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Brit Hadasha: Are Old Testament Prophecies Taken Out of Context?

GROUP STUDY GUIDE

TEACHING SUMMARY

This teaching responds to the claim that the authors of the Brit Hadasha take passages from the TANAKH out of context. The objection is illustrated with Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 for Yeshua's return from Egypt and Jeremiah's words about Rachel weeping in connection with Herod's killing of Bethlehem's children.

The teaching explains that first-century Jewish interpretation was not limited to a prediction-and-fulfillment formula. It identifies literal, midrash, pesher, and allegorical approaches as methods known among Jewish teachers of that time.

The Greek word *pleroo*, translated "fulfill," can mean more than completing a prediction. The teaching uses Matthew 5:17 to explain that Yeshua fulfilled the Torah by embodying its full meaning and expression in his teachings, actions, and deeds.

Some passages from the TANAKH are used as patterns or pictures. Matthew's use of Hosea presents Yeshua as the ideal representative of Israel, and Yeshua's use of Isaiah presents Isaiah's situation as a picture of the religious leaders in his own day.

The teaching also affirms that prophecy can be predictive. Micah's reference to Bethlehem, Zechariah's description of the king riding a donkey, and Isaiah's reference to a rich man's grave are presented as predictions fulfilled by Yeshua.

The teaching concludes that the Brit Hadasha writers used interpretive methods familiar to Jewish teachers and were not given to fanciful interpretations. Understanding the broader meaning of fulfillment resolves the objection that their quotations were necessarily taken out of context.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The objection concerns the Brit Hadasha's use of passages from the TANAKH.
- First-century Jewish interpretation included more than prediction and fulfillment.
- Pleroo can mean to embody or perfect, not only to complete a prediction.
- Yeshua embodied the Torah in his teachings, actions, and deeds.
- Some TANAKH passages function as patterns or pictures of later events.
- Micah, Zechariah, and Isaiah are used as examples of predictive prophecy.
- The Brit Hadasha writers used interpretive methods known in their Jewish setting.
- Matthew's use of Hosea presents Yeshua as an ideal representative of Israel.
- Yeshua used Isaiah as a picture of the religious leaders of his day.
- The teaching says the Brit Hadasha writers respected the TANAKH's text.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK — BASIC

1. Matthew says Yeshua's return from Egypt fulfilled the words, "Out of Egypt I called my _____."
2. The teaching identifies four first-century approaches as literal, midrash, pesher, and _____.
3. The Greek word translated "fulfill" is _____.
4. Yeshua fulfilled the Torah by embodying it to its fullest extent in his teachings, actions, and _____.
5. Micah predicted that the ruler would come from _____.
6. Zechariah described the coming king as mounted on a _____.

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK — CHALLENGING

1. Matthew applies Hosea 11:1 to Yeshua, while Hosea's original context refers to Israel's _____ from Egypt.
2. Matthew applies Jeremiah's words about Rachel weeping to Herod's killing of children in _____.
3. The teaching says not all prophecy is predictive, and not all fulfillment implies completion of a _____.
4. Yeshua's return from Egypt presents him as the ideal representative of the people of _____.
5. Isaiah 53:9 is used to identify the Messiah's burial in a _____ man's tomb.
6. The rabbinic passage discussed cites Deuteronomy _____ to explain the order of the evening and morning Shema.

GROUP DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why might Matthew's use of Hosea and Jeremiah appear to be out of context if fulfillment is defined narrowly?

2. What does the teaching mean by saying that Yeshua embodied or typified passages from the TANAKH?

3. How does Matthew 5:17 help explain the broader meaning of "fulfill"?

4. Which examples does the teaching give of predictive prophecy fulfilled by Yeshua?

5. How does Yeshua's use of Isaiah illustrate the teaching's point about patterns or pictures?

6. Why does the teaching compare Brit Hadasha interpretation with rabbinic interpretive practices?

ANSWER KEY – GROUP GUIDE

Basic

1. son — Matthew 2:13–15; Hosea 11:1
2. allegorical — Teaching's quotation of Paul Copan
3. pleroo — Teaching discussion of pleroo; Matthew 5:17
4. deeds — Teaching's quotation of J K McKee
5. Bethlehem — Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1
6. donkey — Zechariah 9:9; John 12:12–16

Challenging

1. exodus — Hosea 11:1; teaching explanation
2. Bethlehem — Matthew 2:16–18; Bethlehem is the narrative location, Ramah is in the quotation
3. prediction — Teaching's quotation of Paul Copan
4. Israel — Teaching's interpretation of Matthew 2:15
5. rich — Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57–60
6. 6:7 — Deuteronomy 6:7; Berakhot 2a as cited

FACILITATOR DISCUSSION NOTES

Suggested responses follow the teaching. Invite discussion and personal application; these are not additional required answers.

1. If fulfillment means only a direct prediction, Hosea's reference to Israel and Jeremiah's exile setting can appear unrelated to Matthew's narrative. The teaching argues that fulfillment can also involve a pattern or embodiment. Note that Herod's killings occur in Bethlehem and its region, while 'a voice in Ramah' belongs to the quotation.
2. The teaching presents Yeshua as embodying Israel's story and fulfilling patterns in the TANAKH. Matthew's use of Hosea preserves the original exodus setting while connecting it to Yeshua. Ask participants to state both contexts before explaining the proposed relationship.
3. Matthew 5:17 is used to show that fulfilling the Torah involves its full expression in Yeshua's teaching and life, not only completing a prediction. This is the teaching's interpretive use of pleroo; context still matters for each occurrence of the word.
4. The source gives Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1), the king's donkey (Zechariah 9:9; John 12:12–16), and the rich man's burial (Isaiah 53:9; Matthew 27:57–60). Identify the specific correspondence in each instead of assuming every cited text works in the same way.
5. Matthew 15:7–9 uses Isaiah's rebuke of lip-service and a distant heart to address a later audience. The teaching understands that as a recurring pattern rather than a prediction naming those specific leaders. Invite reflection on how the same warning can challenge readers today.
6. The source compares methods of interpretation to explain their historical setting, including a later rabbinic example about Deuteronomy 6:7. That comparison is not permission to ignore context or invent any application. Ask what evidence makes a proposed pattern persuasive and what limits should remain.