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WHERE DISCIPLES LEARN



JESUS, My Rabbi

The Life and Teachings
of the Jewish Jesus

LESSON

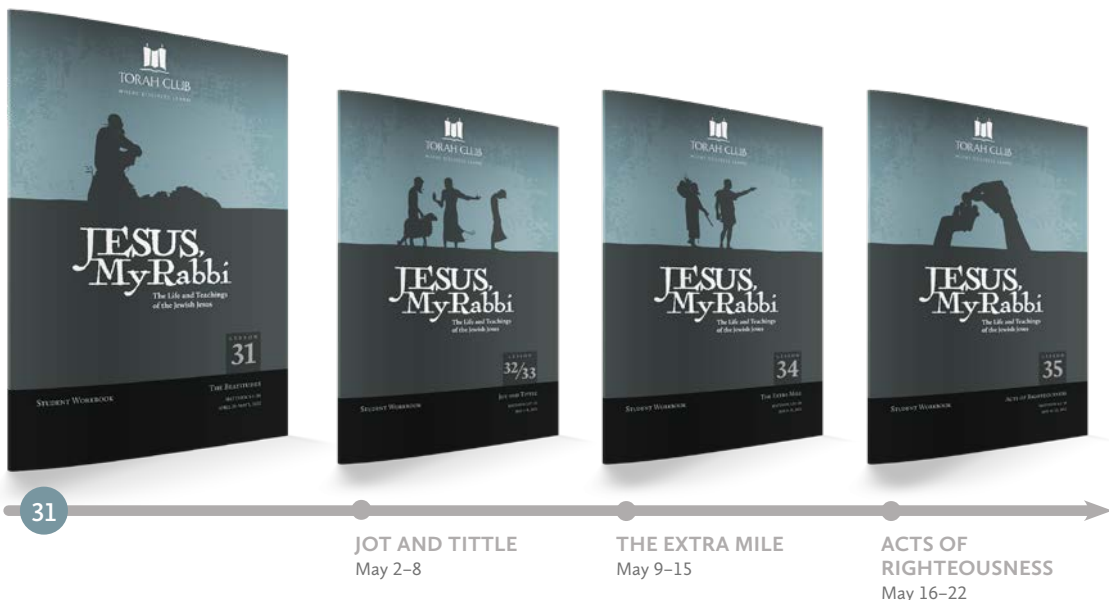
31

STUDENT WORKBOOK

THE BEATITUDES

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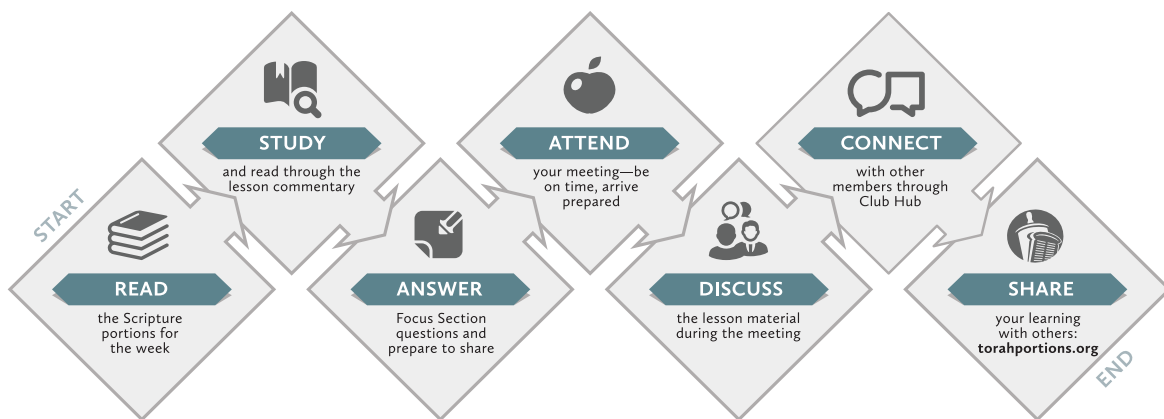
MATTHEW 5:1-16
APRIL 25-MAY 1, 2021



THE BEATITUDES

ON THIS JOURNEY: Yeshua and His disciples slip away from the shore to escape the growing crowds and find a quiet hilltop to use as an open-air classroom. Today, the Church of the Beatitudes sits atop a small hill on the north shore of Lake Galilee, preserving the location of an earlier Byzantine-era church that Christian pilgrims venerated as the location from which Yeshua delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

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LESSON 31: THE BEATITUDES



READING: MATTHEW 5:1-16

LESSON OVERVIEW

HAVING SELECTED twelve men to serve as His inner circle of disciples, Yeshua is eager to begin their formal education, but the large crowds continue to hamper His efforts. He and His disciples ascend a hill to escape the multitude, and He begins a discourse about entering the kingdom of heaven (i.e., the Messianic Era). The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five major collections of Yeshua’s teachings in the book of Matthew. The kingdom belongs not to the rich, the powerful, or the elite of society but to the poor, the downtrodden, and the lowly who hunger and thirst for justice and suffer persecution for righteousness’ sake. They can be considered “blessed” even though, at this time, they suffer deprivation, indignity, and unrequited longing for the revelation of the Messianic Era. This message counters the propaganda of the Zealot movement that advocates armed insurrection. Yeshua’s disciples carry on the spiritual mission of the nation. They are to be like salt, seasoning and preserving the world through their good deeds. They are like lamps, enlightening the world with their good works and the revelation of God. If they fail to do so, they can be likened to salt that has lost its saltiness or a lamp concealed beneath a bowl or under a bed. These words allude to the mission of the whole nation of the Jewish people and contain a warning about the pending exile. Yeshua urges His disciples to let their light shine before others so that they will see the light and glorify God.

