

Matthew

Chapter Twenty-Six

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Matthew 26:1

וַיְהִי כְּכֹלֹת יֵשׁוּעַ לְדַבֵּר אֶת כָּל-הַדְּבָרִים
הָאֵלֶּה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-תְּלָמִידָיו:

“It happened, when Yeshua had finished all these words, that he said to his disciples,”

It happened.

Sometimes, the word ‘it happened’ *vay’hi* can have negative connotations,

“Rather, **Rav Ashi said:** With regard to **every** instance of *vayhi* alone, **there are** some that mean **this**, grief, **and there are** some that mean **that**, joy. However, wherever the phrase “**and it came to pass in the days of [vayhi bimei]**” is used in the Bible, **it is nothing other** than a **term of impending grief.**” (Megillah 10b, Sefaria.org)//

It is as if the word *vay’hi* is a decision point, a fork in the road, branching toward a path that will lead to grief or one that will lead to joy.

All these words.

The phrase “all these words” (*kol hadevarim ha’eleh*) mirror the Revelation at Sinai, where the Ten Commandments are introduced as “*all these words*” (Exodus 20:1). Midrash Tanchuma (Yitro 11) teaches that every utterance at Sinai contained infinite layers of meaning. Similarly, the Gospel suggests that Yeshua’s preceding teachings—particularly those in chapters 24–25

about the End of Days, judgment, and redemption— are within the continuum of Torah revelation.

Finished all these words.

This phrase recalls the formula used in the Torah and in rabbinic tradition when a great section of teaching is completed. In Deuteronomy it is written,

“And it came to pass, when Moses finished speaking all these words...” (**Deuteronomy 31:1**)

Such phrasing signals not merely the end of a speech, but the conclusion of a whole section of instruction, marking a transition from teaching into action.

Matthew 26:2

אַתֶּם יֹדְעִים כִּי עוֹד יוֹמִים וְהַפֶּסַח
בֹּא וּבֶן־הָאָדָם יִמָּסֵר לְהַצִּיל:

“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”

After two days.

We may ask why it specifically mentions two days. In the Peshat, obviously this indicates that these words were likely spoken near the 13th day of Nisan. On a deeper level, since Pesach means the Redemption, one could say that the final Redemption will arrive in two days, i.e. two thousand years, when the Second Exodus will occur. Of course, he will not be crucified then, but the Son of Man will be revealed as the Lion on the clouds of heaven.

The Passover.

Passover (*Pesach*) is the season of Israel’s redemption, “*the time of our freedom*” (*zman cheiruteinu*). It commemorates God’s deliverance from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 12). In rabbinic thought, Pesach is not only a remembrance but a pattern for future redemption. The Midrash states:

“As the first redeemer was, so shall the final redeemer be.” (**Shemot Rabbah 15:11**)

That the Gospel situates Yeshua’s impending suffering precisely at Pesach links his destiny to the archetype of redemption, evoking the rabbinic expectation that the ultimate salvation of Israel would come in this very season.

The Talmud teaches that,

בְּנִיסָן נִגְאָלוּ בְּנִיסָן עֲתִידִין לִיגְאָל

“In Nisan our forefathers were redeemed, and in Nisan they will be redeemed in the future.” (**Rosh Hashanah 11a**)

Thus, the mention of Passover here reveals that the redemption of Israel—past, present, and future—is tied to this sacred time, echoing like waves throughout history.

Delivered up.

In rabbinic law, *mesirah* (literally “to hand over”, i.e. delivering a fellow Jew into the hands of the nations) is considered one of the gravest betrayals (see Bava Kamma 117a). The fact that the Son of Man will be “delivered up” highlights not just Roman crucifixion, but also a halachically forbidden betrayal.

The rabbis lamented similar behavior in the late Second Temple era, when internal betrayal weakened Israel before Rome. Thus, Judas’ act is part of that wider pattern of collapse within Jewish society. *Sinat chinam*—baseless hatred was the cause of the Temple’s destruction (Yoma 9b). The betrayal of one among twelve thus becomes a microcosm of Israel’s larger wound: internal disunity paving the way for national tragedy.

Yet in a paradoxical sense, this “handing over” is also part of the Divine plan of redemption—just as Joseph was “*delivered up*” by his brothers, yet ultimately became the instrument of salvation for them (Genesis 45:7). The Midrash and Ramban tell us that everything that happened to the Fathers served as a portent for the children, encapsulated in the principle,

מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

Ma’aseh Avot Siman L’Banim

“The deeds of the fathers are a sign for the children.”)

The Artscroll commentary to the Ramban explains,

“Whenever the Torah records an incident that occurred in the Patriarch’s personal lives, it is because that event foreshadowed some parallel event that would affect the Jewish people in the future.”

R’ Ari Kahn of Aish.com elucidates this important idea,

“In order to understand the significance of the teachings in Genesis generally, and in this Torah portion specifically, we must introduce the concept of ma’aseh avot siman l’banim, which literally translates “the actions of the forefathers serve as a portent for their descendants.” Put another way, history repeats itself, or, in theological terms, Jewish history is Jewish destiny.” ***R’ Ari Kahn, M’oray HaAish, Vayeshev, Light of Messiah, Aish.com)**

Yeshua’s betrayal thus echoes the pattern of Joseph: apparent tragedy leading to greater redemption.

Crucified.

Crucifixion (*tzlav* in later rabbinic Hebrew) was a Roman punishment, alien to Jewish law. From a Jewish perspective, the shame and curse associated with “hanging on a tree” recalls Deuteronomy 21:23: “*Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree.*” The Gospel portrays Yeshua willingly entering into this curse, identifying with the suffering of Israel and bearing the humiliation of the nations.

Matthew 26:3

וַיִּקְהֻלוּ רֹאשֵׁי הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַסּוֹפְרִים וְזִקְנֵי
הָעָם אֶל-חֹצֵר הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וְשְׁמוֹ קַיָּפָא:

“Then the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people were gathered together in the courtyard of the High Priest, who was called Kayafa.”

Courtyard of the High Priest.

In Mishnah *Sanhedrin* 1:6, the Great Sanhedrin sat in the Chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple precincts. Their gathering here in the *chatzer* (courtyard) of the high priest highlights a problem, since it takes place not in the Temple itself but in the high priest's personal domain. This already hints at a blurred line between sacred duty and political intrigue.

Qayafa.

In Torah, the High Priest is meant to embody holiness and service (*kedushah ve'avodah*). Leviticus 21 lays out his unique sanctity. The High Priest should be the spiritual apex of Israel. However, during the late Second Temple period, the office had become entangled with Roman politics. Josephus (*Antiquities* 20:8) records frequent appointments and removals of High Priests by Roman governors and mentions Caiaphas:

“Tiberius Nero...sent Valerius Gratus to be procurator of Judea, and to succeed Annius Rufus. This man deprived Ananus of the high priesthood, and appointed Ismael, the son of Phabi, to be high priest. He also deprived him in a little time, and ordained Eleazar, the son of Ananus, who had been high priest before, to be high priest; which office, when he had held for a year, Gratus deprived him of it, and gave the high priesthood to Simon, the son of Camithus; and when he had possessed that dignity no longer than a year, Joseph Caiaphas was made his successor. When Gratus had done those things, he went back to Rome, after he had tarried in Judea eleven years, when Pontius Pilate came as his successor.”(**Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.2.2**)

Thus, Caiaphas (Yosef bar Kayafa) represents both the splendor of the priesthood and its tragic corruption under foreign influence.

Matthew 26:4

וַיִּנְעֲצוּ יַחְדָּו לְתַפֵּשׂ אֶת־יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעָרְמָה וּלְהַמִּיתוֹ:

“They took counsel together that they might take Yeshua by deceit, and kill him.”

They took counsel together.

The rabbis themselves were deeply critical of such priestly corruption. In Pesachim 57a, it is said:

“With regard to the prominent priests and those like them, Abba Shaul ben Batnit said in the name of Abba Yosef ben Ḥanin: Woe is me due to the High Priests of the house of Baitos, woe is me due to their clubs. Woe is me due to the High Priests of the house of Ḥanin; woe is me due to their whispers and the rumors they spread. Woe is me due to the High Priests of the house of Katros; woe is me due to their pens that they use to write lies. Woe is me due to the servants of the High Priests of the house of Yishmael ben Piakhi; woe is me due to their fists. The power of these households stemmed from the fact that the fathers were High Priests, and their sons were the Temple treasurers, and their sons-in-law were Temple overseers [amarkalin]. And their servants strike the people with clubs, and otherwise act inappropriately.” (Pesachim 57a, Sefaria.org)

These laments criticize priestly dynasties for their arrogance, violence, and misuse of office. By placing Caiaphas at the center, the Gospel echoes rabbinic critiques of the High Priesthood’s compromised state. It is important to realize that the Rabbinic Judaism and the New Testament are on the same side against the Temple Priesthood.

Matthew 26:5

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִךְ-לֹא בַחֲג פֶּן-תִּהְיֶה מְהוּמָה בָּעָם:

“But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest a riot occur among the people.’”

Lest a riot occur among the people.

The timing is significant. Rabbinic law stresses that judgment in capital cases required great caution. The Mishnah (Sanhedrin 4:1) rules that such cases could not be judged hastily or on the eve of a festival. Yet here, the leaders are plotting precisely as the holiest of Israel’s festivals approaches. This irony reflects rabbinic concerns with chillul Hashem (profanation of God’s Name)—when those entrusted with holiness act unjustly. The Mishnah says,

“Therefore, since capital cases might continue for two days, the court does not judge cases of capital law on certain days, neither on the eve of Shabbat nor the eve of a Festival.” (Mishnah, Sanhedrin 4:1, Sefaria.org)

The Talmud says,

בערב הפסח תלאוהו לישו

“On Passover Eve they hung Yeshu ...”
(Sanhedrin 43a)

Strack and Billerbeck comment,

“There can be no doubt that the trial, which ended with the condemnation of Jesus, did not comply with the Pharisees’ rules of procedure as we know them from the Mishnah and Talmud. Therefore, according to the passage in m. Sanh 4.1 above, the trial against Jesus should not have been opened and closed on the same day and it should not have been conducted in the house of Caiaphas but according to the principle **המקום גורם** in the stone-hewn hall.” (A Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud & Midrash, Strack and Billerbeck, Excursus: The Day of Jesus’ Death B#1, Volume 2, Lexham Press, pg. 940)

Matthew 26:6

וַיְהִי בִּהְיוֹת יֵשׁוּעַ בֵּית הַיָּנִי בְּבֵית שִׁמְעוֹן הַמְּצָרְעַ:

“Now when Yeshua was in Bethany, in the house of Shimon the leper,”

Bethany.

Either Beit-Hini or Beit-Anya. Bethany was a small village on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, is known in rabbinic memory as a place connected with the Temple service. The Mishnah (*Menachot* 11:2) records that the olives for the Temple’s anointing oil and meal-offerings were pressed at locations including Bethphage and Bethany. Thus, Bethany

carries connotations of priestly preparation and purity. That Yeshua is here, on the eve of Passover, evokes imagery of *hakhanah* (preparation) for sacrifice and redemption.

Shimon the leper.

Some have seen ‘the leper’ as an issue, as Yeshua would not have gone to his house prior to a festival due to ritual impurity. But this verse does not say that he was currently a leper. He may have been referred to as such as he was one of those who were healed, and this disambiguator distinguishes him from the other Shimons. If this Shimon had once been a *metzora*, his hosting of Yeshua signals that he has been healed and restored to community.

The rabbis note that the *metzora* undergoes a ritual of purification involving cedar, hyssop, scarlet thread, and living waters (Leviticus 14:4–7). Midrash Tanchuma (Metzora 3) interprets this as symbolic of humility, repentance, and rebirth. Thus, Shimon’s home becomes a fitting setting for a story of renewal and preparation before Yeshua’s own suffering and death.

Rabbinic tradition often extols those who open their homes to sages. In *Shabbat* 127a, “hospitality to guests” (*hachnasat orchim*) is ranked among the highest mitzvot. To entertain a rabbi or teacher in one’s home was seen as a sign of blessing. That Shimon, once marginalized as a *metzora*, now welcomes Yeshua and his disciples reflects the rabbinic principle that those once distant can become close. Rabbi Yohanan said:

“Where penitents stand, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand.” (**Berakhot 34b**)

Shimon embodies this transformation, and consider the irony: The ones who were in a state of the highest ritual purity were plotting to violate the Torah by an illegal trial of Yeshua, whereas one who was once the most unclean person, is hosting the holiest Sage ever to walk the earth. This moment foreshadows the central theme of Passover and redemption: that what was once rejected may be restored, and that Messiah is found not in the palaces of the powerful but in the home of the afflicted who has been healed.

