



Matthew Lesson 3

April 7, 2020

Scriptures from TLV

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”
“2:1-23”

Tonight we begin chapter 2 and are continuing with our general theme, the Jewishness of the Gospel of Matthew which because of its Jewishness, we are calling the *Megillah* of Matthew, the Scroll of Matthew. Our goal through this study is to gain a better understanding of Matthew as we study it through Jewish eyes. Scripture verses are from the Tree of Life Version of the Bible. We have in our past two lessons discussed some of the methods of teaching used by the ancient rabbis and *Torah* Teachers, the *Sopherim*, and we are not disappointed by finding more of them in chapter 2. There are three, perhaps four, uses of one particular method with which you are already familiar. I am referring to *remez*, the use of a statement to hint back at a Scripture in order to make a point.

Chapter 2 opens with Yeshua already having been born in Bethlehem during the time of King Herod’s reign. Men described as Magi came to Herod from the east and asked where they could find the one called “the King of the Jews.” The major points that are brought out in this chapter are: who the King of the Jews is, where the prophets foretold that He was to be born and where they foretold that He was to live when He entered into the ministry for which He was sent.

The characters in this chapter are in order, Herod, the Magi, the ruling *kohanim* (priests), *Torah* scholars (*Sopherim*, scribes), Yeshua, His mother *Miryam*, the Angel of ADONAI and lastly, Joseph. We know who Herod was. He was an Idumean, an Edomite, a descendant of Esau, Jacob’s brother. His father Antipater was a convert to Judaism and an official appointed by Julius Caesar to handle the affairs of Judea. Through his father’s influence, Herod, also a convert to Judaism, was appointed Governor of Galilee. Later, he led a revolt against the Hasmoneans, the ruling descendants of Judah Maccabee. He was very politically savvy and he talked the Romans into proclaiming him as King of Judea. It was the question which the Magi asked him which caused him so much concern; actually, fear. They were seeking the newborn King of Jews and Herod thought that he was the King of the Jews. This newborn was a political rival.

The Magi had seen Yeshua’s star in the east and had travelled a great distance to worship Him. Who were they? The title Magi is a word taken from the Greek word *magos* meaning astrologer or magician. According to the Complete Jewish Study Bible, the Magi were not sorcerers, magicians or astrologers, although they did observe the stars. And, they would have had to have done that in order to observe the star in the east which led them to seek the King of the Jews. According to recent Jewish scholarship, they were sages, possibly wise men of Persia who came from either the Medo-Persian Empire or were sages from Babylon. Jews had lived in those areas since the time of the Prophet Daniel. It is very possible that these Magi were Jewish sages, later generation scholars, maybe even

descendants of those who trained under Daniel some four hundred years earlier. I don't believe that they were Gentile astrologers. An interesting side point regarding where they came from is that at the time of Yeshua's birth, there were more Jews living in Babylon than there were in the Land of Israel. There were many, many Jews there, and many Jewish scholars who did not return to Israel after the captivity. Babylon had remained an important center of Judaism and the Babylonian *Talmud* was written there some 200-400 years after Yeshua's time.

Remez is the Hebraic teaching method which is featured in Matthew Chapter 2. It is one of four methods of teaching which were in use during Yeshua's day and even before. He, Himself, used *remez* frequently in the things which He said. Many hundreds of years later, *remez* and the three other related approaches were given the name *PaRDeS* to describe them as a whole. *PaRDeS* as a Hebrew word, means "garden," but it is actually an acronym formed from the first letters of these four methods. It refers to four spiritual gardening tools, four different approaches to biblical exegesis. The first, and simplest, method is *p'shat*, טפף, the Pa in *PaRDeS*. It is the literal or direct meaning of a Scripture passage. Second is *remez*, רמז, the R in *PaRDeS*, and it hints at a hidden meaning, often by linking it with an earlier Scripture. Next is *d'rash* or *midrash*, שרר, the De in *PaRDeS*. It means to inquire, and is an allegorical application of a text. Last is *sod*, סוד, the S in *PaRDeS*. It means secret and is a mystical or hidden meaning arrived at through the numerical values of the Hebrew letters, unusual spellings, transposing letters, etc. You could say that Matthew's use of *gematria* in arranging Yeshua's ancestry which we discussed in Lesson 1 was a form of *sod*.

The first use of *remez* in chapter 2 is found in the inquiry of the Magi: 2... *"Where is the One who has been born King of the Jews (Judeans)? For we saw His star in the east and have come to worship Him"* (Matthew 2:2b). The word "star" in this verse is *remez*, and it hints back at Balaam's prophesy in Numbers: 17 *"I see him, yet not at this moment. I behold him, yet not in this location. For a star will come from Jacob, a scepter will arise from Israel"* (Numbers 24:17a). The Magi's knowledge of *Torah* would have been additional evidence that they were Jews.

When Herod heard their question, it upset him so much that he called the head *kohanim* (chief priests) and the *Torah* teachers (the Scribes) to find out what they knew. He asked them where the Messiah would be born and they replied, "in Bethlehem." What they said to Herod was a paraphrase of what the prophet wrote: 6 *"And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; For out of you shall come a ruler who will shepherd My people Israel."* (Matthew 2:6). The prophet is Micah: 1 *But you, Bethlehem Ephrata— least among the clans of Judah— from you will come out to Me One to be ruler in Israel, One whose goings forth are from of old, from days of eternity* (Micah 5:1). Not only does this prophecy identify the ruler who will be shepherd, king over Israel, but also identifies Him as deity, one who has eternally been here. This came through Micah some 700 years before Yeshua's day. After asking the Magi when the star first appeared, Herod sent them to Bethlehem with instructions to let him know when they found the baby. When the Magi arrived in Bethlehem, they found Yeshua with his mother *Miryam* and they worshipped Him, presenting Him with gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. But, they were warned in a dream not to go back to Herod and so they took another way home.

After the Magi had gone, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream: 13 *"Now when they had gone, behold, an angel of Adonai appears to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Get up! Take the Child and His mother and flee to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search*

for the Child, to kill Him” (Matthew 2:6 TLV). Joseph took his family to Egypt and they remained there until after Herod died. The next verse is the next incidence of *remez* in this chapter: 15 *This was to fulfill what was spoken by Adonai through the prophet, saying, “Out of Egypt I called My son”* (Matthew 2:15b TLV). This is a hint back to something said by the Prophet Hosea: 1 *“When Israel was a youth I loved him, and out of Egypt I called My son”* (Hosea 11:1 TLV). Our naysayers don’t like this and say that this only refers to Israel being called out of Egypt and not to Yeshua. And, it is referring to Israel as a people, but there is still a larger perspective to be seen here. ADONAI did call Israel, the nation, His son. He said to Moses: 22 *You are to say to Pharaoh, “This is what Adonai says: ‘Israel is My son, My firstborn’*” (Exodus 4:22 TLV). To understand what Matthew is telling us, we must bring together related Scriptures. In Matthew chapter 1, we saw that the angel called Yeshua G-d’s Son. His words to Joseph revealed that Yeshua was the son of G-d through the *Ruach Kodesh*, G-d’s Spirit. The angel also told Joseph in his dream: 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 1:23). The Son born to *Miryam* was and is G-d with us. But, we also have to connect Isaiah 9 to this train of thought: 5 *For to us a child is born, a son will be given to us, and the government will be upon His shoulder. His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God My Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace* (Isaiah 9:5). There are similar Messianic verses in Psalm 2 and Proverbs 30. 7 *I will declare the decree of Adonai. He said to me: “You are My Son— today I have become Your Father”* (Psalm 2:7). 4 *“Who has gone up into heaven, and come down? Who has gathered the wind in the palm of His hand? Who has wrapped the waters in a cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name and what is the name of His son—if you know”* (Proverbs 30:4)? You have to connect the dots to have full understanding. This is the way that *remez* works. It hints at a certain thing or event which then causes you to understand that it is connected to the original statement. Matthew connected Yeshua with Hosea’s Scripture about G-d’s Son being called out of Egypt because he saw Him as the fulfillment of what ADONAI did the first time in physically bringing the people of Israel out of Egypt. From this, we can derive something more; that Yeshua, whom we also know as the second Moses, is the one who will bring the people of Israel out of spiritual Egypt, the personification of sin.

After a while, Herod realized that the Magi were not coming back to give him any information. In a rage, he gave orders to kill all boys in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or less. He determined that age range from what the Magi had told him regarding when they had first seen the star. Verse 1 of chapter 2 tells us that Yeshua had already been born when the Magi came to Jerusalem. Very likely, they had come much later, arriving maybe up to two years later. Presumably, Yeshua had just been born when they first saw His star and would have been somewhere between birth and two years old when they visited Him.

