

28 After Shabbat, at dawn on the first day of the week, Miriam Magdalit and the other Miriam went to see the tomb.

commentary

28:1 After Shabbat – In the language of the Peshitta, “Then, in the night of Shabbat, at the light of the first day of the week.” The wording can be confusing, probably not accurate. Since days begin in the evening, the light of the first day would be in the morning, not in the evening of Shabbat. Rather, we should interpret here that “Then, in the night of Shabbat” ברמשה דין בשבתא means “The night after Shabbat,” when night was dawning. It is a rare meaning, but the phrase itself requires it, because it was clearly Sunday morning. Mark reads “Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise” (*Mark 16:2*), and similarly Luke says, “On the first day of the week, at early dawn” (*Luke 24:1*). The Shem Tov manuscript reads: “On the first day of the week, after waking up” (*Shem Tov Mattai 28:1*).

28:1 Miriam Magdalit – Miriam Magdalit or Miriam of Magdala (a fishing town at the western shore of the sea of Galilee) was one of the closest followers of Yeshua. Her place of prominence in the synoptics is evident. Not only she stands out for being mentioned first among the other women who followed Yeshua from Galilee – many who were also called Miriam, or in Aramaic Mariam (cf. *Matt. 27:55-56*), but in this case she is the only one mentioned by name and, as their leader, is given the responsibility of conveying the news of Yeshua’s resurrection to his students. Most scholars accept Magdalit’s witnessing of Yeshua’s burial as historical.^a Luke says that Magdalit began to follow Yeshua after he cured her from seven demons (*Luke 8:1-3*). According to an ancient tradition, Magdalit was Yeshua’s bride: “There were three Miriam who always walked with the master, his mother and her sister, and Magdalit, who was called his wife. His mother, her sister and his wife were each a Miriam” (*Gospel of Philip*). While this is absent in the synoptics, it is hinted at in the fourth gospel: “There stood by the tree of Yeshua his mother, and his mother’s sister, Miriam of Cleopha, and Miriam Magdalit. And when Yeshua saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing by, he said to his mother, Woman, behold your son. Then he said to the disciple, Behold your mother. And from that hour that disciple took her as his” (*John 19:25-27*). This pericope is not historical, as all the disciples had fled, Yeshua had difficulty to speak while at the cross, and although the women were present during his execution, they were beholding from a distance (*Matt. 27:55*). The fourth gospel is mystical in nature and it must be interpreted as such. Come and see: “The tree of Yeshua” refers to the tree of life. Yeshua [lit. salvation] represents the six emotive sefirot hanging in the tree. He is Tiferet, the bridge between heaven and earth, the son. The disciple whom he loves is not any historical student of his. The disciple whom he loves is every one of us who obey his commands, who follow his teachings – hence we are described as resting at his lap, standing with him in his martyrdom, running faster than anybody to discover he has risen... etc. His mother refers to the mother of Tiferet; that is, the sefirah of Binah, the Garden of Eden. The twin sister of Binah is Malkhut, the kingdom, which represents us in our original state and has two aspects: Miriam of Cleopha, which is the physical world as such, and Miriam Magdalit, which is the Shekhina, the bride of the son. What the author is trying to convey is that the disciple whom Tiferet [i.e., heaven] loves must learn to attain unity with all these forces. Through the teachings of Hassidut [learning from the master] one embraces the level of consciousness known as Binah [understanding]. As it is written “You shall call Binah mother” (*Proverbs 2:3; Bahir #104*). This mystical interpretation proves that for mystical purposes, the fourth gospel envisioned Miriam Magdalit as Yeshua’s bride. This tradition was soon rejected by mainstream Catholicism, because in their views the son of God having a human bride was heretic, and therefore,

^a Sanders E.P., *The Historical figure of Jesus* pp- 274-275.

²And behold, there was a violent earthquake, for the angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. ³His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. ⁴And for fear of him, the guards who were watching trembled and became like dead men. ⁵The angel said to the women, Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Yeshua, who was hanged.

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they soon demonized Miriam Magdalit by claiming that she was a prostitute. The tradition that Yeshua never married also exists, though, in which case he would fulfil the command of being “fruitful and multiply” through the dissemination of his teachings and the growing number of his disciples.