This lesson of *Jesus, My Rabbi* corresponds to Book 2, pages 457–469 of *Chronicles of the Messiah*.

FOCUS SECTIONS

FOCUS SECTIONS combine mechanical, text derived questions ensuring familiarity with the lesson content and more in-depth group discussion topics.

1	Beatitudes	6	5	Salt of the Earth	15
2	The Poor in Spirit	7	6	Light of the World	17
3	Revenge of the Meek	10	7	The City on the Hill	19
4	Those Who Hunger and Thirst	11			

PRAYER (HAREINI MEKASHER: I HEREBY JOIN)

I HEREBY JOIN Myself to the Master, Yeshua the Messiah, the righteous one, who is the bread of life, and the true light, the source of eternal salvation for all those who hear Him.

Like a branch that remains in a vine, so may I remain in Him, just as He also remains in the Father and the Father in Him, in order that they may remain in us.

May the grace of the Master, Yeshua the Messiah, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abound to us.

THE BEATITUDES

MOUNT OF THE BEATITUDES

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. (Matthew 5:1)

The ministry of the Master drew large crowds almost from its outset. “Large crowds followed Him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan” (Matthew 4:25). Multitudes of people sought Him: the sick, the infirm, the troubled, the curious, the seekers, and the skeptical. Luke explains, “There was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured. And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all” (Luke 6:17–19). Matthew says that, when He saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain to teach—not so that the crowds would be able to better hear Him teaching, but to escape the crowds so that He could have some time to teach His disciples.

Matthew refers to a specific hill in the Galilee: “He went up on *the* mountain.” The mountain alludes to Moses ascending Mount Sinai to receive the Torah (the Law). From atop “the mountain,” Yeshua discoursed on the Law. There are no proper mountains around the Sea of Galilee, but the area is surrounded by hills. Hebrew employs the same word for both. Local Christian tradition identifies a modest hill above the Seven Springs of Tabgha as the location from which He delivered the Sermon on the Mount. The hill offers a magnificent view of Lake Galilee. Its gentle slope descends to the northern shore, where the springs of Tabgha dramatically pour into the lake. In the spring months, wildflowers and beautiful red anemones clothed like “Solomon in all his glory” (Matthew 6:29) cover the hill’s uncultivated fields.

Eluding the crowds, Yeshua and His disciples climbed the hill. He sat down to teach. The rabbis always taught from a seated position. In the vernacular of first-century Judaism, a rabbi sitting down is the equivalent of a pastor stepping up to a pulpit. When the Master sat down, His disciples gathered around Him to learn. When the disciples saw their teacher sit down, they knew what was expected of them. They had a job to do. So, they stepped forward, and He began to teach.

In Luke’s version of the story, Yeshua stands “in a level place” (Luke 6:17), giving rise to the title “Sermon on the Plain.” Luke does not, however, indicate that He delivered the sermon in that level place. Instead, Luke prefaces the sermon by distinguishing between the large crowd and the disciples, just as Matthew does. Luke says, “Turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say ...” (Luke 6:20). In these words, Luke indicates that Yeshua delivered the sermon to His disciples, not to the crowds.

HE BEGAN TO TEACH THEM

He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying. (Matthew 5:2)

The Sermon on the Mount constitutes the Master’s first full-length sermon in the book of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew arranges five such sermons, corresponding to the five books of Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), each intended for easy memorization by disciples.

FIGURE 1

Chapters 5–7	The Sermon on the Mount
Chapter 10	The Missionary Discourse
Chapter 13	The Parables of the Kingdom
Chapter 18	The Community Discourse
Chapters 24–25	The Eschatological Discourse

The Sermon on the Mount began Rabbi Yeshua’s formal education of His disciples. The sermon addresses a wide variety of discipleship issues on the theme of entering the kingdom (i.e., how to usher in the Messianic Era). Matthew arranged the material in an associative manner to facilitate easy memorization. In these passages the Master laid out the practical applications of His gospel message: “Repent, the kingdom of heaven is near.” It’s Yeshua’s guide on how to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). It’s His prescription for the path of repentance that leads to the redemption.

FOCUS
SECTION

1

BEATITUDES

The sermon begins with a series of declarations traditionally referred to as the beatitudes, each one beginning with the formula, “Blessed are the ...” The formula appears frequently in the Bible. For example, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked” (Psalm 1:1).

