Matthew 11:12 NASB). Some of the meanings suggested are: "the self-sacrifice of those who would possess the kingdom," "the misguided violence of some who try to establish the kingdom by force" and "the violence of the powers of evil." But, it doesn't seem to be any of those and not even an idiom, but another incidence of *remez*, hinting back at a particular Scripture.

If Dr. Robert Lindsey and Professor David Flusser are correct, it's totally something different from what theologians have suggested. Dr. Lindsey reported in his book *Jesus, Rabbi and Lord* that the two of them had just come together to discuss this verse in Matthew 11 when Professor Flusser said: "I know what *biazetai* means." *Biazetai* is the Greek word which is rendered as "suffers violence" in the NASB. To make a long story short, Professor Flusser was reading a commentary by the medieval rabbi *Radak, Rabbi David Kimchi* in which he interpreted Micah 2:12-13 from an ancient Scripture version. I am going to apply it from the TLV and you will still get the idea. *12 "I will surely gather Jacob—all of you! I will surely gather the remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in a pen, like a flock within its pasture. They will be noisy with people. 13 One breaking through will go up before them. They will break through, pass through the gate and go out by it. Their King will pass through before them—Adonai at their head"* (Micah 2:12-13)!

You can't get this from a reading of the English. According to Lindsey and Flusser, Yeshua was using *remez* and hinting at Malachi 2 when He said: "*the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force.*" In Micah 2:13, "*One breaking through*" is *poretz* in Hebrew, *biazetai* in Greek. This individual is "the breaker." In Micah's verses, Israel is penned up behind a temporary stone wall in the way that a shepherd's flock is kept safe at night from wolves. The shepherd is the breaker, the one who removes stones from the wall in the morning so that the sheep can go out to pasture and they burst out running. If this is true, Yeshua is hinting at these verses in Micah and referring to Himself as the breaker, but also the King and ADONAI. When He said: *12 "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force,"* He was saying that since the day that John announced Him as Messiah, He is the shepherd who is leading the sheep of Israel. They have been penned up until now, but after His leadership, they are breaking out of the pen and following Him.. But, also within these words, without saying it, He is also saying that He is the King and ADONAI. John announced Him and Yeshua set this breaking out in motion and now it is happening!

13 "For all the prophets and the Torah prophesied until the time of John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. 15 He who has ears, let him hear" (Matthew 11:13-15)! In verse 10 we saw that Yeshua said that John was the foretold to come before Him and He specifically identified him as Elijah. Yeshua was not saying that John is Elijah reincarnated. He is not the actual Elijah, but he came in the spirit of and the fulfillment of Elijah's mission. But, there is a second prophecy about Elijah in Malachi which seems to have not yet been fulfilled. *23 "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and terrible day of Adonai. 24 He will turn the hearts of fathers to the children, and the hearts of children to their fathers—else I will come and strike the land with utter destruction"* (Malachi 3:23-24). In Christian Bibles, these verses are 4:5-6. It is because of these verses that we find Elijah so prominent in our Passover Seder. A place is set for him

at the table because we expect him to come before Messiah comes. I also spoke about the great and terrible day of the Lord this past *Shabbat*. It is the day when Yeshua will return in power to defeat His enemies at the Battle of Armageddon. We who know Yeshua see this as His second coming while Rabbinic Judaism sees it as Messiah's first. This person, the coming Elijah, also in the spirit and power of the original Elijah, will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the hearts of the children to the fathers. We really need that right now as so many Christian and Messianic children are rebelling against the teachings of their parents. But, these words also have another level of meaning. In this case, the children are the Gentiles, and they will be turned to the hearts of the fathers of the faith, the Jews and vice versa. We also really need that right now too with all of the antisemitism that is in the world. And, Yeshua confirmed these verses in Malachi that Elijah will come again when He said: 11, *"Indeed, Elijah is coming and will restore all things"* (Matthew 17:11b).

16 *"But to what shall I compare this generation? It's like children sitting in the marketplaces who call to one other, saying, 17 'We played the flute for you, but you did not dance. We wailed, but you did not mourn.'* 18 *"For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon!'* 19 *The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'* Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds" (Matthew 11:16-19). In saying this, Yeshua was speaking about the Israelites of His day who did not receive either Him or John. He compared them to children playing games of weddings and funerals and being angry with those other children who would not play the game with them. He then went on to repeat what He had heard about Himself and John. This same group of people criticized and rejected them both, saying that John had a demon because of his strict schedule of fasting and Yeshua was a glutton and a drunkard because He did not fast. He had previously explained that He is the bridegroom and that His disciples are not to fast while He is with them, but after He leaves, they will fast.

