



“The *Megillah* of Matthew”

24:1-22

Tonight we begin chapter 24. It is still Monday, Nisan 12, probably late in the afternoon. Yeshua has just left the Temple with His disciples for the last time. There are two days before His death on the stake. *1 Now when Yeshua went out and was going away from the Temple, His disciples came up to point out to Him the Temple buildings. 2 “Don’t you see all these?” He responded to them. “Amen, I tell you, not one stone will be left here on top of another—every one will be torn down”* (Matthew 24:1-2 TLV)! Just a few verses earlier in chapter 23 and just a few minutes before in actual time, Yeshua had told the Pharisees *38 “Look, your house is left to you desolate”* (Matthew 23:38 TLV! He told them: “sometime soon, the Temple is going to be empty;” “there will be no people there.” And now He tells His disciples that “it’s going to be torn down, destroyed.” According to the context, they then left the Temple area and walked across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives where they stopped and sat down.

His disciples asked Him two questions. *3 As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen? What will be the sign of Your coming and of the end of the age”* (Matthew 24:3 TLV)? Yeshua’s disciples came to Him privately. There were no crowds around listening to Him as there usually were. For whatever reasons, the general population did not hear Yeshua’s answer although I’m fairly certain that those who later trusted in Yeshua were shared this information. We will see its importance for in just a moment. The disciples first asked Him “when will the Temple be destroyed” and then asked Him to “tell them the sign of His coming and the end of the age.” These are two different events which would be very widely separated in time. Apparently, they believed that both would occur within a reasonably short period of time. From our vantage point in history, we know that the Temple was destroyed just forty years later in the year 70 CE. But, the “end of the age is a totally different matter. What age were they asking about? We will begin to understand this question as we hear Yeshua continue to speak.

*4 Yeshua answered them, “Be careful that no one leads you astray! 5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will lead many astray”* (Matthew 24:4-5 TLV). While today, many see people like James Jones of the Jonestown, Guyana mass poisoning and David Koresh, the leader of group which died in Texas as fulfillment of Yeshua’s words. They did portray themselves as messiahs. But, I don’t think He was speaking of them and others like them. Obviously, they were false messiahs, but Yeshua’s context was different. I believe that He was speaking of Jewish false messiahs. And there have been quite a few of them. Hungarian Jewish anthropologist Raphael Patai discussed them in his book, “The Messiah Texts.” The most famous was *Sh’mon BarKochba* who led a revolt against Rome during the years 132-135 CE. He was proclaimed by Rabbi Akiva, the leading Jewish rabbi of the time, to be the “Messiah/King.” He based his belief on Numbers 24 and similar Scriptures: *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 24:17 TLV). This was a prophecy by Balaam in his failed attempt to curse the nation of Israel, and we know that this was a reference to Yeshua. Akiva gave *Sh'mon* the name *BarKochba* based on this verse and it means "son of a star." It is very interesting that his real name was *BarKosiba* which means "son of a lie." But, his messiahship was totally based on the hope of overthrowing Rome through military strength, limited strength, which ultimately failed. He was also a very cruel man who reportedly made his followers chop off a joint of their index finger to prove their loyalty to him. And this man and many other false messiahs like him led many people astray as Yeshua had said.

6 *"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must happen but it is not yet the end. 7 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 But all these things are only the beginning of birth pains"* (Matthew 24:6-8 TLV). Much of what Yeshua will eventually say as He sits on the Mount of Olives has to do with Israel and the Jews. But not all of it. These three verses are world-wide and refer to what will happen throughout the earth in the years before He returns. Wars, famines and earthquakes happen almost constantly somewhere and have throughout the centuries. Yeshua said, "don't be alarmed. These are normal happenings and not predictors of My coming."

9 *"Then they will hand you over to persecution and will kill you. You will be hated by all the nations because of My name"* (Matthew 24:9 TLV). The "you" Yeshua is now referring to is the Messianic Jews of that day and throughout the centuries. He didn't necessarily mean that they were called by His name, but were associated with His name. They were known as "Yeshua's *talmidim*," His disciples, or as "*HaNatzrati*," the Nazarenes. By extension, this persecution// could also refer to Christians who died as martyrs for Yeshua. It is unlikely that Yeshua was referring to the Jews of the Holocaust since they were not connected with His name.

10 *"And then many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one other. 11 Many false prophets will arise and lead many astray"* (Matthew 24:10-11 TLV). Initially, this seems to apply to Jewish believers in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, but could also be referring to Jewish and non-Jewish believers through the ages. But, the circumstances seem to especially apply to what we are seeing today. Today, many have turned away from the faith. Some former Christians are now atheists who are successful evangelists for their non-faith. The spirits of hate, anger and lawlessness in the world are affecting the lives of millions and many have been led astray. *Sha'ul's* words are especially relevant today: 1 *"But understand this, that in the last days hard times will come— 2 for people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 hardhearted, unforgiving, backbiting, without self-control, brutal, hating what is good, 4 treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 holding to an outward form of godliness but denying its power. Avoid these people"* (2Timothy 3:1-5 TLV)! That's a pretty accurate picture of what we are seeing today. These kind of people are among us and a part of Yeshua's greater body of today. And, James Jones and David Koresh and L. Ron Hubbard and others seem to fit the bill as false prophets who have led people away. But, there are many others. False prophets can be just individuals who try and turn people against G-d. And, then there are those who claim to be followers of Yeshua who teach false doctrines.

6 *"For among these are those who slip into households and deceive weak women weighed down with sins, led away by various desires, 7 always learning yet never able to*

*come to the knowledge of truth*” (Matthew 24:6-7 TLV). By saying, “among these,” Yeshua seems to be implying that there are men who claim to be His followers who declare themselves friends of a family and then enter into adultery with the wife. These men and women are a part of a fellowship which teaches Yeshua, but they are never able to turn away from their sin long enough to learn His truth.

12 *“Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold”* (Matthew 24:12 TLV). Lawlessness can certainly be civil lawlessness and we do have an increasing amount of that today. But I very strongly believe that Yeshua was speaking of turning away from ADONAI’s law, the violation of *Torah*, Torahlessness! Because many have turned away from G-d’s Word today, their love for G-d has grown cold. Faithfully following His Word is a strong force, a force which keeps us focused on love of G-d and love of neighbor. Because so many today have turned away from His Word, their love for ADONAI has grown cold just as Yeshua prophesied.

13 *“But the one who endures to the end will be saved”* (Matthew 24:13 TLV). This can only have one meaning. It can only mean “to the end of their life.” None of us live until the “end of the age.” One who trusts in Yeshua and serves Him must endure to the end of their life in order to be saved. This also seems to be His reference to those who were led astray. They did not endure. They initially trusted in Yeshua, but their love grew cold and they fell away. Whether they had truly trusted in Yeshua or not is only known to ADONAI. Many call on Yeshua’s name for salvation, but then never walk in the way that He has taught us.

14 *“This Good News of the kingdom shall be proclaimed in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come”* (Matthew 24:14 TLV). The “Good News of the Kingdom” is actually the Good News of the Kingdom of Heaven, *Besorah haMalchut Hashamayim*. The “Good News” is that Yeshua, ADONAI’s only begotten Son, came to earth and died as the only effective sacrifice for our sins. Through trusting in His sacrificial death, we receive the promise of eternal life. It’s a promise because we must walk faithfully throughout our lives to finally claim it. And we get it after we have “endured to the end” the end of our earthly lives. At some point in time, the Gospel message will have been proclaimed to all the world, after which Yeshua will return. The events He described, the signs of the times, take place throughout the years beginning right then, about 30 CE, and lasting until the end of the age, in Hebrew, the *Olam HaZeh*. During “this age,” the present age, the Gospel will be proclaimed throughout the whole earth. We don’t know exactly what that means, but possibly that it will be proclaimed to every nation group and language, but not necessarily to every person. But, we would think that every person would have had access to the Gospel in some way. During this time that the Gospel is available, there will be persecutions, false prophets and lawlessness. We’ve seen that throughout the centuries and we see it today. The *Olam HaZeh*, this age, ends when Yeshua returns. And, it is His return which moves us into the next era, the *Olam HaBa*, the world or age to come. I believe that age to be eternity. *Sha’ul* also speaks about the relationship of the spread of the Gospel to all Israel’s coming salvation: 25 *“For I do not want you, brothers and sisters, to be ignorant of this mystery—lest you be wise in your own eyes—that a partial hardening has come upon Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; 26 and in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer shall come out of Zion. He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob”* (Romans 11:25-26 TLV). Yeshua’s words “proclaimed in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations” correlates at least partially with *Sha’ul*’s words “until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.” When this pre-determined time comes, Yeshua will return.

15 “So when you see ‘the abomination of desolation,’ which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy Place (let the reader understand), 16 then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 The one on the roof must not go down to take what is in his house, 18 and the one in the field must not turn back to get his coat. 19 Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! 20 Pray that your escape will not happen in winter, or on Shabbat” (Matthew 24:15-20 TLV). Yeshua’s words now return to His present time and He is speaking directly to His disciples and those whom they will lead to know Him in the coming years. We mentioned at the outset tonight that Yeshua didn’t tell the crowds about this and this also seems to be just to His disciples. He is encouraging them to escape Jerusalem before the abomination prevents them from leaving. In his book “Church History,” the historian Eusebius makes this statement: “The people of the Church in Jerusalem were commanded by an oracle given by revelation before the war to those in the city who were worthy of it to depart and dwell in one of the cities of Perea which they called Pella. To it those who believed on Christ traveled from Jerusalem, so that when holy men had altogether deserted the royal capital of the Jews and the whole land of Judaea...” Pella was one of the cities of the Decapolis, the ten Greek towns which were east of the Sea of Galilee. History does support their return some years later after the fall of Jerusalem.

What is the “abomination” that Yeshua warned them about? Matthew doesn’t identify “the abomination” by gender, but Mark does. He said: 14 “But when you see ‘the abomination of desolation’ standing where it should not be (let the reader understand), then those in Judea must flee to the mountains” (Mark 12:14 TLV). It is made clear to us through Mark’s Scripture that the “abomination of desolation” is not the Anti-Christ, a future world ruler. Many Christians today believe that in the end of days that a physical Anti-Christ, a world ruler, will stand on the Temple Mount. Mark wrote: ‘the abomination of desolation’ standing where it should not be.” An “it” is not a person. It is a thing; a something. There is no physical Anti-Christ and in a moment you will learn what the “it” is.

The abomination of desolation, an “it” which we know from Mark’s writings and referred to by Matthew as spoken of by Daniel the Prophet are things which defile the Temple. At the time that Yeshua was speaking, there had already been an appearance of the “abomination of desolation” and it occurred during the time of the Maccabees and recorded in Daniel chapter 11. The abomination at the time of the Maccabees was the Syrian army which invaded Jerusalem and desecrated the Temple in about 167 BCE. 31 “His forces will rise up and profane the fortified Temple; they will stop the daily offering and set up the abomination of desolation” (Daniel 11:31 TLV). The forces of Antiochus, the Syrian king set up the abomination. It was the pagan Syrian army desecrating and then occupying the Temple. And, as told in the Book of Maccabees, they slaughtered a hog on the altar. By taking over the Temple, they did stop the daily offering and this is another verse which some believe is speaking about a coming physical Anti-Christ. But no! The Daniel event is past.

The dictionary says that an abomination is a thing which causes disgust or hatred. Desolation is a state of complete emptiness or destruction. The abomination of desolation which Yeshua told His disciples to flee from would be a disgusting thing which causes emptiness or destruction. Yeshua said that it happened in the days of the Maccabees but said that it would happen again. The coming abomination which Yeshua now warned His disciples about would bring death to Jerusalem in their days. From history, we know this coming abomination to be the pagan Roman army which destroyed the Temple in the year 70, about 40 years from Yeshua’s words. The pagan Roman soldiers, disgusting and unclean by ADONAI’s standards, defiled the Temple and made it desolate by totally destroying it. This

is a picture of some of the stones that were a part of the Temple and thrown down by the Romans.