The English language provides no adequate word to translate the Hebrew word *ashrei*, which prefaces the biblical formula: “*Ashrei* are the poor in spirit ... *Ashrei* are those who mourn.” Various translations render it as “fortunate,” “joyful,” “blessed,” or even “happy.” The Hebrew implies something closer to “deeply contented.”

In that sense, several of the beatitudes seem contradictory. In what way are the poor, the mourners, the down-trodden, and the persecuted to be understood as glad and deeply contented? The contradiction emphasizes the central point, “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” That is to say, “Their hope is in the Messianic Era.” Such men and women cannot base their happiness or sense of contentment on temporal circumstances. Instead they must rely on God, and because they rely on God, they find inner peace.

In the beatitudes, Yeshua brings good news to the lowly and downtrodden, as the Prophet Isaiah says: “Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with anxious heart, ‘Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come ... the recompense of God will come ... He will save you’” (Isaiah 35:3-4).

The beatitudes depict the citizens of the kingdom of heaven. They are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; they are the merciful; they are the pure in heart; they are the peacemakers. Contrary to expectation, however, they are also the poor in spirit, the meek, the mourning, and the persecuted.

The opposite of *ashrei* is the Hebrew word *oy*, which most English translations offer as “woe.” Yeshua makes several *oy* statements in tandem with His *ashrei* statements:

But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full.

Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep.

Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way. (Luke 6:24-26)

The “*oy*” statements and “*ashrei*” statements contrast those who have found their fulfillment in the delights and luxuries of this world against those who have set their hopes on the kingdom to come.

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. What are some common ways to translate the Hebrew word *ashrei*?
2. Why are those who are the poor, those who mourn, those who are down-trodden, and those who are persecuted to be considered “blessed”?
3. How do we translate the Hebrew word *oy*?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Beatitudes formulas appear commonly in the Bible. Take some time to look up these beatitudes (*ashrei* statements) from the book of Psalms 1:1, 2:12, 32:1, 33:12, 34:8, 40:4, 41:1, 65:4, 84:4-5, 89:15, 94:12, 112:1, 119:1-2, 127:5, 144:15, 146:5.

THE POOR IN SPIRIT

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(Matthew 5:3)



In Luke’s gospel, Yeshua declares, “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20). According to Isaiah 61:1, the Messiah has a divine mandate to proclaim good news to the poor (cf. Luke 4:18). Yeshua declared the poor to be the heirs of the Messianic Era.

The kingdom reverses the value system of this present age. In the Messianic Era, the first will be last, and the last will be first. The wealth and beneficence of the kingdom will satisfy those who once suffered in want and need. The rich, however, will find entrance into the kingdom difficult. “Woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full” (Luke 6:24), Yeshua says. “It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 19:23). The rich have failed to store their treasure in heaven; they have stored up treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy.

The same principle of divine reversal applies to the reward and punishment of the afterlife. Abraham tells the rich man in torment, “Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise

Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony” (Luke 16:25). Most of us don’t think that we are rich, but by comparison with world poverty and the standard of living in Yeshua’s day, most modern people in developed, first-world countries are rich. So what can we do about it?

Matthew’s version of the beatitude is broader and offers a little more hope for the affluent disciple. Instead of limiting the beatitude to just the economically poor, Yeshua says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” To be “poor in spirit” refers to one’s attitude and conduct. The poor in spirit might be men of wealth, but they conduct themselves with the humility of the poor. They do not rely upon their riches or live according to the extravagances of the affluent. The poor in spirit does not conduct himself with the haughtiness and pride that his wealth affords but instead lives modestly, employing his wealth for the kingdom. Such a person is “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21). By the same measure, a poor man who lives extravagantly and at the expense of others is not poor in spirit:

There is one who pretends to be rich, but has nothing; another pretends to be poor, but has great wealth. (Proverbs 13:7)

James, the brother of the Master, explains the “poor in spirit” as those who refuse to glory in their wealth but adopt the attitude of the humble, remembering that their lives are fragile and quickly fleeting (James 1:10-11). Paul warns those who are rich “not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy,” and He urges the rich to be generous in good deeds and sharing in order to store treasure for the future” (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. What is the principle of divine reversal?

2. What do the wealthy find difficult to do?

3. What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”?

4. What does it mean to be “rich toward God” (Luke 12:21)?

GROUP DISCUSSION: First, contrast the difference between being poor and being poor in spirit, then discuss what it might look like to be “rich in spirit” (Proverbs 13:7).

THOSE WHO MOURN

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
(Matthew 5:4)

When you lose someone or when your heart is broken and sorrowful, you obviously don’t feel happy about it. But Yeshua teaches “happy are those who mourn.” In what way should a mourner feel “happy,” and when will mourners find this promised consolation?

The Master says, “Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh” (Luke 6:21). The Bible says that in the kingdom, “Our mouth was filled with laughter ... those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting” (Psalm 126). The kingdom offers hope of consolation for the brokenhearted and bereaved. This explains why Jewish tradition prescribes greeting mourners with the words, “May you be comforted along with the other mourners of Zion and Jerusalem.”