28:1 went to see the tomb – They went to properly finish the burial (cf. *Mark 16:2-3*). Because it was Shabbat and they had postponed it (cf. *Luke 23:56*). There is also a tradition to examine the body of a dead person for three days, in case there is still life in it (*Semakhot 8:1*).

28:2 the angel of the Lord came down – In both Luke and Mark the stone had already been rolled away when Miriam arrived at the tomb, and inside there was a young man dressed in a white robe, sitting inside (*Mark 16:4-5*). Two young men, according to Luke (cf. *Luke 24:4*). Mattai’s description of the man is way more dramatic, following after Daniel’s encounter with an angelic being (see *Daniel 10:5-7*). In Mattai he is called the angel of the Lord *malakha ger d’Marya*, the equivalent to the Biblical “*Malakh Hashem*” (*Gen. 16:7; Exod. 3:2; Num. 22:22; Zech. 3:2*) and he is heroically sitting on top of the stone that covered the entrance of the tomb, which he rolled by himself with an earthquake. This is in the aspect of the Psalm: “The angel of Hashem camps around those who fear him and rescues them” (*Psalms 34:8*). The trembling of fear is also described in prophetic literature, “Even though they did not see the vision [of the angel] a great quaking fell upon them” (*Dan. 10:7*), “Woe to me! For I am ruined!” (*Isaiah 6:5*). Quite often we find in Jewish literature the word “young man” נער as the description of an angel (cf. *2Mac. 3:26*). Even later in Luke the young men are referred to as “angels” (*Luke 24:23*). “Young man” is also the title that Hanokh the angel receives in Kabbalah, as it is written (*Psalms 37:25*), “I have been young נער and I also aged,” which was said by the minister of the world (cf. *Rashi; Zohar 1:143a*). The angel continues: “I have not seen a righteous man forsaken and his seed seeking bread” (*Psalms 37:25*). This is in the aspect of, “God gives you the dew of heaven and the fatness of the earth” (*Gen. 27:48*). The dew represents resurrection as we have explained.

28:3 His appearance – Notice how the opening of this chapter heavily relies on the verb “to see;” using it a total of five times: In verse 1 it says “to see the tomb.” In verse 3 the word “appearance” – *khezveh* חזוה – means sight or vision. Verse 6, “see the place.” Verse 7: “There you will see him.” Verse 10: “There they will see me.” Additionally, the Hebrew term *Hineh* (lo, here it is) in the Greek manuscripts appears as “Behold” another five times, resulting in a total of ten times (*verses 2, 7, 9, 11 and 20*).

28:5 The angel said to the women – The variances in the transmission of this oral tradition pose certain complexity: Mattai talks of a powerful angel that both terrifies the soldiers and engages in conversation with the women. In Mark it is a young man waiting for the women at the tomb. In Luke, the women find inside the tomb two young men of dazzling apparel instead of only one (*Luke 24:4*). In the fourth gospel Miriam sees two angels and immediately after Yeshua himself appears to her (*John 20:12-14*). Now in the Passion gospel we have two separate incidents: In the first one the soldiers have a vision of two angels of brilliant light entering into the sepulchre. When they come outside, they are carrying Yeshua with them, and a “tree” עץ appears behind them (cf. *Gos. of Peter 9:37-10:39*). This represents the tree of life, with the position of the angels being symbolic of the three columns in the sefirotic structure. Afterwards, as the story progresses, Miriam Magdalit arrives at the tomb and finds it already opened, and inside there is a young man with a dazzling robe (*ibid. 13:55*). Either the Passion gospel tries to harmonize the conflicting accounts

⁶He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. ⁷Then go quickly and tell his disciples: He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Behold, I have told you. ⁸And the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹And behold, Yeshua met them, and he said, Peace be to you. And they came up and laid hold of his feet and bowed down.

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or is documenting an earlier rendition that predates the story's divergence into its various forms.

28:6 He is not here – He has become like the angels, resembling the first Adam (cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 24:5), he has received the dew, he has transcended death. It is thus written, “I will ransom them from the Sheol’s hand... I will be your [death] sentence, oh Sheol” (*Hosh. 13:14*).