Matthew 26:7

וַתִּקָּרֵב אֵלָיו אִשָּׁה וּבִיָּדָה פֶּדֶּ מִרְסָחַת יִקָּרֶה
מֵאֵד וַתִּצֹק עַל-רֹאשׁוֹ בִּהְסִיבָו לְאָכֹל:

“a woman came to him having an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table.”

A woman.

This is Miriam, the sister of Lazarus (John 12:3). The entrance of a woman into the scene is striking. Rabbinic tradition often emphasizes the spiritual discernment of women in matters of redemption. The Talmud says,

“In the merit of the righteous women of that generation, Israel was redeemed from Egypt.” **(Sotah 11b)**

Just as the women in Egypt perceived redemption before the men did, so too did Miriam discerns the moment of Yeshua’s approaching suffering and acts prophetically. Her deed recalls the courage of women like Miriam, Deborah, and Hannah, who anticipated God’s plan before others.

Alabaster jar.

The flask (*pach*) made of alabaster recalls rabbinic traditions of precious vessels used to preserve sacred oil. The Midrash (Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:3) compares Israel to a flask filled with fragrant oil: when opened, its scent spreads far and wide, symbolizing the spread of Torah and good deeds.

“Rabbi Yoḥanan interpreted the verse regarding Abraham our patriarch. When the Holy One blessed be He said to him: “Go you from your land, from your birthplace” (Genesis 12:1), to what was it analogous? To a flask of balsam oil that was placed in one corner and its fragrance did not diffuse. One came and moved it from its place and its fragrance diffused. So, too, the Holy One blessed be He said to Abraham: ‘Abraham, you have many good deeds, you have many mitzvot, move yourself around in the world and your name will be exalted in the world.’ “Go, you,” what is written thereafter? “I will render you a great nation” (Genesis 12:2).” **(Song of Songs Rabbah 1:3, Sefaria.org)**

Here, the woman’s flask, once sealed, is opened, suggesting revelation—what was hidden is now disclosed. The act of breaking open precious oil symbolizes self-giving and sacrificial devotion.

Matthew 26:8

וַיֵּרְאוּ הַתְּלָמִידִים וַיִּכְעָסוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַל־מָה הָאֲבוֹד הַזֶּה:

“But when his disciples saw this, they were indignant, saying, ‘Why this waste?’”

His disciples.

John 12:4–6 – explicitly names Yehuda Ish-Kriyot (Judas Iscariot) as the one protesting, and even attributes ulterior motives: Judas did not truly care for the poor, but was a thief, taking from the communal purse.

Matthew 26:9

כִּי הַמֶּרְקָחַת הַזֹּאת הִיָּתָה לְרֵאוּיָה
לְהַפְכֵר בְּמַחִיר רַב וּלְתֵת לָעֲנִיִּים:

“For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.”

Given to the poor.

Their reasoning would have outwardly seemed sound within a Jewish framework, but was Judas who voiced this objection most strongly, out of greed. He pretended to care for the poor but in reality “kept the money bag and used to steal from it.”

The Temple service itself demanded the finest oil, incense, and gold—items that could have been sold for charity. The rabbis explain this not as waste, but as *hiddur mitzvah* (beautifying the commandment), demonstrating love for God.

Yeshua’s interpretation of the woman’s act follows this rabbinic reasoning: her lavish gift is not wasteful but an offering of love, like the costly vessels of the sanctuary. The Talmud relates an analogous story:

“And there was an incident in which Rabban Gamliel the Elder died, and upon his death Onkelos the convert burned seven thousand dinars in valuable Tyrian coinage.” (Avodah Zarah 11b, Sefaria.org)

It wasn't actual coins he burned, but this value in balsam. The Jewish encyclopedia states,

“...spices were put on the coffin or otherwise used at funerals (Ber. 8:6; John 12:7, 19:39), and myrtles and aloes (in liquid state) were carried in the procession (Bezah 6a; John 19:39). In honor of dead kings "sweet odors and diverse kinds of spices" were burned (Jer. 34:5; II Chron. 16:14, 21:19), together with the bier and the armor (see 'Ab. Zarah 11a), or carried along in the procession (Josephus, Ant. 15:3 § 4; xvii. 83).”
(Jewish Encyclopedia, “Burial”)

Matthew 26:10

וַיֵּדַע יֵשׁוּעַ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם לָמָּה תִּלְאוּ אֶת-הָאִשָּׁה
הַזֹּאת מַעֲשֵׂה טוֹב עָשְׂתָה עִמָּדִי:

“However, knowing this, Yeshua said to them, ‘Why do you trouble the woman? Because she has done a good work for me.’”

She has done a good work for me.

Even the smallest act of *chesed* can bring eternal remembrance. Yeshua's declaration that this woman's act would be memorialized “in the whole world” proves that the deeds of righteousness ripple far beyond their immediate moment, becoming part of Israel's eternal merit.

Matthew 26:11

כִּי הָעֲנִיִּים בְּכָל-עֵת אֶתְכֶם וְאֲנֹכִי
אֵינֶנִּי בְּקֶרְבְּכֶם בְּכָל-עֵת:

“For you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me.”

You always have the poor with you.

Yeshua’s words echo the Torah directly:

“For the poor will never cease from the land; therefore I command you, saying, you shall surely open your hand to your brother, to your poor, and to your needy in your land.” **(Deuteronomy 15:11)**

Rabbinic teaching stresses that this verse does not justify neglect but obligates generosity. The poor are always present precisely so that Israel may always fulfill the mitzvah of *tzedakah*.

Matthew 26:12

**כִּי אֲשֶׁר שָׁפְכָה אֶת-הַמָּרְקָחַת הַזֹּאת עַל-גּוּפִי
לְחַנֹּט אוֹתִי עֲשֵׂתָה זֹאת:**

“For in pouring this ointment on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial.”

Prepare me for burial.

In Jewish tradition, oil and spices were indeed associated with burial rites. Just as Yosef was embalmed with spices (Genesis 50:2, 26), so too the righteous were honored with fragrant preparations. The woman’s act is thus not merely symbolic but aligns with Jewish custom: she anticipates a funeral ritual before its time.

Yeshua here interprets the woman’s anointing not as a royal coronation but as preparation for such a death—casting his fate within the rabbinic pattern of the righteous one whose passing holds redemptive significance.

Matthew 26:13

אָמֵן אֶמַר אֲנִי לָכֶם בְּכָל-מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר
תִּקְרָא הַבְּשׂוּרָה הַזֹּאת בְּכָל-הָעוֹלָם גַּם אֶת-אֲשֶׁר
עָשְׂתָה הִיא יִסְפָּר לְזָכְרוֹן לָהּ:

“Amein, I tell you, wherever this Good News is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of as a memorial of her.”

Wherever this Good News is preached in the whole world.

The rabbis emphasize that a true prophet is known when his words come to pass (Deuteronomy 18:22). Here Yeshua makes a bold, improbable prophecy: that this single act of devotion in an obscure house in Bethany would be recounted across the world.

Historically, this has in fact been fulfilled—her story is remembered and read in every language, nation, and community where the Gospel has gone. This confirms the prophetic authenticity of Yeshua’s words.

Matthew 26:14

וַיֵּלֶךְ אֶחָד מִשְׁנֵי הָעָשָׂר וּשְׁמוֹ יְהוּדָה
אִישׁ-קִרְיֹת אֶל-רָאשֵׁי הַכֹּהֲנִים:

“Then one of the twelve, who was called Yehuda Ish-Qeriot, went to the chief priests,”

Yehuda Ish-Qeriot.

The name “Yehudah” recalls the forefather Judah, who in Genesis 37 proposed selling his brother Joseph into slavery:

“What profit is it if we slay our brother... let us sell him.” (**Genesis 37:26–27**)

Likewise, Yehudah Ish-Keriyot betrays a brother figure for gain, echoing the archetypal sin of Judah. Yet in both cases, God turns betrayal into the seed of redemption: Joseph’s descent into

Egypt leads to Israel's salvation, and Yeshua's betrayal leads toward the paschal sacrifice of redemption.

Matthew 26:15

וַיֹּאמֶר מֶה־תִּתְּנוּ לִי וְאֶמְסְרֶנּוּ בְיָדָם
וַיִּשְׁקֻלוּ־לוֹ שְׁלֹשִׁים כֶּסֶף:

“and said, ‘What are you willing to give me, that I should deliver him to you?’ They weighed out for him thirty pieces of silver.”

What are you willing to give me?

The question reveals the root of betrayal: greed. The rabbis often teach that love of money (*ahavat mammon*) can corrupt even the righteous. Judas, by contrast, places gain above Torah loyalty, echoing Esau who “sold his birthright for a meal” (Gen. 25:33). Alternative motives may suggest that Yehuda grew impatient, and wanted to trigger the Redemption by forcing Yeshua's hand against Rome.

I should deliver him to you.

As noted previously, *mesirah* (delivering a fellow Jew into enemy hands) is considered by the rabbis a grievous transgression. Judas' words echo the language of a *moser*: “I will deliver him” (*emsorenu*). This places him within the rabbinic category of betrayal that severs one from the people of Israel.

Thirty pieces of silver.

In *Exodus 21:32*, the Torah fixes the price of a slave at thirty shekels of silver. Thus, the priests value Yeshua—the teacher, healer, and would-be redeemer—at no more than a slave's worth. This resonates also with *Zechariah 11:12–13*, where the prophet is paid thirty pieces of silver—called sarcastically “a handsome price.” The rabbis read this as a prophetic critique of Israel's leaders who devalue shepherds of the people.

See Chapter 27 for more information on the New Testament's citation of this verse.

Matthew 26:16

וּמִן־הַעַתָּה הָיָא בִקֵּשׁ תַּאֲנָה לְמַסֵּר אוֹתוֹ:

“From that time he sought opportunity to betray him.”

To betray him.

The verse emphasizes a turning point. Judas moves from inner grievance (complaining about the ointment, cf. John 12:4–6) to active plotting. The rabbis often speak of sin as beginning with a small thought but escalating into action if unchecked. The Sages teach,

“One sin leads to another.” (**Pirkei Avot 4:2**)

Once Judas entertained resentment and greed, his heart hardened and sought its outlet.

Matthew 26:17

וַיְהִי בְּרֵאשׁוֹן לַחֹג הַמַּצּוֹת וַיִּגָּשׁוּ הַתְּלָמִידִים אֶל־יֵשׁוּעַ
לֵאמֹר אֵיפֹה נִכְיִן לָךְ לֶאֱכֹל אֶת־הַפֶּסַח:

“Now on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Yeshua, saying to him, ‘Where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the Passover?’”

First day of unleavened bread.

Matthew 26:17’s “first of unleavened bread” refers not to the seven days of *Chag HaMatzot* (15–21 Nisan), but to the day of preparation for Pesach, the 14th of Nisan, when chametz was already being removed and the Pesach lamb slaughtered. In the Torah, two closely related festivals are mentioned together but are distinct:

- **Pesach (Passover):** the *Korban Pesach* is brought on the 14th of Nisan, eaten that night, the start of the 15th (Exod. 12:6–8).
- **Chag HaMatzot (Festival of Unleavened Bread):** seven days beginning on the 15th of Nisan, when chametz (leaven) must not be eaten or seen in one's possession (Exod. 12:15–20, Lev. 23:6).

Mark 14:12 notes, “on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb.” That clarifies it refers to the 14th of Nisan—the day of preparation—rather than the formal seven-day festival. Therefore, “the first of unleavened bread” here does not mean the seven-day *Chag HaMatzot* itself, but rather the day of the Pesach offering, when leaven must already begin to be removed in preparation. The Torah gives two commands:

- *Bal Yera'eh u'Bal Yimatzei* – “No leaven shall be seen or found in your borders” (Exod. 13:7).
- *Issur Achilat Chametz* – “Seven days you shall eat no leavened bread” (Exod. 12:15).

