



TORAH CLUB

WHERE DISCIPLES LEARN



JESUS, My Rabbi

The Life and Teachings
of the Jewish Jesus

LESSON

36

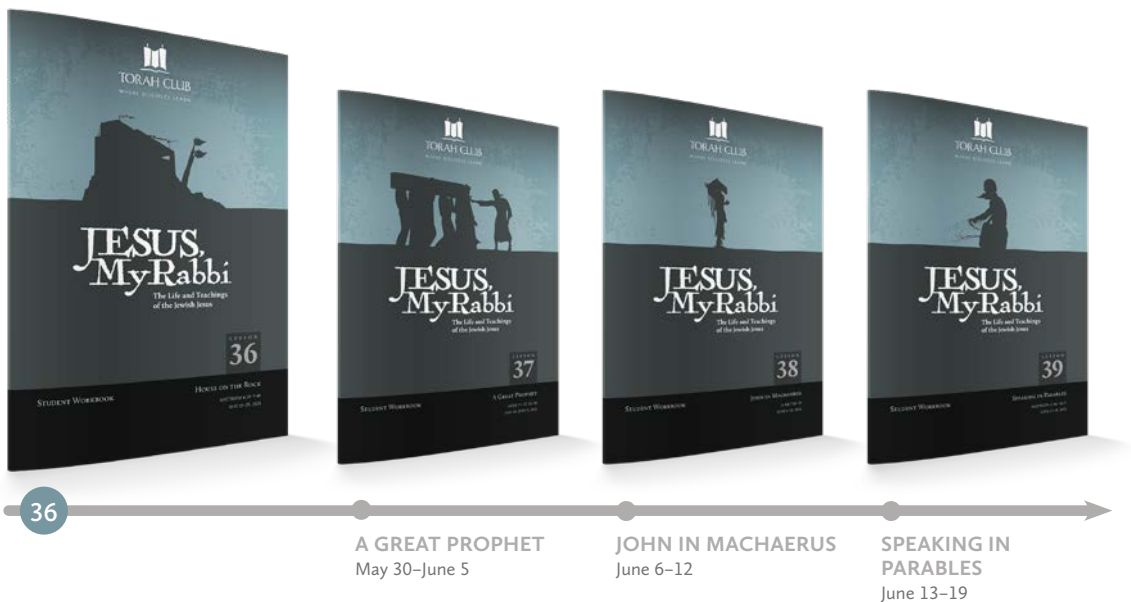
STUDENT WORKBOOK

HOUSE ON THE ROCK

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MATTHEW 6:19–7:29

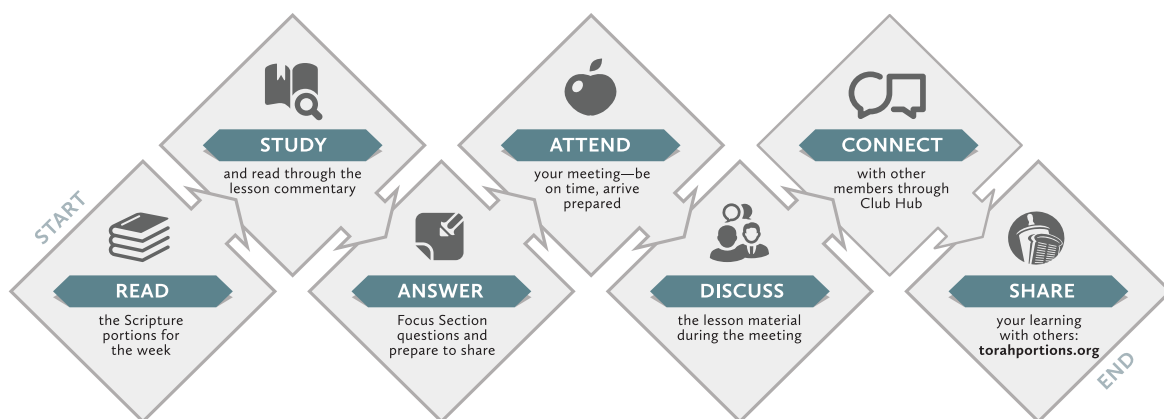
MAY 23–29, 2021



HOUSE ON THE ROCK

ON THIS JOURNEY: Yeshua, still seated atop the hill by Lake Galilee, surrounded by His disciples, teaches them about the kingdom of heaven. He admonishes them to look forward to the world that is coming, living according to its values and not those of this present age. Everyone is amazed by Yeshua's teaching, for He speaks with an authority no other rabbi dares claim.

