



Matthew Lesson 26

March 2, 2020

Scriptures from TLV

“The Megillah of Matthew”

20:1-34

Tonight we begin chapter 20. The Tree of Life Version of the Bible entitles these first 15 verses “The Parable of the Day Laborers.” It begins: 1 *“For the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household, who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard”* (Matthew 20:1 TLV). In this parable, it’s fairly easy to understand that the master of this household is Yeshua Himself and His vineyard is the world. The workers are His followers, those who have trusted in Him and received the promise of eternal life. 2 *“Now when he had agreed with the workers for a denarius per day, he sent them into his vineyard”* (Matthew 20:2 TLV). This first group of workers was likely hired at dawn, probably 6 AM, and they agreed to work all day for one denarius, the usual day’s wage at that time.

3 *“And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing in the marketplace, idle. 4 And to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and I’ll give you whatever is right.’ 5 So they went. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour and did the same”* (Matthew 20:3-5 TLV). It may seem a little strange that the owner of a vineyard would hire men at these different hours during the day. But, during the harvest season a number of workers were needed and the vineyard owner would go back frequently to a gathering place, the place where workers would go to seek work, to try and hire more laborers for the harvest. The third hour would have been about three hours later, around 9 AM in our time. The Master continued to need more workers and went back at the sixth hour, 12 PM, noon, and again at the ninth hour, 3 PM, and hired more. Each of these agreed to work for “whatever is right.”

6 *“And about the eleventh hour, he went out and found others standing around. And he said to them, ‘Why have you been standing here idle the whole day?’ 7 “Because no one hired us,’ they said to him. “He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard, too”* (Matthew 20:6-7 TLV). The eleventh hour, 5 PM, was almost at the end of the work day. At this point, we begin to suspect that the Master hired these last workers because of His mercy. They needed to work, but had had not had any job offers.

8 *“Now when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning from the last to the first.’ 9 And those who had come about the eleventh hour each received a denarius”* (Matthew 20:8-9 TLV). When evening came, or as we say down here in the south, “knocking off time came,” the last group of workers was paid first. Knocking off time was 6 PM and they had only worked one hour, having come to work at 5 PM. They got one denarius.

10 *“And when the first came, they supposed that they would receive more; yet they too received a denarius. 11 “But when they received it, they began to grumble against the master of the house, 12 saying, ‘These last guys did one hour, and you’ve made them equal to us, who bore the burden and scorching heat of the day”* (Matthew 20:10-11 TLV)! These first workers

worked the whole day, 6 AM-6 PM, 12 hours. We can understand their grumbling. We probably would too.

13 *“But answering, he said to one of them, ‘Friend, I’m doing you no wrong. Didn’t you agree with me on a denarius? 14 Take what is yours and go. But I want to give this last guy the same as you”* (Matthew 20:13-14 TLV). Can you picture Yeshua saying “these guys?” What were the TLV translators thinking? But, the truth is that the owner of the vineyard was fair with the first group of workers and gave them the wage which they agreed to work for. Giving the last guys the same wage was because of His generosity.

15 *“Am I not permitted to do what I want with what belongs to me? Or is your eye evil because I am good”* (Matthew 20:15 TLV). A vineyard owner in the natural and Yeshua the Messiah in the spiritual, can pay whatever amount to whomever he wishes. Here is another mention of the “evil eye” which was introduced in Matthew chapter 6. One with an evil eye was stingy and mean. The owner of the vineyard had “a good eye;” was generous. While this story of the workers is spiritual in nature, it also has a lesson for us in the natural. We must stick to what we agree to. These first workers were grasping for more than they had agreed to. But, because the Master had a “good eye,” a generous spirit, He chose to pay proportionately more to the later workers. There’s an old saying: “G-d has no grandchildren.” All of us who have trusted Yeshua are children and even though some have only been spiritually born for a short period of time, we are all equal disciples in ADONAI’s eyes.

The body of Messiah is very much like a vineyard because it is a place of labor. No one who has agreed upon the wages of salvation should be idle. Each of us has been hired by Yeshua to work in His vineyard. We are working out our salvation through Yeshua who works in us. As *Sha’ul* said to the Philippians: 12 *“Therefore, my loved ones, just as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now even more in my absence—work out your salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For the One working in you is God—both to will and to work for His good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:12-13 TLV). ADONAI is working in us and uses us according to His will. Some will labor in His vineyard all their lives before entering into rest, while others will work comparatively less, but receive the same reward. We must guard against expecting special privileges because we have been in the vineyard for many years, or because our particular church group has been around for many years. I wonder if that is not what some believers in the United States are doing now; expecting the extra privilege of having every prayer answered in the way they want it to be answered. There is no group of G-d’s people which is going to be hidden away in the wilderness and protected from the coming time of tribulation. That’s not what Revelation 12:6 is about. And, there is no rapture coming to take anyone away from the trouble of this world. The deliverance, rapture if you prefer, Yeshua coming on the clouds, comes at the end of the present tribulation. We may have to go through some troubles. Our prayer when troubles approach should be that ADONAI will protect us as we work out our salvation through the tribulation.