Rabbinic interpretation (m. *Pesachim* 1:4–7) is that chametz must be destroyed by midday on the 14th of Nisan. Thus, while the formal prohibition of eating chametz applies during the seven days of Chag HaMatzot (15–21 Nisan), in practice one is already forbidden to possess or consume chametz beginning on the afternoon of the 14th. This is why the disciples can say on that day, “Where shall we prepare the Pesach?”—it is the time of the lamb's slaughter and the removal of leaven. Keener writes,

“By this period “the Feast of Unleavened Bread,” which immediately followed Passover in the Bible, had been extended in popular parlance to include the Passover itself.”

(Keener, Craig S.. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (IVP Bible Background Commentary Set) (p. 114). Kindle Edition.)

Matthew 26:18

וַיֹּאמֶר לָכֵן הָעִירָה אֶל-פְּלָנִי אֶלְמָנִי וְאַמְרָתֶם אֵלָיו
כֹּה אָמַר רִבְנוּ עִתִּי קְרוֹבָה וּבֵיתִי אֶעֱשֶׂה
אֶת-הַפֶּסַח עִם-תְּלָמִידַי:

“He said, ‘Go into the city to a certain person, and tell him, ‘The Rabbi says, ‘My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’””

Ploni almoni.

This phrase is familiar from Ruth 4:1, where Boaz encounters the unnamed kinsman who could redeem Ruth: “*Come over here, ploni almoni (such-and-such one).*” In halakhic writings, *ploni almoni* became the conventional way to say “so-and-so”. It protects privacy, but also serves to show that sometimes the focus is not on the individual but on the role he plays in God’s plan.

I will keep the Passover.

Matthew 26:17 situates the disciples’ question precisely on the 14th of Nisan, the day of Pesach preparation, consistent with rabbinic halakhah. Their concern for “where” reflects the rabbinic stress on proper observance in Jerusalem.

The **Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke)** place the death of Yeshua on the **15th of Nisan**, after he and his disciples ate the *Pesach seder* on the evening of the 14th, in keeping with halakhic practice. This would mean Yeshua was crucified on the very day of *Chag HaMatzot*, the first day of the festival, after the Passover meal had already been eaten. From a historical and halakhic perspective, this is the straightforward reading, and it accords with Jewish practice of the time.

The **Gospel of John**, however, presents a different picture: Yeshua dies on the **14th of Nisan**, at the very hour the Passover lambs were being slaughtered in the Temple. In John’s narrative, it seems to suggest that the seder has not yet taken place; rather, Yeshua himself is identified as the *Lamb of God* (John 1:29), whose death coincides with the slaughter of the lambs. How can these accounts be reconciled?

1. The Synoptics as Historical

The Synoptics give the literal, historical timeline. Yeshua celebrated the seder with his disciples, and was executed on the following day, during the festival itself. This fits the halakhic and historical framework of Second Temple Judaism.

2. John as Mystical / Sod Level

John, however, is not contradicting history, but **writing on the level of sod (mystical meaning)**. His concern is not chronology but symbolism. By aligning Yeshua’s death

with the hour of the lambs' slaughter, John is teaching a deeper kabbalistic truth: Yeshua embodies the archetype of the *Korban Pesach*, the lamb whose blood brought Israel's deliverance in Egypt, as the Midrash links this to the Akedat Yitzhak.

Just as the Zohar often reshapes biblical detail to reveal hidden realities, so John reshapes the timeline to unveil the secret of Yeshua's role: the righteous tzaddik as the lamb whose offering secures redemption.

3. Both Are True in Their Level

In rabbinic and mystical thought, truth exists on multiple planes. *Pesbat* (plain sense) is preserved in the Synoptics; *sod* (hidden meaning) is revealed in John. Thus, the difference is not contradiction but complementary:

- The Synoptics present **historical fact**: Yeshua died during the festival after celebrating Pesach.
- John presents **mystical truth**: Yeshua is the Lamb of God, slain in cosmic alignment with Israel's sacrificial offering.

Summary

The Synoptics preserve the historical sequence; John reinterprets that sequence through mystical vision. Just as the rabbis say:

אין מקרא יוצא מידי פשוטו

“Ein mikra yotzei midei peshuto”

“A verse never departs from its plain meaning”

(Shabbat 63a)

While everything in the Gospel of John actually happened, he was not writing on a literal level but on the level of Sod, a mystical commentary. John chose and arranged the story to illustrate a deeper meaning behind the actions of Yeshua and the events in his life. The Talmud says,

“Said R. Menasia b. Tahlifa in Rab's name: ... there is no chronological order in the Torah.” **(Pesachim 6b, Soncino Press Edition)**

The Torah records actual events that happened in history, but it is beyond a mere history book. The same goes for the Gospel of John. Yet at the same time the Torah contains infinite layers of

interpretation, so too here: the plain narrative (Synoptics) and the mystical reading (John) stand together

History and sod converge to reveal that Yeshua is both a historical teacher of Israel and the mystical Lamb whose death participates in the redemption of the world.

Matthew 26:19

וַיַּעֲשׂוּ הַתְּלָמִידִים כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּם יֵשׁוּעַ וַיַּכְיִנוּ אֶת־הַפֶּסַח:

“The disciples did as Yeshua commanded them, and they prepared the Passover.”

They prepared the Passover.

The disciples’ obedience—*“they did as he directed them”*—reflects the rabbinic principle that Torah students (*talmidim*) are to carry out the words of their master with precision. The Mishnah (*Avot* 6:6) lists *“faithful service to one’s teacher”* as one of the qualities by which Torah is acquired. The relationship of Yeshua and his disciples here mirrors that of a sage and his circle of students, where the master gives direction and the disciples fulfill his words as an act of devotion and reverence.

They prepared.

In the peshat, they conducted necepreparations. On a deeper level, the true disciples of Yeshua will prepare for the Redemption.

Matthew 26:20

וַיְהִי בֶּעֶרְבַּ וַיֵּסֵב עִם־שְׁנַיִם הָעֹשֶׂר:

“Now when evening had come, he was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples.”

When evening had come.

Rabbinic halakhah requires the *seder* meal and matzah to be eaten in the evening (*Pesachim* 10:1). The timing underscores that Yeshua is not inventing a new ritual but joining Israel in the eternal rhythm of *zechirat yetziat Mitzrayim* (remembrance of the Exodus).

Reclining at the table.

At the seder, one reclines as a sign of freedom,

“Even the poorest of Jews should not eat the meal on Passover night until he **reclines** on his left side, as free and wealthy people recline when they eat.” (**Pesachim 99b, Sefaria.org**)

Yeshua reclining with his disciples shows them celebrating as sons of Israel redeemed from Egypt.

With the twelve.

Mystically, this seder prefigures a renewal of Israel’s covenant, with the twelve as symbolic representatives of the whole nation.

Matthew 26:21

וּבְאֶכְלָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֱמֵן אָנֹכִי לָכֶם אֶחָד מֵכֶם יִמְסְרֵנִי:

“As they were eating, he said, ‘Amein, I tell you that one of you will betray me.’”

One of you will betray me.

Psalm 55 laments:

“It was not an enemy who taunted me ... but you, a man my equal, my companion and friend.” (**Psalm 55:12-15**)

In regard to the word “friend”, see verse 50 below.

Matthew 26:22

וַיִּתְעַצְבוּ מְאֹד וַיַּחֲלוּ אִישׁ אִישׁ לֵאמֹר
לוֹ הָאֶנְכִי הוּא אֲדֹנָי:

“They were exceedingly sorrowful, and each began to ask him, ‘It isn’t me, is it, Master?’”

Exceedingly sorrowful.

The disciples do not accuse one another but look inward. This reflects a rabbinic virtue: self-suspicion in matters of sin.

Matthew 26:23

וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר טָבַל עִמִּי
אֶת־יָדוֹ בִּקְעָרָה הוּא יִמְסֶרֶנִי:

“He answered, ‘He who dipped his hand with me in the dish, the same will betray me.’”

Dipped his hand with me in the dish.

In Ancient Near Eastern thought, eating together from the same dish is not trivial—it signifies fellowship, trust, and covenantal intimacy. To betray one’s master from such a moment of closeness magnifies the treachery. Psalm 41 foreshadows this:

“Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate of my bread, has lifted his heel against me.” (Psalm 41:10)

Derekh Eretz Rabbah 7 teaches:

“When two sit at one table, the senior of them puts forth his hand first and then the junior; if the junior puts forth [his hand first] he is a glutton.” (**Derekh Eretz Rabbah 7:1, Sefaria.org**)

To dip one's hand at the same time as the master could be construed as disrespectful, unless done at his invitation.

Parallel in the Dead Sea Scrolls:

“Wherever there are ten men of the Council of the Community there shall not lack a Priest among them. And they shall all sit before him according to their rank and shall be asked their counsel in all things in that order. And when the table has been prepared for eating, and the new wine for drinking, the Priest shall be the first to stretch out his hand to bless the firstfruits of the bread and new wine.” (**Vermes, Geza. The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English (7th Edition) (Penguin Classics) (p. 105). Kindle Edition.**)

Scholars note that in some Qumran texts, disciples are explicitly warned not to dip their hands at the same time as their leader, for it is a breach of reverence.

Matthew 26:24

הוּן בֶּן־הָאָדָם הַלּוֹךְ יֵלֵךְ כִּפְתּוּב עָלָיו וְאֵי לָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר
עַל־יָדוֹ יִמָּסֵר בֶּן־הָאָדָם טוֹב לָאִישׁ הַהוּא שֶׁלֹּא נוֹלָד:

“The Son of Man goes, even as it is written of him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born.”

Even as it is written of him.

The Talmud says,

“Everything is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given.” (**Avot 3:15**)

In other words, while betrayal is foreseen in the Divine plan, Judas remains accountable for his choice, and thus his guilt is not lessened.

It would be better for that man if he had not been born.

This phrase, and parallels, is found throughout Rabbinic literature.

Matthew 26:25

וַיַּעַן יְהוּדָה הַמַּסֵּר אוֹתוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר רַבִּי
הֲאֲנִי הוּא וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו אַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ:

“Yehuda, who betrayed him, answered, ‘It isn’t me, is it, Rabbi?’ He said to him, ‘You said it.’”

You said it.

The disciples ask sincerely: “*Is it I?*” Judas, in verse 25, echoes their words but with duplicity: “*Is it I, Rabbi?*”—not “Lord.”

Matthew 26:26

וַיְהִי בְּאֲכָלָם וַיִּקַּח יֵשׁוּעַ אֶת־הַלֶּחֶם וַיְבָרֶךְ וַיִּפְרֹס וַיִּתֵּן
לְתַלְמִידִים וַיֹּאמֶר קְחוּ וְאֲכֹלוּ זֶה הוּא גּוּפִי:

“As they were eating, Yeshua took bread, gave thanks for it, and broke it. He gave to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat. This is my body.’”

As they were eating.

The context is clearly the Passover *seder*. The Mishnah (*Pesachim* ch. 10) describes the order of the meal: blessings over bread, vegetables, the story of the Exodus, and symbolic foods. To

“take bread, bless, break, and distribute” is exactly what Jewish custom prescribed: the master of the seder recites the *ha-motzi* blessing, breaks the matzah, and distributes it to those reclining with him. The form of Yeshua’s action is entirely Jewish and fits seamlessly within the halakhic framework of the seder.

Took bread.

Some readers mistakenly claim that in Matthew 26 Yeshua ate leavened bread, pointing to the Greek word *artos* (ἄρτος). This is a misunderstanding. The term *artos* in Koine Greek simply means “bread” in general, without specifying whether it is leavened or unleavened. Context, not the word itself, determines the type.

In fact, the Septuagint (LXX)—the ancient Greek translation of the Torah—uses *artos* to describe matzah, the unleavened bread of Passover. For example, in Deuteronomy 16:3 the Torah commands: “*You shall eat with it matzot, the bread of affliction (lechem oni).*” The LXX renders *lechem oni* as *artos kakopatheias* (“bread of affliction”). This proves that *artos* includes unleavened bread in its semantic range. It is also used here:

- **Exodus 29:2** – “*unleavened bread (matzah) ... artous azymous*” (ἄρτους ἀζύμους).
- **Leviticus 8:2** – “*cakes of unleavened bread*” = *artous azymous*.

Therefore, when Matthew says that Yeshua “took *artos*,” this does not mean he ate chametz. On the contrary, the narrative is clearly set within the Passover seder, when only matzah would have been eaten. The Greek reflects the same usage as the Torah in the LXX: *artos* can and does mean matzah when the context is Pesach.