The Master contrasted those who mourn for Zion against the powerful and elite of society such as the Romans, the Herodians, and the Sadducees. He said, “Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep” (Luke 6:25). When the kingdom comes, those who have loved this present world and its deceptions will suffer loss, but those who mourn over the exile and yearn for Zion’s redemption will find their consolation in the kingdom. “They will be comforted” because Yeshua fulfills the messianic mission “to bring good news to the afflicted ... to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives and freedom to prisoners ... to comfort all who mourn, to grant those who mourn in Zion ... the oil of gladness instead of mourning” (Isaiah 61:1–3).

FOCUS
SECTION
3

REVENGE OF THE MEEK

Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. (Matthew 5:5)

Yeshua says, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.” Who are the meek? The Greek text behind this saying implies one who is quiet, passive, and submissive, which is why the New American Standard renders it as “Blessed are the gentle.” Yeshua did not teach in Greek. Instead, the saying alludes to the Hebrew of Psalm 37:11, which says, “The humble (*anavim*) will inherit the land.” The Hebrew *anavim* refers not to one who is meek and mild-mannered but rather to the powerless, the downtrodden, the subjugated, and the victimized.

The Hebrew word for “earth” (*eret*) also means “land,” and in this context it refers specifically to the Holy Land, i.e., the land of Israel. Therefore, Matthew 5:5 should be understood to say “Blessed are the subjugated and downtrodden, for they will inherit the land of Israel.” In this sense, the beatitude refers to the faithful Jewish people of the Master’s day who suffered under Roman oppression and to those of every generation who have suffered exile and foreign domination. The Messianic Era will reverse the roles. Those who were once powerless and humbled under the boot of the Gentile nations will possess the promised land and subjugate their enemies. Then the words of Mary’s prophecy will be fulfilled: “He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble” (Luke 1:52).

Yeshua’s beatitude about the humble and oppressed contradicted the philosophy of the Zealots. The Zealots believed that the Romans could be driven out by insurrection, armed resistance, and terrorism. The Zealots taught the oppressed to take up weapons and throw off their subjugation. Yeshua taught that, ultimately, the oppressed will inherit the land, not by means of terrorism and insurrection, but by the divine reversal of the kingdom of heaven. Those who live by the sword will die by the sword, but those who patiently endure and hope in the LORD will ultimately receive the kingdom.

STUDY QUESTIONS

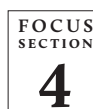
FOCUS
SECTION
3

1. What does the English word meek mean?
2. What does the Hebrew word *anavim* mean?

3. Give two definitions for the Hebrew word *eret*.
4. Against which ideology is the beatitude of Matthew 5:5 directed?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Read Psalm 37 to get the broader picture behind Matthew 5:5. According to the psalm, who will be inheriting the land?

THOSE WHO HUNGER AND THIRST



Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (Matthew 5:6)

Yeshua taught His disciples that those who hunger and thirst now are especially blessed because they will enjoy being satisfied in the Messianic Era. Does this refer to the poor and needy who literally hunger for lack of food and thirst for lack of clean water? Or does it refer to spiritual hunger and thirst? The gospels report two different versions of the saying with two different connotations.

In Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua says, "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied" (Luke 6:21), and, "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry" (Luke 6:25). The tradition preserved in the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas* agrees with Luke's version: "Blessed are those who go hungry, for the stomach of the one in want will be filled" (*Thomas* 69). These sayings indicate that Yeshua had literal poverty, scarcity, and want in view. In the kingdom of heaven, roles will be reversed. Those who suffer want and need due to misfortune and social injustice in this present age will be well-fed in the Messianic Age while those who feed their own stomachs without thought for the needy will find themselves experiencing hunger and poverty. Then the words of Mary's prophecy will be fulfilled: "He has filled the hungry with good things; and sent away the rich empty-handed" (Luke 1:53).

Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount changes the subject from those who suffer physical hunger to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. One who hungers and thirsts for righteousness is one who yearns for the reversal of social and moral injustices. As the Jewish people

groaned under Roman tyranny, they hungered and thirsted for the day that God would vindicate them and usher in His kingdom on earth. The Master assured His disciples that their yearning for God’s righteous vindication would be satiated when the Messianic Era comes.

Therefore, the two versions of the saying complement one another. When the kingdom comes, the literally hungry and thirsty will be satisfied, and that reversal of circumstance will satisfy all who have hungered and thirsted for righteousness and justice.

STUDY QUESTIONS

FOCUS
SECTION
4

1. According to Matthew’s version of the beatitudes, who will be satisfied?
2. According to Luke’s version of the beatitudes, who will be satisfied?
3. What does it mean to “hunger and thirst for righteousness”?

GROUP DISCUSSION: First contrast the difference between hunger and the hunger and thirst for righteousness, then explain how the Messianic Era answers to both versions of the beatitude.

THE COMPASSIONATE

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (Matthew 5:7)

Those who are merciful and compassionate toward others are blessed because they will receive mercy and compassion from God. Conversely, one who does not show mercy toward others should not expect to receive mercy from heaven. The Talmud says, “He who is merciful to men, toward him God is merciful in heaven.”

The beatitude of the merciful finding mercy with God belongs to a series of the Master's teachings based upon the biblical rule of measure-for-measure. "By your standard of measure, it will be measured to you," Yeshua explained. "For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions" (Matthew 6:14–15). For this reason, disciples of Yeshua cannot hold grudges or practice vengeance and retaliation. We are told, "Pardon, and you will be pardoned" (Luke 6:37). The sages extended this principle of receiving mercy on the merit of showing mercy even to how we treat animals.

THE PURE OF HEART

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. (Matthew 5:8)

The LORD told Moses, "You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!" (Exodus 33:20). Nevertheless, Yeshua taught that the "pure in heart" will see God. Biblical Hebrew uses the word "heart" to refer to the mind, the core from which a human being thinks, reasons, and acts. Why does Yeshua say that the pure in heart will see God? According to the Torah's laws of ritual purity, only the Levitically pure may enter into the Holy Temple where God dwells. Levitical purity is a prerequisite to entering God's presence. Psalm 24 brings that ritual-purity symbolism into the moral sphere:

Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in
His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has
not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully.
(Psalm 24:3–4)

In Psalm 24, the man with "clean hands and a pure heart" is a man of integrity. The impure heart is a deceitful and devious mind that cherishes sin and meditates upon unwholesome intentions. The man with a pure heart does not harbor deceit, malice, or immorality in his mind. He will receive a pure revelation of God, as it says, "The upright will behold His face" (Psalm 11:7), and "I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake" (Psalm 17:15). Therefore, the writer of the book of Hebrews tells us to pursue "the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14).

This is good news for the pure in heart, but what about the rest of us? "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. These are the things which defile the man" (Matthew 15:19–20). The LORD says that, in the Messianic Era, "I will

sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean ... from all your filthiness ... I will give you a new heart, and a put new spirit within you” (Ezekiel 36:25–26). Then “the glory of the LORD will be revealed. And all flesh will see it together” (Isaiah 40:5).

THE PEACEMAKERS

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
(Matthew 5:9)

Yeshua’s beatitude about peacemakers contradicted the first-century Zealot impulse that called for taking up armed resistance against Rome. Several of His disciples embraced the Zealot ideal. The beatitude about peacemaking attempted to turn their thoughts away from armed revolution.

“Peacemakers” appear in Psalm 34:14 as those who pursue peace: “Seek peace and pursue it.” A man who pursues peace endeavors to make peace. He does not passively wait for his enemies to be reconciled to him. Instead, he pursues after peace like the working man pursues his daily wages. He seeks peace with his enemies, and he seeks to make peace between a man and his fellow and between a man and his wife.

James, the brother of the Master, says that the peacemaker can be likened to a man who sows his field. He plants peace, but when the crop ripens, he harvests righteousness: “The seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (James 3:18). For this reason, the writer of the book of Hebrews urges us to “pursue peace with all men” (Hebrews 12:14), and Paul tells us, “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men” (Romans 12:18).

By making peace on earth, we bring the world closer to the Messianic Era, when the Prince of Peace will reign. By practicing peace now, we participate in the peace of the coming kingdom, importing the Messianic Era into today’s world.

THE PERSECUTED

Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of
righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10)

To be persecuted for the sake of righteousness means to suffer for the sake of fidelity to God despite various types of coercion and attempts to force a person into compromise and apostasy. Yeshua taught His disciples to expect that type of persecution. By saying, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven,”

Yeshua indicated that those who endure persecution for His sake would find entrance into the kingdom.

The Jewish people had a long legacy of enduring suffering and persecution for their allegiance to God. In the days before the Hasmonean revolt, the wicked Syrian-Greeks persecuted and even martyred Jewish people who remained faithful to the commandments of circumcision, Sabbath observance, and dietary laws. The same fate awaited the faithful Jews of the apostolic and post-apostolic age as the Roman world attempted to suppress the practice of Judaism.

Rabbi Yeshua warned His disciples that they would be insulted, persecuted, and falsely accused specifically because of their affiliation with Him. He said, “Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man” (Luke 6:22). He reminded His disciples that the prophets of old suffered similar persecution from their countrymen. He said, “Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven. For in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets” (Luke 6:23). Yeshua’s disciples should be concerned if they never experience some measure of persecution for the sake of the Master: “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for their fathers used to treat the false prophets in the same way” (Luke 6:26).

The reward of the persecuted is laid up in heaven, that is to say, it remains with God to be paid out at the coming of the kingdom of heaven: “They came to life and reigned with Messiah for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4).

SALT OF THE EARTH

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. (Matthew 5:13)



Rabbi Yeshua called His disciples to act as the salt of the earth. The ancient world used salt as a preservative. In the Temple, the priests salted the sacrifices to prevent putrefaction of the meat, and the Torah refers to an eternal, enduring covenant as a “Covenant of Salt.” Just as salt flavors and preserves, Yeshua wanted His disciples to preserve and repair the world. Judaism expresses the concept of preserving the world as *tikkun olam*, i.e., “fixing the world.” Yeshua wanted His disciples to save the world, so to speak, by spreading the urgent message of repentance to their generation—through example and teaching. He knew that a terrible doom hung over the nation in the form of impending judgment and exile, and He wanted His disciples to become the influence for good that could avert that disaster.