28:7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples – Generally speaking, in ancient Judea women were not accorded the same legitimacy as men when it came to serve as witnesses (cf. *Josephus, Ant. 4:219; Mishna Rosh haShana* 1:8). Chances were that the men would not believe them. In Mark, Keifa is separately mentioned, “Go, tell his disciples and Keifa (*Mark 16:7*). In Mattai Keifa is a representative of the entire group, so it would be redundant.

28:9 And behold, Yeshua met them – Since Yeshua simply repeats the previous words of the angel both in Mark and in this very same gospel, several scholars believe this passage could be redactional, according to them, inserted into the text to harmonize it with Luke. However, as the fourth gospel is dependent on this portion (cf. *John 20:16-17*), we can reasonably infer that the story was, at the very least, known in oral form from its early stages of development.

28:9 Peace be to you – A common Hebrew greeting, with the exact grammatical form in which it was popular during the first century: *Shalom lakhem* שלום לכם.

28:9 laid hold of his feet and bowed down – They bowed down סגד like a man who bows down to a king (cf. *Megillah 16b; Isa. 44:19; Genesis 33:3*). Like David bowed down to Shaul (*1Sam. 24:8*), or like Ruth to Boaz (*Ruth 2:10*). “Laid hold of his feet” seems to be used to make the point that Yeshua’s resurrection was not merely seen in visions, but that the witnesses were actually able to touch him. In Luke, even though he appears and disappears at will out of thin air, he still preserves the wounds from the nails, and he says, “touch me and see, because a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (*Luke 24:39*). The fourth gospel makes use of both Mattai and Luke to tell its own version of the story: In Mattai Miriam lays hold of his feet, and in the fourth gospel Yeshua says, “Quit holding on to me” (*John 20:17*), often misinterpreted as “Do not touch me.” In Mattai it is said that some disciples had doubts, and in Luke Yeshua shows his wounds to prove he is not a ghost. The fourth gospel combines both elements in the story of the doubting Thoma (cf. *John 20:24-26*). As opposed to this view, there is the idea he resurrected with an entirely spiritual body which his disciples only saw in ecstatic visions [hence the need to be on a mount in Galilee]. This was the case for Paul of Tarsus, probably the earliest written testimony we have of the resurrection (cf. *Acts 9:4; 1Co. 15:8-10; 15:53*). The gospel of Mark, the earliest gospel, abruptly ends with the angel talking to Miriam at the empty tomb, but although he tells them to meet him in Galilee, Yeshua never shows up to anybody afterwards. Later scribes considered the ending of Mark to be incomplete or too abrupt, so they filled the void with material from either Luke or Mattai. Mattai’s Old Syriac manuscripts have verses 8 to the end of the chapter missing. In Luke, even though he eats and is touched, he still shows characteristics of a ghost (see also *John 20:19*), to illustrate the immortal nature of the body after the *Tekhiat haMetim*: “being like angels,” being entirely spiritual beings who mostly appear in visions and dreams, but being able to materialize at needed occasions, like when the angels had a meal with Avraham or with Lot (cf. *Tanna d’Vei Eliyahu Rabbah 13:2*).

¹⁰Then Yeshua said to them, Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me. ¹¹While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. ¹²When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, ¹³telling them, You are to say, His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep. ¹⁴If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble. ¹⁵So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Judeans until this day. ¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Yeshua had told them to go.

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28:10 go to Galilee; there they will see me – This has midrashic connotations, for we know Galilee is the home of mystical thought and Kabbalah. From Galilee “will emanate Israel’s salvation and the awakening of the dead” (*Zohar III:239b*). See commentary on Matt. 26:32. Additionally Galilee was separated from the spiritual corruption taking place at Jerusalem. Hence, the author of Mattai knows nothing of the disciples meeting Yeshua in Judea.

28:15 this story has been widely circulated among the Judeans until this day – Here the author endeavors to silence a prevailing defamation against Yeshua’s followers. It is evident from both the context and the intended audience, that in those days there was circulating in Judea a claim asserting that the disciples had stolen Yeshua’s body. The defamation was not revolving around Yeshua’s historical existence or anything of the like which modern agnostic scholars tend to contend. Rather, the controversy is centered on the fact that the body of Yeshua – historically attested to have been crucified under Pilate – was not found anywhere afterwards. Grave robbing and disturbing tombs was a serious crime in the Roman empire punished with death.^b To the reader, the idea that the very same disciples who had fled at Yeshua’s arrest would suddenly muster the audacity to steal his body from a sepulchre supervised by Roman soldiers sounds absurd.