Gave thanks for it.

The Mishnah says that bread requires the following blessing:

“Barukh Atah HaShem, Elokeinu Melech HaOlam, ha-motzi lechem min ha-aretz.”
(m. Berakhot 6:1)

The act of blessing transforms ordinary eating into sacred service, as if the table were the altar (Berakhot 55a). Yeshua acts as the head of the table, performing the duty of blessing on behalf of the group.

This is my body.

Rabbinic tradition often uses food as a symbol of Torah, covenant, and even the self of the tzaddik. For example:

- *Proverbs 9:5: “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mingled.”* The Midrash (*Mishlei Rabbah* 9:5) interprets this as Torah itself, which nourishes Israel.
- The Talmud (*Berakhot* 40a) says: *“Just as bread sustains the body, so Torah sustains the soul.”*
- In mystical texts, the tzaddik himself is described as nourishment for his generation (*Zohar* I:59b).

The Midrash says,

“Every instance in which eating and drinking is stated in this scroll, the verse is referring to Torah and good deeds. Rabbi Yona said: The paradigm for all of them is as it is stated: “[There is nothing better for a man under the sun than to eat, drink, and rejoice]. That will accompany him in his toil [*ba’amalo*] [...during the days of his life...]” (*Ecclesiastes* 8:15). In his world [*be’olamo*] – in this world. “During the days of his life” – to the grave. Is there food and drink in the grave, that it accompanies a person to his grave? Rather, these are Torah and good deeds.” (**Kohelet Rabbah 3:12, Sefaria.org**)

Yeshua here speaks in this rabbinic-symbolic way: the bread of the seder, normally recalling the bread of affliction (*lechem oni*), now also points to himself, the Tzaddik HaEmet who will suffer affliction for Israel. By identifying the bread with his body, he declares that his own self will become the covenantal sustenance for his disciples—just as matzah sustained Israel in the Exodus.

Matthew 26:27

וַיִּקַּח אֶת-הַכּוֹס וַיְבָרֵךְ וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם
וַיֹּאמֶר שְׁתּוּ מִמֶּנָּה כָּלֵכֶם:

“He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, ‘All of you drink it,’”

He took the cup.

In the Seder, the Four Cups are called the *Kos Yeshuot*, the Cups of Salvation. So this cup is literally the Cup of Yeshua.

In mystical symbolism, the cup holds shefa, divine abundance flowing from above. Yeshua commanding “*all of you drink from it*” reflects this mystical idea: all share in the same flow, each disciple partaking in the divine abundance of redemption.

Blessed.

The blessing over wine (*borei pri hagafen*) was (and is) central to Jewish meals and especially the seder. Rabbinic teaching insists that blessings sanctify not only the act of drinking but also the participants themselves (*Berakhot* 35a: “It is forbidden to enjoy this world without a blessing”).

Matthew 26:28

כִּי זֶה הוּא דָּמִי בְּדָם הַבְּרִית הַחֲדָשָׁה
הַנִּשְׁפָּךְ בְּעַד רַבִּים לְסִלְיַחַת חַטָּאִים:

“for this is my blood of the New Covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins.”

My blood of the New Covenant.

Moshe Rabbeinu said,

“Behold, this is the blood of the covenant, which HaShem has made with you concerning all these words.” (**Exodus 24:8**)

Matthew 26:29

וְאֲנִי אֹמֵר לָכֶם לֹא אֶשְׁתֶּה מֵעֵתָה מִפְּרֵי
הַגֶּפֶן הַזֶּה עַד הַיּוֹם הַהוּא אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁתֶּה אִתּוֹ עִמָּכֶם
וְהוּא חֹדֶשׁ בְּמַלְכוּת אָבִי:

“But I tell you that I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on, until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s Kingdom.”

Fruit of the vine.

The phrase recalls the blessing formula fixed by the Sages: “*Barukh atah ... borei p’ri hagefen*” (Mishnah *Berakhot* 6:1). At the *seder*, four cups of wine were prescribed (Mishnah *Pesachim* 10:1), each linked with the four expressions of redemption in Exodus 6:6–7 (“*I will bring out, I will deliver, I will redeem, I will take you*”).

I will not drink.

The rabbis discuss vows to abstain from wine. The *Nazir* is the most famous case (Numbers 6:3), where abstaining signifies dedication to God. In *Nedarim* 9a, refraining from wine can be an act of sanctification, marking a boundary between the present and a hoped-for future. Yeshua’s abstention here functions in that rabbinic spirit: he separates himself from earthly celebration in anticipation of the messianic banquet.

I drink it anew with you.

The term “new” (*kainon* in Greek, *chadash* in Hebrew) resonates with prophetic promises of renewal. Jeremiah 31:31 speaks of a “new covenant” (*brit chadashah*) made with the house of Israel. In rabbinic thought, wine is a symbol of joy and covenant; at a wedding, *kiddushin* is sealed with wine. Here, Yeshua envisions a future moment when he will renew covenantal joy with his disciples, as if a cosmic *kiddushin* between God and Israel will be consummated.

In my Father’s Kingdom.

Rabbinic tradition often speaks of the *seudat ha-leviathan*, the banquet for the righteous at the end of days. *Bava Batra* 75a–b describes a feast where the righteous will eat from the Leviathan and drink the wine preserved since the six days of Creation.

In Kabbalah, wine symbolizes hidden wisdom: “*Nichnas yayin, yatza sod*” – “When wine enters, secret comes out” (Eruvin 65a). The Zohar (II:176b) calls wine the “joy of Torah.” By

promising to drink wine “new” in the kingdom, Yeshua hints that the ultimate *sod* (mystery) of Torah will be revealed in the Messianic Age, when divine secrets will no longer be concealed.

Matthew 26:30

וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי קִרְאָם אֶת־הַלֵּל וַיֵּצְאוּ אֶל־הַר הַזֵּיתִים:

“When they had sung the Hallel, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Sung the Hallel.

The reference here is most naturally understood as the *Hallel*, the series of Psalms (113–118) recited during the Passover *seder*. The Mishnah (*Pesachim* 10:6–7) describes the liturgy: after the meal and the drinking of the fourth cup, *Hallel* is sung. This identifies Yeshua and his disciples as observing normative Jewish practice of the Second Temple period. The act of singing praises after the seder meal fulfilled the mitzvah that “every person must see himself as if he went out of Egypt” (*Pesachim* 10:5). That Yeshua sings *Hallel* on the eve of betrayal and suffering reflects this rabbinic ideal: even when danger looms, the righteous strengthen themselves through praise of God. *Pesachim* 117a states: “At every redemption Israel sings *Hallel*.”

Mount of Olives.

Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer (ch. 31) associates the Mount of Olives with resurrection and redemption. According to *Midrash Tehillim* on Psalm 125, the Shekhinah will first appear there in the future redemption. Thus, Yeshua’s departure to the Mount of Olives after the seder and *Hallel* places him in the geography of messianic expectation.

Matthew 26:31

אָז אָמַר אֲלֵיהֶם יֵשׁוּעַ אַתֶּם כֻּלְּכֶם תִּכְשְׁלוּ בִּי
הַלְיָלָה כִּי כָתוּב אֶכֶה אֶת־הָרֶעֶה וְתִפּוּצִין הַצֹּאן:

“Then Yeshua said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble because of me tonight, for it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’”

I will strike the shepherd.

Yeshua grounds his statement in Scripture, citing Zechariah:

חָרֵב עוֹרֵי עַל-רֹעֵי וְעַל-גֹּבֶר עַמִּיתִי נֹאֵם ה' צְבָאוֹת
הַיְּדֵי אֶת-הָרֹעֶה וְתִפּוּצִין הַצֹּאן וְהִשְׁבֵּתִי יָדִי עַל-הַצֹּעְרִים:

“O sword! Rouse yourself against My shepherd, the man in charge of My flock —says HaShem of Hosts. Strike the shepherd and let the flock scatter, and I will also turn My hand against all the shepherd boys.’ (**Zechariah 13:7**)

Ibn Ezra says this refers to the wars in the land that will lead to the death of Mashiach ben Yosef. In this unusual interpretation, he claims that the ‘shepherd’ refers to Mohammed, the founder of Islam and that the *Gever Amitti* is Yeshua,

ושאמר גבר עמיתי על יש"ו הנוצרים שכפי מחשבת בני אדום
ואמונתם הוא היה בן האל עצם מעצמיו ולכן קראו גבר עמיתי
כפי דבריהם, וכינה את אומות אדום בשם משיחם שהיה גבר
עמיתו של הקדוש ברוך הוא

“And that a *gever ammitti* is about Yeshu, the Christians that according to the thought of the Edomites and their faith he was a son of God himself. And so they call him *gever ammitti* (their words), and called the nations of Edom by the name of their Messiah that he was the *gever ammitav* of the Holy One, Blessed be He.”(**Abarbanel on Zechariah 13:7**)

The Artscroll commentary says,

“Abarbanel suggests that My shepherd is referring to Mohammed and My colleague is referring to Yeshu as their followers refer to them in this manner.” (**Trei Asar, the Twelve Prophets, Volume II, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., pg. 294**)

R' Lichtenstein (who was a believer in Yeshua) agrees that the 'man next to me' refers to Messiah,

“The man next to me” is a reference to the Messiah, for he is the man next to the Holy One, blessed be he. For he is like a second to the king . . .” **(R' Yechiel Tzvi Lichtenstein, Commentary on the New Testament, on Matthew 26:31, cited in Torah Club, Chronicles of the Messiah, Volume 5, pg. 1478)**

While the Targum links the 'shepherd' to the King of Babylon (meaning Edom), as a shepherd in the negative sense, R' Yishmael the Kohen Gadol cited the passage in a favorable sense as a tribute to R' Shimon ben Gamliel. This event occurs in the text *Avot d'Rabbi Natan* during the deaths of the Ten Martyrs,

“[When Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel was executed], R' Yishmael ben Elisha . . . began weeping and crying out, “Holy mouth, faithful mouth! . . . O mouth that would express precious gems, precious stones, and pearls of Torah wisdom! . . . Regarding you Scripture states, ‘O sword, arouse yourself against My shepherd, the man who is My colleague! – says Hashem, Master of Legions (Zechariah 13:7).” **(Avos DeRabbi Nassan, Swartz Family Edition, Artscroll, Mesorah Publications, Ltd., pg. 547)**

The Artscroll commentary says,

“This verse is understood here as an allusion to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel's death by the sword, for as Nasi of the Jewish people, he could fittingly be titled the “shepherd” of God's children (Ahavas chesed; Ben Avraham; see also *Avos De-Rabbi Nassan*, Nusach 2, Ch. 41; cf. *Binyan Yehoshua*).” *Avot DeRabbi Natan* goes on to cite Exodus 22:23 in application to these sages,

“My wrath shall blaze, and I shall kill you by the sword.” **(Exodus 22:23)**

The Artscroll commentary reveals an interesting connecting thread to Zechariah 13:7,

“It is unclear why the Baraisa associates the death of Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel and R' Yishmael ben Elisha with this verse. Ben Avraham suggests that the verse is expounded to read, My wrath shall blaze against the Jewish people, and I shall kill you by

the sword. In other words, the Baraisa is saying that these great men were killed to atone for the sins of the nation. [This may be that Rabban Shimon was held accountable for the sins of his people.”]

Now we understand why Yeshua applied this verse to himself prior to his death,

“Then Yeshua said to them, ‘All of you will stumble because of me tonight, as it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.’”
(Matthew 26:31, cf. Mark 14:27)

In prophetic literature, the “scattering of sheep” is often a metaphor for exile and dispersion (Ezek. 34:5–6). Rabbinic commentary sees this scattering as both punishment and preparation for redemption: God regathers the scattered sheep (Jer. 23:3). Yeshua applies this imagery to his disciples, who, like Israel itself, will scatter for a time before being regathered by divine mercy. However, as the Good Shepherd, he will regather the flock as Ezekiel says,

“For thus says the Lord HaShem: Behold, I myself, even I, will search for my sheep and will seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered abroad, so will I seek out my sheep; and I will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. I will bring them out from the peoples, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them with good pasture; and on the mountains of the height of Israel shall their fold be: there shall they lie down in a good fold; and on fat pasture shall they feed on the mountains of Israel. I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will cause them to lie down, says the Lord HaShem. I will seek that which was lost, and will bring back that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick: but the fat and the strong I will destroy; I will feed them in justice.”