A little bit of salt can make an otherwise bitter taste palatable. His disciples are to be the influence for good and righteousness that balances the bitterness and ugliness of the world and all that is evil and wrong and wicked.

The Master warned His disciples not to lose their saltiness. “Salt is good; but if the salt becomes unsalty, with what will you make it salty again?” (Mark 9:50). He said, “If even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear” (Luke 14:34–35).

Can salt lose its salinity? The Talmud records a debate between a famous rabbi named Yehoshua and a school of Greek philosophers from Athens. In the course of the debate, the philosophers attempt to stump Rabbi Yehoshua with a series of riddles. At one point they ask him, “When salt becomes unsavory, how can it be made salty again?” Rabbi Yehoshua answers the riddle with another riddle. He says, “Salt may be made salty again with the afterbirth of a mule.” The philosophers object, “Does a mule have an afterbirth?” (Mules are born sterile, and therefore, they do not reproduce or have afterbirth.) Rabbi Yehoshua explains, “And can salt lose its saltiness?” Just as a mule cannot have afterbirth, the laws of chemistry make it impossible for salt to lose its saltiness.

Yeshua played on the absurdity of the idea that salt could lose its flavor. If other foodstuffs taste bitter, they can be salted into palatability, but this would not work for the salt itself. Just as salt without salinity would no longer serve any purpose, so too, disciples who fail to perform their function as disciples are no longer serving their purpose. If salt loses its saltiness, it’s not salt.

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. For what did the ancient world use salt?
2. Define the Hebrew term *tikkun olam*.
3. What was the “terrible doom” that hung over the nation?

4. How were the disciples of Yeshua supposed to help save the world and avert disaster?

5. With what can salt be made salty again after it has lost its salinity?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Reiterate the point of the saying about salt losing its saltiness. How does that relate to us?

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14–16)



Yeshua told His disciples that they were the salt of the earth. In the same teaching, He told them, “You are the light of the world.” With these words, He urged His disciples to fulfill their national mission as Jews—to be a light to the world. They were to provide spiritual enlightenment for the world around them and to spread the kingdom’s message of repentance that could avert the looming judgment.

The interior walls of first-century houses had small niches in which the homeowner placed an oil lamp for illumination, and from that perch, the lamp “gives light to all who are in the house.” Yeshua pointed out the absurdity of lighting a lamp and then covering it with a basket. Just as salt without salinity fails to fulfill its purpose, a lamp under a bowl or a bed is also useless.

In the two analogies, salt and light correspond. The disciples are the salt of the world and the light of the world. Retaining our saltiness is equivalent to letting our light shine before men. Losing our saltiness is equivalent to hiding our light under a bowl. What is the saltiness? What is the light? How can Yeshua’s disciples retain their saltiness? How can they give light to everyone in the house?

The Master answered, “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” The disciples’ main message consisted of their good works. In Judaism, the term “good works” is idiomatic for acts of lovingkindness and the fulfillment of the commandments. Yeshua told His disciples that if they kept the commandments according to His teaching, they would retain the influence of their saltiness, and their light would shine before men and bring honor to God.

THE SALT AND THE LIGHT (MATTHEW 5:13-16)

Salt = disciples

Saltiness = good deeds

Salt without saltiness = disciples without good deeds

Lamp = disciples

Light = good deeds

Concealed lamp = disciples without good deeds

Meaning = A disciple who does not practice good deeds (the commandments and the teaching of Yeshua) is not fulfilling his purpose and has become useless.

STUDY QUESTIONS

FOCUS
SECTION
6

1. With what source of illumination were first-century homes lit?
2. In what way were Yeshua’s disciples to provide light for the world?
3. In the two analogies, what do the salt and light symbolize?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Compare two teachings of Yeshua about “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14 and John 8:12).

TRANSMITTING THE TEACHING

Now no one after lighting a lamp covers it over with a container, or puts it under a bed; but he puts it on a lampstand, so that those who come in may see the light. For nothing is hidden that will not become evident, nor anything secret that will not be known and come to light. (Luke 8:16–17)

Yeshua used the same lamp illustration to achieve a different point in the Gospels of Mark (4:21) and Luke. In those contexts, He compared His disciples again to lamps and asked, “A lamp is not brought to be put under a basket, is it, or under a bed? Is it not brought to be put on the lampstand?” The meaning in that context is that His disciples should not be reluctant to transmit the teaching they learn from Him. His teachings are not like the secret, esoteric lessons of the mystics that were whispered from one rabbi into the ear of his disciple lest others overhear. Instead, Yeshua wanted His disciples to disseminate His teaching broadly: “For nothing is hidden, except to be revealed; nor has anything been secret, but that it would come to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:22–23). The version of the lamp illustration preserved in the apocryphal *Gospel of Thomas* agrees with the Markan and Lukan context about transmitting Yeshua’s teachings:

What you will hear in your ear, in the other ear proclaim from your rooftops. After all, no one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, nor does one put it in a hidden place. Rather, one puts it on a lampstand so that all who come and go will see its light. (*Thomas* 33)

THE HIDDEN LAMP (MARK 4:21–23/LUKE 8:16–17)

Lamp = disciples

Light = transmission of Yeshua’s teaching

Concealed lamp = disciples who do not transmit His teaching

Meaning = A disciple who does not transmit the teaching of his rabbi is not fulfilling his purpose and has become useless.