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LESSON 36: HOUSE ON THE ROCK



READING: MATTHEW 6:19–7:29

LESSON OVERVIEW

THIS WEEK we continue with our fifth lesson on the Sermon on the Mount. Yeshua first directs His disciples’ attention to the futility of accumulating wealth in this life. He reminds them that all earthly possessions will one day come to nothing. Greed is not only vapid and useless but damaging to one’s very soul. Preoccupation with the accumulation of wealth prevents one from devoting himself to the service of God. Though His disciples should put forth effort for their livelihood, they should not spend any time or effort worrying about their basic physical needs; they must trust instead for God to provide. Yeshua admonishes His followers that they must not sit in the place of God to pronounce judgment. Nevertheless, He teaches them that the oracles of God must not be casually transmitted to those who have no regard for them. Yeshua assures His disciples that if they have a need, whether physical or spiritual, they only have to ask their Father in heaven. He freely gives all who ask with pure intentions, like a father who gives bread to his son. The Master sums up His teaching in a simple precept: Whatever one wishes others to do to him, so should a person do for others. He warns that the way of discipleship is narrow, and few will successfully traverse it. False prophets will deceive many—and even themselves, as they are disappointed on the day of judgment. The crowds marvel at Yeshua’s authoritative teaching. How can He transmit the Torah without reference to the sages who came before Him?

This lesson of *Jesus, My Rabbi* corresponds to Book 2, pages 518–536 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.

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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.

HOUSE ON THE ROCK

FOCUS
SECTION

1

TREASURES IN HEAVEN

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. (Matthew 6:19)

People say, “You can’t take it with you.” Yeshua contradicted that adage by citing the common Jewish belief that resources given to the needy will be repaid and rewarded in the Messianic Era and the World to Come. “Treasures in heaven” does not refer to literal treasure stored up someplace beyond the sky; instead, it means “treasure with God.” That is to say, “Invest in the things of God, and He will reward you”:

Lose your money for your brother and your neighbor, but do not let it rust under a stone to be lost. Lay up your treasure according to the commandments of the Most High, and it will bring you more profit than gold. Store up charity in your storehouses and it will deliver you from all affliction. (*Sirach*)

A person who accrues wealth for himself risks losing that wealth. Life is temporary and uncertain. Thieves might steal. Time destroys. Wealth depreciates. James the brother of the Master expounds upon Yeshua’s teaching as follows:

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. Your gold and your silver have rusted; and their rust will be a witness against you and will consume your flesh like fire. It is in the last days that you have stored up your treasure! (James 5:1–3)

How does one store up treasure with God? Yeshua says, “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:33–34). A man’s heart (that is, his mind, thoughts, and intentions) will be focused on the accumulation of his wealth. If he has accumulated wealth on earth, his mind will be focused on earthly matters, but if he has invested in the things of God, his mind will be focused on matters of godliness.

In the Apostolic Era, the famous convert to Judaism, King Izates of Adiabene, sent an enormous sum of money to Jerusalem for famine relief. His brothers and countrymen criticized him for squandering the family inheritance. His reply reveals influence from the teaching of Yeshua:

My fathers stored up below, and I am storing above ... My fathers stored in a place which can be tampered with, but I have stored in a place which cannot be tampered with ... My fathers stored something which produces no fruits, but I have stored something which does produce fruits ... My fathers gathered for this world, but I have gathered for the future world. (Talmud)

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. How can a person convert worldly possessions into eternal “treasure with God”?
2. What happens to all the possessions we do not convert into eternal treasure?
3. If a person chooses to accumulate wealth in this life instead of in the next, what might they have to fear besides missing out on an eternal reward?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Modern economies run on conspicuous consumption fueled by relentless advertising. Discuss some practical ways one might avoid falling into the trap of accumulating possessions in affluent societies.

AN EVIL EYE

The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! (Matthew 6:22–23)

The ancients believed that a form of invisible light issued forth from the eye, enabling a person to see. A blind man's eyes did not emit this light, hence his blindness. Rabbi Yeshua invoked that ancient belief about the function of the eyes when He called the eye “the lamp of the body.” The Master said that if a person's eye is healthy, his whole body will be filled with light—that is to say, he will see clearly. On the other hand, if a person's eye is bad, he will be in darkness. To simplify, a man with healthy eyes can see; a man without healthy eyes cannot see.

In this case, however, Yeshua was not speaking about physical blindness but spiritual blindness. When He said, “If your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness,” He employed a Hebrew idiom for stinginess and greed. The Bible and rabbinic literature describe a miserly person as a man with a “bad eye.” English Bibles usually translate the term “bad eye” as “selfishness” or “greed”:

Eat thou not the bread of him that hath an evil eye, neither desire thou his dainty meats. (Proverbs 23:6, KJV)

He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him. (Proverbs 28:22, KJV)

An evil eye covets his own bread, and he is selfish at his table. (*Sirach*)

If you sit at a bountiful table, do not be greedy ... remember that an evil eye is a wicked thing. (*Sirach*)

Likewise, a “good eye” was an idiom for generosity. The sages described a charitable person as a man with a good eye. The Master employed the good-eye/bad-eye terminology metaphorically to speak about spiritual blindness. If a person is generous and charitable, he has a good eye. The lamp of his body functions, filling his body with light—which is to say, he has spiritual sight. “If therefore your whole body is full of light, with no dark part in it, it shall be wholly illumined, as when the lamp illumines you with its rays” (Luke 11:36). If the person has a bad eye—that is, he is greedy and selfish—the lamp of his body is not functioning. His whole body is filled with darkness; he is spiritually blind. If the lamp inside of a person produces darkness instead of light, it will be a very thick darkness indeed.