Ezekiel 34:11-16

Matthew 26:32

וְאַחֲרֵי כַּוְּמִי אֵלֶךְ לְפָנֵיכֶם הַגָּלִילָה:

“But after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee.”

After I am raised up.

Joseph rises from the pit, David from persecution, Israel from exile. Yeshua anticipates his own rising as part of the ultimate iteration of the divine pattern of the Tzaddik who suffers temporarily but is restored by God.

I will go before you.

The phrase evokes the image of the shepherd, a central rabbinic and biblical metaphor for leadership. Moses is remembered as one who “*went before*” Israel, caring for the flock (Exod. 13:21; Midrash Tanchuma, Shemot 27). Similarly, God is called the Shepherd of Israel (Ps. 80:1). The leader does not follow behind but walks in front, showing the path. By saying, “*I will go before you*,” Yeshua takes the role of a shepherd who regathers his scattered sheep (cf. Zech. 13:7, cited in the previous verse).

Into Galilee.

In the previous verse (26:31), the disciples are likened to scattered sheep. Now Yeshua assures them of regathering: just as the prophets promised that God would regather Israel from exile (Jer. 23:3), so he will regather his disciples. Rabbinic teaching (*Pesikta Rabbati* 15) emphasizes that the shepherd will one day gather every lost sheep, no matter how scattered. The “going before” to Galilee is thus not retreat but the beginning of re-constitution, a new Exodus-like gathering.

Matthew 26:33

וַיַּעַן פֶּטְרוֹס וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ גַּם כִּי-יִפְּשָׁלוּ בְּךָ
כֻּלָּם אֲנִי לֹא אֶפְשָׁל לְעוֹלָם:

“But Peter answered him, ‘Even if all will be made to stumble because of you, I will never be made to stumble.’”

Peter answered him.

Peter's words reflect sincere zeal but also a dangerous self-confidence. The rabbis often warn that one should not trust in his own righteousness. The Rabbis say,

“Do not trust in yourself until the day of your death.” (**Pirkei Avot 2:4**)

Even great sages feared stumbling; Yosef's resistance to Potiphar's wife is remembered as extraordinary precisely because most could falter (Sotah 36b). Peter's pledge, while noble, shows reliance on self rather than humility before God's testing.

Matthew 26:34

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יֵשׁוּעַ אָמֵן אֲמַר לְךָ כִּי בַּלַּיְלָה הַזֶּה
בְּטָרִם יִקְרָא הַתְּרִנְגוֹל תִּכְחַשׁ בִּי שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים:

“Yeshua said to him, ‘Amein, I tell you that tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.

You will deny me.

Peter's overconfidence will be shattered by his denials, but this breaking becomes the prelude to his later restoration. The tzaddik often falls in order to rise to greater strength (*tzaddik sheva yipol v'kam* – “the righteous falls seven times and rises again,” Prov. 24:16).

The rooster.

In Jewish usage, the “crowing of the rooster” (*keriat ha-gever*) was a well-known expression to denote a specific time in the night, roughly the last watch before dawn. The Mishnah (*Berakhot* 1:2) records: “*From what time may one recite the Shema in the morning? From the time that one can distinguish between blue and white ... until the ‘call of the gever.*” The word *gever* literally means “man,” but in rabbinic idiom it was sometimes used for “rooster,” since the rooster's crow marked the transition to dawn.

Rabbinic sources prohibit chickens in Jerusalem. The Mishnah (*Bava Kamma* 7:7) states: “*They may not raise chickens in Jerusalem because of the Temple.*” The concern was that chickens scratch in refuse and might spread impurity to sacred things. If this halakhah was observed

strictly, there should not have been roosters within the holy city.

Therefore, some scholars argue that the “rooster” here could not literally be the bird, but instead the **Temple crier** who announced the changing of the priestly guard and the beginning of the daily services at dawn. Rabbinic sources indeed use the same word, *gever*, for such an official crier. For example, the Talmud (*Yoma* 20b) mentions: “*At the call of the gever they would open the Temple gates.*”

Matthew 26:35

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו פֶּטְרוֹס גַּם אִם עָלַי לָמוּת אֶתָּד
לֹא אֶכְחֹשׁ בָּךְ וְכֵן אָמְרוּ גַם כָּל־הַתְּלָמִידִים:

“Peter said to him, ‘Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you. All of the disciples also said likewise.’”

I will not deny you.

In Second Kings, we gain insight into the relationship between Elijah and Elisha:

“Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, for HaShem has sent me on to Bethel.” “As HaShem lives and as you live,” said Elisha, “I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel.”
(2 Kings 2:2, Sefaria.org)

Matthew 26:36

אַחֲרֵי־כֵן בָּא אֲתָם יֵשׁוּעַ אֶל־חֹצֵר הַנִּקְרָא
גֵּת־שֶׁמְנִי וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הַתְּלָמִידִים שְׁבוּ לָכֶם פֹּה
עַד־אֲשֶׁר אֵלֶךְ שָׁמָּה וְהִתְפַּלֵּלְתִּי:

“Then Yeshua came with them to a place called Gat-Sh’manei, and said to his disciples, ‘Sit here, while I go there and pray.’”

Gat Sh’manei.

The name *Gethsemane* derives from the Aramaic/Hebrew *Gat Shemanim* (גַּת שְׁמָנִים), literally, “oil press.” This was an olive grove at the foot of the Mount of Olives (*Har HaZeitim*), where harvested olives were crushed to extract their oil. In Jewish thought, olive oil (*shemen*) carries deep covenantal and messianic symbolism: it was used to anoint priests (Exod. 30:30), kings (1 Sam. 16:13), and even the sacred vessels of the Temple (Exod. 30:26–29).

Thus, Yeshua’s last night of freedom begins at an “oil press,” a place where fruit is crushed so its essence flows out. The name itself becomes a midrash: just as olives must be pressed to yield oil, so the righteous are often “pressed” through suffering to release light for the world.

“You shall further instruct the Israelites to bring you clear oil of beaten olives for lighting, for kindling lamps regularly.” (**Exodus 27:20, Sefaria.org**)

As the olive yields light only when crushed, so Israel fulfills her calling only through trials. Gethsemane, the “oil press,” becomes not only a geographical location but a spiritual metaphor: Yeshua will be pressed by sorrow and betrayal, but through this crushing comes the release of the light of redemption, just as pure oil lights the menorah. This is the secret of the verse,

“And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.” (**Luke 22:44**)

Remember the last chapter, the Ten Virgins and the oil for the light.

Matthew 26:37

וַיֵּסַח אֶתוֹ אֶת-פֶּטְרוֹס וְאֶת-שְׁנֵי בְנֵי
זַבְדִּי וַיְחַל לְהֵעָצֵב וּלְמוֹג:

“He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zavdai, and began to be sorrowful and severely troubled.”

Peter/Two Sons of Zavdai.

Yeshua takes with him Peter, James, and John (the sons of Zebedee). This recalls a rabbinic pattern of choosing select disciples for intimate instruction or prayer. Moses ascended Mount Sinai with Joshua alone (Exod. 24:13), and Elijah often separated Elisha for special moments. Yeshua’s act follows this rabbinic model: not all disciples can witness the master’s deepest sorrow; only a few are entrusted with this closeness.

Sorrowful/Severely troubled.

Rabbinic literature describes how the righteous (*tzaddikim*) often carry the pain of their generation. Moses cried, “I cannot bear this people alone.” Similarly, Yeshua begins to feel the crushing weight (*gat sbemanim*, the “oil press”) of interceding for his disciples and for Israel. The sorrow is not self-pity but covenantal burden, like Moses, Jeremiah, and the prophets who “wept for Israel’s sins.”

The rabbis often portray grief as the prelude to redemption. Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says:

“Three good gifts were given to Israel, and all of them were given only through suffering: Torah, the Land of Israel, and the World to Come.” (**Berakhot 5a**)

Of King David, it says,

“David went up by the ascent of the Mount of Olives, and wept as he went up, and he had his head covered, and went barefoot: and all the people who were with him covered every man his head, and they went up, weeping as they went up.” (**2 Samuel 15:30**)

Mystical Note – Sorrow of the Shekhinah

The Zohar describes the Shekhinah herself as weeping in exile with Israel. The sorrow of the righteous one is mystically united with the sorrow of the Divine Presence. In this light, Yeshua’s grief is not simply personal but participates in the grief of the Shekhinah over Israel’s suffering. His anguish is thus both human and cosmic.

Matthew 26:38

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם נַפְשִׁי מְרֵה-לִּי עַד-מוֹת עֲמָדוֹ פֹּה וְשָׁקְדוּ עִמִּי:

“Then he said to them, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here, and watch with me.’”

Even to death.

The phrase recalls Jonah (Jonah 4:9), who said: “*I do well to be angry, even unto death.*” The rabbis interpret such expressions as moments where the soul feels the crushing weight of its mission. Yeshua’s words align with rabbinic teaching on *mesirut nefesh* (self-sacrifice): the righteous sometimes accept the anguish of death as part of their service. Rabbi Akiva, as he was martyred, recited the Shema saying:

“All my life I wondered when I would fulfill this verse: ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your soul.’” (**Berakhot 61b**)

Matthew 26:39

וַיֵּלֶךְ מֵעֵט מֵאֲתָם וַיִּפֹּל עַל-פָּנָיו וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל לֵאמֹר אָבִי
אֱ-סִיּוּכָל לְהַיּוֹת תַּעֲבֹר-נָא מֵעָלַי הַכּוֹס הַזֹּאת אֲדָּ לֹא
כָרְצוֹנִי כִּי אֱ-סִיּוּכָל:

“He went forward a little, fell on his face, and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will.’”

Fell on his face.

Yeshua’s posture reflects the biblical and rabbinic tradition of *nefilat apayim*—falling upon one’s face in desperate prayer. Moses and Aaron fell upon their faces before God when Israel

sinned (Num. 16:4, 20:6). Rabbinic texts explain this as the ultimate act of humility, acknowledging total dependence on the Divine (Berakhot 34b). Yeshua here places himself in continuity with Israel's prophets and leaders who lowered themselves utterly before God.

Let this cup pass.

The imagery of the “cup” as suffering or divine judgment is deeply biblical and rabbinic. Isaiah 51:17:

“You have drunk from the hand of HaShem the cup of His wrath.” (**Isaiah 51:17**)

Not what I will, but what you will.

This phrase embodies the essence of *bittul*: surrendering one's own ego, desire, and will before God's higher plan. Rabbinic tradition describes *bittul* as the path of the true tzaddik. In *Avot*, Hillel says:

“Nullify your will before His will, so that He may nullify the will of others before your will.” (**Pirkei Avot 2:4**)

Yeshua enacts this rabbinic principle by aligning his own will with the Divine, even in the face of unimaginable suffering. This is not weakness, but the highest form of faith: absolute surrender to Heaven.

Beyond *bittul*, this moment also embodies **mesirut nefesh**, the willingness to give one's very soul for the sake of God and Israel. Rabbinic literature abounds with examples: Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in Daniel 3 chose fire rather than deny God. Yeshua enters the same current of Jewish martyrdom, offering his life willingly as an expression of loyalty to God's plan and of intercession for his people.

Matthew 26:40

וַיָּבֹא אֶל-הַתְּלָמִידִים וַיִּמָּצְאֵם יְשָׁנִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-פֶּטְרוֹס
הֲיָה לֹא-הָיָה בִּיכְלָתְכֶם לְשָׁקֵד עִמִּי שְׁעָה אֶחָת:

“He came to the disciples, and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, ‘What, could not you watch with me for one hour?’”

Found them sleeping.

The rabbis often use *sleep* as a metaphor for spiritual neglect. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 5:2 interprets “*I sleep, but my heart is awake*” as Israel slumbering in exile, inattentive to God’s call.

One hour.

Here, Yeshua asks for only “one hour” of vigilance. In rabbinic thought, a single hour can carry eternal weight:

“One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the World to Come.” (**Avot 4:17**)

Matthew 26:41

שְׁקִדּוֹ וְהִתְפַּלֵּלוּ פֶּן-תִּבְאוּ לִיַּדִּי נְסִיוֹן
הֵן הָרוּחַ חֲפִצָּה וְהַבָּשָׂר רַפָּה:

“Watch and pray, that you do not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Spirit is willing/Flesh is weak.

