

# Explaining The Chosen: Season 2, Episode 1: Thunder

From [HebrewRootsMom.com](http://HebrewRootsMom.com) (copyright 2023, all rights reserved)

Season 1 of The Chosen drew an enormous audience! We got to know the characters we've learned about in the Bible on a personal level through the imaginations of The Chosen's creators. Those of us enamored by **Season 1** were chomping at the bit for **Season 2** to come out, and it didn't disappoint!

Episode 1 of Season 2 brought us back together with the characters we've come to know so well. We get to meet the culprit in the robbery and beating of the man in the Good Samaritan story and be surprised by the compassion Jesus shows him. We also get an inside perspective of what John was possibly thinking when he started writing the Book of John by referring back to creation.

[Looking for my other posts on The Chosen? Here they are!](#)

I've heard from so many of you who enjoyed the explanations I wrote for Season 1 and have asked when I'll cover Season 2. I appreciate your support! To write these posts, I usually watch each episode and take notes on what I find interesting or that needs explanation. I have to admit this episode sucked me in! I kept forgetting to look for things to explain and enjoyed the story – even after watching it numerous times. I did eventually focus and found some exciting points to cover. Here they are!

**“Behold, I am eating a new bug.”**

I know The Chosen's writers added this sentence to the interview with Simon and Andrew for comic relief, but there is some truth to it, as the Bible does say John the Baptizer did eat bugs (Matt. 3:4 and Mark 1:6)!

The “bugs” he ate were locusts. Being a Jewish guy, John would have only eaten animals considered kosher, as listed in Leviticus 11. Locusts fit into a kosher diet because of their leg structure. They have legs that are jointed above their feet, which qualifies them as kosher, as opposed to other bugs (Lev. 11:21). Although we don't consider locusts a delightful addition to our diet, they would have been an adequate source of nutrition in the wilderness, where John spent his time.

**“It was the fourth morning of the third week of Adar.”**

In his interview with John, Matthew (with facial hair! I almost didn't recognize him!) says, “It was the fourth morning of the third week of Adar, sometime in the second hour,” He states that he wants his account to be precise. Now we know this is just a part of his character, but it's important to note here that the Hebrew calendar is precise and has been for thousands of years!

**The Hebrew calendar** is an intriguing subject, and it's unique in that God Himself created it! He says the reason he placed the lights in the sky in the first place was for His calendar (Gen. 1:14-19).

In this scene, Matthew refers to the month of Adar. Adar is a joyful month, where the holiday of Purim is celebrated as indicated in the Book of Esther (Est. 9:20-32). The date he refers to is the 18th of Adar. I'm not sure whether that's significant to the story or the writers just had him use that date to point out that he's being very exact in his testimony.

### **"During Shiva?"**

John's mother (also Jesus's mother) questions his timing in recording the story of Jesus's days on earth. She appears concerned for him and asks, "Why now? During shiva?"

Shiva is a time of mourning as a Jewish custom. When someone in the family dies, the rest of the family "sits shiva." Shiva is three to seven days long, during which time the family stays together in either the deceased's home or another location and takes time to comfort and support each other.

We conclude that the disciples and family members are together at the beginning of this episode to sit shiva in mourning of Big James. John takes advantage of this time when they're all together to get the story of Jesus's life and ministry from those closest to him.

### **Remah**

As I've mentioned in my previous posts on *The Chosen*, I love the names the writers chose for the Biblically unnamed characters.

The word "Remah" means "word" and, more specifically, "a spoken word." This Greek word is used when Jesus responds to Satan while being tempted in the wilderness. He says, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word (remah) that proceeds out of the mouth of God'" (Matt. 4:4), and remah is also the word used for the "things" Mary treasured in her heart (Luke 2:19).

The owner of the field plowed by James and John (we find out he's the robber who beat the man in the good Samaritan story) is named Melech, which means "king," and Chedva is his wife. Her name means "happiness."

### **The High Priest of Sychar**

As they walk through the city, the disciples discuss the invitation Jesus received to have dinner with the High Priest of Sychar. Sychar was a Samaritan city where Jacob's well

was located (John 4:5). The High Priest of Sychar isn't mentioned in the Bible, but his meeting with Jesus would have been a big deal, and here's why.

The Samaritans maintain that the Temple should be on Mount Gerizim, where they say Jacob dreamt of angels descending and ascending (Gen. 28:10-22), Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19), and where the Tabernacle stood (Jere. 7:12). The Bible, however, records these events taking place on Mount Moriah, where the Temple stood in Jerusalem. The fact that the Samaritans worshipped on Mount Gerizim as the holiest place was one of the points of contention between the Samaritans and the Jews.

Because of this, it would have been considered very wrong for the Samaritans to worship on this mountain, and the High Priest would have been totally out of line by practicing there. But, as Mary brings up later in this episode, they weren't allowed to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem either, so they had no place to worship. This disagreement on the appropriate Temple location makes the invite to Jesus from the High Priest of Sychar such an unusual one.

Later in this episode, the disciples find Jesus and introduce him to Gershon, the priest of Sychar. The man is dressed in priestly garments, speaks of a synagogue, and even has the sacred breastplate worn by the priests (Ex. 28). But this man is from Sychar, Samaritan territory. How is he a Jewish priest?

While we should note that this scene isn't in the Bible, the history of the Samaritans explains what's going on here. The Samaritans are of Israelite descent. When the Israelites were taken captive by the Assyrians, some Israelites remained with the Assyrians. Those that stayed intermarried with the pagan inhabitants and adopted some of their religious practices. Gershon (a fictional character, as far as I can tell) would have practiced a similar religion to that of the Jews.