THE LAMP OF THE BODY (MATTHEW 6:22–23)

Eye/Lamp of the body = a person's penchant toward generosity
or greed

Healthy Eye/Good Eye = a generous nature

Bad Eye/Evil Eye = a selfish, stingy nature

Meaning = A generous person sees clearly; a stingy person is blind and
in spiritual darkness.

TWO MASTERS

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and
love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth. (Matthew 6:24)

Imagine two different slaveholders with equal possession over the same slave. They make competing demands upon the slave's time and service. The slave cannot loyally serve both simultaneously. Yeshua used this example to illustrate an important point.

However, is it necessarily true that a slave with divided loyalties will harbor absolute hatred toward one of his masters? We need not postulate that he would. In the Hebrew idiom of the Master's teaching, the contrast of love and hate indicates an order of preference—not complete antithesis. In other words, the slave will by way of necessity prefer one master over the other. The slave with divided loyalties cannot serve both masters simultaneously, so he must choose one over the other, even if he truly wishes he could serve both. His preference for one master will eventually evolve into disdain for the other.

An apocryphal version of the same saying adds two more hypothetical absurdities which may also have originated as additional illustrations in the teaching of the Master:

A person cannot mount two horses or bend two bows. And a slave
cannot serve two masters, otherwise that slave will honor the one and
offend the other. (*Gospel of Thomas*)

Who are the two masters in the metaphor? Yeshua explained, "You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew 6:24). The word translated "wealth" is *mammon*, an Aramaic loan word used in rabbinic Hebrew for money, wealth, and possessions. In a broader sense, it refers to a lifestyle concerned primarily with material possessions rather than spiritual pursuits.

Yeshua instructed His disciples to be generous and charitable. He told them to store up treasure in heaven rather than on earth, and He encouraged

them to possess a good eye rather than a bad eye. He told them, “You cannot love both God and mammon.”

FOCUS
SECTION

2

DO NOT WORRY

For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? (Matthew 6:25)

The Master chided His disciples for worrying over life’s necessities—even the mundane requirements of food, shelter, and clothing. He called them “men of little faith” (Luke 12:28). A person preoccupied with acquiring the basics of life divides his time between the service of God and the service of money. He serves two masters, and he is unable to give generously and freely. He is unable to serve God with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength because he is driven by his anxieties. He worries from morning to evening and from evening to morning about his needs. Therefore, the Master instructed His disciples to set aside their anxieties and focus on their service to God.

In the open-air setting of the Mount of Beatitudes, the Master could point to the birds as an example. Birds do not make bread. They do not sow and reap. They do not store food in granaries. Despite all this, “your heavenly Father feeds them” (Matthew 6:26). He pointed to the wildflowers, which, in the springtime, grow in abundance on the Mount of Beatitudes. The flowers of the field do not spin wool or sew fabric, yet “not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these” (Luke 12:27). “He himself will give you raiment,” Yeshua said.

His argument here follows the pattern of a common method of rabbinic argumentation called “light to heavy,” known to Western logicians as “*a minori ad maius*.” A classic “light to heavy” argument hinges on presenting a minor case and then stating, “If this is so in the minor case, how much more so is it true in the major case!” Thus, the logic proceeds from the light matter to the more serious matter: “If God feeds birds (and you are more valuable than birds), how much more so will He feed you? If God clothes the grass (and you are more valuable than grass), how much more so will He clothe you?”

Likewise, the Talmud says, “He who has bread in his basket today yet worries, ‘What will I eat tomorrow?’—that is a man of little faith.”

These precepts should not be taken to mean that a disciple of the Master should purposely fail to earn a living in this world. The life of John the

Immerser, who lived in the wilderness eating and wearing only what he found, is a telling example. John did not call his followers to take up his way of life. He did not tell soldiers or tax collectors to forsake their careers. Instead, he instructed them to stay in their professions and conduct themselves honestly, sharing their possessions with the less fortunate.

It is equally evident that the Master did not intend that all His disciples forsake their worldly occupations and renounce all their possessions. Remember that Yeshua Himself worked His father's trade as a carpenter. The disciples returned to fishing even after the resurrection. According to church legend, Thomas labored as a stonemason and architect, and John took a job as a furnace-stoker in Ephesus. Paul the apostle supported himself as a tentmaker, and he instructed the believers in Thessalonica, saying, "Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life and attend to your own business and work with your hands, just as we commanded you; so that you may behave properly toward outsiders and not be in any need" (1 Thessalonians 4:11–12). Paul told Timothy, "If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

Discipleship to Yeshua did not allow for an abdication of responsibility. Even so, it absolutely did call for a renunciation of worry and anxiety.