28:16 went to Galilee – As per Mark’s ending, there in Galilee they were meant to see him (cf. *Mark 16:7*), arguably, for the first time. Since they had just started to celebrate the feast of *matzot* (the unleavened bread), they would stay in the surroundings of Jerusalem for the entire week (cf. *Luke 24:33; John 20:26; Deut. 16:16*). Only after the feast did some people return to their hometown in Galilee (cf. *Gos. of Peter 14:58; John 21:1*). In contradiction to the Keifa tradition, Luke says that after the resurrection Yeshua instructed them not to leave Jerusalem (*Luke 24:39, 53*). Consequently, all the appearances take place in Judea. However, the author himself seems to mend his initial words in the book of Act, explaining that Yeshua had been appearing to them over a period of forty days, and it was only on one of these occasions – not necessarily the first time – that he told them to stay in Jerusalem until *Shavuot* (cf. *Acts 1:3-4*), which is the feast of the “harvest” (cf. *Exod. 23:16*).

^b Nazareth Inscription. cf. Cicero deLegibus 3; *Revue d’Histoire* 163, pp. 241-266; Kyle, Donald G., *Spectacles of death in ancient Rome*, pp. 143-144.

¹⁷When they saw him, they prostrated before him; but some doubted.

¹⁸Then Yeshua came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

—textual variants—

28:18 All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me – The Peshitta adds: “And as my father has sent me, I also send you.”

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28:16 to the mountain where Yeshua had told them to go – Mount Meron, the resting place of Shimon Bar Yohai.^c The place associated with the opening of mysticism for the entire world, the place where Zoharic Kabbalah emerged, giving rise to modern Hassidut, which is the necessary *tiqun* to understand Yeshua’s teachings, as they have been exiled from their source for almost two millennia.

28:18 Then Yeshua came to them – They had just prostrated before him. Why does the text say immediately after that “Yeshua came to them?” Does it mean in a dream? In an ecstatic vision? If they had a physical encounter, why would Yeshua “come” to them? And why were they doubtful? Was he not recognizable? Or was the very idea of the resurrection too bewildering for them? Luke responds to all these questions by claiming that, indeed, his physical appearance was unrecognizable (cf. *Luke 24:15-16*), the visions of him were like one who sees a ghost, for he would vanish out of thin air (*ibid. 24:31*), and still, the wounds from the crucifixion were visible in his body and he was able to eat bread with them (*ibid. 24:30, 39*). Some of the disciples experienced a combination of fear, joy, and amazement, and so they did not believe what they were seeing (*ibid. 24:37, 41*). This is according to Luke. In Mattai, the phrase “Then Yeshua came to them” must be interpreted in a spiritual sense. They were on a mystical mount in Galilee and so they had a mystical experience. What Mattai is narrating about Yeshua and his disciples is similar to what the aggadah says concerning Eliyahu the prophet. On one occasion, Shimon bar Yohai hid himself in a cave because Caesar had decreed the execution of Torah teachers. Then “Eliyahu came” and stood at the entrance of the cave to tell him that Caesar had died and the decree had been annulled (*Shabbat 33b*). In aggadah Eliyahu is not merely a prophet of the past, he is a supernal being, an angelic force^d that transcends time and death, appearing to the Rabbis to guide them in life, as it says, “Eliyahu appeared to him” (*Bava Metzia 84a*), “Eliyahu used to appear to him often, but stopped appearing” (*Yerushalmi Terumot 8:4*). Eliyahu also appears often unrecognizable, usually disguised as a beggar (*Nedarim 50a*). The Nazarene stories of the disciples encountering Yeshua are not different. Both Yeshua and Eliyahu are alive, in one way or another. So when it says “Yeshua came to them” or “Yeshua appeared to them” we must understand it in the same way that Eliyahu “comes” or “appears;” it is a mystical moment one receives through divine inspiration or holy spirit to guide us in life.