THE CITY ON THE HILL

What did Yeshua mean when He referred to His disciples as the light of the world? The saying hinted toward the destruction of Jerusalem, which is “a city set on a hill”:

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. (Matthew 5:14–15)



A lamp placed under a bowl extinguishes itself for lack of oxygen. The extinguishing of the “light of the world” hints toward the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, which are also referred to as “the light of the world.” Yeshua foresaw the danger and urged His disciples to influence the generation toward repentance.

Along the same line of thought, Yeshua warned His disciples that salt without saltiness “is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet” (Matthew 5:13). These words cryptically alluded to the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming exile, that is, the so-called “times of the Gentiles”:

They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, *and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles*, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. (Luke 21:24)

That is to say, if Israel had repented under the teaching of Yeshua and the influence of His disciples, the destruction of Jerusalem might have been averted, and the redemption would have dawned, as the Prophet Isaiah says, “Arise shine, for your light has come ... and nations shall come to your light ... they shall bring the praises of the LORD” (Isaiah 60:1-6).

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. To what does the “city set on a hill” allude?

2. In this interpretation, what does the extinguishing of the light symbolize?

3. What does the trampling underfoot of the salt symbolize?

GROUP DISCUSSION: What do you think is meant by the so-called “times of the Gentiles” in Luke 21:24 (Revelation 11:2)?

KEY WORDS AND TERMS



VOCABULARY

anavim	Humble, powerless, downtrodden.
ashrei	Deeply contented; translated as blessed, happy, joyful in English Bibles.
eret	Earth; land.
oy	Woe.
rabbi	Teacher.
tikkun olam	Repairing or fixing the world.
Torah	Literally “instruction”; the five books of Moses; Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.



PRIMARY SOURCES

Gospel of Thomas	First- or second-century Coptic non-canonical sayings gospel.
Talmud	Foundational collection of Jewish law arranged in sixty-three tractates. The Talmud contains two elements: the Mishnah and Gemara (commentary on the Mishnah). The Talmud was compiled in the early sixth century from long-remembered oral tradition.



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TORAHPORTIONS

"Man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD." (Deuteronomy 8:3)

READ THE BIBLE JESUS READ. Torah Club Members should study the weekly Torah portion (parashah) in addition to the weekly gospel lesson. The lessons in *Jesus, My Rabbi* depict Jesus as a teacher of the Torah, so it's important to study the five books of Moses. TorahPortions.org provides the scriptures that are read every Sabbath in the synagogue (and a suggested gospel selection for Messianic Jewish synagogues). Accompanying online devotionals bring the Torah portion to life and connect you more closely with Jesus, your Rabbi.

#	PARASHAH	DATE	TORAH	HAFTARAH
GENESIS / B'REISHEET				
1	B'reisheet	17 Oct. 2020	Gen. 1:1-6:8	1 Sam. 20:18-42
2	Noach	24 Oct. 2020	Gen. 6:9-11:32	Isa. 54:1-55:5
3	Lech Lecha	31 Oct. 2020	Gen. 12:1-17:27	Isa. 40:27-41:16
4	Vayera	7 Nov. 2020	Gen. 18:1-22:24	2 Kgs. 4:1-37
5	Chayei Sarah	14 Nov. 2020	Gen. 23:1-25:18	1 Kgs. 1:1-31
6	Toldot	21 Nov. 2020	Gen. 25:19-28:9	Mal. 1:1-2:7
7	Vayetze	28 Nov. 2020	Gen. 28:10-32:3(2) [®]	Hos. 12:13(12)-14:10(9) [®]
8	Vayishlach	5 Dec. 2020	Gen. 32:4(3)-36:43 [®]	Oba. 1-21
9	Vayeshev	12 Dec. 2020	Gen. 37:1-40:23	Zec. 2:14-4:7
10	Miketz	19 Dec. 2020	Gen. 41:1-44:17	1 Kgs. 3:15-4:1
11	Vayigash	26 Dec. 2020	Gen. 44:18-47:27	Eze. 37:15-28
12	Vayechi	2 Jan. 2021	Gen. 47:28-50:26	1 Kgs. 2:1-12
EXODUS / SHEMOT				
13	Shemot	9 Jan. 2021	Exo. 1:1-6:1	Isa. 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23
14	Va'era	16 Jan. 2021	Exo. 6:2-9:35	Eze. 28:25-29:21
15	Bo	23 Jan. 2021	Exo. 10:1-13:16	Jer. 46:13-28
16	Beshalach	30 Jan. 2021	Exo. 13:17-17:16	Jdg. 4:4-5:31
17	Yitro	6 Feb. 2021	Exo. 18:1-20:23	Isa. 6:1-7:6, 9:5-6(6-7) [®]
18	Mishpatim	13 Feb. 2021	Exo. 21:1-24:18	2 Kgs. 12:1(11:21)-17(16) [®]
19	Terumah	20 Feb. 2021	Exo. 25:1-27:19	1 Sam. 15:2-15:34
20	Tetzaveh	27 Feb. 2021	Exo. 27:20-30:10	Eze. 43:10-43:27
21	Ki Tisa	6 Mar. 2021	Exo. 30:11-34:35	Eze. 36:16-38
22/ 23	Vayak'hel / Pekudei	13 Mar. 2021	Exo. 35:1-40:38	Eze. 45:16-46:18
LEVITICUS / VAYIKRA				
24	Vayikra	20 Mar. 2021	Lev. 1:1-5:26(6:7) [®]	Isa. 43:21-44:23
25	Tzav	27 Mar. 2021	Lev. 6:1(8)-8:36 [®]	Mal. 3:4-3:24
Pesach I		28 Mar. 2021*	Exo. 12:21-51; Num. 28:16-25	Josh. 5:2-6:1
Pesach VII		3 Apr. 2021*	Exo. 13:17-15:26; Num. 28:19-25	2 Sam. 22:1-51
26	Sh'mini	10 Apr. 2021	Lev. 9:1-11:47	2 Sam. 6:1-7:17
27/ 28	Tazria / Metzora	17 Apr. 2021	Lev. 12:1-15:33	2 Kgs. 7:3-20
29/ 30	Acharei Mot / Kedoshim	24 Apr. 2021	Lev. 16:1-20:27	Amos 9:7-15
▶ 31	Emor	1 May 2021	Lev. 21:1-24:23	Eze. 44:15-31
32/ 33	Behar / Bechukotai	8 May 2021	Lev. 25:1-27:34	Jer. 16:19-17:14