Rabbinic thought often contrasts the lofty soul with the earthy body.

- *Berakhot* 61b: “*Two nations are within you*” is read as the conflict between body (*guf*) and soul (*neshamah*).
- The *nefesh* yearns for pleasure, while the *neshamah* aspires to God.

Matthew 26:42

וְיֹסֵף לֵלְכֶת-לוֹ שֵׁנִית וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל לֵאמֹר אָבִי
אִם-לֹא תוּכַל הַכּוֹס הַזֹּאת לָעֵבֶר מֵעָלַי בְּלֹתִי
אִם אֲשֶׁתָּה אֲתָה יְהִי כְרָצוֹנְךָ:

“Again, a second time he went away, and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if this cup cannot pass away from me unless I drink it, your will be done.’”

This cup.

The image of the cup as destiny or judgment is deeply biblical:

- Isaiah 51:17: “*You have drunk ... the cup of His wrath.*”
The rabbis extended this to mean each person has their “cup” apportioned by Heaven (*Eruvin* 13b: “Each person has his own cup of suffering and blessing”). Yeshua accepts that his portion is to drink the cup of suffering, not as punishment for sin, but as the fate of the righteous one bearing Israel’s pain.

Matthew 26:43

וַיָּבֹא וַיִּמְצָאם גַּם בַּפֶּעַם הַזֹּאת יְשָׁנִים כִּי עֵינֵיהֶם כְּבִדּוֹת:

“He came again and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.”

Found them sleeping.

The disciples, overwhelmed, cannot stay awake in the hour of trial. Rabbinic tradition often associates “sleep” with spiritual negligence. *Avot* 3:1 exhorts: “*Know before Whom you stand.*”

Matthew 26:44

וַיִּנְיחֵם וַיּוֹסֶף לְלַכֵּת וַיִּתְפַּלֵּל שְׁלִישִׁית
בְּאָמְרוֹ עוֹד־הַפֶּעַם כַּדָּבָר הַזֶּה:

“He left them again, went away, and prayed a third time, saying the same words.”

A third time.

Each repetition deepens his *bittul*—the surrender of human will to divine will. In the first prayer, he asks for the cup to pass; in the second, he accepts that it must be drunk; in the third, he seals his submission. Yeshua’s threefold prayer demonstrates this progressive *bittul*, culminating in perfect alignment.

Matthew 26:45

וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הַתַּלְמִידִים וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם נוֹמוּ עוֹד וְנוּחוּ
הִנֵּה הַשָּׁעָה קְרוּבָה וְכֹן־הָאָדָם נִמְסָר בְּיַד חַטָּאִים:

“Then he came to his disciples, and said to them, ‘Sleep on now, and take your rest. Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.’”

Sleep on now.

Yeshua’s words, part irony and part resignation, mirror the rabbinic theme that in the moment of testing, many fall asleep spiritually, unable to perceive the gravity of events. The BeShT was once praying with his disciples, and a similar story is told:

“The Baal Shem Tov was once praying with his Hasidim. That day he prayed with great concentration, not only word by word, but letter by letter, so that the others finished long before he did. At first they waited for him, but before long, they lost patience and one by one they left.” Later the Baal Shem Tov came to them and said: While I was praying, I ascended the ladder of your prayers all the way into Paradise. As I ascended, I heard a song of indescribable beauty. At last I reached the palace of the Messiah, in the highest heavens, known as the Bird’s Nest. The Messiah was standing by his window peering out at a tree of great beauty... “...I followed his gaze and saw that his eyes were fixed on a golden dove, whose nest was in the top branches of that tree. That is when I realized that the song pervading all of Paradise was coming from that golden dove. And I understood that the Messiah could not bear to be without that dove and its song for as much as a moment. Then it occurred to me that if I could capture the dove, and bring it back to this world, the Messiah would be sure to follow. So I ascended higher, until I was within arm’s reach of the golden dove. But just as I reached for it, the ladder of prayers collapsed.” (**Tree of Souls, The Ladder of Prayers, Howard Schwartz, Oxford University Press, pg. 490**)

Matthew 26:46

קוּמוּ וְנִלְכֶּה הִנֵּה הַמַּסֵּר אוֹתִי הַלֵּךְ וְקָרֵב:

“Arise, let us be going. Behold, he who betrays me is at hand.”

He who betrays me is at hand.

The scene recalls Jacob rising to meet Esau, who came with 400 men (Gen. 33:1). Midrash (*Bereshit Rabbah* 78:15) emphasizes Jacob’s courage: though fearful, he went forward to face betrayal and possible death.

Matthew 26:47

עוֹדְנוּ מְדַבֵּר וְהִנֵּה יְהוּדָה אֶחָד מִשְׁנַיִם הָעָשָׂר
בָּא וְעִמּוֹ הָמוֹן רַב בְּחֶרְבוֹת וּבִמְקָלוֹת מֵאֵת
רֹאשֵׁי הַכֹּהֲנִים וְזִקְנֵי הָעָם:

“While he was still speaking, behold, Yehuda, one of the Twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and clubs, from the Chief Priest and elders of the people.”

With swords and clubs.

The rabbis were deeply critical of priestly corruption during the Second Temple period. As stated in verse 4 above, *Pesachim* 57a curses the priestly houses of Boethus, Hanin, and Kathros, saying: “*Woe is me because of their rods; woe is me because of their whisperings!*” The text notes that their servants beat people with clubs. Matthew’s description—“swords and clubs” sent by the chief priests—fits this rabbinic picture exactly: Temple elites misusing power, ruling with violence rather than holiness.

Matthew 26:48

וְהַמָּסֵר אֹתוֹ נָתַן לָהֶם אוֹת לֵאמֹר הֲאִישׁ
אֲשֶׁר אֶשְׁקֹחוּ זֶה הוּא תִפְשׁוּהוּ:

“Now he who betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, ‘Whoever I kiss, he is the one. Seize him.’”

Seize him.

The betrayal recalls rabbinic portrayals of false disciples like Doeg the Edomite and Achitophel, King David’s counselor. *Sanhedrin* 106b describes how Achitophel betrayed David by perverting intimacy and counsel into treachery. Judas fits this archetype: a disciple who twists closeness with his master into the means of his downfall.

Matthew 26:49

וּמִיָּד נָגַשׁ אֶל-יֵשׁוּעַ וַיֹּאמֶר 'שָׁלוֹם לָךְ רַבִּי', וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ:

“Immediately he came to Yeshua, and said, ‘Shalom to you, Rabbi!’ and kissed him.”

Kissed him.

Avot de-Rabbi Natan 29 teaches: “There are kisses of greatness, kisses of meeting, kisses of parting, kisses of deceit.” The most striking biblical parallel is Esau’s kiss of Jacob in Genesis:

“And Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him; and they wept.” (**Genesis 33:4**)

In the Torah scroll, **dots are placed above the word “kissed him”** (וַיִּשָּׁקֵהוּ, *vayishakeihu*). The Sages (Sifrei Numbers 69; *Bereshit Rabbah* 78:9) debate the meaning:

- Some say the dots indicate that Esau did not kiss sincerely, but with a hidden intention of biting Jacob’s neck.
- Others say the dots hint to the opposite—that for that moment, Esau’s compassion was stirred, and he kissed Jacob wholeheartedly.

This ambiguity captures the paradox of the kiss: is it love, or is it treachery?

Judas’ kiss repeats this drama but resolves it clearly: his kiss is one of deceit. He outwardly greets Yeshua as *Rabbi*, but inwardly hands him over to death. His act embodies the rabbinic suspicion of Esau’s kiss—that affection may conceal enmity.

Matthew 26:50

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יֵשׁוּעַ רֵעִי עַל-מָה בָּאתָ וַיִּגָּשׁוּ
וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֶת-יְדֵיהֶם בִּישׁוּעַ וַיִּתְּפְשׂוּ אֹתוֹ:

“Yeshua said to him, ‘Friend, why are you here?’ Then they came and laid hands on Yeshua, and took him.”

Friend.

Proverbs says:

“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.”
(Proverbs 27:6)

Matthew 26:51

וְהִנֵּה אֶחָד מִן־הָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר עִם־יֵשׁוּעַ שָׁלַח יָדוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַף
חֶרְבוֹ וַיִּדֹּךְ אֶת־עַבְדֵּי הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וַיִּקְצֹץ אֶת־אָזְנוֹ:

“Behold, one of those who were with Yeshua stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck the servant of the High Priest, and struck off his ear.”

Struck off his ear.

Pinchas was praised and given a “covenant of peace,” but the rabbis also debated whether zealotry is always justifiable (Yerushalmi Sanh. 9:7). True zeal flows from alignment with God’s will, but zeal rooted in ego causes destruction.

The disciple’s sword represents zeal without full submission to Heaven. The disciple acts in zeal like Pinchas, but unlike Pinchas, his action does not bring peace—it escalates conflict. In rabbinic symbolism, the **ear** is associated with obedience to Torah. *Shabbat* 88a connects the phrase “*We will do and we will hear*” (Exod. 24:7) to Israel’s covenantal obedience. To lose an ear is to be cut off from hearing.

Matthew 26:52

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יֵשׁוּעַ הָשִׁב אֶת-חֶרְבְּךָ אֶל-תַּעֲרָה כִּי כָל-אֲחֲזִי
חָרֵב בַּחֶרֶב יֵאָבֵדוּ:

“Then Yeshua said to him, ‘Put your sword back into its place, for all those who take the sword will die by the sword.’”

All who take the sword.

This aligns with rabbinic teaching: “*Those who rely on the sword will themselves be consumed by the sword*” (*Avot de-Rabbi Natan* 4). The Torah’s vision for Israel is not domination by the sword but submission to God’s will and Torah as the true source of strength. In Genesis, Isaac speaks to Esau:

“By your sword you shall live, and your brother you shall serve; but when you grow restless, you shall break his yoke from your neck.” (**Genesis 27:39-40**)

Esau’s lot is perpetual violence, living by the sword without peace. *Bereishit Rabbah* 67:7 comments that Esau’s portion is the sword, but Jacob’s portion is the voice of Torah.

By telling his disciple to put away the sword, Yeshua implies: Israel must not embrace Esau’s destiny. The covenantal path of Jacob is Torah and prayer, not force of arms. To wield the sword as Esau does is to abandon Israel’s unique calling.

Matthew 26:53

הֲתֹאמַר בְּלִבֶּךָ כִּי לֹא יִכְלֹתִי לִשְׁאֹל עֲתָה מֵאֵת אָבִי
וַיִּצְנֶה-לִּי יוֹתֵר מִשְׁנַיִם עָשָׂר לְגִיוֹנוֹת שָׁל-מַלְאָכִים:

“Or do you think that I could not ask my Father, and He would even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?”

Do you think that I could not ask my Father.

This is an interesting glimpse into Yeshua's choice and the plan of Redemption. Note that a few verses earlier, he prayed the cup could pass from him if there was 'another way'. Pesikta Rabbati places the same choice on the Messiah's shoulders:

“At the time of the Messiah's creation], the Holy One, blessed be He, will tell him in detail what will befall him: ‘There are souls that have been put away with you under My throne, and it is their sins which will bend you down under a yoke of iron and make you like a calf whose eyes grow dim with suffering, and will choke your spirit as with a yoke; because of the sins of these souls your tongue will cleave to the roof of your mouth. Are you willing to endure such things?’ The Messiah will ask the Holy One, blessed be He: ‘Will my suffering last many years?’ The Holy One, blessed be He, will reply: ‘Upon your life and the life of My head, it is a period of seven years which I have decreed for you. But **if your soul is sad at the prospect of suffering, I shall at this moment banish these sinful souls.**’ The Messiah will say: ‘Master of the Universe, with joy in my soul and gladness in my heart, I take this suffering upon myself, provided that not one person in Israel perish; that not only those who are alive be saved in my days, but that also those who are dead, who died from the days of Adam up to the time of redemption, and not only these be saved in my days, but all those who died as abortions; and that not only these be saved in my days, but all those whom You thought to create but were not created. Such are the things I desire, and for these, I am ready to take upon myself [whatever You decree.]’ At these words, the Holy One, blessed be He, will appoint for the Messiah the four creatures who will carry the Messiah's throne of glory.” (Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 36, translated by William G. Braude, Yale University Press, pgs. 678-679)

Twelve legions of angels.

A Roman legion numbered about six thousand soldiers. Twelve legions would symbolize a force larger than any earthly army. The choice of “twelve” resonates with Israel's twelve tribes: divine hosts could defend Israel in parallel to her tribal divisions. Midrash *Tanchuma* (Vayishlach 4) describes how when Jacob feared Esau's army, angels surrounded him for protection. Yeshua declares that he could summon similar heavenly hosts—yet he refrains. Keener comments,

“Legions normally had six thousand soldiers, so Jesus is saying that he could summon around seventy-two thousand angels (a legion per disciple). Even a human force of this

size could have easily crushed the whole temple guard and the Roman garrison in the fortress Antonia, many times over; rarely did any nation field such vast armies in one place. The whole of Syria had only three legions (Josephus, Jewish Antiquities 17.286). Such an angelic force could have easily defeated any human army raised against them.”
(Keener, Craig S.. **The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament** (IVP Bible Background Commentary Set) (p. 116). Kindle Edition.)

Matthew 26:54

וְאֵיכָכָה אֶפֹּאֵא יִמְלְאוּ הַכְּתוּבִים כִּי-כֵן הָיָה תְּהִיָּה:

“How then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must be so?”

Scriptures be fulfilled.

The Zohar (II:161a) teaches: *“The Holy One looked into the Torah and created the world.”* History is not random, but the unfolding of Torah’s script. Yeshua’s statement that “the Scriptures must be fulfilled” reflects this mystical truth: his suffering is not accidental but the outworking of the divine blueprint written into creation itself.

Matthew 26:55

בְּשָׁעָה הַהִיא אָמַר יֵשׁוּעַ אֶל-הַמּוֹן הָעָם כְּצֵאת עַל-פְּרִיץ
יֵצְאוּתֶם בְּחֶרְבוֹת וּבִמְקָלוֹת לְתַפְּשֵׁנִי וְאֲנִי הָיִיתִי יוֹשֵׁב
וּמְלַמֵּד בַּמִּקְדָּשׁ יוֹם יוֹם וְלֹא הִחַזְקְתֶּם בִּי:

“In that hour, Yeshua said to the multitudes, ‘Have you come out as against a robber with swords and clubs to seize me? I sat daily in the Temple teaching, and you did not arrest me.’”

Daily in the Temple.

Yeshua exposes the irony of his arrest: he is treated as a bandit, or a robber, though his life was one of teaching Torah openly. Rabbinic tradition condemns such distortion of justice. *Avot* teaches:

“The world stands on three things: on justice, on truth, and on peace.” (**Pirkei Avot 1:18**)

To bring clubs against a sage is to undermine all three.

Matthew 26:56

וְכָל-זֶאת הַיְתָה לְמַלְאֵת כְּתָבֵי הַנְּבִיאִים
אֲזַעְזְבוּהוּ הַתְּלָמִידִים כֻּלָּם וַיִּנּוּסוּ:

“But all this has happened, that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples left him, and fled.”

Disciples fled.

Yeshua’s framing of events echoes Joseph’s words to his brothers:

“It was not you who sent me here, but God” (**Genesis 45:8**)

Yosef is a prototype of the Tzaddik HaEmet who interprets betrayal as part of God’s plan. In the same way, Yeshua sees beyond the malice of men to the hand of Providence.

Matthew 26:57

וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר תָּפְשׂוּ אֶת-יֵשׁוּעַ הוֹלִיכֵהוּ אֶל-קַיָּפָא
הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל אֲשֶׁר נִקְהָלוּ בְּבֵיתוֹ הַסּוֹפְרִים וְהַזִּקְנִים:

“Those who had taken Yeshua led him away to Qayafa the High Priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together.”

Scribes/Elders gathered together.

The Psalms lament:

“The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, seeking to slay him.” (Psalm 37:32)

The Talmud says,

“Any judge who judges a true judgment truthfully, even if he sits in judgment only one hour, the verse ascribes to him as if he became a partner to the Holy One, Blessed be He, in the act of Creation. It is written here: “And the people stood over Moses from the morning until the evening.” And it is written there, “And it was evening and it was morning, one day” (Genesis 1:5) (**Shabbat 10a, Sefaria.org**)

Matthew 26:58

וּפֶטְרוֹס הָלַךְ אַחֲרָיו מֵרְחוֹק עַד לְחֶצֶר הַכֹּהֵן
הַגָּדוֹל וַיָּבֹא פְּנִימָה וַיֵּשֶׁב אֶצֶל הַמְּשָׁרְתִּים
לִרְאוֹת מִה־יִּהְיֶה אַחֲרֵית הַדָּבָר:

“But Peter followed him from a distance, to the courtyard of the High Priest, and entered in and sat with the officers, to see the end.”

The court of the High Priest.

Peter literally enters the courtyard of those conspiring against his master.

“Justice, justice shall you pursue (Deuteronomy 16:20)”

“By virtue of three things the world endures: law, truth and peace.”

(Ethics of Our Fathers 1:18, cited at Chabad.org)

The Jerusalem Talmud says,

“The three are one and the same: if the law is upheld, there is truth and there is peace.”
(Jerusalem Talmud, Taanit 4:2, cited at Chabad.org)

Commenting on the doubled word for “justice” R’ Bunim comments,

“Why does the verse repeat itself? Is there a just justice and an unjust justice? Indeed there is. The Torah is telling us to be just also in the pursuit of justice—both the end and the means by which it is obtained must be just.” (Rabbi Bunim of Peshischa, cited at Chabad.org)

Matthew 26:59

וְרָאשֵׁי הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַסּוֹפְרִים וְכָל־הַסֵּנֶדְרִין
בִּקְשׁוּ עֵדוּת שֶׁקֶר בְּיֶשׁוּעַ לְהַמִּיתוֹ וְלֹא מָצְאוּ׃

“Now the chief priests, the elders, and the whole council sought false testimony against Yeshua, that they might put him to death”

Whole Council.

Was this a valid Sanhedrin trial? Let’s examine the evidence:

- **Wrong Place: Not in the Chamber of Hewn Stone.**

Rabbinic tradition states that the Sanhedrin convened in the **Lishkat HaGazit** (Chamber of Hewn Stone) on the Temple Mount (m. *Sanhedrin* 11:2). If they moved from that chamber, they lost authority to judge capital cases (Rosh Hashanah 31a). By meeting instead in the house of Caiaphas, they abandoned both the proper location and the legitimacy of their rulings. This was no lawful Sanhedrin, but a private conspiracy masquerading as justice.

- **Wrong Time:**

The Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 4:1) states: capital cases must begin during the day and be concluded in daylight. Here, the trial occurs at night, during the festival of Pesach, a time when trials were forbidden. *Sanhedrin* 10:4 prohibits adjudicating capital cases on the eve of a festival, lest the judgment disrupt Israel's joy. That such a proceeding occurs during the holiest of times shows its illegality under halakhah.

The Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 4:5) stresses that judges are to protect life, not seek pretexts for execution: “*A Sanhedrin that executes once in seven years is called destructive.*” Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah says even once in seventy years. When earthly courts are corrupted, the heavenly court still judges truly. This gathering at Caiaphas's house is a parody of a Sanhedrin: outwardly clothed in authority, yet stripped of legitimacy.

Matthew 26:60

וַאֲף כִּי בָאוּ שְׁמָה עֲדֵי שֶׁקֶר רַבִּים לֹא מָצְאוּ:

“and they found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward,”

Many false witnesses.

For the Sanhedrin actively to “seek false testimony” violates the very foundation of Torah justice. In rabbinic categories, this tribunal is no true *Beit Din*, but a perversion of justice.

Matthew 26:61

וּבִאֲחֶרֶץ נִגְשׁוּ שְׁנֵי עֲדֵי שֶׁקֶר וַיֹּאמְרוּ זֶה אָמַר יֵשׁ לְאַלֵּל
זֶדִי לַהֲרֹס אֶת־הַיֵּכָל הַזֶּה וְלִבְנוֹתוֹ בְּשִׁלֶּשֶׁת יָמִים:

“and said, ‘This man said, I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days.’”

Destroy the Temple of God.

Before Gedaliah's betrayal, Ishmael and his company had a meal *with* Gedaliah,

"In the seventh month, Ishmael son of Nethaniah son of Elishama, who was of royal descent and one of the king's commanders, came with ten men to Gedaliah son of Ahikam at Mizpah; and they ate together there at Mizpah." **(Jeremiah 41:1, Sefaria.org)**

Even worse, this was no ordinary dinner. According to Radak, this meal occurred on Rosh HaShanah. Sephardic.org comments,

"When Rosh Hashanah approached, Ishmael and ten men came to celebrate the holiday with Gedaliah. During the festivities, Ishmael and his men attacked Gedaliah and his men and murdered them. Not only did this terrible act lead to more violence and murder, but it also forced the Jews to flee to Egypt, which ended the Jewish settlement in the land of Israel. The murder of Gedaliah and his men led to the finality of the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people from the land of Israel in its entirety." **(Why We Fast on Tzom Gedaliah, Shelly Greenstein, Sephardic.org)**

The Malbim explains that Ishmael attempted to find false legal grounds for his actions,

"And it was on the second day, Ishmael had hidden the death of Gedaliah, therefore it said No man knew. He intended to find a false charge so that he could say that he killed him legally and justly. This was the strategy in killing the eighty men..." **(Malbim on Jeremiah 41:41, Sefaria.org)**

R' Pesach Siegel, comments on his connection to the Temple:

"By virtue of his constant connection with Hashem and simultaneously with His people, he was the bridge between heaven and earth. He was the Beis HaMikdash in human form. The people were his "service", and he saw the point of light within each one, bringing together as one in the service of their "Temple"... The outpouring of life force from the Creator was channeled through Gedalia to the rest of the world, in the same manner that a husband is *mashpia*, pours forth his blessing upon his wife...Gedalia was THE tzaddik. He was the sole cause of Hashem's continued personal interest in

Eretz Yisroel at the time. It is for this reason that his death is literally the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. The Rambam calls him “the burning coal.” Just as a smothered fire can be brought back to life by a solitary remaining coal, so too, the Beis Hamikdash was not totally consumed as long as Gedalia lived. His death is worthy of a fast day.” (**Tzom Gedalia 5771, R’ Pesach Siegel, Yeshiva Tiferet**)

The Talmud speaks of the *death of the righteous*,

מיתתן של צדיקים כשריפת בית אלקינו

“...the death of the tzaddikim is put on a level with the burning of the House of our G-d.” (**Rosh HaShanah 18b, Soncino Press Edition**)

R’ Chaim of Volozhin comments,

“If someone sanctifies himself properly through the performance of all the Mitzvot...Then he himself is the Beit HaMikdash itself...Because this is the truth regarding Tzadikim through the deeds which are desirable by the blessed one they are the Mikdash mamash.” (**R’ Chaim of Volozhin, Nefesh HaChaim, Gate 1, Ch. 4**)

The Gospel of John says,

“What sign do you show us, seeing that you do these things?’ Yeshua answered them, ‘Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ The Judeans therefore said, ‘It took forty-six years to build this Temple! Will you raise it up in three days?’ But he spoke of the Temple of his body.” (**John 2:18-21**)

Matthew 26:62

וַיָּקָם הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו הֲלֹא תַעֲנֶה
דָּבָר מֵהַזֶּה יַעֲדוּ-בָךְ הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה:

“The High Priest stood up, and said to him, ‘Have you no answer? What is this that these testify against you?’”

Have you no answer.

Yet here Caiaphas rises not to honor truth but to pressure the accused.

Matthew 26:63

וַיְשׁוּעַ הַחֲרִישׁ וַיַּעַן הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ מִשְׁבִּיעְךָ אֲנִי
בְּאֱלֹהִים חַיִּים שְׂתֹאמַר לָנוּ אִם-אַתָּה הַמָּשִׁיחַ
בֶּן-הָאֱלֹהִים:

“But Yeshua held his peace. The High Priest answered him, ‘I adjure you by the Living God, that you tell us whether you are the Messiah, the Son of God.’”

Held his peace.

