



Matthew Lesson 8

May 26, 2020

Scriptures from TLV

“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

5:20-48

The entirety of the Sermon on the Mount is in chapters 5, 6 and 7. We particularly the Jewishness of Matthew’s Gospel throughout it, complete with many Hebraisms. As we visualize Yeshua speaking about so many different things from this mountain in Israel, we can readily understand the comparison between what He was doing and Moses on Mount Sinai. As the second Moses, who is also the “living Word” from John chapter 1, we would expect him to explain *Torah*. John said of Him: 17 “*Torah was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Yeshua the Messiah*” (John 1:17). The TLV correctly punctuated this sentence. Many Bible versions enter their own bias by saying, “Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus the Christ.” But, John was not comparing the two, just giving a continuation. Grace here probably means more than just the grace of salvation, but it definitely includes that. The *Torah* given through Moses was the only *Torah* at the time. The truth which came through Yeshua was to explain the finer points of *Torah*.

We begin tonight with verse 20. Logically, it should have been included with verse 19 which we discussed last week, but can also stand alone. 19 “*Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees and Torah scholars, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:19-20)! Yeshua criticized certain Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 15 (2-6) because they perverted *Torah* by overlooking the care of their parents and by so doing violate Exodus 20:12, “Honor your mother and father.” Yeshua saw their works, but He also knew their hearts. The Kingdom of Heaven, in other Gospels, the Kingdom of G-d, is His Movement, an increasing number of Israelites who believed in Him and followed Him. By saying, *you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven*, He was telling these Scribes and Pharisees that unless their hearts and their actions changed, they could not be His disciples. Their problem was their righteousness, their standing before ADONAI. By saying this, Yeshua was saying that they were not righteous before G-d. Righteousness meant that a person was morally correct and justifiable before ADONAI. In Luke 1 Zechariah and Elizabeth were said to be 6 ... *righteous before Adonai, walking without fault in all His commandments and instructions* (Luke 1:6b). Even though this verse states that they were faultless in keeping the *mitzvot*, I believe that their righteousness also included their heart relationship with ADONAI. Those particular Scribes and Pharisees not only twisted the *Torah*, but most likely also lacked the personal relationship with G-d. Zechariah was what was called a *tzadiq*, a righteous man, a man who not only kept ADONAI’s commandments, but also had a circumcised heart. Our righteousness today is a bit different. Our initial righteousness comes through trusting in Yeshua, but that is not all. We must be faithful to follow Him.

The next six verses all go together. 21 “*You have heard it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever commits murder shall be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I tell you that*

*everyone who is angry with his brother shall be subject to judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca' shall be subject to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be subject to fiery Gehenna. 23 "Therefore if you are presenting your offering upon the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. 25 "Make friends quickly with your opponent while you are with him on the way. Otherwise, your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the assistant, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 Amen, I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid back the last penny" (Matthew 5:21-26)! Yeshua was using *remez*, hinting back, to make them think about the sixth commandment: 13 "Do not murder" (Exodus 20:13). The judgment to which they would have been subject was that of the *Sanhedrin*, the supreme court of Israel which was charged with carrying out ADONAI's justice. But, Yeshua's purpose for saying this went deeper. He was saying that anger can lead to murder. It is better to understand that evil thoughts must be eliminated than to have them escalate to the point of murder. Incidentally, the *Torah* says murder, not kill. There is a difference. "Thou shalt not kill" was imprinted in past years on many minds through certain Bible versions, but most have now been corrected to say murder. Killing a human being can include self-defense and killing in war, not something we wish to do, but sometimes have to.*

*But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be subject to judgment.* The Greek word used here is *orgizó* (or-gid'-zo) and means "to make angry." The person described would have committed some offense against his brother and been subject to judgment, in this case, the local judgment of the *Beit Din*, the *synagogue* court. This would be the settlement of a dispute such as the one to which Yeshua referred in Matthew 18: 15 "Now if your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault while you're with him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother. 16 But if he does not listen, take with you one or two more, so that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand.' 17 But if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to Messiah's community. And if he refuses to listen even to Messiah's community, let him be to you as a pagan and a tax collector" (Matthew 18:15-17). Messiah's community refers here to the two or three judge court of every *synagogue*. This individual would have been angry with his brother over something. The brother would have tried to restore him through the first two steps, going to him personally and then going to him with a friend. The final step being was to bring him before the local judges in the *synagogue*. This procedure applies for us today in settling disputes. Seek to restore your brother first. If that doesn't work, take someone with you. If that doesn't work, ask the rabbis to step in and settle the situation.

*And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca' shall be subject to the council;* Whomever says to his brother, "you fool; you empty head," will be subject to the *Sanhedrin*, the high court of Israel. This would have been an escalation of anger and could possibly have been slander.

*And whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be subject to fiery Gehenna.* The Greek word used here is *móros*, and means dull, stupid or foolish, the root word of moron. Again, this seems to have been a progression of anger and what anger can lead to. He used the trash dump of the *Gehinnom* Valley next to Jerusalem and its fires as a visible picture to make reference to ADONAI's judgment. This person would not have been on G-d's righteous list. *Sha'ul* said: - Yeshua's point was that unless we deal with anger now, it can escalate to murder.

*"Therefore if you are presenting your offering upon the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."* This is a continuation of the discussion of anger. A person who wishes to make a gift to ADONAI, but has anger in his heart against his brother, is not spiritually prepared to give it. ADONAI does not desire our gifts if our hearts are not right. In Hosea 6, ADONAI said: 6 "For I delight in loyalty and not sacrifice,

*knowledge of God more than burnt offerings*" (Hosea 6:6). He did not suddenly stop the sacrifices in the Temple, but referred to the heart of the one who brought the offering. It is a mockery of our relationship with Yeshua if we ignore our sins. We must ask forgiveness and be reconciled with Him. It is not enough to just forgive our brother or sister mentally, it is best if we are reconciled with them personally.

*"Make friends quickly with your opponent while you are with him on the way. Otherwise, your opponent may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the assistant, and you will be thrown into prison."* This is also a reference to Matthew 15 which we discussed a moment ago. Yeshua was saying, "When you run into the one with whom you have a dispute, settle it then." If you don't, you face the possibility of being found guilty by the *Beit Din*, the synagogue house of judgment, a court which in Yeshua's day, had the power to imprison. This statement could also apply to judgment before the *Sanhedrin*.

We'll take verses 27-30 together. 27 *"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'* 28 *But I tell you that everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.* 29 *And if your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away! It is better for you that one part of your body should be destroyed, than that your whole body be thrown into Gehenna.* 30 *And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away! It is better for you that one part of your body should be destroyed, than that your whole body go into Gehenna"* (Matthew 5:27-30). Yeshua used the same approach here that He did with murder. In effect, He said: "You have heard it said:" 14 *"Do not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). Yeshua again went to the root, sexual lust, as something which must be dealt with before it leads to adultery. He probably was also referring to Exodus 20:17 which says, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife." According to Leviticus 20:10, the penalty for adultery was death. Yeshua said: *"But I tell you that everyone who looks upon a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."* A man or woman in Yeshua's day could not be condemned in court for impure thoughts, but Yeshua told them and is telling us that in *His* court, before His judgement seat, you can be judged. He tells us that it is better to deal with it here, now, rather than waiting until we stand before Him. He is not suggesting that we gouge out our eye if it looks with lust or that we cut off our hand. He was saying these are our parts which sin in this way and that we must control our thoughts. Job sets the example for us: 1 *"I made a covenant with my eyes not to pay attention to a virgin"* (Job 31:1). Yeshua said that we should deal with these sinful, lustful thoughts before they lead to adultery and to *Gehenna*, a guilty verdict by His judgment. Just as anger is sin, so are lustful thoughts.

31 *"It was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'* 32 *But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery"* (Matthew 5:31-32). By saying a certificate of divorce, Yeshua was referring to this command given by Moses: 1 *"Suppose a man takes a wife and marries her. Now if she doesn't find favor in his eyes because he has found something indecent in her, he is to write her a certificate of divorce, hand it to her and send her out from his house"* (Deuteronomy 24:1). But, it wasn't Moses that commanded it, it was ADONAI. Moses made no laws and commanded no *mitzvot* that weren't from Him. Yeshua was not saying that a man giving his wife a get, a certificate of divorce was not lawful. It was lawful. Because many men in that day had misused their power over their wives by unjustly divorcing them, Yeshua was defining what "something indecent in her" was. Something indecent could only be sexual immorality. It was the only ground which allowed a man to marry another without committing adultery. And, Yeshua addressed this to the men because they had the control. Women could not instigate a divorce. This is an important subject and because there is not enough time tonight to fully consider it, I will give you a portion of a much longer lesson which I taught several years ago. I will be happy to send the link to anyone interested.

To get more understanding of Yeshua's words here, I go again to the writings of David Bivin, one of the authors of *Understanding The Difficult Words of Jesus* and the present head of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research. Yeshua further discussed what He said here in Matthew 5 in Matthew 19:9. Dr. Bivin begins there. 9 *"Now I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, **and** marries another, commits adultery"* (Matthew 19:9). This is his explanation. The Greek word translated as "and" is *kai*. This small word makes a big difference. Both the Greek *kai* and the English "and" have the meaning of "and," but, Yeshua very likely was teaching in Hebrew. The word which He would have used is *vav*. *Vav* has a much wider range of meaning than the Greek *kai* and the English "and." Its meaning also includes the words: then, therefore, since, while, but and so. In Hebrew language study, it is called "the *vav* of purpose." A demonstration of how it works is found in Exodus 7:16. Regarding Pharaoh, ADONAI told Moses: 16 *"You are to say to him: Adonai, God of the Hebrews, has sent me to you, saying, 'Let My people go, **so** they may serve Me in the wilderness,' and behold, you have not listened"* (Exodus 7:16 TLV). The "*vav* of purpose" in this verse is translated as "so." We can see this in the word וַיִּעַבְדֵנִי, *v'ya'avduni*; "**so** they may serve me." It also could have been translated "**and** they may serve me," but that wouldn't seem to make much sense. "So" is the better translation. We could understand Yeshua's words as "Anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality (*vav*-in order to) marry another, commits adultery."

There is something similar in Luke 16: 18 *"Everyone who divorces his wife **and** marries another commits adultery"* (Luke 16:18a TLV). Considering the *vav* of purpose, what Yeshua most likely would have said is: "Everyone who divorces his wife **so** that he can marry another is committing adultery." "So" would have been the *vav* of purpose. But, what about the second half of this verse, 18b, which says: 18... *"And he who marries one who is divorced from a husband commits adultery"* (Luke 16:18b). The question is, would Yeshua have condemned the newly married husband to "living in adultery" just because he married a divorced woman? If you take this verse at face value, the way in which we read it in English, the divorced woman must remain single or she will enter into adultery with her next husband and also cause him to sin. In seeking to understand this, David Bivin was joined by Shmuel Safrai, also of the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research, to propose another possibility for understanding the second part of this verse. It is called the "Hebraic doublet." The doublet says something one way in one part of a sentence and then says the same thing in a slightly different way in the second part. If He was using the doublet, Yeshua would have said it one way in Luke 16:18a and said the same thing in a different way in Luke 16:18b. We have a good example of this in Psalm 119:15: 15 *"I will meditate on Your precepts (pik kudim), and regard Your ways (orach- [English-path])"* (Psalm 119:15 TLV). The psalmist is essentially saying in two different ways that he will keep ADONAI's *Torah*, His precepts and His ways or path. Looking at Luke 16:18 a and b as a doublet, we can understand it this way: "Everyone who divorces his wife **to** marry another commits adultery and any woman who divorces her husband **to** marry another commits adultery." The whole reason for divorcing is in order to marry another. Yeshua vigorously defended marriage. He was not for divorce. In Matthew 19 He said: 4 *"Haven't you read?" He answered. "He who created them from the beginning 'made them male and female' 5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' 6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate"* (Matthew 19:4-6 TLV). It is very clear that Yeshua says that marriage is to be permanent: *"Therefore what God has joined together, let no man separate."* And, He made it crystal clear that divorce was only for sexual immorality. If a man divorced just to be able to marry another whom he desired above his current spouse, Yeshua emphasized that if he divorced for that reason he committed adultery. In Yeshua's day, a woman couldn't divorce her husband to marry another. But, today she can and today it applies to her as well. "Every man who divorces his wife (in order to marry another) and marries another commits adultery and every woman who divorces her husband (in order to