#	PARASHAH	DATE	TORAH	HAFTARAH
NUMBERS / BAMIDBAR				
34	Bamidbar	15 May 2021	Num. 1:1-4:20	Hos. 2:1-2:22
Shavu'ot		17 May 2021*	Exo. 19:1-20:23; Num. 28:26-31	Eze. 1:1-28, 3:12
35	Nasso	22 May 2021	Num. 4:21-7:89	Jdg. 13:2-25
36	Beha'alotcha	29 May 2021	Num. 8:1-12:16	Zec. 2:14(10)-4:7 [®]
37	Shelach	5 Jun. 2021	Num. 13:1-15:41	Josh. 2:1-24
38	Korach	12 Jun. 2021	Num. 16:1-18:32	1 Sam. 11:14-12:22
39	Chukat	19 Jun. 2021	Num. 19:1-22:1	Jdg. 11:1-11:33
40	Balak	26 Jun. 2021	Num. 22:2-25:9	Mic. 5:6(7)-6:8 [®]
41	Pinchas	3 Jul. 2021	Num. 25:10-30:1(29:40) [®]	Jer. 1:1-2:3
42/ 43	Mattot / Massei	10 Jul. 2021	Num. 30:2(1)-36:13*	Isa. 66:1-66:24
DEUTERONOMY / DEVARIM				
44	Devarim	17 Jul. 2021	Deut. 1:1-3:22	Isa. 1:1-2:7
45	Va'etchanan	24 Jul. 2021	Deut. 3:23-7:11	Isa. 40:1-26
46	Ekev	31 Jul. 2021	Deut. 7:12-11:25	Isa. 49:14-51:3
47	Re'eh	7 Aug. 2021	Deut. 11:26-16:17	1 Sam. 20:18-20:42
48	Shoftim	14 Aug. 2021	Deut. 16:18-21:9	Isa. 51:12-52:12
49	Ki Tetze	21 Aug. 2021	Deut. 21:10-25:19	Isa. 54:1-10
50	Ki Tavo	28 Aug. 2021	Deut. 26:1-29:8(9) [®]	Isa. 60:1-22
51	Nitzavim	4 Sep. 2021	Deut. 29:9(10)-30:20 [®]	Isa. 61:10-63:9
Rosh HaShanah		7 Sep. 2021*	Gen. 21:1-34; Num. 29:1-6	1 Sam. 1:1-2:10
52	Vayelech	11 Sep. 2021	Deut. 31:1-30	Hos. 14:2(1)-10(9) [®] ; Mic. 7:18-20; Joel 2:15-27
Yom Kippur		16 Sep. 2021	Lev. 16:1-34; Num. 29:7-11	Isa. 57:14-58:14
53	Ha'azinu	18 Sep. 2021	Deut. 32:1-52	2 Sam. 22:1-22:51
Sukkot I		21 Sep. 2021	Lev. 22:26-23:44; Num. 29:12-16	Zec. 14:1-21
Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah*		28 Sep. 2021 (29 Sep. 2021)*	Deut. 14:22-16:17; Num. 29:35-30:1(29:40) [®]	1 Kgs. 8:54-66
54	Vezot ha'Bracha	29 Sep. 2021	Deut. 33:1-34:12	Josh. 1:1-18

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