Yeshua’s silence recalls Isaiah’s description of the suffering servant:

“He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb led to the slaughter.” (Isaiah 53:7)

Matthew 26:64

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו יֵשׁוּעַ אַתָּה אָמַרְתָּ וְאֲנִי אֹמֵר לָכֶם
מֵעַתָּה תִּרְאוּ אֶת-בֶּן-הָאָדָם יֹשֵׁב לְיָמִין הַגְּבוּרָה
וְבָא עִם-עַנְיֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם:

“Yeshua said to him, ‘You have said it. Nevertheless, I tell you, after this you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of the heaven.’”

You have said it.

Yeshua does not boastfully declare, but responds with a measured acknowledgment, echoing rabbinic teaching that one should not seek to glorify oneself but allow others to draw conclusions.

“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth.” (**Proverbs 27:2**)

Son of Man.

This title directly invokes Daniel:

“Behold, with the clouds of heaven came one like a son of man ... and to him was given dominion and glory and kingship.” (**Daniel 7:13-14**)

Rabbinic interpretation of this passage in *Sanhedrin* 98a–b connects it to the Messiah:

“If Israel merits, he will come with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon a donkey.”

Sitting at the right hand of Power.

“Sitting at the right hand of Power” – A Citation of Psalm 110:1

This alludes to Psalm 110:

“HaShem said to my lord: Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool.”
(**Psalm 110:1**)

Rabbinic sources also see this verse as messianic.

Power.

In Jewish practice, the Tetragrammaton is not pronounced in common speech. Instead, circumlocutions (*kinuyim*) are used—“HaShem” (*the Name*), “HaMakom” (*the Place*), or “HaGevurah” (*the Power*). Thus, Yeshua’s reference to “the Right Hand of Power” fits perfectly within this Jewish reverential language—“Power” (Greek *dynamis*) as a respectful circumlocution for God, just as Jews say *HaShem*. The Epistle to the Hebrews continues this convention:

“...he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” (**Hebrews 1:3**)

Here “Majesty” (megalōsynē in Greek) parallels “Power” as another circumlocution. Both expressions echo the Jewish practice of saying HaShem or HaGevurah in place of God’s ineffable Name.

Sifre Devarim 32 (on Deut. 32:39) calls God “HaGevurah” (the Power) when speaking of His absolute authority.

Matthew 26:65

וַיִּקְרַע הַכֹּהֵן הַגָּדוֹל אֶת־בְּגָדָיו וַיֹּאמֶר מְגִדָּף הוּא
וַיִּמָּהֲלֵנוּ עוֹד לְבִקֵּשׁ עֵדִים הֲלֹא עָתָה שְׁמַעְתֶּם אֶת־גְּדוּפּוֹ:

“Then the High Priest tore his clothing, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Behold, now you have heard his blasphemy.’”

Tore his clothing.

The Torah explicitly forbids the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) from tearing his garments:

- *Leviticus 21:10: “The priest who is chief among his brothers ... shall not let the hair of his head go loose nor tear his clothes.”*
- The Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 7:5) further states that in cases of blasphemy, ordinary judges rend their garments, but the Kohen Gadol may not. By tearing his clothing, Caiaphas directly transgressed a commandment of the Torah, acting not as a true high priest of Israel but as one who desecrates the sanctity of his office.
- Rabbinic tradition holds that when the High Priest defiles himself, his priesthood is compromised. *Horayot* 12b describes how a Kohen Gadol who errs in Torah matters loses authority. Likewise, by publicly tearing his garments, Caiaphas symbolically tears apart the dignity of the high priesthood. Midrash Rabbah (Lev. 21:10) comments:

- *“The garments of the High Priest are his glory and his crown.”*
To rip them is to profane that glory.
- By rending his robes, Caiaphas enacts a mystical breach: instead of sustaining Israel with holiness, he tears the very vessels of light. Thus, his accusation of “blasphemy” rebounds upon himself—his act profanes the divine service more than any word Yeshua spoke.

Matthew 26:66

מֶה־יִדְעַתְכֶם וַיֵּעֲנוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ־מָוֶת הוּא:

“What do you think?” They answered, ‘He is worthy of death!’”

He is worthy of death.

The charge is blasphemy (26:65). Yet the Torah defines blasphemy as cursing the Divine Name itself (*Lev. 24:16*). To claim messianic identity or to cite Scripture (as Yeshua did with Daniel 7 and Psalm 110) is not blasphemy.

Matthew 26:67

וַיִּרְקְאוּ בְּפָנָיו וַיִּכּוּהוּ בְּאַגְרוֹף וְאַחֲרֵים הִכּוּ עַל־הַלְחִי:

“Then they spit in his face and beat him with their fists, and some slapped him,”

Spit in his face/Beat him.

Isaiah says,

“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.” (**Isaiah 50:6**)

Matthew 26:68

וַיֹּאמְרוּ הַנְּבִיא לָנוּ הַמָּשִׁיחַ מִי הוּא הַמַּכָּה אוֹתְךָ:

“saying, ‘Prophecy to us, you ‘Messiah’! Who hit you?’”

Prophecy to us you ‘Messiah’.

To taunt Yeshua with the very title “Messiah” is to take Israel’s holiest hope and turn it into a weapon of mockery. The rabbis considered scoffing at sacred things to be especially severe. *Avot* 3:11:

“One who disgraces the festivals, despises Torah scholars, and shames his fellow in public ... even if he has Torah and good deeds, he has no share in the world to come.”

Their derision of the title “Messiah” therefore constitutes a profound *chillul Hashem* (profanation of God’s Name).

Matthew 26:69

וּפֶטְרוֹס יָשָׁב מִחוּץ לְבֵית בְּחָצֵר וַתֵּגֶשׁ אֵלָיו שִׁפְחָה אַחַת
לֵאמֹר גַּם-אַתָּה הָיִיתָ עִם-יֵשׁוּעַ הַגָּלִילִי:

“Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a maid came to him, saying, ‘You were also with Yeshua, the Galilean!’”

Peter sitting outside in the court.

While Peter fails here, he nevertheless is displaying great courage. Moreover, note that the trial is not taking place in the Chamber of Hewn Stone, but at Kayafa’s house.

Matthew 26:70

וַיִּכְחַשׁ בְּפָנָיו כָּלָם לֵאמֹר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי מֶה־אַתָּה אֹמֶרֶת׃

“But he denied it before them all, saying, ‘I don’t know what you are talking about.’”

Denied it.

Out of fear.

Matthew 26:71

וַיֵּצֵא אֶל־פֶּתַח הַשַּׁעַר וַתֵּרָא אוֹתוֹ אַחֶרֶת וַתֹּאמֶר
לְאַנְשֵׁים אֲשֶׁר־שָׁם גַּם־זֶה הָיָה עִם־יֵשׁוּעַ הַנָּצִרִי׃

“When he had gone out to the opening of the gate, someone else saw him, and said to those who were there, ‘This man also was with Yeshua of Nazareth.’”

Onto the Porch.

The gateway (*sha'ar*) in Jewish thought is a place of judgment and decision. *Sha'arei teshuvah* (the “gates of repentance”) is a common rabbinic and mystical motif. Standing at the literal gate, Peter also stands at a spiritual gate: Will he confess or deny?

Matthew 26:72

וַיֹּסֶף לְכַחֵשׁ וַיִּשָּׁבַע לֵאמֹר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי אֶת־הָאִישׁ׃

“Again he denied it with an oath, I don’t know the man.”

Denied it with an oath.

He did this to cover up that he was a disciple.

Matthew 26:73

וּמַעַט אַחֲרֵי-כֵן וַיִּגָּשׁוּ הָעֹמְדִים שָׁם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל-פֶּטְרוֹס
אַבְל גַּם-אַתָּה מֵהֶם כִּי גַם-לְשׁוֹנְךָ מְגַלָּה אוֹתְךָ:

“After a little while those who stood by came and said to Peter, ‘Surely you are also one of them, for your speech makes you known.’”

Your speech makes you known.

Peter is recognized not by his appearance but by his *lashon* (speech). The people in Jerusalem note the distinctiveness of Galilean pronunciation. Rabbinic texts confirm that Galileans were known for their accents, sometimes mocked by Judeans for imprecise enunciation.

- The Gemara there gives examples of Galileans confusing guttural sounds and failing to differentiate between letters, causing ambiguity. A Galilean who failed to articulate properly once said, “*Who has amar?*” (wool), but it was unclear if he meant *hamor* (donkey), *hamor* (wine), *hamor* (wool), or *hamor* (lamb) because he swallowed the gutturals. (**Eruvin 53a-b**)
- This was proverbial: Galileans’ indistinct accents gave away their origin. Thus Peter’s denial is undermined by his voice itself—his Galilean tongue “betrays” him.

Matthew 26:74

וַיִּחַל לְהַחֲרִים אֶת-נַפְשׁוֹ וַלְהַשָּׁבַע לֵאמֹר לֹא יָדַעְתִּי
אֶת-הָאִישׁ וּמִיד קָרָא הַתְּרִנְגוֹל:

“Then he began to curse and to swear, ‘I don’t know the man!’ Immediately the rooster crowed.”

He began to curse.

It seems that Peter's "cursing" in Matthew 26:74 was **not using bad language or profanity** as we think of it today. Rather, it was:

- **A curse upon himself** ("may I be cursed if I know him"), and
- **An oath** to strengthen his denial.

In a moment of fear, his 'cursing' was an attempt to conceal the holiness of his true root. One's voice (*kol*) reveals the soul's root. Though Peter denies his connection to Yeshua, his voice betrays him. His *dibbur* carries the imprint of his teacher. Mystically, this shows that no disciple can fully conceal the influence of his master: the essence of discipleship is carried in speech. Thus this illustrates that Yeshua's disciples were known for their carefulness of speech, oaths and language.

Matthew 26:75

וַיִּזְכֹּר פֶּטְרוֹס אֶת-דְּבַר יֵשׁוּעַ אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֵלָיו לֵאמֹר בְּטָרֶם
יִקְרָא הַתִּרְנָגוֹל תִּכְחַשׁ בִּי שְׁלֹשׁ פְּעָמִים וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה
וַיִּמָּרַר בִּבְכִי:

"Peter remembered the word which Yeshua had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times.' He went out and wept bitterly."

Peter remembered.

The rabbis teach that remembrance (*zekhirah*) leads to repentance. When a person recalls his sins, he is moved to return to God. Here, Peter remembers Yeshua's words and is pierced by their truth. His bitter weeping echoes the rabbinic image of *teshuvah m'yirah* (repentance out of awe and fear), which cleanses a person from sin (Yoma 86b). His tears are not despair but the waters of purification.

Judas too regretted his betrayal (Matt. 27:3–5), but his remorse ended in suicide. There are two responses to sin:

- **Teshuvah that leads to life** (*teshuvah gemurah*): turning regret into change, returning to God, and rebuilding one's life.
- **Condemnation that leads to death**: sorrow without return, despair without hope. Judas embodies the second path—regret consumed by despair. Peter embodies the first: bitter weeping that becomes the seed of transformation.

The rabbis put it this way: “*Teshuvah and good deeds are like a shield against punishment*” (Avot 4:13). Judas cast away the shield; Peter seized it, even through his tears.

Later, Yeshua restores Peter with a *tikkun* (repair) in John 21: three times asking, “***Do you love me?***” corresponding to Peter's three denials. Rabbinically, this is *middah k'neged middah* (measure for measure) but in mercy: each denial is undone by an affirmation of love. Just as the rabbis say in *Yoma* 86b that teshuvah transforms deliberate sins into merits, so Peter's denials become the foundation for his future faithfulness.

Three times.

“Three” is the measure of confirmation. Three times establishes a pattern. Yeshua's prophecy of three denials signifies that Peter's failure will not be a single stumble but a confirmed pattern under pressure.

Peter's bitter tears remind us that failure is not the end. Rabbinic wisdom teaches:

“In the place where penitents stand, even the perfectly righteous cannot stand”
(**Berakhot 34b**)

Peter's denial led to tears, his tears led to teshuvah, and his teshuvah led to *tikkun*. Yeshua, as master and shepherd, restored him by asking three times: “***Do you love me?***”—turning shame into mission, and sin into sanctity.

For us, the lesson is clear: we may fall, but despair is not our destiny. The difference between Judas and Peter is the difference between condemnation and teshuvah—between despair that ends in death and repentance that leads to life. When we choose *teshuvah*, our failures can become the very steps that raise us higher.

As we close Matthew 26, we come to a crossroads: How much is Yeshua worth? Will we deny him? Do we love him?