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I Tell You the Truth,
One of You is Going to Betray Me
Matthew 26:21-25; Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23: John 13:21-30
About 8:00 pm on Friday evening
the fifteenth of Nisan

I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me DIG: In what stages does Jesus reveal His betrayer? If you had been reclining at that table, how do you think you would have felt? Or said? If foretelling His betrayal, what do you sense in Messiah: Resolution? Resignation? Restlessness? What do you sense in the talmidim? In Judas? Is Judas responsible for his actions (John 13:27 and **John 6:70, 12:4-6, 13:2)? What is the significance of Judas going out into the night?**

REFLECT: If you knew ahead of time that someone would "stab you in the back," how would you treat that person? How does Yeshua show what love is all about? How hard would that be? Is it unrealistic? Given three years of intimate fellowship with Messiah, how could Judas turn around and betray Him?

The lamb was ready. As it was taken tenderly from the oven, **Jesus** and **the apostles** lifted **their** voices in unison, veritably shouting: **Hear, Isra'el! ADONAI our God, ADONAI is one (Deuteronomy 6:4).** Servants walked in and out of the inverted U table, setting ritually clean dishes in place and standing metal cups before the places of **the** thirteen **men**. The chill of the early evening could be felt in the room and the servants set about lighting stoves. The whole lamb had been set, brown and sizzling, on snowy cloths on the low table. The spices and wild herbs and the fruits had been set along with the bowls.



After the washing of the hands, in this case the footwashing, came the eating of bitter herbs, **dipped** with **the matzah** into a bowl of soup. **And while they were reclining at the table**, chatting **and eating, Jesus paused,** greatly **troubled in spirit. Yeshua** had a secret, a terrible secret. In **His** hand **He** held the bitter herbs, a symbol of the bitter bondage in Egypt. **He** did not name anyone, but blurted out: **I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray Me (Matthew 26:21; Mark 14:18a; John 13:21).** Although this had been foreshadowed beforehand when **Jesus** said of **Judas: One of you is the devil (Yochanan 6:70),** it still must have been quite a shock. What? Did **the Master** actually mean to say that one of **their** own was going to hand **Him** over to the Great Sanhedrin? To the Romans? **Yeshua** had spoken of being **delivered into the hands of men** or **betrayed** by **His** adversaries in **Matthew 17:22, 20:18-19** and **26:2**, but had so far given no indication of who it would be, even though the reader knows.

As previously noted, **Judas** had already struck a deal with the Sadducees who wanted to see **Jesus** killed (**to see link click Kc – Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus**). But now **Messiah** brings up this imminent reality to **the Twelve** during the Seder. This was not merely to indicate the person who will **betray Him**, but the enormity of the offense. Although **the Lord** knew what **the false apostle** would do, Our **Savior** did not *force* **him** to do it. At every opportunity, **Yeshua** warned **Judas** and pleaded for **him** to repent and be saved, but at every point **Judas** refused. Everyone has the free will to accept or reject **Jesus Christ**. We can say "no" to **God** and make it stick, and **Judas** said "no" day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year. Incomprehensible.

Imagine the disbelief that went around the table – all except for **Judas**. **The apostles stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them He meant.**

They were visibly upset and **began to question among themselves which one of them it might be who would do this.** It must have seemed nearly impossible that **one** of **their** own would turn against **their Master**. To **betray** a **friend** after eating a meal was, as still is, regarded as the worst kind of treachery in the Near East.[1390]

Just a short time ago, after washing **their** feet, **Jesus** had said to **them: He who shared My bread has turned against Me (John 13:18).** This was a paraphrase of **Psalm 41:9**. **Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me.** This referred to Ahithophel's betrayal of King David by helping Absalom plot against his father **(Second Samuel 16:15** to **17:3)**. Ahithophel, the ultimate betrayer in the TaNaKh, was parallel to **Judas**. But **Christ** soon realized that **He** was not understood. **The talmidim** said to **Yeshua one after another, "Surely not I, Lord" (Matthew 26:22; Mark 14:19; Luke 22:23; John 13:22).** The Greek construction expects a negative answer to the question. Who could possibly fall to such depths?

It is interesting that **the apostles** were puzzled. Apparently **Christ** had treated **Judas** the same exact way as the other **talmidim**. For three years **the Lord** had been gentle, loving, and kind to **Judas** just as **He** had been to the other **eleven**. Apparently any challenge from **Jesus** for **Judas'** unbelief had been in private. All **the** other **apostles** would have known if **Yeshua** had treated **Judas** any differently. Had **Judas** in any way been thought of as the black sheep of the group someone would have surely have suggested that **he** was **the traitor**. But no one did. In fact, **Judas** was the treasurer of the group, **the talmidim** trusted **him**.[1391]

