

Explaining The Chosen: Season 1, Episode 1: I Have Called You By Name

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If you haven't yet watched The Chosen, make it a point to do so! I usually find Christian movies to be somewhat boring and difficult to get into. But not this one. It's fun to watch, the characters are well developed, and the people act like, well, people!



[The Chosen: Season 1](#)
[Click here to watch!](#)

Another thing I really like is that The Chosen portrays the characters in a realistic cultural context. Jesus is a Jewish guy, doing Jewish things, as are the Jewish people around him. The creators of this series don't seem to fear the Jewishness of the New Testament.

Dallas Jenkins, the show's director and co-writer consults a Messianic Jewish rabbi, [Rabbi Jason Sobel](#), among others, to achieve the most realistic and Biblically accurate story possible.

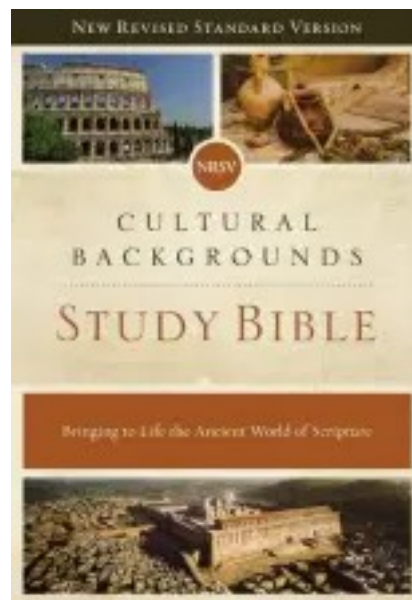
There are many interesting and enlightening things I find in this series that I would have missed before my journey on the [Hebrew Roots path](#), however. I'd like to expand on some of these as they may be unnoticed or easily dismissed but add so much to the series when understood.

Who is Adonai?

When Mary Magdalene is a little girl, she and her father pray the “prayer of **Adonai**”. What they’re praying is from Isaiah 43:1. Most of your translations will say something similar to this:

But now, thus says the LORD, your Creator, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine! Isaiah 43:1

In the original Hebrew for this verse, the word translated “LORD” is יהוה, God’s name. This could be translated “Yahweh” or “Yehovah” but it’s out of respect that it’s traditionally read as “Adonai” when reading it in the Hebrew scriptures.



The **Cultural Background Study Bible** is a wonderful tool for understanding the cultural intricacies found throughout the bible.

The word “adonai” means “god” or “lord”. Just like we use the word “god” to mean “our God” or just any “god”, the word “adonai” can mean THE God or can be a term of respect, like when a commoner addresses a member of royalty.

In this case, they refer to God as “Adonai” just as we call Him “God”.

City of Capernaum

This episode takes place in Capernaum, where Matthew, Peter, Andrew, James, and John were from. During Jesus's time, the fishing village of Capernaum was under Roman rule, which explains the Roman soldiers roaming around and giving much grief to the Jewish people on the show.

Who is Quintus?

In this episode, we meet Quintus, a Roman soldier that served Pilate. But who is he? Is he in the Bible or is he a made-up character?

Although Quintus is not mentioned in the Bible, his name, meaning "fifth" was a common name for a Roman male fifth child. According to the writings of Josephus (The War of the Jews), the books of the Maccabees, as well as archeological sources, there are multiple accounts of a Roman soldier named Quintus. One of these worked under Quirinius, who *is* mentioned in the Bible near the time of Jesus's birth.

I'm not sure exactly which Quintus is portrayed in The Chosen but it certainly is a realistic name for a character, historically. If you know more about Quintus's character, share with the rest of us in the comments!

What are Nicodemus and His Students Wearing?

Aside from being a very cool theatrical addition, Nicodemus's outfit has meaning and is the traditional dress for a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin of that time.

All of Nicodemus's students, as well as other Jewish men in The Chosen, are wearing a prayer shawl called a tallit (tall-eet), with fringes on it called tzitzit (tzeet-tzeet). On the tallit, there's often an embroidered blessing. This is usually the tallit blessing in reference to the command in Numbers 15:37-41:

Blessed are You, LORD, our God, Master of the Universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments (mitzvot) and commanded us to wrap ourselves in the fringed garment (tzitzit).

A tallit is worn in order to adhere to the command to wear tzitzit, which also is a reminder and a symbol of us being surrounded by God, protected by Him, and of His commandments.