28:18 All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me – The concluding words in Mattai parallel the concluding words in the Tanakh: “Hashem the God of heaven has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has appointed me to build the Temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah” (*2Chr. 36:23*). This was said by king Cyrus of Persia, “who was in the aspect of Messiah ben Yosef” (*Qol haTor 1:6; 2:109*), as it is written, “So says Hashem to his messiah, to Cyrus” (*Isaiah 45:1*). It also resonates with the “son of man” prophecy, “And he came up to the Ancient of Days, and was brought before him, and he gave him dominion and glory and a kingdom... his kingdom is one which will not be destroyed” (*Daniel 7:13-14*). “And he gave him dominion and glory and a kingdom” (*Dan. 7:14*). This means that the Messiah will be brought into the hearts of the people with honor and glory. Since Israel were devastated without king or [holy] rulers, the Messiah will be king in the Holy Land, so that all nations will fear him... he will destroy the spirit of error from within the Land and

^c cf. Peninei Halakha, Zemanim 5:5.

^d cf. Toldot Yaaqov Yosef; Shaar haGilgulim 31:7a.

¹⁸Then Yeshua came to them and said, All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

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they will no longer sin" (*Malbim on Dan. 7:14*). As explained many times throughout this commentary, Daniel's "son of man" refers mainly to the communal soul shared by the saints of Israel; the *Yekhidah*. The *Yekhida* is not an individual part of the soul, it is the same for everybody for it is the source of all souls. Attaining it means reaching unification with the Creator, a unification which we lost with the sin of Adam Rishon, and which is to be restored in the days of Messiah. It is, therefore, also called Messiah's soul. By definition, the only way to grasp a feeling of the *Yekhidah* soul is by repentance – *teshuvah*, igniting the desire to fulfil God's will (cf. *Rabbi Alexandri on Berakhot 17a*) and by empathy towards creation. While individual people fail and make mistakes, the soul known as "*Qol Israel*" the collective of Israel, remains righteous and sees the sparks of righteousness within others, as it says, "And your people, all of them righteous, will inherit the Land forever" (*Isaiah 60:21*). The sages teach: In the future, the tzaddiqim will sit with their diadems in their heads, delighting in the radiance of the Shekhina" (*Berakhot 17a*). It should say with their diadems on their head, but it says "in their heads," because it really is a matter of internalizing the Shekhina. "They will sit," indicates an absence of motion and change, as it is written (*Psalms 2:4*), "He who sits in heaven." The diadems, עטרות indicate transcendence, as it refers to the *Keter* consciousness, which will be internalized in the future (cf. *Reshit Hokhmah 6:9; Liqutei Moharan 21:4*). We conclude that the authority Yeshua is referring to has to do with the calling for repentance and unity with the Creator, which was disseminated around all the nations of the world as a consequence of Yeshua's mission on earth, and this is an undisputable fact, for no other sage of Israel has been more influential to the world than Yeshua of Nazareth, for whose merits millions of people around the world have repented and turned to the one God of Israel, or at the very least, known about monotheism, Torah and *mitzvot*. Also, since dominion is given to the "son of man" figure, similar to what the Dead Sea Scrolls read, "heaven and earth will obey his Messiah" (*4Q521, fr. 2*), praying with faith in the merits – in the name – of Yeshua elevates our prayers to higher levels than praying on our own merits.

¹⁹Therefore, go and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy spirit,

—————textual variants—————

28:19 immersing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy spirit – The phrase “immersing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy spirit” appears to be a post-Nicene corruption of the text (cf. *Rudolph Bultmann, Theology of the New Testament, 1:133-134*). Pre-Nicene Eusebius quotes Matt. 28:19 a total of twenty-one times, and none of them has the three names formula in it. He quotes this portion in two different forms: The first one: “Go and make disciples of all nations, teachings them to observe everything I have commanded you” (*this corresponds with the Hebrew Shem Tov on Mattai 28:19*). The second and most common form says, “Go and make disciples of all nations in my name, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you.” This is consistent with other N”T verses – such as Acts 2:38, 10:48 or Romans 6:3 – where conversion or repentance are mentioned in Yeshua’s name. Luke’s version of this passage equally reads: “and repentance for the forgiveness of sin would be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem” (*Luke 24:47*). The Old Syriac manuscripts are damaged on the final page of Mattai, leaving us with no means to tell how they read. On the authenticity of Mattai’s trinitarian formula, Conybeare wrote: “I have been able to substantiate these doubts of the authenticity of Matt. 28:19 by adducing patristic evidence against it, so weighty that in future the most conservative of divines will shrink from resting on it any dogmatic fabric at all, and the most enlightened will discard it completely as they have its fellow-test of the three witnesses” (*F.C. Conybeare, the Hibbert Journal*). The trinitarian formula does appear in the Didache, though: “Concerning immersion, do it this way: After first explaining all these things, immerse into the name of the Father, and of the son and of the holy spirit, in living water” (*Didache 7:1*). Therefore – unless the author of the Didache invented it – even if it was an interpolation, it seems to belong to an early tradition.