Without naming anyone **Yeshua** stated: **The hand of him who is going to betray Me,** literally *who is in the process of betraying* [a present participle] *Me* **is with Mine on the table.** The **betrayal** had already begun. Hinting, **He** said: **It is one of the Twelve, Jesus** continued, **the one who dips his** unleavened **matzah into the bowl with Me will betray Me (Matthew 26:23; Mark 14:18b** and **20; Luke 22:21).** But because **the apostles** were in the habit of sharing meals together, where each **dipped his matzah** into a common **bowl**, it could have been *any* of **them**. **The Lord** did, however assure **them** that only **one** of **them** was guilty and **the others** genuinely belonged to **Him (Yochanan 13:18).**

The **dipping** aspect seems to be a clear reference to the part of the Seder in which a piece of unleavened **matzah** is **dipped** into the *bitter herbs.* The dish contained *charoset* and/or *maror. Charoset* is a sweet paste made of fruit, nuts, spices and

wine. Its function in the Seder is to recall by its appearance the mortar that that Israelite slaves made in Egypt. *Maror* means *bitter herbs,* calling to mind the bitterness of Israelite slavery to Pharaoh; today horseradish root is used as *maror.* Rabbi Hillel, in the generation before **Yeshua**, inaugurated the custom of eating a "sandwich" consisting of a piece of Passover lamb, together with the **matzah** and *bitter herbs*, in a literal fulfillment of the command: **That night, they are to eat the meat, roasted in the fire; they are to eat it with matzah** and *bitter herbs* **(Exodus 12:8).**[1392] This **dipping** was also a very symbolic act, reflecting the *bitter* action about to be undertaken by this **disenchanted talmid**.

Today in Judaism the Passover Seder is eaten in a festive atmosphere with the singing of songs and comes between the second and third cups of wine. Interwoven with the symbolic foods is a full meal that is nothing short of a feast. It begins with the dipping of a roasted egg in salt water. The roasted egg represents the *Chagigah offering* that was made on the bronze altar in the Temple on the first morning of the Passover. The egg is symbolic in several ways. First, the roundness of the egg symbolizes the cycle of life. Secondly, it is a symbol of mourning over the destruction of the Temple when the sacrifice of the Passover lamb ceased. The fact that there is an egg in place of the lamb makes it a sign of mourning. Thirdly, it is a symbol of resurrection in Judaism and perhaps that is the origin connecting Christ's resurrection with the Easter egg. Fourthly, the egg is also a symbol of the Jewish people because the more the egg is cooked the harder it becomes. Likewise, the more the Jews are persecuted, the tougher the Jews become.[1393]

In spite of the depressing news, **Yeshua** affirmed that it was all part of **ADONAI's** great plan of redemption (see my commentary on **Exodus Bz – Redemption**). **The Son of Man will die just as the TaNaKh says He will. God's** greatest blessings often come disguised as disasters. Anyone who doubts this only needs to ascend the hill of Calvary. Tziyon's collective opinion that Friday was this: **Yeshua** was finished. What other conclusion made sense? The Sanhedrin had turned **Him** in. Rome had refused to bail **Him** out. **His apostles** had tucked **their** tails and scattered. **He** was nailed to a cross and left to die . . . which **He** did. They silenced **His** lips, sealed **His** tomb, and, any priest worth his phylactery would tell you, **the Nazarene** was history. Three years of power and promises were decomposing in a borrowed grave. Search the crucifixion sky for one ray of hope, and you won't find it. This was the outlook of **the talmidim**, the opinion of **His** friends, and the outlook of **His** enemies. But **ADONAI** wasn't surprised. **His** plan was right on schedule. Even in . . . especially in . . . death, **Messiah** is still

the King, **the Master** over **His** own crucifixion.[1394]

Yet, at the same time, **Judas** is held accountable for **his** personal choices, as **Christ** warned: **But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born (Mattityahu 26:24; Mark 14:21; Luke 22:22). Judas'** future in hell was so terrifying that **he** would have infinitely better off if **he had not been born**. **He** is the most graphic and tragic example of people about whom the writer to the **Hebrews** says that, because **they go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of fire which will consume the adversaries . . . How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood covenant by which He was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:26-27** and **29 NASB).**

After some soul-searching by each **talmid**, the conversation resumed at some point with each **man** wondering to the ones closest to **him** about the identity of **the betrayer**. **Simon Peter** was especially disturbed. Reclining at the very end of the table, **he motioned to John** and said: **Ask Him which one He means. One of them, John, the apostle whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to Him.** At the Passover meal, everyone reclines in a left-handed position with the head resting on the left palm. **Leaning back against Jesus, Yochanan asked Him, "Lord, who is it" (John 13:23-25)?**

The room was noisy as **the men** talked among **themselves**. Because **Yochanan** was reclined right next to **Yeshua the** other **talmidim** could not hear **the Lord's** answer, saying: **It is the one to whom I will give this piece of matzah when I have dipped it in the bowl (John 13:26a).** Then **Jesus** took a small piece of unleavened **matzah**, and **dipped** into the *bitter herbs***.** The one who **dips** is the one who officiates and he does this for everyone, including himself. In this case **the Lord** officiated. **He** was to **dip** a total of thirteen times: once for **Himself** and once for each of **the Twelve**. After that, each would **dip** for **himself**. This didn't specifically reveal **the betrayer** but emphasized again that it was one who enjoyed the closest relationship with **Yeshua** – **he** even **dipped his matzah** into the same **bowl**.