marry another) and marries another commits adultery.” According to David Bivin’s understanding, the innocent spouse in such a relationship is not made into an adulterer if he or she remarries. The millions of former spouses today who were divorced for trivial reasons are free to remarry. And, those who have divorced in order to marry another, committed adultery.

With this in mind, let’s look again at Yeshua’s words in Matthew 5: 31 *“It was said, ‘Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery”* (Matthew 5:31-32). Looking at this statement in the way which we have just understood, Yeshua most likely meant: “Everyone who divorces his wife in order to marry another commits adultery and whoever who marries a woman whose husband divorced her for her sexual immorality, commits adultery.” In Yeshua’s day, the two leading rabbinic schools, the House of *Hillel* and the House of *Shammai*, had different understandings of Deuteronomy 24:1. In this case, “something indecent in her” in the Deuteronomy verse was what they debated. *Hillel* said it could be for something as simple as being “displeased because she burned his supper.” But, *Shammai* said that “something indecent” could only be “sexual immorality or adultery.” Yeshua essentially agreed with *Shammai* in this point. Even among Yeshua’s followers today, both men and women divorce not only to marry another, but also for many other trivial reasons.

33 *“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall carry out your oaths to Adonai.’ 34 But I tell you, do not swear at all—not by heaven, for it is the throne of God; 35 or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make a single hair white or black. 37 But let your word ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’—anything more than this is from the evil one”* (Matthew 5:33-37). Here again, Yeshua was referring to *Torah*, specifically to this command (also found in Numbers 30:3 and Deuteronomy 23:122): 12 *“You are not to swear by My Name falsely, and so profane the Name of your God. I am Adonai”* (Leviticus 19:12). In the generations surrounding Yeshua’s time, the swearing of oaths was widely used as a way to prevent lying. Although it may seem that Yeshua is changing *Torah*, He did not. The *Torah* warns against making false vows or breaking vows and oaths, but it does not require a man to make a vow or an oath in the first place. When He spoke about oaths, Yeshua most likely also had in mind this command from the Ten Words, 16 *“Do not bear false witness against your neighbor”* (Exodus 20:16) and a similar statement: 11 *“... You are not to lie. You are not to deceive one another”* (Leviticus 19:11b). The rabbis of Yeshua’s day also warned against making vows as a means of saying you did not lie. Yeshua said, “let your yes be yes and your no be no.” In our American courts of law, a person formerly had to “swear to tell the whole truth so help you God.” The current statement is “do you swear or affirm.” As a court witness, we don’t have to swear. We can affirm and let our yes be yes and our no be no.

