

Matthew Lesson 18

It is amazing to see how the Lord works through the politics of the world and of local areas. Today we will see that people are becoming more polarized in their opinions of who Yeshua is, and Matthew draws our attention to political tensions that are also brewing in the area where Yeshua is working.

What political tension is being exposed as Matthew opens this chapter? It is tensions with Herod. Herod was a very controversial figure as he was not really Jewish. He was from a family of Idumeans who had converted to Judaism. However, political power took precedence with Herod, over following Torah. His actions of killing Jewish babies and beheading John the Baptizer were obvious ways of showing where his true allegiance lied. Therefore, when Herodias, the former wife of his brother Philip was pointed out by John, as a Torah violation (Lev. 18:16,20:21). Herod imprisoned John and beheaded him at the bequest of Herodias. These two acts alone caused Herod to be thought of as more pagan than Jewish.

Politically speaking, Herod's ambition for power led him to be loyal to the Romans who put him in his position. When Herod the great died, the territory he ruled was divided up among three of his cronies: Archelaus, Herod Philip, and Herod Antipas. Herod Antipas was the ruler of the region of the Galilee where Yeshua's ministry was taking place. It was Antipas who was married to Herodias during the infamous party when they were confronted by John the Baptizer. It is said that he was a strong promoter of the Hellenistic culture and sided with the Pharisees who were against Yeshua.

Matthew 14:1-12 **1** At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus, and he said to his attendants, This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him. Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, for John had been saying to him: It is not lawful for you to have her. Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered John a prophet. On Herod's birthday the daughter of Herodias danced for the guests and pleased Herod so much that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she asked. Prompted by her mother, she said, Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist. The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he ordered that her request be granted and had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who carried it to her mother. John's disciples came and took his body and buried it. Then they went and told Jesus.

Now we will see both the human and Divine side of Yeshua when he heard the news of John's death.

Matthew 14:13 When Jesus heard it, He departed from there by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitudes heard it, they followed Him on foot from the cities.

1. How is Yeshua's humanity shown in the above verse?

Remember the qualities of a servant of the King? 1. We must know him personally. 2. We run to do His will with never a thought of saying, No. 3. We have 100% expectation that G-d will act and cause to happen what He has asked you to do. 4 We bless the Lord, acknowledging that it is His Spirit, not our might nor our will that gets things done. 5. We are willing to lay down our lives to accomplish His will.

Matthew 14:14 And when Jesus went out he saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

2. How do you see Yeshua filling the role of a servant? Did His own need, to just be alone and grieve for a while, stop Him from His Father's mission?

Matthew 14:14-19 And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food. But Jesus said to them, **They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat.** And they said to Him, We have here only five loaves and two fish. He said, **"Bring them here to Me."** Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.



Here are people in a place where there is no food. Does this not sound like reminiscent of the wilderness? Yeshua is showing the people again that He is G-d, as G-d provided food for the children of Israel in the wilderness, now He will provide food for them. Next, notice that Yeshua's eyes are open and He is looking toward the heavens as He does the Bracha for the food. Though the Christian tradition is to close our eyes are closed and our heads are bowed, the Jewish tradition is to do what is shown in this picture.

Psalm 121:1,2 I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come? My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

Notice also in verse 19, they Yeshua commands the multitudes to sit down.....

The Hebrew word He used for "sit" (hey, ayin,sheen, caf, yod, mem) ((root - sheen,caf,veit)) is the traditional Hebrew word used for "recline". When you reclined to eat, you were a free people. Free people reclined to eat. Was He reminding them that even in these harsh political times, that as citizens of the kingdom, they would recline to eat? This is a powerful reminder for us! The situation with John the Baptizer reminded them all that if you spoke up for truth, your head could literally be in jeopardy. Is Yeshua telling them not to fear, but to act courageously. They are citizens of a higher kingdom. They should recline to eat as free people.

3. What lessons did the disciples learn and how do you think the people were affected?

Matthew 14:22 Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent them multitudes away.

Matthew 14:23 And when He had sent the multitudes away. He went up on the mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, he was alone there.

Again Yeshua is teaching the disciples and showing His humanity. Even He needed a break from the crowds and even a break from the disciples. He too needs some alone time, and how does He get His strength? He prays!!!

Matthew 14:24-33 But the boat was now ²in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary. Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a ghost! And they cried out for fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying **Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.** And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water. So He said, **Come.** And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus. But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried

out, saying, Lord, save me! And immediately Jesus stretched out *His* hand and caught him, and said to him, **O you of little faith, why did you doubt?** And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased. **Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, Truly You are the Son of God.**

Peter's reaction is such an amazing blessing and lesson to us. We too can do the miraculous as long as we keep our eyes on Yeshua. The minute our eyes glance at the storms around us, we sink.