16 *Then when Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he became furious. And he sent and killed all boys in Bethlehem and in all its surrounding area, from two years old and under, according to the time he had determined from the magi* (Matthew 2:16). In what Herod did by murdering the young boys of Bethlehem, we find a third incidence of *remez*, hinting at an earlier Scripture: 17 *Then was fulfilled what was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet, saying, 18 “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and loud wailing, Rachel sobbing for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more”* (Matthew 2:17-18). To understand this, we have to understand that the meaning of Jeremiah’s words about Rachel weeping for her children was actually about something else. Jeremiah’s reference is to Rachel weeping for her actual children, her son Benjamin and her grandsons

Ephraim and Manasseh. *14 Thus says Adonai: “A voice is heard in Ramah —lamentation and bitter weeping— Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted for her children, because they are no more”* (Jeremiah 31:15). This is about Babylon’s assault against the Kingdom of Judah in Jeremiah’s time. The captives, Rachel’s descendants, were assembled at the town of Ramah in the Territory of Benjamin north of Jerusalem. Some of these were killed and the others were taken to Babylon. Jeremiah was speaking symbolically, because Rachael didn’t actually weep for her children. She had been dead for hundreds of years. Now, here is the connection of Herod’s murder of the baby boys in Bethlehem to Rachel’s weeping for her children. We know from Genesis 25 that Rachel, Jacob’s wife, died after giving birth to Benjamin just outside Bethlehem. Verse 25 says: *19 Then Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrat (that is, Bethlehem)* (Genesis 25:19). To this day, her tomb is just outside the town. Here is the *remez*, the connection. Though she had been dead for 1,700 years at the time that Yeshua was a baby, Rachel was prophetically connected to two different events, both of which occurred long after her life ended. She was seen to be symbolically weeping for her physical children who lived during the Babylonian invasion more than 600 years before Yeshua’s day, but also weeping with the mothers in Bethlehem for the children whom Herod killed at the doorstep of her tomb. These two events had no actual connection at all, but were the use of *remez* by Matthew to emphasize the deep mourning which took place in Bethlehem.

While our minds are still on Bethlehem, I would like for you to consider another prophecy by Micah. The one which we read a moment ago about the King of the Jews being born in Bethlehem is from chapter 5. In chapter 4, Micah prophesies about the end of days and then he says: *2 Then many nations will go and say: “Come, let us go up to the mountain of Adonai, to the House of the God of Jacob! Then He will direct us in His ways, and we will walk in His paths.” For Torah will go forth from Zion, and the word of Adonai from Jerusalem* (Micah 4:2). This is our great hope, what we are waiting for right now, that Yeshua will return to earth as King and rule over all the earth from the mountain of Adonai, Jerusalem. Micah continues with this subject a few verses later and this is the second connection to Bethlehem for which we are looking: *8 But you, watchtower of the flock, are the hill of the Daughter of Zion. To you she will come. Even the former dominion will come, the kingdom of the Daughter of Jerusalem* (Micah 4:8). Watchtower of the flock, *Migdal Eder*, מִגְדַּל-עֵדֶר, in Hebrew was a very significant place. There is information in the *Talmud* about it which identifies it as the watchtower which guarded the fields where lambs set for slaughter in the Temple were being raised. We are mixing our story in Matthew with the Gospel of Luke a bit here, but the connection is that Bethlehem, where Yeshua was born, is a prophetic place regarding Him in more than one way. This is just a possibility, but consider it: Was Yeshua born in an animal feeding trough in a stable on the grounds of fields where shepherds were watching their flocks, a place which had a guard tower, *Migdal Eder*, the Tower of the Flock, which was also the place where the High Priest was raising lambs for slaughter in the Temple, even the lambs that were to be slaughtered at Passover? If this was true, the Lamb of G-d, Yeshua, was born in Bethlehem, the place where the King of Israel was prophesied to be born, but was Himself the lamb, the prophetic lamb, born in the place where the sacrificial lambs were being raised. It could be true. ADONAI is very specific about prophetic events. Otherwise, why would Micah even mention it?

Meanwhile, Joseph and his family are in Egypt: *19 But when Herod died, behold, an angel of Adonai appears in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, 20 saying, “Get up! Take the Child and His mother and go to the land of Israel, for those seeking the Child’s life are dead”* (Matthew 2:19-20 TLV). And, he did. In these verses we also note that the angel did not say “go to the

land of Palestine.” Throughout the *Ketuvim Sh'lichim*, the writings of Yeshua's disciples, this land is only referred to as the Land of Israel, *Eretz Yisra'el*. Unfortunately, many Christian scholars refer to Israel as Palestine. In some cases, it is because of their political agenda and in others, maybe not paying close enough attention to the Scriptures. The use of Palestine as a name for Israel in Yeshua's day is an anachronism, a thing appropriate to a period other than in which it exists. The name Palestine was never used to refer to Israel before about 136 CE, more than one hundred years after Yeshua's time. That was the time of Israel's second revolt against Rome. After Israel was defeated, the Emperor Hadrian took out his anger on the Jews and renamed Jerusalem, Aelia Capitolina and Israel, Palestine, after their ancient enemies the Philistines. It was called Palestine from that time until 1948 and the Jews living there before 1948 were called Palestinians. In 1948, the nation of Israel was born in a day, just as prophesied by Isaiah in 66:8 and the Jews were no longer Palestinians, but now Israelis. And, the Palestinian Post changed its name to the Jerusalem Post. The Arabs living in Israel at that time were not Palestinians either, that is, until the PLO, the Palestinian Liberation Organization was formed in 1964. From that founding, they now claim that they are the original Palestinians and that the Jews have no claim on the land. But, Scripture is clear. Micah prophesied some 2,700 years before Yasser Arafat's day: *1 But you, Bethlehem Ephrata— least among the clans of Judah— from you will come out to Me One to be ruler in Israel,..* (Micah 5:1a). And, Yeshua our King, will one day soon return to the Land of Israel. And, when He returns, He will also return as the Messiah of those who now call themselves Palestinian, for many will put their trust in Him.