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. Name some consequences of worrying too much about one's physical needs.
2. What was John the Immerser's instruction to those who had careers?

3. To which serious sin did Paul compare the error of failing to work for one's living and provide for one's family?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Read 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15. Do you think the Thessalonians may have misunderstood Yeshua's teaching in Matthew 6? What was Paul's instruction to them? Is it still relevant today?

SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM

But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.
(Matthew 6:33–34)

Rabbi Yeshua wanted to teach His disciples to rely on God's provision rather than their own frantic efforts. He contrasted them against the pagan, non-Jewish world. The Gentiles prioritized mammon and expended all their energy fretting over the pursuit of material goods: "All these things the Gentiles eagerly seek" (Matthew 6:32). Unlike the Gentiles who consume their years seeking after material goods, the disciples of Yeshua should seek the kingdom of heaven. He told His disciples to "seek first His kingdom and His righteousness" (6:33). After all, "Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things ... and all these things shall be added" to the one who seeks first the kingdom and God's righteousness (6:32–33). Clement of Alexandria transmits a similar saying of the Master not known from the Gospels: "Ask for the great things, and God will add unto you the little things."

What does it mean to seek first the kingdom?

The "kingdom" is the kingdom of heaven, the Messianic Era. To seek the kingdom first means prioritizing bringing the kingdom through repentance and godliness and seeking the personal reward of entering the kingdom—i.e., the resurrection of the dead and the Messianic Era.

What does it mean to seek "His righteousness"?

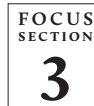
The Sermon on the Mount describes God's righteousness as an application of God's Torah that internalizes His righteous standard. To seek God's righteousness means to apply His commandments as Yeshua explained them in the Sermon on the Mount.

If a man will set aside his anxiety over material possessions and instead apply his efforts toward entering the kingdom and practicing God's righteousness, he need not worry; the LORD will supply him his material needs. The ancient sages of Judaism had similar advice:

Do not worry about tomorrow's trouble, for you do not know what the day will bring. Tomorrow may come and a man will be no more, so he has worried about a world which never belonged to him. (Talmud)

It is sufficient for trouble to come at its time. (Talmud)

MEASURE FOR MEASURE



Do not judge so that you will not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. (Matthew 7:1–2)

Yeshua told His disciples not to judge others. Does this mean that judges officiating in a court of law should not offer verdicts? Obviously, Yeshua was not prohibiting judiciary functions, nor did He intend to grant license for sin and subjective morality. Neither was He erasing the line between wrong and right nor encouraging His disciples to wink at sin.

Instead, Yeshua warned His disciples against taking on the role of God in judging others. That is to say, disciples of Yeshua should not declare God's condemnation against others or presume to know God's verdict regarding a human being. For example, a disciple should not call upon God to punish his fellow's sin, nor should he point to his fellow's misfortune and declare him justly repaid for wrongdoing. The disciple of Yeshua should be the most reluctant of all to declare a man's final judgment and eternal destiny. James, the brother of the Master, explained, "There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?" (James 4:12).

Yeshua warned His disciples to refrain from deciding who is saved and who is not, who will be exalted and who will be humbled, who will be damned and who will be raised. According to Yeshua, a man makes such assumptions (the type that is too often tossed about matter-of-factly in theology and practice) at risk to his own soul: "For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you" (Matthew 7:2).

The "standard of measure" refers to a container used for measuring out dry goods such as grain. A dishonest merchant might use two different standards of measure, a slightly larger capacity measure for his purchases

and a slightly smaller capacity container for resale. An honest merchant uses the same standard of measure whether he is buying or selling.

Yeshua promises that a person who offers the benefit of the doubt and judges others favorably will receive the full measure of favor in return:

Do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return. (Luke 6:37–38)

Rabbinic literature contains numerous parallel sentiments:

Hillel said, “Do not judge your neighbor until you have reached his place.” (*Pirkei Avot*)

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel, “The same measure which a man gives is measured out to him.” (*Midrash Rabbah*)

By the same measure with which a man measures out to others, they (i.e., Heaven) measure it out to him. (Mishnah)

He who calls down [God’s] judgment on his neighbor is punished [for his own sins]. (Talmud)

All the measures of the Holy One, blessed be He, are measure-for-measure. (Talmud)

The Master based several of His teachings upon the biblical rule of measure-for-measure. Clement of Rome, the disciple of Peter, transmits a series of measure-for-measure sayings in the name of Yeshua:

Be especially mindful of the words of the Master Yeshua which He spoke, teaching us humility and long-suffering. For He said as follows, “Be merciful, so that you may receive mercy; forgive so that it may be forgiven to you; as you do to others, so shall it be done unto you; as you judge, so shall you be judged; as you are compassionate, so shall compassion be shown to you; with whatever measure you measure out, with the same it shall be measured back to you.” By this command and by these rules let us establish ourselves, so that we walk with all humility in obedience to His holy words. (1 *Clement* 13:1–3)

Yeshua gave His disciples the example of the log and speck in the eye to illustrate the folly of condemning others (Matthew 7:3). The person who sees the speck of sawdust in his brother's eye remains oblivious to the log in his own eye. A critical person acutely observes even the most insignificant flaws in the character of others, but he has no concern for even the most glaring deficiencies in his own character. In the words of the Jerusalem Talmud, "Let us pick off the straws from ourselves before we do it to others." In the words of Paul, "You have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things" (Romans 2:1).

The Master's own field of work in Nazareth may have inspired the illustration. He used the terminology of a carpenter. The Greek word translated "log" references a beam of timber, much like today's two-by-four planks used in construction.

A generation later, Rabbi Tarfon complained about the popularity of Yeshua's speck-in-the-eye adage, saying, "I wonder whether there is anyone in this generation who accepts reproof, for if one says to him, 'Take the speck from between your eyes,' he will answer, 'Take the beam from between your eyes!'" (Talmud).

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. How should a person officiating as a judge in a legal system follow Yeshua's instruction in this verse?
2. If we know a person who does not seem to be living in obedience to God, what can we assume about God's disposition toward them or their eternal destination?
3. Both Yeshua and the sages recorded in the Talmud warned of a specific consequence for a person who judges and condemns others. What was it?

4. When we are tempted to point out the faults of others, what should we do instead?

GROUP DISCUSSION: It is common practice in some religious circles to ascribe natural disasters to some sin on the part of those who have been afflicted. What can we learn about this practice from Yeshua's instruction in this passage?

DOGS AND PIGS

Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. (Matthew 7:6)

The Master told His disciples not to give what is “holy” to dogs—that is, not to give meats from the altar sacrifices to dogs. The Talmud agrees: “We may not redeem dedicated sacrifices [that became disqualified] in order to feed the dogs.” Yeshua borrowed from that Temple imagery to warn His disciples against teaching Torah (what is holy) to idolaters. He also told them not to cast their pearls before pigs. Rabbinic literature refers to adages and interpretations of the rabbis figuratively as “pearls.” Moreover, in Jewish sources from the Roman Era, a dog can be idiomatic for a Gentile idolater, and a pig might imply a Roman. The sages were reluctant to study with Gentiles:

A treasure must not be revealed to everyone; so also with the precious words of Torah. One must not go into the deeper meaning of them, except in the presence of those individuals who are suitably trained. (Jerusalem Talmud)

The teachings of the Torah are not to be transmitted to an idolater, for it is said [in Psalm 147:20], “He has not dealt thus with any nation; and as for His ordinances, they have not known them.” (Talmud)

In that broader context, the saying about casting pearls before swine seems to be a warning about working among idolaters and Romans. In another passage, He told them, “Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matthew 10:5–6). Similarly, in Matthew 15:26, He

objected to healing a Gentile woman's daughter, saying, "It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs."

The "dog" and "pig" terminology sounds offensive to modern ears, particularly the ears of a Gentile Christian, but Yeshua does not refer to those Gentiles and Romans who will forsake paganism and take hold of the God of Israel. His warning must be weighed in balance with His interaction with the centurion in Matthew 8:5–13 and His commission to the disciples in Matthew 28:19, in which He sends them to all nations.

ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (Matthew 7:7–8)

The Rabbi encouraged His disciples to ask, seek, and knock. The ask-seek-knock saying appears in almost identical form in Luke 11:9–10. In both Matthew and Luke, the saying prefaces a discussion about prayer. Yeshua encouraged His disciples to be persistent in prayer, confident that God will answer.

The one who asks is certainly the one who asks the Father in prayer, as James the brother of the Master explained, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). One sage, recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud, agrees: "Answer to prayer is only near to the calling, and calling is near to the answer."

The one who seeks, seeks the LORD, as the Torah says in Deuteronomy 4:29: "You will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul." The Prophet Isaiah adds, "Seek the LORD while He may be found; call upon Him while He is near" (Isaiah 55:6).

The one who knocks is the one who seeks entrance into the kingdom of heaven. He knocks at the narrow gate, and the door opens up for him. "He knocked at the gates of mercy and they were opened for him" (Talmud).

HOW MUCH MORE SO

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:11)

The Master told His disciples to ask, seek, and knock in prayer. He encouraged them to do so with an illustration in which He compared the LORD

to an earthly father. If a son asked his earthly father for a loaf of bread, the father would not give his son an inedible stone. If he asked him for a fish, he would not give him a snake—an unclean animal that the Torah prohibits Jews from eating. “Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he?” (Luke 11:12).