—————commentary—————

28:19 go and teach all nations – Teach, תלמד, or as the Greek says, “go and make disciples.”

28:19 immersing them in the name of the Father, and of the son and of the holy spirit – Notice none of the apostles ever used this formula in the conversion of gentiles or repentant Jews. The first conclusion would be that it is a later interpolation, a liturgical addition. Yeshua had just said that all authority had been given to him, so we would expect the text to read “make disciples in my name” (cf. *Eusebius, Eccl. History 3:5; see its parallel in Luke 24:47*). The three names formula appears to be out of place. However, as it is present in nearly all extant manuscripts, removing it from the text would be arbitrary. Therefore, we must proceed to offer the second possible explanation, namely, that it is not a religious baptismal formula, as claimed by Christians. No immersion has ever been recorded in the name of the Father, the son and the holy spirit – neither by Jews or by Christians – prior to its liturgical adoption in the second century. The origin of the phrase is actually kabbalistic, as we are going to explore.

28:19 in the name – The holy spirit רוחא דקדושה (or spirit of holiness) has never been given a proper name, and neither is a person. So what does “in the name of” mean? Let us first familiarize with this common Semitic expression: בשם “*bshem*.” When an individual employs this phrase, they are deflecting credit for certain teaching or mitzva and attributing its merits to someone else, for example: “Esther reported to the king in Mordekhai’s name” (*Esther 2:22; cf. Avot 6:6*) or “[A teaching of] Rabbi Yohanan in the name of Rabbi Benaniah” (*Yerushalmi Pesakhim 10:1*). This expression derives from the fact that the word “*shem*” also means “being known” as in “fame” (cf. *Gen. 11:4*). Moreover, the “name” may signify an action done “for the sake of” something, like when they say, “Any dispute that is for the name לשם of Heaven will perdure” (*Avot 5:17 [20]*). Lastly, a “name” carries with it the indirect connotation of “function,” since the essence of any matter is always implicit in its name (cf. *Gen. 2:19*). Thus, we are taught that one of the things which were created

¹⁹Therefore, go and teach all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and of the son and of the holy spirit,

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before the world was שמו של משיח “the name of Messiah” (*Pesakhim 54a*). On the verse, “Let there be lights in the firmament” (*Gen. 1:14*), the Zohar explains that the two luminaries should be considered one whole, for they are included “in the name בשם of Heaven, which is one” (*Zohar, introduction*).

28:19 in the name of the Father... son... holy spirit – It says “in the name” and not in the names. Come and see: The name of the Father was made known to Moshe at the burning bush, “Yod-hei-vav-hei, the God of your fathers... This is my name forever” (*Exod. 3:15*). This is the name that corresponds to the entire structure of creation, consisting of three realms: the intellectual, the emotional and the physical. The “intellectual” or “mental” refers to the realms of Divine thought and their transcendence, referred to as “Father”^e (In Zoharic language, “the Long Face” or *Arikh Anpin*).^f The “emotional” refers to the structure known as “the son.”^g The Father crowns the son and blesses him with many blessings, as it is written, “Hashem said to me, you are my son” (*Psalms 2:7*). This is the aspect of Israel as being collectively righteous, and the Messiah as their head, being the mediating force between Heaven and earth, in Kabbalah, corresponding to the letter *Vav* in God’s tetragrammaton. “The physical” – the last letter *Hei* in the name of God – refers to our world, where we perform deeds that connect us or disconnect us from the upper realms. When the community follows the path of holiness, this is what the text refers to as “holy spirit” or “spirit of holiness,” which is the voice of the Shekhina – In Zoharic language “the Shekhina” is also called “the daughter” and “the community of Israel.” The same “holy spirit” that rested upon Samson (*Vayiqra Rabbah 8:2*; cf. *Judg. 13:25*) is equally called Shekhina (*Sotah 9b*) because they are interconnected concepts. Understand that when the author of Mattai says “immersing them in the name of the Father, son and holy spirit” he is instructing Yeshua’s followers that a man should be indeed immersed in these three levels of consciousness which form the entirety of God’s Sacred Name: YaH, Vav and Hei. As we know, both the Messiah and the community of Israel are called by God’s name: The Messiah is called (*Jer. 23:6*): “Hashem Tzidqenu” (cf. *Ibn Ezra on Exod. 18:3*). “The Holy name – Hashem – is Israel, who are destined to bring the name of the Blessed Holy One [to the world]” (*Zohar II:184a*).