16 *“So the last will be first, and the first last”* (Matthew 20:16 TLV). Yeshua paid the last workers first and the first workers, last. No matter how long each of us has worked, we each will get payment of a day’s wage. We will get one denarius, an amount equal to the value of eternal life. An example of the last being first would be the thief on the cross. He called upon the name of Yeshua just minutes before he died. He has received the full blessings of eternal life for a few minutes labor while those who have labored their whole lives for Yeshua receive the same. We have no right to question to whom ADONAI gives His grace.

17 Now as Yeshua was going up to Jerusalem, He took the Twelve aside privately; and on the way he told them, 18 “Look, we’re going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the ruling kohanim and Torah scholars. They will condemn Him to death 19 and hand Him over to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify. Yet on the third day, He will be raised up” (Matthew 20:17-19 TLV). This is the third of four times in the Book of Matthew that Yeshua told His disciples about His coming death, plus the additional time when three of the disciples overheard Him discussing His death with Moses and Elijah at the Transfiguration. That detail was not in Matthew, but in Luke 9:31. This time, however, He added more details. Yeshua was preparing them so that they would not be caught off guard when these things happened. That first discussion from Matthew 16 in Lesson 22 is included at the end of the written text of this lesson.<sup>1</sup>

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came with her sons to Yeshua, and she was kneeling down and asking something from Him. 21 “What do you want?” He said to her. She said to Him, “Declare that these two sons of mine might sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your kingdom” (Matthew 20:20-21 TLV). Zebedee’s sons were Ya’akov and Yochanon, James and John, the ones whom Yeshua had called “the sons of thunder.” Their mother, Salome, was present at the stake when Yeshua died and also one of the women who later went to His tomb. She was a devoted follower of Yeshua and perhaps felt that she had the right to make this request. Mark 10:35 tells about the same event, but in his account, it was James and John who asked the question and not their mother. Both mother and sons could very well have asked the question in both of the accounts. Matthew and Mark, the Gospel writers just chose not to tell every detail. There is no contradiction.

22 But Yeshua replied, “You don’t know what you’re asking! Are you able to drink the cup I am about to drink?” “We are able,” they say to Him. 23 He said to them, “You shall indeed drink My cup. But to sit on My right and left, this isn’t Mine to grant. Rather, it’s for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father” (Matthew 20:22-23 TLV). They really did not understand what they were asking. Yeshua was about to drink the cup of suffering and death, but even though He had told them about His death, they still had no idea that his cup was death. In the Book of Acts, we read about a great persecution which came upon the Messianic community. Kefa was imprisoned but miraculously set free by angels. But, Ya’acov’s cup was to be beheaded. 1 Now at that time Herod the king seized some from Messiah’s community to do them harm. 2 He had Jacob, John’s brother, put to death with the sword (Acts 12:2 TLV). Many years later, his brother Yochanan in his old age, was tortured and exiled to the Island of Patmos. His cup didn’t come right away, but it came. 9 “I, John, your brother and fellow partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patient endurance that are in Yeshua, was on the island called Patmos because of the word of God and the testimony of Yeshua. (Revelation 1:9 TLV). Tradition tells us that John was boiled in oil. Even a quick dip in boiling oil would have caused severe burns and a person who survived that kind of torture would have been horribly disfigured. If John was really dipped in oil, his survival was a miracle of G-d.

24 Now when the ten heard, they became indignant with the two brothers (Matthew 20:24 TLV). We don’t know for certain what their indignation was about, but possibly anger motivated by jealousy. They may have thought that these two already appeared to be in the most favored group of Yeshua’s disciples and now they were asking for more. But, the truth be known, the others would probably have made the same request if they had the opportunity. Jealousy and competition had manifested itself among the disciples.

