



Matthew Lesson 21

December 22, 2020

Scriptures from TLV

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

16:13-20

We continue tonight with our study of the Book of Matthew, which we are calling “The *Megillah* of Matthew,” “The Scroll of Matthew.” We have called it that because it is such a Jewish book. But, obviously, when it was first written it was a scroll, since books with pages were far in the future. Tonight, we will only cover one incident in Yeshua’s ministry on earth. At Caesarea Philippi, we will hear Him make several declarations and also a very Hebraic statement, one which His disciples would have clearly understood.

We begin by learning where Caesarea Philippi was located and something about the history of the place at which Yeshua taught His disciples. This modern map shows Caesarea Philippi a few miles north of what appears to be a good-sized lake. And, it used to be a lake, Hula Lake, but because it was a swampy and marshy area full of malaria mosquitoes, it was mostly drained in about 1950. Today, it is called Hula Plain, a very fertile agricultural area. Today, Caesarea Philippi is just a ruin. Adjacent to it is another ruin called Baniyas. More about that in a moment.

Switching now to a different map, we see Caesarea Philippi at the top left of the red area. The red area was the Tetrarchy of Batanaea, the part of Herod the Great’s kingdom which was ruled by his son Philip after his death. Philip, also called Herod Philip, built this city and named it Caesarea in honor of Caesar Augustus. Philippi was added to the name later to distinguish it from Caesarea Maritima on the Mediterranean coast.

Going back to our first map, notice Baniyas. Also nearby is the ancient city of Dan. This may seem like a little bit too much history, but it all fits in perfectly with this event. Baniyas was an ancient community of Greek oriented people which was dedicated to the worship of the so-called Greek god Pan and was originally called Panias. We’ve visited it a number of times. We were told that a thousand or more years ago, the local Arab residents couldn’t pronounce the p and it came out Baniyas instead of Panias. Whether that is true or not, I don’t know, but the name was changed. The two sites, Caesarea Philippi and Baniyas are adjoining.

*13 When Yeshua came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is” (Matthew 16:13 TLV)? Here it is from Mark: 27 Now Yeshua and His disciples went out to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way He asked His disciples, “Who do people say that I am” (Mark 8:27 TLV)? Luke 9 also covers the incident, but doesn’t give the location. From Matthew and Mark, the statements about the region of Caesarea Philippi and the villages around Caesarea Philippi are both correct. Being in a village around Caesarea Philippi, I believe, correctly identifies the location as Baniyas. Baniyas is at the foot of Mount Hermon. Its ancient name, Panias, and what formerly went on there has much to do with a statement which Yeshua made to His disciples while they were there.*

He asked, “Who do men say that I am?” *14 They answered, “Some say John the Immerser, others say Elijah, and still others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.” 15 He said, “But who do*

you say I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17 Yeshua said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 16:14-17 TLV)! Simon Peter was the only one who answered. And, he had the correct answer revealed to him by the Father through His *Ruach* that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of the Living G-d!

Because Peter answered correctly, Yeshua said this to him: 18 "And I also tell you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My community; and the gates of Sheol will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:18 TLV). Initially, Yeshua referred to Peter as *Shimon BarYonah*, Simon, son of Jonah, his actual name. But now, He gives him a new name and calls him Peter and then says "upon this rock." What do the name Peter and the word rock have to do with each other? If Matthew was originally written in Hebrew, as I believe it was, Yeshua would have used the appropriate Hebrew words to make the distinction we are about to describe between these two words. But, since Matthew is now translated into Greek, the two Greek words for Peter and rock continue to have the same relationship as they would have had in Hebrew. Peter is the English equivalent of the Greek *Petros*. *Petros* is a masculine word and is used appropriately as a name for a male. What the word *petros* actually means is not agreed upon by everyone. Many of you have heard it referred to as meaning "a pebble," but Strong's Concordance does not agree with that and defines it as "a stone" or "a boulder." Pebble is too small. Why would Yeshua name *Shimon* "a little pebble?" But, there is an "in between." According to other Greek sources, Strong's is only partially correct. *Petros* does mean stone, but not boulder. Other sources say that *petros* means "a piece of rock; a stone; a single stone; movable, insecure, shifting, or rolling." Is it possible that by giving Simon the name Peter, *Petros*, Yeshua was both giving him the stability of a slightly larger stone, but also alluding to Peter's upcoming denial of Him, where the words movable, insecure, shifting, or rolling could also apply?