Just as with the example of clothing and feeding wild animals, the Master here argued from “light to heavy.” Yeshua said, “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!”

FOCUS
SECTION

4

THIS SUMS UP THE TORAH AND THE PROPHETS

In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

The baseless hatred of Yeshua’s generation had put the Jewish people on a collision course with national disaster. Yeshua tried to avert this disaster by calling on His generation to abandon their hatred and replace it with love. The “Golden Rule,” “treat people the same way you want them to treat you,” paraphrases Leviticus 19:18: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” What does it mean to love one’s neighbor as one’s self? Whatever a person does not want others to do to him, he should not do to others. As you love to be treated yourself, so you should treat others. That principle describes basic empathy, the foundation of human morality. The apocryphal book of *Tobit* states it as “Do to no man that which you hate.” Another rabbinic source puts it succinctly: “What you hate for yourself, do not do to your neighbor” (*Avot de Rebbe Natan*).

Rabbi Yeshua told His disciples that the Golden Rule “is the Torah and the Prophets.” In other words, it expresses the ethical core behind the message of the whole Bible.

Bible teachers sometimes suppose that the Master meant that the Golden Rule replaces the Law. They use Matthew 7:12 as an escape clause from the other commandments of the Torah. That is to say, if a man simply does to others what he would have them do to him, he need not concern himself with the specifics of the commandments. Accordingly, Yeshua abolished the Torah and replaced it with this shorter, easier-to-remember formula.

On the contrary, the Master did not say, “This replaces the Torah and the Prophets.” He said, “This is the Torah and the Prophets.”

The Golden Rule echoes a maxim of Hillel the Elder, who lived a generation before the Master. In a famous story in the Talmud, Hillel claimed that the Golden Rule summarized the whole Torah:

On another occasion a certain Gentile came to Shammai and said to him, “Make me into a Jewish convert, but teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot.” Immediately Shammai drove him away with the measuring stick which was in his hand. When the same Gentile went before Hillel with the same proposition, Hillel said to him, “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor. That is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary on it. Now go and study it.” (Talmud)

Rabbi Hillel used the Golden Rule to summarize the essence of the Torah, not to replace it. So too, with Yeshua who says, “This is the Law and the Prophets.” Paul follows the same teaching when he says, “If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfillment of the Torah” (Romans 13:9–10). Paul did not mean that Leviticus 19:18 replaced the other commandments. The apostolic community transmitted the Golden Rule in direct conjunction with Leviticus 19:18: “You shall love your fellow as yourself. Whatever you do not want to happen to you, do not do to one another” (*Didache* 1.2).

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. What commandment in the Old Testament did Yeshua, Paul, and Hillel the Elder point to as a summation of the entire Torah?
2. Explain why Matthew 7:12 does not constitute an “escape clause” from the commandments of the Torah.
3. What basic interpersonal skill is the foundation of human morality?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Leviticus 19:11–18 contains many specific laws concerning interpersonal relationships. Choose several of these laws and explain how they are fundamentally expressions of the Golden Rule.

THE NARROW PATH

Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it. (Matthew 7:13–14)

A certain disciple asked Yeshua, “Master, are there just a few who are being saved?” He replied, “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:23–24). Yeshua contrasted the narrow path and small gate that leads to life with the wide road and expansive gate that leads to “destruction,” a reference to Gehenna—a word often translated as “hell,” the place of punishment.

The Bible metaphorically depicts the commandments of God as a path through life. The Torah says, “You shall walk in all the way which the LORD your God has commanded you, that you may live” (Deuteronomy 5:33). “Walk in the way of good men and keep to the paths of the righteous” (Proverbs 2:20). “He is on the path of life who heeds instruction” (Proverbs 10:17), and “the path of life leads upward for the wise that he may keep away from Sheol below” (Proverbs 15:24).

In these scriptures, “the way” to life follows a path of faith and obedience. Yeshua invoked the biblical “path” metaphor when He said, “The way is narrow that leads to life.” The Sermon on the Mount describes the straight and narrow path of righteousness that “surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees” without which “you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Those who “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33) follow the narrow way that leads to the narrow entrance—the entrance to life. For His generation, “the entrance to life” meant entering the Messianic Era instead of descending to destruction and exile. “Life” means the resurrection from the dead, entrance to the kingdom of heaven (i.e., the Messianic Age), and ultimately eternal life in the World to Come.

