

**11** After Yeshua had finished instructing his twelve disciples, he went on from there to teach and to proclaim in the towns of Galilee. <sup>2</sup>When Yohanan, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples <sup>3</sup>to ask him, Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else? <sup>4</sup>Yeshua replied, Go back and report to Yohanan what you hear and see:

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commentary

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**11:1 When Yohanan, who was in prison** – According to some manuscripts and Josephus, in the fortress of Machaerus (cf. *Mattai 14:2*). Yohanan was loved by all people, because he “was a good man, and commanded the Jews to exercise virtue, both as to righteousness towards one another, and piety towards God, and so to perform immersion [for repentance]” (*Josephus, Antiquities 18:5:2*). But Herod had imprisoned him on account of Herodyah, his brother’s wife, because Yohanan publicly reprovved his sin and said, “She is forbidden for you” (*Mattai 14:4*), and Herod feared an insurrection from the people.

**11:2 heard about the deeds of Messiah** – He heard from his disciples about Yeshua gathering large numbers of followers and performing wonders of deliverance, matching some of the messianic expectations of those days.

**11:3 Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?** – Why asking this? Did he not immerse Yeshua the day he saw the spirit rest like a dove over him? But this has a reason: Firstly, because his disciples could be discouraged and lose faith, since Yohanan had been imprisoned and was about to be executed, reason why his disciples had become impatient for the kingdom to be restored. “Blissful are those who remain faithful under trials” (*Yaaqov 1:12*). Therefore, he sent them to Yeshua, who was also calling the masses to repentance. However, Yeshua’s approach was not like that of Yohanan; Yeshua did not live the austere life of Yohanan, and did not tell his disciples to fast, but often was invited to eat in the houses of those sinners who were repenting (as he did when Mattai became his follower). Also, Yeshua was not engaged in the judgment over the nations which was a messianic expectation since the days of Hanokh, as it says, “He will bring forth justice upon the nations” (*Isaiah 42:1*) and he was not sending the wicked to a never quenching fire (cf. *Mattai 3:11-13*). Instead, he was healing and guiding people to repentance, even Romans, which the text calls “the deeds of Messiah”. Therefore, was he the one, or should they wait for somebody else?

**11:3 should we expect someone else?** – In order to have a full grasp of what this chapter is going to convey, we must remember Yeshua’s words from chapter 10, for they contextualize Yeshua’s worldview for the redemption process. “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth” (*Mattai 10:34*). He says: If you are thinking that I am here to bring the era of peace about which the prophets said: “The wolf and the lamb shall graze together and the lion shall eat straw like the ox” (*Isaiah 65:25*), you are mistaken. “I have not come to bring peace, but a sword” (*Matt. 10:34*); I am going to bring about the era known as the footsteps of Messiah, as it is taught (*Mishna Sotah 9:15*): “In the footsteps of Messiah... a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household” (*Micah 7:6*). This, as explained in chapter 10, refers to the role of Messiah ben Yosef, who fights the wars of God with the sword of Yehoshua: There is going to be conflict, then division, then great suffering, then a shameless generation whose “face is like a dog” (*Sotah 9:15*), but all of it is part of the preparation for the Messianic era, as the sages taught: “The son of David will come in a generation whose face is like a dog” (*Shir haShirim Rabbah 2:13*). Redemption is not easy to figure out because we know from the prophets its key elements, but we know nothing of how exactly are these events going to unfold.<sup>a</sup> If this is true even today, how much more so in the days of the second Temple! So it makes sense that Yohanan asked: “should we expect someone else?”

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<sup>a</sup> “We should not come to definitive conclusions and try to determine how events will actually occur... Messiah can come on any given day – even if it does not match the documented course of events” (*Alexander Aryeh Mandelbaum, Redemption unfolding*).

<sup>5</sup>The blind see, the lame walk, the leprous are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and good news is proclaimed to the poor. <sup>6</sup>And blissful is he who does not stumble on account of me. <sup>7</sup>When they were departed, Yeshua began to speak to the crowd about Yohanan: What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind?

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commentary

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**11:5 The blind see, the lame walk** – What Yeshua is saying here concerning his mission is a peshet on some verses of Isaiah combined through remez with some verses from the Psalm 146. These verses are about redemption. Isaiah reads: “The spirit of Adonai Hashem has anointed me, to bring tidings to the humble ones (*Isaiah 61:1*)... ..Then the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer and the mute tongue will shout for joy” (*Isaiah 35:5-6*). The Psalm says: “He gives bread to the hungry, Hashem sets loose the bound, Hashem gives sight to the blind, Hashem strengthens the bench...” (*Psalm 146:7-8*). The last verse in this Psalm is messianic in nature, as it says “Hashem will reign forever...etc” (cf. *Rashi on Psalm 146:10*). This peshet is not unique to the Nazarenes, for it is also found in a Qumran apocalyptic scroll, which might have been known to Yohanan: “Heavens and earth will listen to his Messiah... For he will honor the Hassidim upon the thrones of his eternal kingdom, release the captives, open the eyes of the blind, lifting up those who are oppressed... For the Lord will accomplish glorious things which have never been... for he will heal the critically wounded, raise the dead, bring good news to the poor” (*4Q521:fr.2*). Although the opening of the eyes and the walking of the lame are taken as part of the physical redemption, it also has the spiritual connotation of receiving Torah and repentance, as it can be inferred from Isaiah’s words: “On that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of the deep darkness the eyes of the blind will see. The humble will increase their joy in Hashem, and the poor among men will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel” (*Isaiah 29:18-19*), and these are “the deeds of Messiah”. Why does redemption delay or comes in a way we do not expect? It is recorded in an aggadah (*Sanhedrin 98a*) that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi found Messiah at the gates of Rome and asked him when he would come, and the Messiah said: Today. But the Messiah did not come that day and so he went to Eliyahu the prophet and said: Messiah lied to me, and Eliyahu responded: He meant “today, if you hear his voice” (*Psalm 95:7*).

**11:5 the leprous are cleansed** – This means that tzaarat is being removed from among people; that is, their lashon is being purified with holy speech, no longer committing lashon hara.

**11:5 good news is proclaimed to the poor** – Alternatively, those who are poor are given hope.

**11:6 blissful is he who does not stumble on account of me** – This, he said to Yohanan’s disciples. “Just because my way is not like Yohanan’s or some other Rabbis, do not get offended by me”. He tells you to fast often, I do not, but the Bat Qol (the small voice) descends and says: “One and the other [even though they seem different] are both the words of the Living God” (*Eirubin 13b*). Because when receiving challenging opinions, “one is not to demean the other, even if the law contradicts one own’s views, for this is in the aspect of a dispute for the sake of Heaven, for in fact, one and the other are the words of the Living God, just that it is impossible to comprehend this because it is the wonders of He who is perfect in knowledge” (cf. *Liqutei Moharan 56:10:5*). Also, you may be expecting a sudden national deliverance from Rome, but I offer a spiritual redemption that works in small steps. Perhaps you expect a son of man who judges the wicked nations, but Hanokh did not see this son of man as a physical leader of flesh and blood; it is a spiritual entity. That is why his righteous judgement is done before “The Lord of spirits” (cf. *Enoch 61:8-9*). “For he will not rely on horse, rider ad bow” (*Psalms of Solomon 17:33*), “He will bless the people with wisdom and gladness” (*Psalm 17:35*). His main weapon will be prayer, as it is written: “My prayer will be a stamp for you” (*Isaiah 48:9*). Therefore, blissful is he who does not get offended by me.

**11:6 blissful is he who does not stumble on account of me** – The interpretation given by Rabbi Soloveitchik is that, since people saw Yeshua perform numerous signs and wonders, he prayed that they would not turn him into a deity, like Nebuchadnezzar did with Daniel, thus stumbling and falling from Torah (*Qol Qore; cf. Rashi on Daniel 2:46*).

**11:7 began to speak to the crowd about Yohanan** – When the crowd heard the question that Yohanan had sent to Yeshua, they probably began to talk about it, and where there is gossip, there is negative speech. Perhaps they thought that the Immerser was losing his faith or that his teachings were erroneous, but as soon as his disciples left, Yeshua honored him. May we all learn from this behavior to counter idle gossip by judging a fellow tzaddiq favorably, as the sages taught: “When you judge anyone, tip the scale in their favor” (*Pirquei Avot 1:6*).

**11:7 a reed shaken by the wind?** – This question can be both ironic and metaphorical. Did you go out to the wilderness to see reeds or a holy man? And when you met him, was Yohanan an unstable person who swayed with the fashions of the world or has he ever wavered like a reed?

<sup>8</sup>If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in delicacies? No, those who wear delicacies are in kings' palaces. <sup>9</sup>Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? I say to you, yes; and more than a prophet. <sup>10</sup>This is the one about whom it is written: Behold, I send my angel ahead of you, that he may prepare the way before you. <sup>11</sup>Amen I say to you, among those born of women, there has not risen anyone greater than Yohanan the Immerser; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.

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textual variants

**11:8 wear delicacies** – Other manuscripts say, “in delicate garments”.

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commentary

**11:8 A man dressed in delicacies?** – Did you follow him because he looked important and luxurious like the Herodian scribes do?

**11:9 what did you go out to see? A prophet?** – Was it because he was preaching about repentance and judgment?

**11:9 yes; and more than a prophet** – Because of the words: “I say to you... more than a prophet”, Rabbi Soloveitchik interprets here that Yeshua is calling him a sage, as Ameimar taught that “a sage is greater than a prophet” (*Bava Bathra 12a*). However, Yeshua is definitely calling him a prophet, as the text says: “A prophet? I say to you, Yes”. In order to understand what he means by “and more than a prophet” we must read the next verse.

**11:10 I send my angel ahead of you** – This pesher is a blend through remez of Exodus and Malachi. In the Biblical Hebrew as well as in the Aramaic of Mattai the word malakhi מַלְאכִי is not meant to be understood as a human messenger, synonymous with shaliakh. Exodus (23:20) says: “Behold, I send an angel מַלְאָךְ ahead of you to guard you on the way”. Malachi (3:1) says: “Behold I send my angel מַלְאכִי, that he may prepare a way before me. And suddenly, the master whom you seek will come to his Temple”. It means an angel, literally, synonymous with elohim, as we can see from its use in other sources. A midrash, for instance, explains concerning the sin of the twelve spies: “Because the emissaries [who were afraid of the giants] were of flesh and blood, it has been decreed over them that they should not enter the land in this world; but in the World to Come I will suddenly send my angel, that he will clear a way” (*Bamidbar Rabbah 16:11*). This angel is identified as Eliyahu the prophet (cf. *Mal. 3:23, Matt. 11:14*). For in truth, the mystic tradition teaches that Eliyahu is really an angel who temporarily took human form, and therefore he had no parents nor offspring (*Yalqut Reubeni, Bereshit 9a*). The true Eliyahu is a spiritual cosmic force of redemption, “for he is an angel of the host of God, and after that [i.e., after this angelic force incarnated and lived as a human] he literally became a heavenly angel” (*Shaar haGilgulim 31:7a*). Eliyahu represents a soul that is greatly zealous for God, and so every person that attains his level is said to receive the spirit of Eliyahu (*ibid.*).

**11:10 that he may prepare the way** – The verse, “Clear a way of Hashem” (*Isaiah 40:3*) – which Mattai previously attributed to Yohanan – together with these two verses from Exodus and Malachi refer to the spiritual redemptive force of Messiah ben Yosef, for every verse that concerns paving the way is an allusion to Messiah ben Yosef (cf. *Qol haTor 2:64*), as we have explained (*in Mattai 3:3*). Malachi says afterwards: “Behold, I send Elijah the prophet... that he may cause to repent the heart of the fathers through the sons...etc” (*Malachi 3:23-24*). Eliyahu is coming to bring the covenant of peace, causing people to repent, but the end of the passage has a warning in case his message is rejected: “lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction” (*ibid.*). Yeshua will make allusion to this later.

**11:11 among those born of women** – The Semitic expression “born of women” serves to contrast the decaying nature of mortals as opposed to angels, because angels are not born of women. “Man, born of a woman, short of days and full of trouble” (*Jyov 14:1*). “Can anyone born of a woman take in any food without excreting?” (*Yoma 75b*). When Moshe ascended the heavenly spheres to receive the Torah, the angels said: Master of the Universe, what is one born of a woman doing here among us?” (*Shabbat 88b*). Because Rav Yehuda feared Heaven, “Shamuel declared about him: this one is not born of woman”, but he is like an angel (*Niddah 13a*). Similarly Rashi explains about the prophet Ezekiel that “there was no one born of woman like him”, because even though he was a “son of man”, he was walking around the heavenly heights (*Rashi on Ezekiel 2:1*). Here is the meaning of Yeshua’s words, then: Eliyahu the prophet is an angel, and Yohanan the Immerser is like Eliyahu, even though he is a mere mortal. Observing the Torah can elevate a person from his mortal status, as it has been taught that the positive commands in the Torah were given to “remove the stains which are part of man being a creature born of a woman” (*Ohr Hayim, Vayiqra 12:3*).

**11:11 greater than Yohanan the Immerser** – For he was like an angel, like Eliyahu, bringing the nation to repentance, and it has been taught about he who teaches Torah and brings people closer to Hashem (*Prov. 31:29*): Many women have done well, but you surpass them all (cf. *Liqutei Halakhot, Orakh Hayim, Hashkamat baBoqer 4:18*).

<sup>12</sup>From the days of Yohanan the Immerser until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent seize it. <sup>13</sup>For all the Prophets and the Torah prophesied until Yohanan. <sup>14</sup>And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come. <sup>15</sup>Whoever has ears, let them hear.

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commentary

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**11:11 whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he** – It is similarly written in the midrash: “The poor among you are as beloved to me as Eliyahu when he went up to Karmel, in light of the verse: Eliyah climbed to the top of mount Karmel, crouched on the ground and put his face between his knees. Why did he do that? Because he said: Master of the Universe, if we do not have any merit, at least look at the covenant of circumcision” (*Vayiqra Rabbah* 31:4). And so, those who had no merits but returned to Hashem through repentance are greater than Eliyahu and the angels, because the achievements of a penitent are greater than those of a saint who has never sinned (*Berakhot* 34b).

**11:12 the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent seize it** – Contextually, this is still talking about Yohanan. The kingdom of heaven was suffering violence from Yohanan’s days until that very moment in which Yeshua was speaking. It is not referring to acts of violence or to the zealots or the Maccabees, for they existed hundreds of years before Yohanan. So what did Yohanan do that nobody else did before him? He called the masses to repentance and drew close large crowds to listen to his message, for Eliyahu must come to “draw close those who have been distanced by force” (*Eduyot* 8:7). Yohanan managed to attract all types of people, from religious to sinners, and called them all to repentance, and the same impact he caused on the nation was also caused by Yeshua and his disciples later. Calling large crowds of masses to abandon their sinful lifestyles and returning to Hashem is described in Yeshua’s figurative speech as an army coming to conquer a kingdom and attacking it from all sides, but only those with eagerness and zeal will force their way into it and take possession, similarly to what it says: “I will make them as sheep in a fold, and as a flock within its stall they will stir with people. The one who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through a gate and go out” (*Micah* 2:12-13). The kingdom of Heaven was already explained in chapter 3.

**12:13 For all the prophets and the Torah prophesied until Yohanan** – The words “and the Torah” are omitted in the Old Syriac Sinaitic manuscript as well as in a few Coptic manuscripts (*Boharic mms*; cf. *Schøyen Codex*), thus reading: “For all the prophets prophesied until Yohanan”, probably having in mind that which is similarly written in the Talmud: “All the prophets prophesied only for the days of Messiah” (*Sanhedrin* 99a). Anyway, the point is that the goal of the Torah and the Prophets (i.e., the Tanakh) is precisely that which took place in Yohanan’s days, that all the people would come under the wings of the Shekhina, as it is written: “In the end of days you will return to Hashem your God” (*Deut.* 4:30). Now Messianic redemption was at hand, if only the nation had accepted Yohanan’s message and collectively repented from their sins, then the final redemption would have taken place in their day.

**11:14 he is the Elijah who was to come** – The aggadic narration in Luke tells about an angel revealing to Yohanan’s father that he would “turn many of the sons to Adonai their God... in the spirit and power of Eliyahu” (*Luke* 1:16-17). Eliyahu’s mission is “to calm the wrath of God before it breaks out in fury, by turning the heart of the fathers through the sons” (*Ben Sirah* 48:10), “to make peace in the world” (*Mishna Eduyot* 8:7). The “covenant of peace” was given to Pinkhas for eradicating immorality and idolatry through an act of burning zeal which led the nation to repentance (*Numbers* 25:12-13). The same zeal was found in Eliyahu, who faced the prophets of Baal, even mocking them and, again, causing many in the nation to abandon idolatry (*1Kings* 18:24, 27). The same zeal was found in Yohanan the Immerser whose zeal and boldness led him to confront Herod himself accusing him of adultery. The zeal of Yohanan is like that of Eliyahu, and the zeal of Eliyahu is like that of Pinkhas. The midrash teaches “Pinkhas is Eliyahu” (*Targum Yonathan on Exodus* 6:18; *Pirqie d’Rabbi Elazar* 8). If Pinkhas lived before Eliyahu, why do the sages say “Pinkhas is Eliyahu” and not “Eliyahu is Pinkhas”? Because the angelic force of redemption called “Eliyahu”, which is in the same soul root as Messiah ben Yosef, predates Pinkhas (cf. *commentary on Matt* 3:4). These secrets are revealed through Gematria: for the numerical value of zeal (qnah קנאה) is the same as Yosef יוסף = 156, and Yosef plus Eliyahu אליהו equals Pinkhas פינחס (156 + 52 = 208). Pinkhas equals “ben Yosef” בן יוסף = 208. Yohanan the Immerser – יוחנן המטביל Yohanan haMatbil (220) – equals “He is Pinkhas”; Hu Pinkhas הוא פינחס = 220. Yohanan יוחנן equals “gilgul Eliyahu” גלגול אליהו = 124. Also, the ordinal value of Yohanan and the ordinal value of Mashiakh משיח both equal Eliyahu = 52. For more gimetriot, check commentary on verse 3:3.

<sup>16</sup>To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others: <sup>17</sup>We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we wailed to you, and you did not mourn. <sup>18</sup>For Yohanan came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He has a demon. <sup>19</sup>The son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners. But wisdom is justified by its works. <sup>20</sup>Then Yeshua began to reproach the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. <sup>21</sup>Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. <sup>22</sup>But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. <sup>23</sup>And you, Kefar-Nahum, who are exalted to the heavens, you will go down to Sheol. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. <sup>24</sup>But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.

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textual variants

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**11:19 wisdom is justified by its works** – “Avodeiah” עבדיה, its/her works. This same saying appears in Luke (7:35), but the Greek manuscripts differ and create a textual conflict, for some manuscripts say “...is justified by her children” and some manuscripts say “...is justified by her works”. This discrepancy comes from the Greek versions, as they attempt to translate from an original source which was written in a Semitic language and not in Greek. The Aramaic manuscripts in Luke use the word Bneiah בנייה, which can be interpreted both ways: ‘Bneiah’, as coming from the root ‘bar’ בר literally means “her children”, but if we take it as coming from the root ‘Bna’ בנא; to build, to work on something, then the intended translation is “her works”, which is the rendering found in Mattai.

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commentary

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**11:16 They are like children sitting in the marketplaces** – Because both Yohanan and Yeshua preached repentance, but whereas Yohanan encouraged abstinence and fasting, Yeshua did not tell his disciples to fast but rather ate at their homes, and yet, no matter how the message was introduced, nothing pleased the nation and they did not want to repent. They thought Yohanan was a crazy lunatic from the desert, and they thought Yeshua was a friend of sinners.

**11:19 The son of man** – That is, the messianic force of redemption which Yeshua’s work embodied.

**11:19 But wisdom is justified by its works** – It does not matter if people accuse Yohanan of being crazy or if they accuse Yeshua of engaging in licentiousness, their works of wisdom speak louder than their opponents.

**11:20 because they did not repent** – This supports the interpretation I have been giving in previous chapters, that all his miracles and all his preachings had the sole purpose of bringing people to repentance and under the wings of the Shekhina. Any interpretation that contradicts this principle is heresy.

**11:21 And you, Kefar-Nahum** – While Korazin and Bethsaida were cities of Galilee, he mentions Kefar-Nahum separately because it was his hometown and therefore it is compared to the pagan city per excellence: Sodom. Yeshua’s cities were inhabited by Israelites whereas Tyre, Sidon and Sodom were pagans. Therefore, the consequences of not repenting are considered more severe. See how Nineveh repented after Yonah’s message of destruction. Because God is merciful, his wrath against the unrepentant cities came in stages: first with the Roman war which brought the destruction of the Temple and the slaughter or exile of many Jews all around Israel, then with the aftermath of the Jewish rebellion against Byzantium in which especially the Galileans were slaughtered or exiled, and finally, with Raash Sheviit; the Earthquake of the Sabbatical year (the great earthquake of 749 C.E.), which devastated the Holy Land and caused it to be inhabited by Ishmael.

<sup>25</sup>At that time Yeshua said, I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to infants. <sup>26</sup>Yes, Father, for this was pleasing before you. <sup>27</sup>All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the son and he to whom the son pleases to reveal him. <sup>28</sup>Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am humble and lowly in spirit, and you will find rest for your souls.

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commentary

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**11:25 you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to infants** – The meaning of these words is twofold: firstly, it refers to those who are not elders or sages, but people devoid of knowledge, who are just born into the covenant through repentance and therefore are considered spiritual infants, as it is written: “Out of the mouth of babies and sucklings you have established strength” (*Psalms* 8:3), and somewhere else: “To give... knowledge and discretion to the youth” (*Prov.* 1:4). The message is simple: it talks about repentance. There are people of great knowledge who miss the point. The reason for the miracles, Yeshua’s teachings, the reason that Yohanan and Yeshua dealt with people in apparent contradictory ways.... It is all about repentance and returning to Hashem; nothing else, but those scholars miss the point, like the proverbial saying goes: “In their sharpness they overlooked the obvious” (*Eiruv* 90a). Secondly, Yeshua rejoices because he has understood the whole picture of how and why events unfold in the way they do: the redemption which Yeshua is envisioning, that in which Yohanan is perceived as the herald of a potential imminent salvation, was hidden from the sages, or perhaps the sages decided not to talk about it, and instead it was revealed through Ruakh haQodesh to Yeshua’s audience, who are like new born infants. In the words of Rambam, “Some of the sages say that Eliyahu the prophet will come before the coming of Messiah, but all of these and similar matters, one will not know how will they occur until they actually happen, for they were undefined by the Prophets, and even the sages have not established a tradition regarding these matters except their own interpretations on these verses. Therefore, there is controversy” (*Mishneh Torah, Melakhim uMilkhamot* 12:2). The sages say: “From the day that the Temple was destroyed, prophecy was taken from the prophets and given to the foolish and the infants” (*Bava Bathra* 12b) and elsewhere: “In the days of Messiah even the infants will find the hidden words of wisdom” (*Zohar* 1:74a).

**11:26 for this was pleasing before you** – A Hebraism which means: “This was your will”. Everything that happened was part of God’s plan, and nothing that took place back then escaped the will of God. It was God’s will that redemption would unfold in such a manner and that Yeshua and his vision for redemption would be concealed from the sages. Because in the upcoming generation the movement of Yeshua would be hijacked by Greco-Roman paganism and they would turn it into a new religion and they would turn Yeshua into a god, and it was necessary for the sages, the heads of Israel, to keep a distance from all of this and to talk about Yeshua only in riddles and allusions, so that the purity of the Torah would be preserved and the original meaning of Yeshua’s message would remain uncorrupted through the teachings of Hazal.

**11:27 None knows the Father except the son** – There are those who think “the son” refers only to one person. However, when one repents and performs the commands with love for the Creator, “You are no longer a slave but a son” (cf. *Gal.* 4:7). The son who knows the Father refers to every righteous person who becomes a living Torah and becomes a light for others. In Kabbalah, he is represented by Tiferet or more specifically by Zeir Anpin. Just like the Torah reveals God, only the son, the one who becomes a living Torah, knows the Father. It is thus, written: “The Blessed Holy One has a son... whose head reaches heaven and whose roots are set in the holy ground” (*Zohar* II:105a). Meaning, he connects the people with Hashem and Hashem with the people. Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai did this and was called “the son of the Blessed Holy One” and the “son of the Shekhina” (*Zohar, Akharei Mot*, 3:61a-b). Yeshua is introducing himself in such manner because he is about to ask the masses to follow him, and he wants people to understand how important it is to cleave oneself to a “son”, hence, the following sentence is: “Come to me”.

**11:28 Come to me** – As our sages taught: “Acquire for yourself a teacher” (*Avot* 1:6) and similarly: “Make for yourself a lamp so you can walk by its light. What light? The light of the Torah” (*Midrash Mishlei* 6:6), for it is written: “the Torah is a light” (*Prov.* 6:23). And so the Hassidim have taught: “One who attaches himself to the truly righteous ones has true faith. The Messiah is the true tzaddiq. One who accepts the Messiah will receive from him pure faith and it will not be misplaced” (cf. *Liqutei Moharan* II:8:8).

**11:29 Take my yoke upon you** – These words are inspired by the book of Ben Sirah, which says: “Put your neck under the yoke [of wisdom], and let your soul receive her instruction; for she is close to those who seek her” (*Sirah* 51:26). The yoke, as explained in earlier chapters refers to obedience and engagement, for once you take the instructions upon you, you will bear them like an ox that bears its yoke: “acquire first the yoke of the kingdom of Heaven” i.e., understand that God is one that that everything is ruled by this principle “and then the yoke of the commands” (*Berakhot* 2:2), and “the yoke of the Torah” (*Avot* 3:5). “And learn from me”; i.e., become my disciple.

<sup>30</sup>For my yoke is pleasant and my burden is light.

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commentary

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**11:29 for I am humble and lowly in spirit** – “The words of Torah cannot endure except in one who makes himself as nothing” (*Sotah 21b*), as it is stated: “But wisdom can be found in nothingness” (*Iyov 28:12*) and again, “The words of Torah are only fulfilled with him who is meek” (*Taanit 7a*).

**11:29 and you will find rest for your souls** – As it is written about repentance: “So says Hashem: stand on the roads and see, and ask of the paths of old, which is the good way, and go on it, and find rest for your souls” (*Jer. 6:16*).

**11:30 For my yoke is pleasant and my burden is light** – In essence, for those who love Hashem, the commandments are not grievous but delightful. “The light is sweet and pleasant to the eyes; the light of the Torah is sweet” (*Midrash Qohelet 11:7*). Also, Yeshua is not teaching the way of fasting like Yohanan, the way of asceticism like the Essenes or never-ending regulations of purity like the Haverim. In comparison, his path of Torah is a light burden.