25 But Yeshua called them over and said, “You know that the rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their great ones play the tyrant over them. 26 It shall not be this way among you. But whoever wants to be great among you shall be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you shall be your slave— 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:25-28 TLV). Addressing their jealousy and competition, Yeshua called them over to teach them how they should have acted in this matter. Regarding the request of Salome, the mother, and the request by the two sons as told in Mark 10, all three were wrong to ask for this honor. Regarding the indignation of the other twelve disciples, they also were wrong. Yeshua’s words illustrated what they were not to do, but also, what they should do. In other words, we are not to seek recognition for our spiritual work. We are reminded of Haman, one very good example of what not to do, a man who sought power and recognition. He wanted people to bow to him and was infuriated when Mordechai would not bow. Yeshua said that we are not to be like that, but to seek to serve others in humility. If we want to be great in the Kingdom of Heaven, we must be a servant to others. Yeshua, who came to serve and gave His life for others is our example. This is the calling of all who follow Yeshua, not just those in leadership positions. What Yeshua was teaching His disciples is illustrated in this example: 8 “When you are invited by someone to a wedding, don’t take the seat of honor, for someone more highly esteemed than you may have been invited by him. 9 Then the one who invited both of you will come to you and say, ‘Give up this seat.’ And with shame, you would proceed to take the lowest seat. 10 But when you are invited, go and recline in the lowest seat so that when the one who invited you comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher.’ Then you shall be honored in the presence of all those who are dining with you. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 14:8-11 TLV). Yeshua was almost scolding James and John for wanting to be greatest. And, He was also chiding the other ten. There is no place for jealousy in the Body of Messiah. To be great in ADONAI’s sight, we must humble ourselves to the place of servants. Yeshua, our example, humbled Himself to a very shameful death. He came to earth with great love for us and gave His all, His life, for us. I pray that none of us would ever have to give our life for Yeshua, but to be His disciple, we must be willing.

29 Now as they were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed Him. 30 And here two blind men sitting by the roadside, when they heard that Yeshua was passing by, cried out, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Master, Ben-David!” 31 The crowd warned them to be quiet, but they cried out all the more, saying, “Have mercy on us, O Master, Ben-David!” 32 Yeshua stopped and called out to them. “What do you want Me to do for you?” He said. 33 They said to Him, “Master, let our eyes be opened!” 34 Moved with compassion, Yeshua touched their eyes. Instantly they regained their sight and followed Him (Matthew 20:29-34 TLV).

We also see accounts of this event in Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 18:35-43. There is a difference in these three accounts in that Matthew refers to two blind men, Mark tells of one blind man named Bartimaeus and Luke speaks of one unnamed blind man. But, there is no conflict here. The three authors chose to emphasize only certain aspects of the event. But, there is another difference in these three stories to deal with.

Luke said that this happened on approaching Jericho but Mark and Luke said that they were departing Jericho. To the eager atheist, that would be a contradiction proving that Scripture is not true. But, most don’t realize that in the 1<sup>st</sup> century there were two Jericho’s. Travelling south, the first one that they would have come to was the Jericho of the Book of Joshua, ancient Jericho. In the 1<sup>st</sup> century, it was a few small huts mostly surrounded by

the ruins of ancient Jericho. About two miles further to the south was the new city of Jericho. It was originally built by the Jewish Hasmonean kings, a winter palace to escape the cold in Jerusalem. This was rebuilt even better by Herod the Great and in the 1<sup>st</sup> century consisted of three winter palaces.

Walking south, Yeshua would have first passed through ancient Jericho and then through Herod's Jericho. The accounts in Matthew and Mark where Yeshua is said to be leaving Jericho would refer to old Jericho. Luke's account about approaching Jericho would refer to the new city. These three were all about the same event and the exact same place. It would have taken place somewhere between the two Jericho's. Matthew and Mark said they were leaving old Jericho and Luke said they were approaching new Jericho, but all three were referring to the very same location

How the blind men were referring to Yeshua is significant. They called Him "Son of David," a Messianic title. Not many days before, just after *Shimon Kefa* identified Yeshua as the Messiah, the son of the living G-d, in Matthew chapter 16, He told them not to tell anyone that He was the Messiah. Now, He allows the blind men to not only say it, but to yell it out twice. And, the crowd heard. What's the difference? Most probably, it was because Yeshua was nearing Jerusalem for His final Passover and the coming revelation of His identity. In the Galilee, He didn't want to attract extra attention to this part of His nature prematurely and to attract even greater crowds, crowds who wanted Him to rescue them from the Roman occupation. But, now Yeshua is approaching His destiny. His compassion for the blind men led Him to heal them and they followed Him. This ends chapter 20.

As we continue our study of Matthew and we only follow Matthew's account of things, we will miss some very important events in the next nine days of Yeshua's earthly life. Why Matthew left certain things out, and why Mark, Luke and John chose what they chose to put in their accounts is unknown. But, to have the most complete account of Yeshua's last days, we will have to use all four Gospels. And, we will- next time. *Shalom aleichem!*

## <sup>1</sup>Matthew Lesson 22

*21 From that time on, Yeshua began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and ruling kohanim and Torah scholars, and be killed, and be raised on the third day* (Matthew 16:21 TLV). This is the first time that Yeshua told His disciples about His having to die and He would tell them three more times in the book of Matthew (17:22-23, 20:17-19 and 26:32). The first three of these four are also found in Mark (8:31-33, 9:30-32 and 10:32-34) and Luke (9:21-22, 9:43-45 and 18:31-34) in slightly

different form. Yeshua also told them about His death several times in the Book of John, all of which came after He reached Jerusalem His final time.