The other **apostles** were deeply troubled and **they** babbled about convincing **the Master** to go back to Bethany or all the way to Ephraim where no plotter would

dare arrest **Him**. These **men** did not want to believe that **Jesus** would die. But if that be the case, **they** expected at the very least that **His** death would be a glorious act, worthy of **God**. **They** wanted **Him** raise **Himself** up on a cloud of fire and go straight to heaven like Elijah **(Second Kings 2)**. The thing **they** dreaded most was a death of shame, to be executed as a common criminal. And that **they** knew, was what **He** risked by being in the city of David tonight.[1395]

By Oriental custom it was a special honor for the host to offer anyone the first **matzah dip** and indicate that he was considered a favored guest. **Judas** was reclining in the place of honor to **Yeshua's** left. **Then, dipping the piece of** unleavened **matzah, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon (Yochanan 13:26b). The little man** was at the crossroads. **Christ** kept the door of salvation open for **Judas** right up to the very last. Still noisy, the others miss the final exchange between **Jesus** and **Judas** because **the traitor** was right next to **Him**. **Then Judas, the one who would betray Him,** feigned: **Surely not I, Rabbi? Judas'** question was similar to the others except that in place of the normal **apostle** address of **Lord**, **he** used **Rabbi**, which was never used by the other **talmidim**, but only used by people outside the group. So **the traitor's** own words exposed **his** true colors. Even though he spent years with the Messiah, seeing the miracles, and listening to the Gospel, he never believed it. He never possessed saving faith. **His** question merely echoed the other **apostles** so as not to appear conspicuous.

But **Jesus** strongly confirmed that **Judas** was **the betrayer** when **He** murmured: **the words are yours (Matthew 26:25 CJB)**, which was an Aramean colloquialism meaning **yes.** The stage is set, but nothing is out of the control of the sovereign **God**. **Yeshua** will soon be **betrayed**, but **He** clearly understands that no one will take **His** life. **He** will give it voluntarily to fulfill the great purpose for which **He** had come down from heaven to fulfill.[1396] **The Son of God** had already declared: **The reason My Father loves Me is that I lay down My life – only to take it up again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from My Father (Yochanan 10:17-18).**

As soon as Judas took the matzah, Satan entered into Him a second time (the first was when **he** made an agreement with Caiaphas to betray **the Lord** in **Luke 22:3**) to actually perform the act of **betrayal.** An eternity appears in this verse. **Judas** had been enticed by **the tempter**, flirting with **evil** while pretending to follow **Christ**. Now **the evil one** entered **his** heart and took full control. In that

awful moment, the **evil** will of **Judas** resisted the final offer of **Christ's** love. The day of salvation had expired for **him**. Damned to hell for all eternity by **his** own choice, **his** doom was sealed. **Jesus** stared at **Judas** steadily, no rancor in **His** eyes, and **He** said plainly: **What you are about to do, do quickly (John 13:27).**[1397]

The Adversary took the **phony talmid** over gradually. I don't think that **the devil** ever takes a person suddenly. There are many little falls that permit **the ancient Serpent** to move in gradually. Then finally **he** takes over. **The Lord** gave **Judas** an opportunity to accept **Him** over a three-year period, but **the false apostle** continually turned **his** back on **Him**. Then **the Destroyer of souls** moved in and took **him** over completely.

No one at the meal heard Messiah say: The words are yours, but clearly **Judas** understood. **He** pushed **himself** back from the low-lying table and stood up. For a moment **he** looked down on the reclining figures of **his** friends and then, without saying goodbye, **he** walked around the table, the leather purse swinging from **his** hand, and left. It was an unusual time to leave the Passover table. However, **some of the talmidim thought Yeshua was telling him to buy something for the poor** because **he had charge of the money (Yochanan 13:28-29).** To this day it is still a Jewish tradition to give alms to **the poor**, and that's what the rest of **the talmidim** thought **Jesus** had told **him**.[1398]

As soon as Judas had taken the matzah, he went out. And it was night (John 13:30). It **was** dark, but not **as** dark as **the night** within the heart of **Judas.** And it was also a dark **night** for **Christ** and **His apostles** as we will soon see. Both **Judas** and **Jesus** knew exactly what was going to happen next. Clutching **his** moneybag, **the traitor** walked through the streets to the house of the high priest a mere few blocks away to give Caiaphas the good news. It was time to act.[1399]