28:19 in the name... of the son – The repentant must be immersed in the messianic consciousness through attachment to the tzaddiq, called “the son,” because the tzaddiq has transcended the level of a servant and operates through the level of “son.” “It is the glory of the son to have power over everything. He who strives in the Torah to know [i.e., to have a relationship with] the Blessed Holy One and his mysteries is the son of the Blessed Holy One” (*Zohar III:112a*). “One who attaches himself to [the teachings] of a true tzaddiq has

^e Modern Kabbalistic concepts have gone through centuries of development. Mattai shows a more rudimentary, pre-Zoharic form of them. We, therefore, can expect certain variances, just like there are variances in the different forms of first-century mysticism. For instance, with the time the word *Yesod* [foundation] was preferred over the word *kol* [all] which Paul uses in Romans 11:33-36. Mattai refers to Arikh Anpin as the Father. What early literature tends to consistently call holy spirit or spirit of the Lord, in later Rabbinic literature is better developed by separating the roles of the Shekhina (Divine immanence) and holy spirit (divine inspiration), both terms being intrinsically related. Notice, “the spirit of the Lord fills the world” (*Wisdom 1:7*), “Hashem’s Shekhina fills all of creation” (*Liquetei Halakhot, Orakh Hayim, Birkot haShakhar 2:1*), “God’s Shekhina is with humanity, and he will dwell with them” (*Rev. 21:3*). Once we understand this, the underlying interpretation remains essentially the same.

^f This is also called “the Beginning,” which has the name Ehyeh engraved in it, because all creation comes to be through it (*Zohar I:15a*).

^g “The Blessed Holy One has a son, whose glory shines from one end of the world to the other... [he is Zeir Anpin]” (*Zohar II:105a*). “Hokhmah is his name [the Father’s name] and Tiferet the name of his son” (*Zohar II:79b*).

²⁰and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the world.

—textual variants—

28:20 to the very end of the world – The Peshitta ends the book of Mattai with the word “Amen.” It was probably inserted for liturgical purposes, similar to the extended ending of the Avinu prayer.

—commentary—

true faith. The Messiah is the true tzaddiq and one who accepts the Messiah will receive pure faith and will not be misplaced” (*Liqutei Moharan 2:8:8*). By being immersed into the son and into the holy spirit, one also knows and learns the will of the Father. And how do we immerse ourselves into the Father? By nullifying our ego and making God’s will our own.