FALSE PROPHETS AND FALSE TEACHERS

Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (Matthew 7:15)

Yeshua warned His disciples against false prophets. The Torah addresses the problem of false prophets by establishing careful criteria for authentication. According to the Torah, a failed prediction disqualifies a would-be prophet: “If the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken” (Deuteronomy 18:22). He is a false prophet and

liable to the death penalty: “That prophet shall die” (Deuteronomy 18:20). Even if the prediction does come about, and even if the prophet offers signs, wonders, and miracles, he still might not be a true prophet. If he entices Israel into idolatry or to turn away from the commandments of the Torah, he is a false prophet, despite all his miraculous proofs (Deuteronomy 13:4–5).

False prophets were active in the first century, but when Yeshua warned His disciples against false prophets, He used the term broadly to refer to anyone claiming to be a spiritual leader among the believers—not just prophets. Though they disguise themselves as genuine followers of the Master, they “inwardly are ravenous wolves” (Matthew 7:15). While claiming to define God’s will for others, they do not conduct themselves according to His commandments.

The chief criterion by which the false prophet may be recognized is not necessarily theological or miraculous. Yeshua told His disciples to watch the fruit of their lives. In rabbinic literature and apostolic teaching, a man’s “fruits” are his deeds. Good fruits are good deeds; bad fruits are acts of wickedness.

Yeshua compared people to trees, as it says in the Torah, “The man is the tree of the field” (Deuteronomy 20:19). Good trees bear good fruits; bad trees do not. “Each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush” (Luke 6:44). Yeshua warned, “Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matthew 7:19). While we should not pass judgment on our brothers, we are to exercise discernment. Yeshua told us that we would recognize those who are genuine by their deeds. We are not to look for miracles or spiritual fireworks.

NOT EVERYONE WHO SAYS, “LORD, LORD”

The Sermon on the Mount describes a high standard of righteousness without which one may not enter the kingdom of heaven. He concluded His instructions with a stern warning against self-deception; evidently, there will be many who falsely believe themselves to have attained His high standard but who have not actually heeded His words. He asked His disciples, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46). A disciple who does not heed his master is no disciple at all.

When the Messianic Era commences, many supposed followers of Yeshua will gather around Him to seek entrance into the kingdom. They will claim to be His disciples and insist on entering the kingdom on that basis, but not everyone who says to Him, “Master, Master,” will gain admission. Yeshua



declared that only the person “who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” will enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21).

Many of us consider ourselves to be followers of Yeshua and therefore heirs to the kingdom. However, if we do not allow the commandments of God and the teaching of Yeshua to inform our lives, we may be surprised to find ourselves outside the kingdom. The Master compared Himself to the owner of a house who has already shut the door at night and is unwilling to open it for strangers:

Once the head of the house gets up and shuts the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock on the door, saying, “Lord, open up to us!” then He will answer and say to you, “I do not know where you are from.” Then you will begin to say, “We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets”; and He will say, “I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from me, all you evildoers.” (Luke 13:25–27)

We will protest that we ministered, prophesied, and performed miracles in His name: “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” (Matthew 7:22). He will say to us, “I never knew you,” quoting Psalm 6:8: “Depart from me, all you who do iniquity.”

The words “I never knew you” are a rabbinic expression for placing one’s disciple on the ban. With those words, the rabbi disavowed relationship with his disciple for the duration of the ban—ordinarily from seven to thirty days, but in this case, at the very least, for the duration of the Messianic Era.

The rejected disciples, barred from the Messianic Era, will see the great banquet of Messiah, but they will not find a place at the table. They will see “Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:28), and many others “will come from east and west and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:29), but they themselves will be thrown out. Then “there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Luke 13:28). Those who “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), however, will be among those seated at the table.

STUDY QUESTIONS

FOCUS
SECTION
5

1. Does a false disciple know that he’s a false disciple?

2. How does Yeshua describe the difference between a true disciple and a false disciple?

3. To what rabbinic practice does the phrase “I never knew you” refer?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Read James 1:22–25. What specific advice does the brother of the Master have for the one who wishes to avoid falling into the trap of self-deception?

THE HOUSE ON THE SAND

Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them,
may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock.
(Matthew 7:24)



Rabbi Yeshua told His disciples, “Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock” (Luke 6:47–48). He compared the disciple who heard His words but did not do them to a foolish man who built his house on sand.

Have we disregarded the words of the Master, particularly these hard words of the Sermon on the Mount? Have we placed our concerns with doctrinal suppositions and having the right set of beliefs rather than in the radical obedience and discipleship to which the Master calls us? In so doing, we imperil ourselves like the foolish man who built his house on the sand. The Master asked us, “Why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?” (Luke 6:46).