38 *“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evildoer. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him also the other. 40 And the one wanting to sue you and to take your shirt, let him also have your coat. 41 Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two”* (Matthew 5:38-41). The Amorite king Hammurabi wrote a law code about 450 years before *Torah* was given and instituted the term “eye for eye and tooth for tooth.” It was physically enforced by the cutting off of body parts as a means of restitution. The term is also used in *Torah* in a legal sense as a way of restitution for loss. If someone borrowed a person’s donkey and it died, the owner could take the borrower to the *kohanim* and they would judge the value of the donkey and require payment to the owner. Physically cutting off a person’s part was never done in Israel. When Yeshua said: *“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evildoer,”* According to David Bivin, when Yeshua’s saying is translated back into Hebrew, it

seems to be a quotation of a well-known Hebrew proverb which is found in Psalms 37:1 and 8 and Proverbs 24:19. It is usually translated, “Do not fret because of evildoers,” and Yeshua most likely meant: “don’t take revenge.” Bivin suggests that the Greek *anthistémi* (anth-is'-tay-mee), the word resist in the TLV, can also be translated “take revenge.”

*“But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him also the other. And the one wanting to sue you and to take your shirt, let him also have your coat. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.”* These statements are a continuation of the same thought. Today we might say: “Don’t try to get even with evildoers.” Yeshua was not promoting pacifism, but that we should not seek revenge. Robert Lindsey offers this about “whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.” In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, Roman soldiers frequently forced someone to carry his gear. Rather than resist, be helpful and go further than asked. You will have a positive effect on someone who has treated you meanly.

42 *“Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you”* (Matthew 5:42). Yeshua was not saying that we are required to give money to whomever asks us or to lend to whomever asks us. His statement, to give or lend, was based on their need. By telling His disciples to give freely to those who asked of them and to lend to those who wanted to borrow from them, Yeshua was making reference to *Torah’s* command to help the poor. 7 *“If there is a poor man among you—any of your brothers within any of your gates in your land that Adonai your God is giving you—you are not to harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother. 8 Rather, you must surely open your hand to him and you must surely lend him enough for his need—whatever he is lacking”* (Deuteronomy 15:7-8). Some thoughts from the Jerusalem School of Synoptic Research also help to clarify what Yeshua was saying. It is suggested that this is Hebrew parallelism. *“Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you”* are parallel thoughts. Ask and borrow are related terms in Hebrew. Ask, *sha’al* in Hebrew, is used when asking to borrow something which will be returned. Borrow, *lavah* in Hebrew, is used when food is consumed or eaten and replaced later. The two phrases are saying almost the same thing; lend to someone who is in need.

43 *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous”* (Matthew 5:43-45). Yeshua is referring to what they had heard from people, not from the *Torah*. Nowhere in *Torah* are we told to hate our enemy. In fact, it stresses just the opposite: 4 *“If you find your enemy’s ox or his donkey going astray, you must surely bring it back to him again. 5 If you see the donkey of the one that hates you lying down under its burden, do not leave it. Rather, you are to release it with him”* (Exodus 23:4-5).

46 *For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors do the same, don’t they? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than anyone else? Even the pagans do that, don’t they? 48 Therefore be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect”* (Matthew 5:46-48). The second greatest commandment, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” doesn’t say love them if they love you. If we love them as ourselves, even if they hate us, we will love them. This is all about how committed we are to be to ADONAI. To be perfect as our Father is perfect is to be holy because He is holy. 2 *“Speak to all the congregation of Bnei-Yisrael and tell them: You shall be kedoshim, for I, Adonai your God, am holy”* (Leviticus 19:2). ADONAI spoke similar words to Israel numerous times and Shimon Kefa repeated it for us as well. It is clear. We are to model ourselves after ADONAI and Yeshua. It requires doing something. We could consider these last few verses as Yeshua’s summary of the *Torah* which He has just delivered to us from the mountain in chapter 5. All of His *mitzvot* point to being like Him and being His disciples. If we really understand Yeshua’s words, can we really call ourselves His disciples if we’re not at least trying, to keep them. *Shalom aleichem!*