The word rock is *petra*, feminine gender, and means "a rock; a cliff; a projecting rock; mother rock; huge mass; solid formation; fixed; immovable; enduring." This is a huge rock, even a mountain of rock. By saying that *petros* means boulder is Stone's interjecting their theology? There are those who would like it to mean boulder because they believe that Peter is also the *petra*, the huge rock, upon which Yeshua said He would build His *Ecclesia*, His Congregation. We do not agree with that. Peter was not the rock, the *petra*, and was not the first pope. Yeshua did not build His *Ecclesia* upon him, the man Peter. Here is what Yeshua essentially said: "You are Petros and upon this petra I will build my community." Peter is *petros*, but the *petra*, the rock upon which Yeshua will build His community is a truth, the truth which Peter recognized. He understood that "the Son of Man" is Messiah, the Son of the living G-d. That truth is the *petra*, the boulder, the cliff of rock or even mountain of rock, the huge rock upon which Yeshua would build His Community.

Our Hebrew oriented Bibles call Peter by his Hebrew name *Kefa*. That is because another name is given for him in the *Ketuvim Sh'lichim*: 42 Andrew brought Simon to Yeshua. Yeshua looked at him and said, "You are Simon, son of John. You shall be called *Kefa* (which is translated Peter)" (John 1:42 TLV). What this tells us is that Yeshua had already given Simon the name Peter. As John 1 tells us, this giving of the new name was when they first met as Yeshua was walking by the Sea of Galilee. When they were at Caesarea Philippi, Simon had already been named Peter, but Yeshua repeated it there to make His point. When they first met Yeshua gave him the name Peter, He knew that He would be referring to this name in the future. Strong's says that the name is: "*Képhas*: "a rock," Cephias, a name given to the apostle Peter." It also says that *Kephas* is Aramaic for "rock." That's very close to *Kefa*, isn't it? The Book of John also brings up a question. Matthew says Simon son of Jonah and John says Simon son of John. Is the answer that Peter's father possibly had two names? We don't know.

Going back to Yeshua's statement to Peter, I believe that it is entirely possible that Yeshua said to him in Hebrew, "You are *Kefa*, meaning a rock, and upon this *tsur*, this boulder, this huge truth you have understood, I will build my community. But, in Greek the understanding is the same. The relationship of *petros* to *petra* is the same as *kefa* to *tsur*. But, of course you understand that I don't

know what Yeshua said in Hebrew. That's just what I think He may have said. But, it is possible that He said that.

18 *"And I also tell you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My community; and the gates of Sheol will not overpower it"* (Matthew 16:18 TLV). "And the gates of *She'ol* will not overpower My *Ecclesia*, My body of believers!" In the Greek, the word which the TLV translated *She'ol* is *hades*. According to Strong's, *hades* means, "the abode of the dead," or "the unseen world." *She'ol* means the same thing, but in the Hebrew.

Since my first visit to Israel and Caesarea Philippi I have thought that the place where Yeshua was teaching His disciples was significant and related to what He said. This picture is of the area where they were possibly gathered. At the very bottom right of the picture are several benches. We sat on them and looked across the water. There is a small spring which flows out from the base of Mount Hermon and forms this small pond. Later, it becomes the Banias River, one of three major streams which eventually join to form the Jordan River. I can picture Yeshua's disciples sitting on those very same benches as He spoke to them. Possibly, He gestured toward the large cave in the upper left where the people are standing. Within it are the ruins of a temple of worship to Pan and the reason for the place being named Panias. Is it possible that Yeshua by saying gates of *She'ol* was referring to the works of *HaSatan*? That is one possibility. At Yeshua's death on the stake, *HaSatan* was defeated and cast out. Speaking of His death in just a few days, He said: 31 *"Now is the judgment of this world! Now the prince of this world will be driven out"* (John 12:31 TLV)! Through Yeshua's sacrificial death on the stake, *HaSatan* was defeated. Even though he's still here and working to deceive, he's already been defeated. The end has already been written and *HaSatan* loses.