The message of Yeshua was not one of refined theology or hair-splitting over doctrine. He called for genuine repentance characterized by good works, obedience to God’s commandments, and the training of discipleship. He called His disciples to practice a standard of righteousness that exceeded even that of the other religious leaders of their day. The whole of the Sermon on the Mount functions as a fleshing out of the central message of the gospel: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

A parable similar to that of the wise and foolish builders appears among the sayings of the sages:

He whose learning is greater than his good deeds, to what can he be compared? He is like a tree with many branches but few roots. The wind blows and uproots the tree ... But he whose good deeds are greater than his learning, to what can he be compared? He is compared to a tree with only a few branches but with many roots. Even if all the wind in the world was blowing against it, it could not be uprooted. (Mishnah)

STUDY QUESTIONS

FOCUS
SECTION
6

1. The Sermon on the Mount is a fleshed-out version of Yeshua's core gospel message. What is this message?
2. What analogy does Yeshua use to describe a person who hears His message but does not act on it? What does Yeshua imply about such a person's religious expression?
3. Name some issues that tend to sidetrack followers of Yeshua from the simple message of radical obedience.

GROUP DISCUSSION: The Protestant theological world has, since its inception, been concerned about relativizing works as being less important than faith. Analyze the relationship between faith and works based on Yeshua's teaching in this passage. Consult James 2:14–26.

TEACHING WITH AUTHORITY



When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes. (Matthew 7:28–29)

By the time Yeshua concluded teaching His disciples, the crowds had found Him and regathered around Him. They were amazed at His teaching because He taught “as one having authority.” He did not sound like the typical rabbi. He did not equivocate between opinions or wrangle over halachic minutiae. He did not transmit His teachings in the names of teachers before Him.

In the rabbinic mode of teaching, one’s credibility rests upon citing traditions and interpretations from earlier generations. The authority of the scribes and sages rested upon teaching “in the name” of a higher authority—that is, earlier links in the oral transmission. A typical rabbinic sermon might begin with the words, “Rabbi Eliezer said in the name of Yochanan ben Zakkai who taught in the name of Hillel the Elder what he had heard from his teacher Abtalion.” In one passage in the Jerusalem Talmud, the rabbis refused to receive even the teaching of the great rabbi Hillel until he presented it to them in the name of earlier teachers. Another passage, however, argues that a disciple closely associated with a certain sage need not always cite his teacher’s name since everyone assumes that he learned his teaching directly from his master:

Did Joshua preface every word he taught with the words, “Thus did Moses tell me”? No. Joshua sat and taught without ever mentioning the names [of his teachers], but everyone knew that his teaching was the Torah of Moses. So too did [Rabbi Yochanan’s] disciple Rabbi Eleazar sit and teach without ever mentioning his teacher’s names, but everyone knew that the teaching was Rabbi Yochanan’s. (Talmud)

Yeshua spoke with His own authority, a disciple only to His Father in heaven. He did not cite the opinions of earlier generations, nor did He speak in the name of earlier rabbis. He spoke only in His own name and the name of His Father. He made simple pronouncements and stated His own interpretations confidently and matter-of-factly. He spoke more like a prophet, speaking in the name of God than a Torah sage speaking in the name of earlier sages. This is what it meant to speak “as one having authority.”

STUDY QUESTIONS



1. What key difference would the crowds around Yeshua have detected between His teaching and that of other rabbis?
2. What spiritual office did Yeshua apparently hold when He made simple pronouncements in the name of God?
3. Who gave Yeshua the authority to speak, and whose opinion did Yeshua transmit to His disciples?

GROUP DISCUSSION: Since Yeshua did not cite other sages to bolster the credibility of His teaching, what might we point to as evidence that His teachings are indeed credible?

KEY WORDS AND TERMS



VOCABULARY

a minori ad maius	(Latin) Light to heavy, as in presenting a minor case to emphasize a major case.
mammon	(Aramaic) Wealth.



PEOPLE AND PLACES

Clement of Alexandria	Titus Flavius Clemens; the first well-known theologian of the Church of Alexandria. He was born about the middle of the second century, and died between 211 and 216.
Clement of Rome	A disciple of the Apostle Peter.
Hillel the Elder	A famous rabbi who lived in the generation before Yeshua.



PRIMARY SOURCES

Didache	Also known as <i>The Lord's Teaching through the Twelve Apostles to the Nations</i> , it is a brief anonymous treatise written in Koine Greek, dated by modern scholars to the first century.
Gospel of Thomas	First- or second-century Coptic non-canonical sayings gospel.
Midrash Rabbah	Composition of commentary on the Torah and five Megillot finalized in the eleventh century.
Mishnah	"Repetition"; The Mishnah is a work of Jewish law composed in the second century CE, traditionally attributed to Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi.
Pirkei Avot	"Saying of the Fathers"; a compilation of the ethical teachings and maxims from Rabbinic Jewish tradition.
Sirach	Also known as <i>The Wisdom of Sirach</i> ; a Jewish work originally in Hebrew of ethical teachings, from approximately 200 to 175 BCE, written by the Jewish scribe Ben Sira of Jerusalem.
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.
Tobit	A book of scripture that is part of the Catholic and Orthodox biblical canons.



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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. 1:1-27
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. 34:1-30	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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