Before Joseph returned with his family to Israel, he heard that Archelaus had become king after his father Herod's death. Being afraid that he would continue with Herod's retribution and also being warned in a dream, Joseph did not take his family back to Bethlehem. He went instead to the Galilee to Nazareth, the town where he and Miriam had lived before going to Bethlehem. *23 And he went and lived in a city called Natzeret, to fulfill what was spoken through the prophets, that Yeshua shall be called a Natzrati* (Matthew 2:23).

וַיָּבֹא וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּעִיר הַנְּקֻרָאֵת נְצָרֶת לְמִלְאֵת הַדְּבָר הַנְּאֻמָּר עַל־פִּי הַנְּבִיאִים כִּי נְצָרִי יִקְרָא לוֹ:

Vayavo vayashev ba'ir hanikret Natzaret limlot hadavar hane'emar al-pi hanevi'im ki Notzri yikarei lo.

This is how Messianic Jews in Israel read this verse in Hebrew. And, in it is the final incidence of *remez* in Matthew chapter 2. Matthew tells us that Joseph took his family to Nazareth so that Yeshua would fulfill that which was spoken by the prophets, that He would be called a *Natzrati*, someone from Nazareth. Don't get confused, but *Notzri*, the term used in the modern Hebrew version of Matthew 2:23 which we just read, is the modern Hebrew term for Christian. The Greek is *Nazóraios* ((nad-zo-rah'-yos) and this corresponds well with the Hebrew, *Natzrati*. By saying Yeshua would be a *Natzrati*, Matthew tied Him to Isaiah's prophecy: *1 Then a shoot (הַטֵּר) will come forth out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch (נֶצֶר) will bear fruit out of His roots* (Isaiah 11:1 TLV). Isaiah says that a shoot, a *choter*, הַטֵּר, will come from the stem of *Yishai*, David's father, and a branch, a *netzer*, נֶצֶר, will grow out of his roots. Yeshua is both the *netzer*, the branch from Jesse, and a *Natzrati*, a man from Nazareth. And, *remez* connects the two. The English term Nazarene may have or could have easily been

transliterated from either the Greek, *Nazóraios* ((nad-zo-rah'-yos), or from the Hebrew, *Natzrati*. And, that's why ADONAI sent them back to Nazareth rather than to Bethlehem; so that Yeshua would be called a Nazarene.

This concludes chapter 2. Matthew's use of *remez* here continues to demonstrate the Jewishness of his Gospel. Or, should we say, the “*Yehudahness*,” the “*Judahness*”. That is what it really says in verse 2: 2... “*Where is the One who has been born King of the Judeans*” (Matthew 2:2b)? The Hebrew book of Matthew says: *Melekh haYehudim*, מֶלֶךְ הַיְהוּדִים. This literally means King of the Judeans, the citizens of *Yehudah*, the southern kingdom of Israel. This agrees with the Greek term used here, *Ioudaios* (ee-oo-dah'-yos), Judeans. Particularly when in reference to the Land of Israel, it should be translated *Yehudim*, Judeans. Oh well, we'll go with the flow. King of the Jews it is!

Context is important and we should be nit-pickers when it comes to detail. We all need to forget the images that have been put into our minds of Mary riding a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem and three kings at baby Jesus' manger. None of this is in the Scripture. I exhort you to be Berean. *10 As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas to Berea. Upon arrival, they made their way to the Jewish synagogue. 11 Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, because they received the message with goodwill, searching the Scriptures each day to see whether these things were true* (Acts 17:11). Even as we receive the Gospel message with goodwill, we should also be like the Jews of Berea and search the Scriptures daily to confirm that these things are true. Don't just take my word for it. Search it for yourselves!

Shalom, shalom! 7 And the shalom of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Messiah Yeshua. (Philippians 4:7)!

Shalom shalom!

Benjamin and her actual children, her son
Ephraim and her grandsons