Here is another possible answer. Yeshua could have meant that "His death" would not overpower His congregation of believers. Even though He would be crucified and buried, He would rise from the dead and build His *Ecclesia*, His assembly, in Hebrew, His *Kehilah*. He was emphasizing the fact that the powers of death could not defeat Him. Yeshua's body of believers would not only survive, but thrive, and attack and pull down the strongholds of the enemy. So, perhaps Yeshua was pointing to *HaSatan*'s lair, the Temple of Pan. *HaSatan* was the author of all of the pagan religions and false gods that human beings dreamed up. But, He was probably also referring to His death, which was not a defeat, but a victory. And, through His death, His body of believers would continually win in the battle against the Adversary.

19 *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Whatever you forbid on earth will have been forbidden in heaven and what you permit on earth will have been permitted in heaven."* 20 *Then He ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah* (Matthew 16:19-20 TLV). Was Yeshua speaking to *Kefa* alone when He said this? I think not. I believe that He was speaking to all of His disciples as being future leaders in His body and that by extension He was speaking to every future leader within His body.

The Tree of Life version of the Bible uses forbid and permit, but binding and loosing is equally correct. "Binding and loosing" is originally a Jewish phrase, one in use by the rabbis for several generations before Yeshua. Binding means to forbid by an indisputable authority, and loosing means to permit by an indisputable authority. It was a ruling made by a human being, someone in authority. It was about *halacha*, the interpretation of *Torah* which told them how to walk; how to understand *Torah*. When Yeshua spoke of binding and loosing, He wasn't talking about spiritual warfare. He was talking about the authority to make decisions, the authority from both Him and His Father to make decisions on the earth. Simon Peter and the other disciples would have also understood that Yeshua was speaking about something consistent with Jewish thought and practice. It wasn't a new thing, something which only Yeshua Himself knew. It was something entirely familiar to all of them because it was how the spiritual leaders in Israel would either approve something or ban it according to the teachings in *Torah*. The Hebrew verbs אָסַר (*āsar*) meaning bind and הִתִּיר (*hitir*) meaning loose, each have more than one meaning in the Hebrew language. But by Yeshua's time, *āsar* had acquired

the additional meaning of “forbid,” and its opposite, *hitir*, had acquired the meaning of “permit.” These are the meanings most often found in rabbinic literature and I believe that that is how we should understand Yeshua’s words today. Yeshua gives His leaders the authority to *āsar* and to *hitir*. In essence, Yeshua said to Peter that He was giving him the authority to make decisions about the faith, the authority to make *halacha*, the way that His followers would walk.

And when Yeshua said to Peter that “I give this authority to you, He didn’t just mean to him alone.” He meant that this authority was given to those in leadership of His Messianic Community then and in the future. And today, that means that this authority is given to the leadership of the various branches of Yeshua’s followers, both in Christianity and Messianic Judaism. Each community has been given the authority to develop *halacha*, how they are to walk spiritually, for those under their authority. The authorities in Christianity have sanctioned certain ways of interpreting Scripture and certain days to honor. They have been given authority and the responsibility from Yeshua to do that. Yeshua has given that same authority and responsibility to leaders in Messianic Judaism to develop our *halacha*, how we interpret Scripture and which days we honor, and so forth. We can all bind certain things, that is, forbid them, and we can all loose certain things, permit them. Yeshua has given us this authority. Who in His body is correct in his interpretation? I’m certain that the answer is none of us because we see in part and we prophesy in part. No one group in Yeshua’s body is completely correct. But, it is not our job to determine who is right. Yeshua will ultimately make that decision. But it is clear that each group has the authority from Yeshua to make determinations for their followers. And each group is not to criticize the other. We are commanded to love each other and to be in unity and that is the direction in which I believe that we are now going as a body.

The “keys to the kingdom” is the term which describes the authority which Yeshua has given to leaders within His body. It wasn’t just to *Kefa* or just to the pope, but to all leaders in all of the various denominations and fellowships who trust and follow Yeshua. We all now know that Yeshua, the “Son of Man,” is the “Son of ADONAI, the Living G-d.” And, we live and walk in that truth. We are the present expression of His Kingdom on earth, His *talmidim*, His disciples, who are awaiting His return! *Shalom aleichem!*