Yeshua told His disciples to pray that this would not happen in winter and it didn't. It happened in the spring of the year 70CE. Titus's Roman legions broke through the walls of Jerusalem and slaughtered almost the entire population of Jerusalem. We don't know how many of Yeshua's disciples did not escape as He had warned them to do.

21 *"For then there will be great trouble, such as has not happened since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever will.* (Matthew 24:21 TLV). Great trouble is what some call "the Great Tribulation." And, Yeshua told his *talmidim* that this coming time would be the worst that ever happened in *eretz Yisra'el*! His prophecy was about what would happen in 70 CE when the Romans killed many, many Jews. That was the "Great Tribulation." How bad was it? It has been estimated that the population of Jerusalem in the year 70 was 600,000. But, Josephus the Jewish historian reported that as many as 1,100, 000 were killed during the siege of Jerusalem and that 97,000 more Jews were sold as slaves. That's almost 1.2 million! How could that happen in a city of 600,000? The answer is that over a million others came to Jerusalem for Passover. Josephus said that it was during Passover when the Romans surrounded and blockaded the city. And, many of those killed were not residents of Jerusalem, but those who had travelled there for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. That accounts for the greater number of dead, many of whom starved to death. Almost all of the citizens of Jerusalem were either killed, died of starvation or sold as slaves. They were trapped inside the city for about 110 days, from Passover until the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av, the day the Romans broke through and destroyed the Temple. The *p'shat*, the plain meaning of Yeshua's words "great trouble," was a reference to an event which would happen in Jerusalem, not in the entire world. And, it happened in the year 70 CE. It has already happened. Something worse than what happened in the year 70 would have to happen to Jerusalem today for it to be a greater time of tribulation. But, it won't happen again because Yeshua said: *there will be nothing like it again!* The "Great Tribulation" has already happened. That doesn't mean that there is not tribulation. We have had it through the ages and many are in tribulation of famine and religious persecution today.

22 *"And unless those days were cut short, no one would be delivered. But for the sake of the chosen, those days will be cut short"* (Matthew 24:22 TLV). The chosen, or according to Mark, the elect, were those who survived the Romans to carry on the ministry of the Kingdom. But some of Yeshua's disciples did manage to get out.

There is more that we need to know about what Yeshua said which was not told in either Matthew or Mark. Yeshua said: 24 *"They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led away captive into all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled"* (Luke 21:24 TLV). "They" refers to the Jews who survived the Roman assault. As we said, over a million were killed and almost three-quarters of a million were sold as slaves. Yeshua said that the "Jews would be killed and made slaves" by the Romans and at that time, they would take them into all the known nations of the world. They were scattered in the year 70 CE and are now being physically regathered. The second part of Yeshua's statement was a prophecy about Jerusalem, saying that: "it would be under the control of Gentile nations until the time for Gentile control to end." Gentile control came to an end during the Six Day War in July of 1967 when the Israeli army recaptured and gained control of Jerusalem for the first time since Yeshua uttered these words, some two thousand years.

Yeshua spoke about two appearances of “the abomination of desolation.” Since 70 CE, one more has occurred. In about 692 CE, the Dome of the Rock, an Islamic shrine, was completed. It is also an “abomination of desolation” because since 692 its presence has made the Temple Mount desolate for Jews. It is unavailable for a Jewish Temple to be constructed and today Jews barely have rights to go up there to pray. I personally don’t believe that a third Temple will be constructed until after Yeshua returns to rule from Jerusalem, if then. But, it will present no problem at that time if He wishes to build another Temple.

We will end here for tonight. The day of the week has not changed. It is still Monday, Nisan 12, but now late in the afternoon. *Shalom aleichem!*