4. Of all the miracles Yeshua had done why would this one - walking on the water - have caused them to proclaim the words, Truly You are the Son of God?



Matthew 15:1,2 Then the scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Jesus saying, Why do Your disciples transgress the **tradition of the elders?** For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.

Notice the three words "tradition of the elders."

They are not saying that He is transgressing Torah, but some of the oral traditions that had been explained or expanded from concepts in the Torah. It is not to say that these are necessarily wrong, but Yeshua wants to make a point about the accusation.

Matthew 15:3-6 He answered and said to them, **Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.'** But you say, **'Whoever says to his father or mother, Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God'— then he need not honor his father or mother.'** **Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.**

Yeshua is using a rabbinic technique that we have mentioned before called kal va chomer - comparing something that is light with something heavier, or something of small importance with something of weightier importance.

And Yeshua accuses them of transgressing the commandment of God because of their tradition.

He reminds them that giving to G-d what should have gone to the parents has actually "canceled" a commandment of God because of tradition.

Traditions become so deeply held that people live and die by them.

It is so important that we consider what the Word says, and then do it.

The Word has to trump our traditions.

When you get married, you begin to realize how important your traditions have been. Maybe your family ate Thanksgiving dinner at 2:00 in the afternoon, but your spouse's family ate at 6:00. There can be huge problems over this discrepancy in time. So He tells them honoring your parents is G-d's commandment. This overrides your tradition.

And Yeshua goes on:

Matthew 15:7-9 Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me And in vain they worship Me. Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.

Yeshua is leaving no room for doubt. What label did He give those challenging Him?

Again He puts traditions of men this time calling them, "commandments of men."

Matthew 15:10, 11 When He had called the multitude to Himself, He said to them, Hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defines a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man.

What has Yeshua just done? In front of these leaders who are challenging Him, He calls the multitude to come near to Him. And He teaches them more about the heart of the Torah.

Why does what comes out of the mouth defile us?

It shows what is in our hearts! Our words are like a spotlight or a mirror saying -This is what is in my heart!!! Our words expose! Is Yeshua saying don't follow the dietary laws? No!

Matthew 15:12-14 Then His disciples came and said to Him, Do You. know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying? But He answered and said, **Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.**



5. Was Yeshua concerned about offending the leaders who are challenging Him?

Matthew 15:15-20 Peter said, Explain the parable to us. **Are you still so dull?** Jesus asked them. **Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? But the things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.**

Matthew 15:21-28 Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon. And behold, a woman of Canaan came from that region and cried out to Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, **O Lord, Son of David!** My daughter is severely demon-possessed." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and urged Him, saying, "Send her away, for she cries out after us." But He answered and said, "**I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**" Then she came and worshiped Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" But He answered and said, "**It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs.**" And she said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table." Then Jesus answered and said to her, "**O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.**" And her daughter was healed from that very hour.

For the first time, we see Yeshua travel outside the land of Israel since He began His ministry. This area around would have been the area around current day Lebanon, and Matthew points out that the woman in this story was a Canaanite - descending from the ancient pagan people of this area. Since Yeshua is going to a Gentile area, you would expect Him to encounter Gentiles, which He does.

What is not expected is the way He handles this situation. In reality, He handles this situation as any rabbi of the Jewish people would be expected to.

First, He knows His mission. He came first for the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Rabbi Shaul's ministry was to the Gentile world, but he clearly understood that the Gospel would go to the Jewish people first. There is order in the Kingdom of G-d. If the rabbis of the day, were approached by a Gentile, because of suspicions, they were to reject the person. So Yeshua seems to reject this woman three times, and that would be normal procedure.

But the woman had an urgency.

She had knowledge of who Yeshua was as when she calls out to Him, she calls Him, Son of David. It seemed she knew that He was the Messiah of Israel. She has a terrible problem. Her daughter is severely demon possessed. **But** Yeshua does not answer her. She was persistent and falls down at His feet to beg for His help. When He answers by comparing her to a household pet dog. This was meant to say that the treasures belonging to Israel were not to be debased by pagans. **But she** perseveres and even agrees, but points out that even the pet dog get the leftovers from their master's table.

Then Yeshua found her faith so great, that He healed her daughter at that moment!

8. How does this story increase your appreciation for the freedom we have today to have the free access to the Kingdom of G-d that we have been provided?

Ephesians 2:11-13 Therefore remember that formerly you who are Gentiles in the flesh and called uncircumcised by the so-called circumcision remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ....