

16 Pharisees and Sadducees approached Yeshua and testing him demanded to show them a sign from heaven. ²But he answered and said to them, When evening comes, you say, It will be fair weather, for the sky is red, ³and in the morning, Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and gloomy. Hypocrites, you know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. ⁴A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Yonah the prophet. Then he left them and departed.

—textual variants—

16:2 When evening comes – Yeshua’s words on verses 2 and 3 are omitted in several manuscripts, including most of the Semitic ones, such as the Old Syriac. Origen’s quote from this passage also excludes the explanation about the weather. It appears these verses were a Western addition into the text. In the original, therefore, Yeshua begins to speak in verse 4, thus reading (16:2-4): “But he answered and said to them, A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign... etc.”

—commentary—

16:1 Pharisees and Sadducees – The two parties were opposed to each other (cf. *Josephus, War of the Jews* 2:164-166). The combination of both groups can only be explained if the text talks about certain members from those parties, and not the entire sects as a whole, as many scholars wrongfully assume. Even more, in Mark the word ‘Sadducees’ is substituted with the more specific term: Herodians, for as we know, Herod and his followers wanted to kill Yeshua.

16:1 testing him – Despite the author’s negative tone due to the contextual antagonism between Yeshua and those two groups, testing someone is not a negative trait. We must test people’s spirits, to check whether they come from God or whether they are false teachers (cf. *1John 4:1*). It is thus written about Yosef that he wished to test his brothers (*Genesis 43:34*). When the sages wanted to test a person’s spirit they would proceed and ask him many different questions. The Gemara uses the expression: “Go and sniff out his container” (*Shabbat 108a*); in other words: Go and check whether he is an authentic Torah scholar or a charlatan. A similar account happens in chapter 22, in which this author says that a scribe came to test Yeshua with a question (*Matt. 22:35*). Although we tend to perceive the testing as something negative, the parallel version in Mark describes the same incident as a friendly conversation between the scribe and Yeshua, and at the end of the story the two of them praise each other (cf. *Mark 12:28-34*).

16:1 a sign from heaven – Ironically, the Talmud Yerushalmi tells of an incident with Eliezer ben Hurcanos, who said: “if the law is according to the rabbis’ words, let this carob tree uproot itself, but it did not uproot itself. Again, he said: If the law is according to my words, uproot yourself! And then the carob tree uprooted itself... And everywhere Rabbi Eliezer cast his eye burned... And a voice from heaven appeared and said: the law is according to my son Eliezer.” Yet, the rabbis did not accept the signs from heaven because they said, “It is written (*Deut. 30:20*) that it is not in heaven” (*Yerushalmi Moed Qatan 10b*). Therefore, Rabbi Soloveitchik comments here: “No sign will be useful to you... If I show you a sign in the morning and turn the day into night, you would claim that it is because the sky went cloudy” (*Soloveitchik on Matt. 16:4*).

16:4 the sign of Yonah the prophet – The sign of Yonah is the rebuke for the sake of repentance. “Yonah was the Mashiakh ben Yosef in his generation, as explained in midrashim and in the Zohar, and it is written (*Isaiah 2:4*): He will admonish many peoples... and again... (*ibid. 11:4*) admonish righteously the humble of the earth” (*Qol haTor 2:75*). For a deeper understanding on the sign of Yonah, check commentary on chapter 12 (*Matt. 12:40*).

⁵When his disciples had come to the other side, they forgot to take bread. ⁶He said to them, Look out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. ⁷They discussed this among themselves and said, It is because we did not bring any bread. ⁸Aware of this, Yeshua asked, You of little faith, why are you talking among yourselves about having no bread? ⁹Have you not yet understood? Do you not remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many baskets you took up? ¹⁰Or the seven loaves for the four thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered? ¹¹How is it that you do not understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But that you should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. ¹²Then they understood that he was not telling them to guard against the yeast used in bread, but against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

—commentary—

16:5 Look out and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees – He refers to the two groups who had come earlier to test him in the beginning of the chapter. Mark renders more accurately: “Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod” (*Mark 8:15*), which comes to prove these two groups did not represent the whole sect, but rather only those who were influenced by Herod.

16:11 How is it that you do not understand – Yeshua does not interpret for them his allegorical words. Rather, he makes them follow a train of thought so they can derive an interpretation on their own. He tells them what the leaven does not mean, so they can deduce on their own what it does mean.

16:12 they understood that he was... ..against the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees – This poses a difficulty. The traditional interpretation of this passage cannot be correct, since it overlooks the fact that, as a matter of fact, Pharisees and Sadducees had different and even opposing doctrines and teachings. Furthermore, the teaching of Yeshua pretty much resembles that of the Pharisees. Hence, the phrase “they understood” must be taken at face value. This is what “they understood,” and not necessarily what Yeshua’s words actually meant. The leaven that Yeshua had in mind was not their doctrine or theology, but the hypocrisy with which they taught, which is expressly stated in the gospel of Luke (*Luke 12:1*). This is proven by the fact that whenever Yeshua confronts them, he attacks their hypocrisy and not their theology. Hypocrisy, which emerges from the evil inclination that is within, is like “leaven in the dough” (*Berakhot 17a*). It is not visible at first, but it then contaminates the entire bread. It is similar with those who externally study and observe Torah, but their heart is inflated with their ego.

—relevant quotes—

“Passover in the present: why do we eat matza? ... We try to arouse the holiness and the presence of the Shekhina as our ancestors did by not allowing the yeast to rise within us” (*Yismakh Yisrael on Pesakh Haggada, Magid, Rabban Gamliel’s three things 4:1*)

¹³Now when Yeshua came to the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples,
What do people say concerning me, that I am the son of man?

—textual variants—

16:13 What do people say concerning me, that I am the son of man – Some Greek manuscripts – probably the source of the Revised Version and the Latin Vulgate – render the question in third person form: “Who do men say the son of man is?” The difference is due to the omission of the pronoun **με** which happens in some Greek manuscripts (τίνα με λέγουσιν as opposed to: τίνα λέγουσιν). Shem Tov only says: “What do the sons of men say concerning me?” omitting “the son of man” entirely, in order to harmonize it with the other synoptics, which do not use that phrase. The Markan and Lukan traditions register the short version: “Who do people say I am?” (cf. *Mark 8:27; Luke 9:18*). Because of this some scholars have translated it: “Who do men say that I am? The son of man?” The third person rendering: “Who do men say the son of man is?” causes a very interesting phenomenon: When the disciples answer that ‘it is Yohanan the Immerser,’ or ‘Eliyahu’ or ‘Yirmiyahu’... etc., what they mean to say is that some people consider these prophets to be “the son of man.”

—commentary—

16:13 when Yeshua came to the coasts of Caesarea Philippi – This transitional passage appears in all the synoptics, albeit with variations. In Luke, for instance, the passage opens with the words “One day, as Yeshua was praying in private” (*Luke 9:18*), placed, and therefore implying, that the incident took place after the feeding of the five thousand, after Yeshua wanted to be left alone (cf. *Matt. 14:23*). Still, the words “one day” make this passage not necessarily connected to the previous one. In Mark, like in Mattai, the passage happens when travelling with his students around the villages that surround Caesarea Philippi (*Mark 8:27*). Mattai calls it “the coasts,” i.e., the surrounding areas of the city. A more mystical version appears in Thomas, with information that is unique to this gospel. All these versions have in common the fact that Yeshua asked the question privately to his close students. Caesarea Philippi, as its name implies, was a province under the jurisdiction of Philip (Philippos) the tetrarch, so the author suggests Yeshua was avoiding Herod, who at that time wanted to kill him. He did not enter the main city, but stayed in the surrounding villages, far from the opposing masses and the pagans.

16:13 What do people say concerning me, that I am the son of man? – This translation follows the wording in the Peshitta. The author of Mattai uses “the son of man” reference to provide more interpretative depth. In fact, the gospel of John is influenced by Mattai’s rendering of this passage, more specifically in the second half of the Nicodemus chapter, when Yeshua talks about the “son of man” and offers a mystical interpretation on the bronze serpent (for, as we know, John is a mystical gospel which re-imagines and expands events and teachings from the synoptic tradition).

16:13 the son of man – We have discussed at length the meaning of this expression (see *full commentary on Matt. 13:37*). At times it is used to humbly refer to oneself (*Matt. 8:20*), sometimes it means humans in general (*Matt. 9:6 & 12:8*). It can be both too. When it comes to parables and eschatology, it is a title borrowed from Daniel which in Jewish mysticism refers to the awakening of this global messianic consciousness called the son of man (cf. *Matt 10:23 second commentary*). While the physical king of Israel – the physical Messiah – would be the head of this consciousness, the entire human race makes its body. In order to understand where this idea comes from and where it is leading in the narrative, we have to start with Adam, the first human being. Come and see: The entire story of humankind’s redemption is solely about Adam. On the surface, Genesis tells about a first man created on the sixth day, how he was planted in the Garden of Eden, how he fell, had children... etc., but actually, Adam’s story involves all layers of our reality, like an image with fractal-based patterns. Although we perceive many individual human beings in this shattered, fallen world, there is only one, single Adam in the Creator’s perspective, whose soul encompasses everything. So even if we talk about Adam rishon (the first human), of which the text says “became a living soul” (*Genesis 2:7*), Adam’s multilayered consciousness is always intrinsically implied. Adam is not only the original man, he is a divine collective consciousness, the entirety of humankind, and the original Messiah. Created in the image of God, Adam carries God’s consciousness within. See how the sages explain this phenomenon: Adam was created androgynous; encompassing both the male and the female aspects (*Bereshit Rabbah 8:1*). At the creation of this glorious Adam, the angels in heaven mistook him for the Shekhina, the Divine Immanence, and wanted to say qedusha on him; i.e., to call him “holy, holy, holy” (*ibid. 8:10*). Adam rishon spanned from one end of the world to the other; such was his size (*Sanhedrin 38b, Hagiga 38a*). His vision was so pure he could see

¹⁴They replied, Some say Yohanan the Immerser; others say Eliyahu; and still others, Yirmiyahu or one of the prophets. ¹⁵He asked them, And you, who do you say that I am?

commentary

God's light from one end of the universe to the other (*Bereshit Rabbah* 42:3). His own body was made of supernal light (*ibid.* 20:29); he was "the light of the world" (*Yerushalmi Shabbat* 2 [5b]). Such was the glory of the first man before the fall. All this metaphorical language means basically that he "existed in a spiritual essence **ברוחניות** before eating from the tree, before being materialized" (*Maharash, Hemshekh v'kakha* 5637, ch. 18). The 'metaphor' is quite literal when we talk about the archetypal Adam – the first world of Divine consciousness in creation; Adam Qadmon. Adam's essence was filtered and descended throughout the different realms of reality, way into the world of Assiyah (the physical world), where Adam's consciousness was bestowed "coverings of skin" (*Gen.* 3:21); i.e., from the perspective of our reality, he was concealed within a materialistic animal body (*Zohar II:229a-b*). Even then, the fact remains that Adam Qadmon comprises the entirety of all existence and all times (cf. *qla"kh Pitkhei Hokhma* 97:9). It is said Adam fell asleep and was split into two sides: male and female, Israeli soul and worldly soul... etc., and then his feminine aspect (the aspect of the left) ate from the tree of knowledge and fell from his divine status in Gan Eden into this physical world. Since then, Adam remains asleep, waiting to be awakened. This awakened Adamic consciousness is what Daniel saw ascending – from its previously fallen state – into the presence of the Ancient of Days, and he describes it as "something like a son of man" (*Daniel* 7:13). This is what Enoch calls "the son of man." When this Adamic consciousness is reborn, awakened, then all humanity will return to their intended status at creation, as it is written: "The end is embedded in the beginning" (*Yetzirah* 1:7). This will be in the seventh day of creation (The archetypal seventh millennium), which will be the Messianic era, a time that is entirely Shabbat. For now, we exist in Adam's sixth day, and as the Psalmist says, one day is like one thousand for Hashem (*Psalms* 9:4), in the secret of: "the smallest will turn into elef – a thousand **אלף**" (*Isaiah* 60:22), or: the smallest Adam will turn into aluf – a champion. The secret of this lays in the one thousand years of Adam, for he gave seventy years of his own life to the soul of king David, thus living only 930 years, and David became the paradigm of the king Messiah. The completion of these two powers brings the Messianic era, and so the sages teach that the word "Adam" **אדם** is an acronym for Adam rishon **אדם ראשון**, David **דוד המלך** and Mashiach **משיח**, as these three are the same soul (cf. *Moshe Idel, Messianic mystics* pp.189-190). This final Messiah is the rectified Adam, the Adam 2.0, the return to this divine consciousness which will allow us to ascend to higher levels afterwards, levels of the Divine that remain unknown to us yet. This is what Rashi means when he says this "something like a son of man" is the king Messiah. The king Messiah, coming to rule from the 'partzuf' which is called "the Ancient of Days" (that is: the sefirah of Keter), means it is a soul that transcends the logical order of the sefirot; it transcends space, time, and as the head of Malkhut, it is the Yekhida, the communal soul of Israel. This is the soul that we all must awaken within, and the soul that is awakened in the man destined to be the physical Messiah (cf. *Hayim Vital, Arba Meot Sheqel Kesef* p.241). In the Messianic era we will experience the quickening dew from heaven (cf. *Pirquei d'Rabbi Eliezer* 33:17) and then the World to Come; which is Malkhut turned into Binah (cf. *Cordova, Ohr Neerav III:5:30*), because the physical kingdom will receive equality of form with the Garden of Eden. "The spirit of impurity will pass, how much more so materialism" (*Liquetei Divurim* 23:2, 1st seder, 5703). The footsteps towards restoring the fallen Adam to its previous glory is the mission of Messiah ben Yosef (cf. *Qol haTor* 2:104), so that the final Messiah will rise humanity to a glory even higher than that, one which Adam rishon could not access back then.

16:15 And you, who do you say that I am? – In Thomas he says: "Compare me and tell me who I resemble" (*Thomas* #13). Then Keifa compared him to a righteous angel, Mattai compared him to a wise philosopher and Thomas had no words to compare him to anything. After having been compared to others by the masses, here Yeshua ask his close disciples: "You, who have been with me from the beginning and who have drunk from my wine, who do you say that I am?"

¹⁶Shimon Keifa answered and said, You are the Messiah, the son of the living God.

¹⁷Yeshua replied and said to him, Blessed are you, Shimon bar Yonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.

commentary

16:16 Shimon Keifa – As the spokesman of the twelve disciples.

16:16 You are the Messiah – There is a Talmudic passage in which Rabbi Hillel II is of the opinion that there will be no physical Messiah anymore, as Israel enjoyed him in the days of Hizqiyah. However, immediately after every school of thought considers their Rabbi to be the Messiah, as it says: “The school of Sheila says: Shilo is his name... the school of Yannai says: Yinnon is his name... the school of Rabbi Hanina says: Hanina is his name... others say Menahem ben Hizqiyah... Rav says: If he is among the living, he is like Rabbi [Yehuda haNasi]... etc” (*Sanhedrin 98b*). Every student calls his Rebbe Messiah, and so too, the students of Yeshua said: “You are the Messiah, the son of the living God.” This is because the tzaddiq represents the sefirah of Yesod, as it is written: “Tzaddiq yesod olam” (*Prov. 10:25*), and as such, through their righteousness have awakened the messianic consciousness. They all manifest attributes of Messiah, they admonished and lead the people towards Torah and repentance, they all lead the soul towards that original state in the Garden in Eden, Binah. Notice the first letter of the four names given to Messiah (Menahem, Shilo, Yinon, Hanina), form the word Mashiakh משיח. It is taught that when the holy temple was destroyed, a Jew’s cow moored and an Arab told the Jew: “It means that the Messiah has been born” (*Yerushalmi Berakhot 2*). This story is meant to teach that the potentiality for the physical Messiah to show up exists in every generation and he will come as soon as the people of Israel are ready.

16:16 the son of the living God – “The son of the living God” refers in a sense to the soul of Messiah shining within him, through his righteousness – righteousness is an attribute of Yesod, which is called “Elohim Hayim, living God” – so the physical man (Malkhut), through his righteousness (Yesod) has elevated himself to the level of son of God (Zeir Anpin). And since he ascends such a lofty level, also the cosmic messianic soul, which is like that of Adam before the fall, descends upon him, thus awakening within the messianic consciousness, as it is written: “You have loved righteousness... therefore God, your God has made you Messiah above your companions” (*Psalms 45:7*). The Zohar explains about this spiritual force: “The Blessed Holy One has a son who shines from one end of the world to the other [Like the original Adam]” (*Zohar 2:105a*). It is, thus, written: “What is the name of his son?” (*Prov. 30:4*). The son is the divine archetypal soul of Adam. On another level, the Zohar on Behar says: “He who knows the Blessed Holy One in a general manner is called a servant who does as his master bids him... But he who strives to know the Blessed Holy One and his mysteries, he is called the beloved son... like the child who looks at the hidden and all the mysteries of his house” (*Zohar 3:111b*). The conclusion here is that when Keifa said “You are the Messiah,” he meant it literally. Yeshua is the paradigm of Messiah, being from the line of Yishai, righteous, teacher and doer of Torah... etc. Had the nation repented and done universal teshuva in his days, Yeshua would have brought the messianic era not only to Israel but to the entire world. “If Israel did repentance even for a day, they would be instantly redeemed and the son of David would show up at the moment, because it is written (*Psalms 95:7*): Today, if you hear his voice” (*Shemot Rabbah 25:12*; cf. *Sanhedrin 98a*). But Yeshua’s deliverance was spiritual (from sin), not physical (from Rome). He knew the messianic era would not come if people did not return to Hashem as they should. In fact, he knew the nation would not repent, as a few verses later reveal, hence, he did not bring the messianic expectations into fruition. He did not bring world peace, universal knowledge of the one true God, the entire Israel back to their homeland, or any of those prophecies that are expected to happen when the Messiah comes. Instead, all of this would take place in various stages of concealment throughout the centuries, by having Yeshua activate the spiritual plan of salvation which is called “the footsteps of Messiah.”

16:17 this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood – As it is written: “What is his name and what is the name of his son, if you know?” (*Prov. 30:4*). Meaning that not everybody recognizes his son. For the righteous head of Israel is called “the son,” as it is written “You are my son, I have begotten you today” (*Psalms 2:7*). He is as God’s son because everybody is dependent on him (cf. *Rashi on Psalms 2:7*). Since, “Tzaddiq Yesod Olam” – the righteous is the foundation of the world – so the world is sustained by this person’s righteousness.

¹⁸And I tell you that you are a rock, and on this rock I will build my community, and the gates of Sheol will not prevail against it. ¹⁹I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ²⁰Then he ordered his disciples not to tell no man that he was the Messiah.

commentary

16:18 you are a rock – Or a stone, in Aramaic keifa. This is the nickname Yeshua gave to him; he was henceforth known as Shimon Keifa. Keifa כַּיִפָּא can represent a paved road or idiomatically a cornerstone.

16:18 on this rock I will build my community – When Yaaqov had the dream of the angelic Ladder, the twelve stones he used as a pillow became under his head one single stone, as it is written: “He took the stone he had placed at his head and he set it up as a monument and poured oil upon it” (*Genesis 28:18*). Then he said: “This stone... will be a house of God” (*ibid. 28:22*). Meaning, people will come here to find God’s presence. This stone became the cornerstone, the foundation rock, of the Holy Temple, where the ark of the covenant stood, in the center of Jerusalem. It was here also, on this stone, where Avraham bound his son Yitzhaq to be offered in sacrifice. Because of this stone king David made Jerusalem the capital of the kingdom. Around this stone the Muslims later built their “dome of the rock.” This stone is the nexus of interconnectivity between heaven and earth, between the physical and the spiritual. This stone is a physical microcosmic reflection of that which is going on in a spiritual, macrocosmic level. Adam is the cornerstone of global consciousness, even when he apparently fell from its original state. Israel became the cornerstone of humankind, even when they appear to be nothing special in humankind’s eyes. The tzaddiq is the cornerstone of his community, even when his community rejects him. The Mashiach is the cornerstone of redemption, although not everybody accepts him. It has, thus been written, “The stone which the builders rejected became a cornerstone” (*Psalms 118:22*). The fact that Yaaqov’s stone was originally twelve speaks of the tribes that compose Israel. In Yeshua’s peshet, his twelve students are the twelve stones which become one under his head. They are the cornerstone of salvation, the nexus between heaven and earth, the carriers of God’s kingdom. And Sheol has no power over them.

16:19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven – The keys are used to open and to shut, to bind and to loose. “I will give you” means “I will pass it on to you.” Even though Yeshua speaks in singular to Keifa alone, he is the spokesman of the twelve disciples. In chapter 18 Yeshua repeats the same words in plural to the community (*cf. Matt. 18:18*). It has already been stated that the kingdom is within and all around, not far from us in a distant heaven, so these keys are something we can use right here and right now. To ‘bind and to loose’ is a Rabbinic legal term that refers to the faculty of the community to decide what to do in religious matters where there is no Biblical command or a specific hallakha. These are called in Hebrew posqim; arbitrators. “Under Queen Alexandra... the Pharisees... became the administrators of all public affairs so as to be empowered to banish and readmit who they pleased, as well as to loose and to bind” (*Josephus, War of the Jews 1:5:2*). They could “bind” a day by declaring it a fast day (*Taanit 12a*). When Shammai forbade something and Hillel allowed it, the Talmud states: “One binds and the other looses” (*Megillah 26b*). We see the followers of Yeshua making use of this authority in the book of Acts, when they decide what to do with the gentiles who were joining their community (*Acts 15:3, 28*). Once the decision was taken it was bound both in heaven and on earth, i.e., it became “binding.” It must be emphasized that the posqim have no authority to contradict the Torah or to invalidate any of its commands. Yeshua himself spoke about this in previous chapters, when he said: “Anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom” (*Matt. 5:19*), and again: “You nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition” (*Matt. 15:6*).

²¹From that time on Yeshua began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the scribes, and that he must be killed and arise on the third day. ²²Keifa took him and began to rebuke him and said, Far it be from you, my master, that this should happen to you! ²³But he turned and said to Keifa, Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me, for you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but concerns of the sons of men.

—commentary—

16:21 Yeshua began to explain – He began to explain the path that Mashiach ben Yosef must take in order to bring redemption and restore Adam to his previous state in the Garden of Eden. This is based on Bilaam's prophecy: "From the hills I behold him" (*Numbers 23:9*). Mashiakh ben Yosef, as the "cornerstone that the builders rejected" will come to redeem Malkhut, the lower hill, but Malkhut only receives, and having nothing to bestow upon MBY, Malkhut will take him completely, "he will die because he will be killed. And he will remain dead until the lower hill – Malkhut – receives light from the higher hill – Binah" (*Zohar 3:203b; cf. Sukka 52a*). This is a secret in the verse: "On the third day Esther clothed herself with Malkhut" (*Esther 5:1*). Mashiakh ben Yosef is the paradigm of the tzaddiq, the embodiment of righteous person (*Qol haTor 2:6; cf. Zohar 1:59b*). "When the righteous are seized by disease or affliction, it is in order to atone for the world. Thus all the sins of the generation are atoned for. When the Blessed Holy One wants to bring healing to the world, he strikes one righteous human among them with disease and affliction; through him he brings healing to all. We know this because it is written (*Isaiah 53:5*): He was wounded because of our sins, crushed because of our iniquities... by his bruises we were healed" (*Zohar 3:128a*). Mashiakh ben Yosef acts, therefore, as the 'healer' of Israel, as it is written "a faithful emissary brings healing" (*Prov. 13:17*), paving the way for the process of the final redemption through his suffering (*Qol haTor 2:128*).

16:21 arise on the third day – It is written: "He will revive us from the two days; on the third day he will set us up and we will live before him" (*Hoshea 6:2*). It is similarly written: "Yonah was on the belly of דג the fish for three days" (*Yonah 2:1*). As we have stated, the word for fish, DaG, stands for Din-Gehinom (the judgment of Gehenna). This is in the merits of Avraham about whom it is written: "On the third day Avraham lifted up his eyes and saw haMaqom from afar" (*Gen. 22:4*). He foresaw that even if he sacrificed his son Yitzhaq, he would live.

16:23 Get behind me, Satan! – Satan means opposer. He was rebuking Keifa for not seeing the whole picture, unable to understand God's cosmic plan to redeem humankind in a long-term period. Instead, he only focused on the here and now and attempted to prevent his rabbi from being brutally tortured and killed in Jerusalem. Yeshua as a tzaddiq engifted with ruakh haqodesh saw the necessity of the plan, saw the purpose of it, and saw how it would influence the world both in a long and a short-term period. Therefore, he took willingly the plan upon himself. Undeniably, Yeshua's martyrdom changed the course of history. Even today, two thousand years after, we are still seeing the fruit that his sacrifice produced. Had Yeshua died perhaps of old age surrounded by his children, the impact he would have caused on humankind would have been just like any other preacher or wise man. But his suffering has led to what the Ramkhal describes, that: "there is a special, higher type of suffering that comes to a tzaddiq who is even greater and more highly perfected than the {others}. This suffering comes to provide the help necessary to bring about the chain of events leading to the ultimate perfection of mankind as a whole" (*Derekh Hashem 2:3:8*). This is also the meaning of the words: "They shall look unto me – upon Hashem – because they have thrust him through; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son" (*Zechariah 12:10*).

—relevant quotes—

"The Holy One brought forth the soul of the Messiah, and said to him, Are you willing to be created and to redeem my sons after 6000 years? He replied, I am. God replied, If so, you must take upon yourself chastisements in order to wipe away their iniquity, as it is written, Surely our sicknesses he has carried. The Messiah answered, I will take them upon me gladly" (*Pesiqta, as per Hulsius, 324, quoting Avqat Rokhel. Cf. Pesiqta Rabbati 36:1*)

²⁴Then Yeshua said to his disciples, Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ²⁵For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake, will find it. ²⁶What good will it be for a man to gain the whole world, and lose his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷For the son of man is going to come in his Father's glory with his holy angels, and then he will reward each man according to his works. ²⁸Amen I say to you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the son of man coming in his kingdom.

—commentary—

16:24 Must deny themselves – Must deny their 'nefesh' נפש; their animalistic desires, their ego.

16:24 and take up their cross – In the Aramaic, "take up their pole" זקיף. Same word used in Megillah 16b, when it says the ten sons of Haman were all hanged on one pole זקיפה. As it is written: "Let Haman's ten sons be hanged on the tree" (*Esther 9:13*). In the first century Judea, the imagery of carrying one's pole referred to a Roman process of martyrdom, in which a person sentenced to death was forced to carry a tree and walk towards the place of their execution, wherein the soldiers would lift up the pole and hang the prisoner on it. Therefore, Yeshua's allegory refers to "dying" to our egoistic desires every day. It is a torture because the inclination to evil is first nature in human beings.

16:25 whoever wants to save their life will lose it – Their life, their nefesh. Whoever wants to live under their animalistic desires like there is no tomorrow, will eventually find that they have lived a pointless life, not having corrected what they came to correct in the first place. They will have to suffer the purge in Gehenna.

16:25 whoever loses their life for my sake, will find it – "Whoever follows my teachings and negates themselves to their evil inclinations and the wicked morality of this world system, will find redemption."

16:27 For the son of man is going to come in his Father's glory – The teaching comes full round now. The son of man, the Adam 2.0, is going to come and redeem Malkhut. "Come and see in the lower garden of Eden... the entire garden is surrounded by many chariots of tzaddiqim, and the Messiah stands over them, and over many hosts and camps of souls of the righteous" (*Zohar 2:8a*). "At that time the king Messiah will come out of the garden of Eden and... will become revealed in the land of Galilee. On the day the Messiah goes there the whole world will tremble and all the people of the world will hide" (*Zohar 2:7b*). It is written: "The spirit of Hashem will rest upon him... and with righteousness he will judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the land; and he will smite the land with the rod of his mouth, and with the breathe of his lips he will slay the wicked" (*Isaiah 11:2-4*).

16:28 some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the son of man – This can be interpreted in two ways. In a literal sense, perhaps Yeshua thought the Messianic era would come on earth before all his disciples died. However, given that this statement is subject of exploration in the mystical gospel of John, my tendency is towards the metaphorical interpretation. In the fourth gospel, Keifa sees the "disciple whom Yeshua loves following them" (*John 21:20*). Yeshua tells Keifa: "What if I want him to remain until I return? You follow me" (*ibid. 21:22*). While Christianity tends to assume the "beloved disciple" must refer literally to one of the twelve – usually Yohanan being the chosen one – this is a mistaken assumption. The "beloved disciple" is a metaphor for those, anyone of us, who genuinely follow the teachings of Yeshua. What Yeshua means is: "There are those who will awaken the messianic consciousness within themselves before the masses, before dying and resurrecting. Even though their bodies will still live in this materialistic world, their soul will be elevated unto the consciousness of the Garden of Eden. It will be for them as if they already were in the Messianic era." As a matter of fact, when the Messianic era comes, the world will follow its current course, as if nothing had happened, but emunah (faith) and freedom will make a massive difference (cf. *Mishne Torah, Hilkhos Melakhim 12:1*).