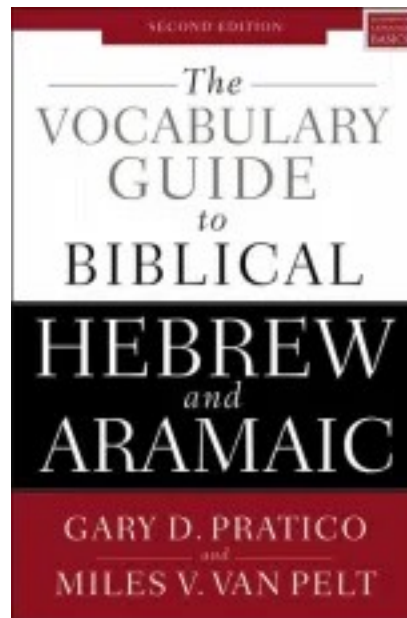
What is a Torah Room?

At one point in this episode, Nicodemus says to Shmuel (Samuel), "A fine Torah room is the heartbeat of a fine synagogue, Shmuel."

Today, a Torah room is a place to inspect Torah scrolls for quality. Those working in the Torah room ensure the scrolls are intact and legible. Torah rooms are where these valuable scrolls are stored and preserved.

Why Do the Women Cover Their Heads?

Women covered their heads in Bible times as a custom in their culture. While not a law they were required to follow, it was considered shameful to have their heads uncovered. Married women covered their heads out of modesty and many Jewish (and some Christian) people still do this today, some whenever they're in public and others just in synagogues.



[The Vocabulary Guide to Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic](#)

Hebrew Vandalism

The writing on the wall Nicodemus and the soldiers pass on the way to the Red District is in Hebrew. It says "the Messiah will overthrow the Romans" or, in Hebrew, **הַמֶּשִׁיחַ יִהְיוּס אֶת הַרֹמָנִים** (Hamaschiach yaharos et haromanim). At this time, the Romans were in power in Capernaum and surrounding areas and, as you can see in the story, were oppressive to the Jewish people.

Exorcism Scene

When Nicodemus is being taken to the Red District for Mary Magdalene's attempted exorcism, he passes pigs on the way. This indicates that this is a pagan area, as pigs are considered unclean animals.

When Nicodemus figures out Mary's possessed by a demon, he asks for Sulfur, Nettles, Hyssop, and Wormwood. He needs these items because he intends to drive the demons out, reportedly by way of fumigation. Smoke and sulfur are used to drive them out. The other items have different purposes in the exorcism procedure as well. The hyssop, for example, is for cleansing.

The All Powerful El Shaddai

It's in the name of the "All Powerful El Shaddai" that Nicodemus casts out the demon indwelling Mary. One of the most sacred names for God in Judaism, you'll also find **El Shaddai** in your own Bible. In Genesis 17:1, God uses this name for Himself when establishing His covenant with Abram. It means "all sufficient God".

Shabbat Dinner

Shabbat is the Hebrew word for Sabbath, as in the **Sabbath day**. This refers to Saturday, which is Yom Shabbat in Hebrew. On **the Hebrew calendar**, days begin the evening before, similar to how our days begin at 12:00 am, which is technically the night before, right? So, Shabbat, the Sabbath Day, begins on Friday.

Simon and Andrew discuss attending Eema's Shabbat dinner and Simon's wife mentions it later as well. Why is this so important? Doesn't Shabbat dinner happen every week? What's wrong with missing a week?

Shabbat dinner is a wonderfully sacred time in a Jewish household. Just after sundown, candles are lit, blessings are said, songs are sung, and families everywhere come together to "remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy". These traditions, some thousands of years old, serve to set apart the Sabbath and to honor the command to keep it.

Yes, it's done every week but Simon and Andrew didn't want to miss it because, well no one does! It's a celebration - a time to leave the hardship and the grind behind and settle down to focus on God and the people you love.

Who's Eema?

We hear of Eema, not only when they discuss Shabbat Dinner, but also when Eden, Simon's wife is "staying at her Eema's tonight". Eema is the Hebrew word for "mom". In this case, they're referring to Eden's mom, Simon's mother-in-law.

The Chosen is rich with a cultural context that's rare to find elsewhere. It brings to life the characters in the Bible, helping our Western minds to grasp what it may have been

like in Jesus's time. It's so well done! Stay tuned for [Explaining The Chosen: Episode 2: Shabbat!](#)

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