20 *Then Yeshua began to denounce the towns where most of His miracles had happened, because they did not turn from their sins. 21 "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have turned long ago in sackcloth and ashes. 22 Nevertheless I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the Day of Judgment than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum? Will you be lifted up to heaven? No, you will go down to Sheol! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. 24 Nevertheless I tell you that it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom on the Day of Judgment than for you"* (Matthew 11:20-24). These verses are a continuation of Yeshua's condemnation of the Israelites who did not listen to Him and respond to the miracles done in their midst. First, He rebuked the people and now He has rebuked the cities. His major point is that the people of these cities witnessed most of His miracles, but still did not repent and turn to ADONAI. This is also a truth for us. It is imperative that we experience revival here in the United States now because we have had the freedom of religion and access to the Gospel and ADONAI's Word for generations. It seems now that as a nation, we have fallen away from where we once were. Will our nation be more subject to Yeshua's judgment if we don't return? I hope and pray that we don't have to find out and that revival is coming. Yeshua also seemed to be indicating that there will be different levels of judgment. Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum have already been judged as cities and no longer exist except as excavated ruins. Also, the people who saw the miracles are long dead and presumably among the lost. These cities serve as reminders to us of our great need for revival and return to ADONAI. We haven't seen many miracles here as those cities did, but we certainly had the opportunity to.

25 *At that time Yeshua said in response, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and discerning and revealed them to infants. 26 Yes, Father, for this way was pleasing to You”* (Matthew 11:25-26). Yeshua is reminding us that worldly knowledge cannot replace faith. We can’t logically explain the way ADONAI works in the world. We can’t explain how a sacrificial death brings life. But, we must accept it as truth in the same way that a child believes something told him by his father. Children are trusting and readily trust. *2 And He called a child to Himself, set him in the midst of them, 3 and said, “Amen, I tell you, unless you turn and become like children, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 18:2-3). Skepticism is necessary to protect ourselves from telephone predators who seek our bank account details, but not in matters of faith. And, Yeshua said that this plan, that we would accept Him by faith in the manner of little children was pleasing to the Father.

27 *“All things have been handed over to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him”* (Matthew 11:27). Yeshua said that “the control of all things” has been given to Him by the Father. *Sha’ul* explains this further for us: *23 “But each in its own order: Messiah the firstfruits; then, at His coming, those who belong to Messiah; 24 then the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father after He has destroyed all rule and all authority and power. 25 For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For God has “put all things in subjection underneath His feet.” But when the psalmist says that “all” has been put in subjection, it is clear that this does not include God Himself, who put all things under Messiah. 28 Now when all things become subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also become subject to the One who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all”* (1Corinthians 15:23-28). And, we also learn from Yeshua that we cannot know the Father unless the Son chooses to reveal Him to us. *6 Yeshua said to him (Thomas), “I am the way, the truth, and the life! No one comes to the Father except through Me”* (John 14:6). We can’t just be good and follow *Torah* and expect to be accepted by the Father. The only way is through the Son.

28 *“Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and ‘you will find rest for your souls.’ 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light”* (Matthew 11:28-30). This is a continuation of Yeshua’s words about His authority. When he said: “come to me,” He is giving an invitation to reveal us to the Father. As we just saw, it is only through Him that there is a way to the Father and He encourages us to come to Him to find that way. It will result in our receiving His rest, salvation. He encourages us to take His yoke. A yoke is a collar which can be placed over the neck of a draft animal such as a horse or an ox. This yoke, when securely fitted to the neck, enables an animal to pull a plow or some kind of a load more efficiently. In Judaism, there is a phrase, the “yoke of the kingdom,” which is a reference to a person being completely dedicated to the service of G-d and to advancing ADONAI’s ways in the world. That is the kind of yoke which we all should have. Those who are completely sold out to Yeshua have taken Yeshua’s yoke, the “yoke of the kingdom,” His Kingdom.

When He said: *‘you will find rest for your souls,’* He was again using *remez* and quoting from Jeremiah: *16 Thus says Adonai: “Stand in the roads and look. Ask for the ancient paths—where the good way is— and walk in it. Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We won’t walk in it.’”* (Jeremiah 6:16). By going back to Jeremiah’s words, we see that while Yeshua actually said “you will find rest for your soul,” He hinted at more. In effect, He was

saying that the rest for our souls can be found by walking in the ancient paths. The ancient path is the narrow way which leads to life. Yeshua said: *13 "Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and those who enter through it are many. 14 How narrow is the gate and difficult the way that leads to life, and those who find it are few"* (Matthew 7:13-14). The ancient paths are the paths which lead us away from the ways of the world and lead us to the original truths of G-d's Word. Yeshua is encouraging us to follow the *netivot olam*, the ancient paths. These paths are truths. They are everything which He has taught us, His words, but also the words of Moses and the prophets, words which He continually referred to, to lead us to His Way. His yoke is easy and His burden is light. It is a yoke of faith with obedience. As Yeshua's brother *Ya'acov* said: *17 "So also faith, if it does not have works, is dead by itself"* (Jacob 2:17). This is not a yoke of religious observance as a means of salvation. It is the act of a loving child who understands the righteous commands of the Father and the Son and wishes to be obedient and pleasing to them. *29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and 'you will find rest for your souls'* (Matthew 11:29). May we all take Yeshua's yoke of servitude to Him. It's not hard!