28:19 in the name... of the holy spirit – The community of Israel must strive for holiness. This guiding spirit of holiness or divine inspiration is what the text calls holy spirit – *ruakh haQodesh*. This is the spirit which will guide the entire community in the messianic era, as it is written, “the spirit of God hovered over the face of the waters [of the Torah]” (*Gen. 1:2*). This refers to the spirit of Messiah (*Bereshit Rabah 8:1*). It is also the spirit that empowers a person to perform God’s will. “You have shed your holy spirit upon me that I may not stumble” (*Hodayot 1QH*). Thus, it is written that “Esther clothed herself of Malkhut”^h (*Esther 5:1*), meaning, “with the holy spirit” (*Megillah 14b*). “One who learns [Torah with enthusiasm] in order to put it into practice, he will merit to receive the holy spirit” (*Vayiqra Rabbah 35:7*). “Whoever teaches Torah in public, the holy spirit [divine inspiration] rests upon him” (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:9*). Compare it with: “If two sit together to engage in Torah, the Shekhina is with them” (*Berakhot 6a*). This is because the holy spirit rests upon those who seek the Shekhina – the Divine Presence (*Sifre on Deut. 173*). The two are intrinsically related. In the book of Acts, when certain man called Hananiah gave a fraudulent donation to the community, Keifa defined it as “deceiving the holy spirit” (*Acts 5:3*). That is, the fraud fell upon God’s Immanence within the community, as it is taught, “If two sit together and there are matters of Torah between them, the Shekhina abides among them” (*Avot 3:2*). Hence Keifa says immediately after, “You have not lied to the people, but to God” (*ibid. 5:4*). It is written, “Let them make me a Sanctuary and I will dwell in their midst” (*Exod. 25:8*). The verb “I will dwell” ושכנתי refers to the Shekhina שכנה. In their midst means “inside of them” (cf. *Shelah*). Because God wants us to be a receptacle for his divine presence in this world. Paul says that “our body is a Sanctuary where the holy spirit lives, within us” (*1Cor. 6:19*).

28:20 to observe everything I have commanded you – This a call to become actively engaged in Torah and mitzvot. To “observe” means to “obey.” Those religions that teach a life entirely based on passive faith and neglect the performance of mitzvot and good deeds are against the teachings of Yeshua and against his brother Yaaqov (*James 2:26*). Yeshua never commanded us to disregard the Torah of Moshe as some people do in his name. He taught mussar – ethical behavior, and he also taught, with very clear words, that until heaven and earth pass, not one Yod or one apex will pass from the Torah, and if someone sets aside one of the least commands in the Torah and teaches others accordingly will be called the least in the kingdom (cf. *Matt 5:18-19*). He also instructed us to do more than what we are required, to go beyond the letter, that our righteousness should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (*ibid. 5:20*). This is in addition to his instructions to pray for at least one hour in a private manner, to avoid hypocrisy, or to practice empathy towards others, to say a few of his mussar teachings. These commands are often ignored by pulpit charlatans who reduce Yeshua’s entire message into a form of idolatry towards him.

28:20 behold, I am with you always – When Yaaqov was ready for the redemption, it is written he went to Esav and asked to go together at mount Se’ir, as it is written, “Saviors will ascend mount Tzion to judge the mountain of Esav” (*Obad. 1:21*). However, Yaaqov said he would go to a slower pace, “at the pace of the

^h Malkhut, in this case being a reference to a prophetic state, is the sefirah which is also called Shekhina.

²⁰and teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the world.

—commentary—

children" (*Gen. 33:14*). He never went to Se'ir, which is something expected to happen in the days of Messiah. Instead, he went into the Egyptian exile together with his children in the days of Yosef. Hassidut learns from this that "The tzaddiq will experience a larger exile in order to be able to take along his flock, who are young and not ready to experience the light of Messiah" (*Lubavitcher Rebbe, 10 Shevat 5714*). If the light of Messiah comes too quickly, the process of refining the world might remain incomplete, so it is better that he tarries. So too, Moshe Rabbeinu remains buried in the desert for the sake of those sons of Israel who died in the wilderness during the Exodus. Because a true leader does not leave his flock behind, not even in his death (cf. *Midrash Tanhuma*). Moshe Rabbeinu will remain with his flock until the very end of the world, until the day of the redemption and the resurrection of the dead, when they will finally inherit the land of Canaan. If a tzaddiq reaches unification with the Creator, ascends and receives the glory of the world to come, why would he concern himself with the physical world at all? In the fulfillment of the command "Love your fellow as yourself," the tzaddiq has understood God's perfect will for us, and even after his death or his ascension his soul descends to help the people of his flock. A tzaddiq is compared to the sun, as it is written (*Prov. 13:9*), "the light of the tzaddiqim will rejoice" (*Sanhedrin 97b*). It is, therefore, written, "the sun rises and the sun sets" (*Eccl. 1:5*). Even when the sun sets and its light is not seen directly, it is still there to serve its purpose in another plane. Certainly, Yeshua's teachings and his merits have been accompanying us for more than two millennia and have contributed to the shaping of the world as we know it and in the preparation of what is to come in the Messianic era.