## **Search Torah**

During his conversation with Melech, Jesus tells him to "Believe my words, return to synagogue. Search Torah."

The Torah is the first five books of the Bible – Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy but some also use the word "Torah" to refer to the entire Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh or the Old Testament). So, Jesus was telling Melech he should return to the synagogue and search Torah to hear what God had to say and realign his life with God's plan for him.

Melech responds with, "I never learned to read," but Jesus tells him to listen to the word read aloud. It was common for people not to be able to read in those days, and even those who could would have had a hard time getting their hands on a Torah scroll.

Every Saturday (Shabbat), the scrolls were – and still are – read aloud in Hebrew in synagogues, so people needed to merely show up and listen to access the Scriptures.

**“I don’t always address everything with new converts.”**

Big James wonders why Jesus didn’t correct Neriah when he said the bedroom was haunted. Jesus’s response that he doesn’t address everything with new converts reminds me of the Jerusalem Council’s decision when deciding what to do about the “problem” of Gentiles in the faith.

In Acts 15, an uncommon problem faced the apostles and elders. Many Gentiles had embraced the Messiah, causing them to abandon their pagan lives and worship the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It doesn’t sound like a problem to us, but previous to this time of mass conversion, the Jewish faith consisted mainly of those who were Jewish by birth. The men were all circumcised, and adherence to Torah Law was presumed. Now, numerous people were joining the Jewish faith through the Messiah. To use Paul’s imagery, they were being **grafted in** to the Kingdom of God, just like Gentile Christians are today.

But, as Christians who embrace a Hebraic faith even today know, it’s challenging to learn and align your life with Laws you have only been newly introduced to. To aid these Gentiles in joining the faith, they gave them a short list of just four Laws to start them out.

The decision of the Jerusalem Council is similar to how we disciple new Christians in our churches and faith communities. Although we know there are changes they may need to make in their lives to follow Jesus, we don’t confront them with all of it on the day of their conversion. We know they need time to grow and will be led in sanctification by the Holy Spirit along their walk.



[Modeh Ani Hebrew Art Print](#)

## Morning Prayers

When Jesus wakes up in the morning, he says a prayer before he even gets out of bed. This prayer is a tradition, primarily among Jewish people even today, and it's called the Modeh Ani.

Here's the Modeh Ani in English:

I am thankful before You, living and enduring King, for you have mercifully restored my soul within me.  
Great is Your faithfulness.

It's traditionally said in Hebrew:

מוֹדָה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיִּים. שְׁהַחַזְרַתָּ בִּי נַשְׁמָתִי, בְּחַמְלָה.  
רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתְךָ

The Hebrew is pronounced:

Mo-deh ah-nee leh-fa-neh-ka meh-lech chai veh-ka-yahm. Sheh-heh-cheh-zar-tah bee neesh-mah-tee beh-chem-lah. Ra-bah eh-moo-nah-teh-chah.

It's interesting to note that, in this prayer, we thank God for returning our souls. This idea stems from the thought that sleep is somewhat similar to death in that our souls leave us temporarily when we're asleep. Thanking God for returning our souls can be compared to thanking Him for giving us another day on this earth, as He's the one who blesses us with each new day of life.

## The Sons of Thunder

After rebuking James and John for suggesting Jesus use the power of God to rain down fire on the Samaritans who mistreated them, Jesus gives them the name "the sons of thunder."

This scene comes from Jesus's conversation with James and John in Luke 9:51-56. The term "sons of thunder" was given to these two men by Jesus in Mark 3:17, but the Bible doesn't tell us why. We can assume they tended to over-react or be aggressive by their suggestion to call down fire from heaven and Jesus's rebuke in response.

Another example of James and John's inappropriate boldness came from Mark 10:35-45, when these two stirred up trouble among the disciples, suggesting they be seated on

Jesus' right and left in heaven (encouraged by their mother, Salome in Matt. 20:20-28). Jesus responded that this position wasn't his to grant but his Father's.

## Torah Reading



The priest of Sychar invites Jesus to read from the Torah scroll in their synagogue. Out of everything in this episode, this is my favorite part! It's such an honor to read the words of God from an ancient scroll and in the original language. An invite to read from the Torah scroll at a synagogue is referred to as "Torah honors" in synagogues worldwide today.

It is quite the honor, as the person who will read has to have quite a bit of preparation ahead of time. Not only is the scroll in Hebrew, but it's written without vowels and in an ancient language. It also has no chapter or verse numbers! To give you an idea of what it looks like, here's a close-up taken while my son was reading the Torah scroll at one of our services.

## Books of the Torah

The next scene shows inside the synagogue and the different Torah scrolls in their ark (cabinet where the scrolls are stored). The scrolls are covered with an elaborate cover called a mantle to protect them during storage and when they're being handled.

Gershon shows Jesus to the ark, then tells them which book is in each scroll. There's one scroll for each book in this scene. Some scrolls (like the one my congregation has) have all five books of the Torah in one scroll. He tells Jesus which scroll is which book, and he lists them in order with their Hebrew names:

Genesis (large scroll in the middle) – Bereshit, meaning “In the Beginning.”

Exodus (scroll to the right of Bereshit) – Shemot, meaning “Names.”

Leviticus (scroll to the left of Bereshit) – Vayikra, meaning “And He called”

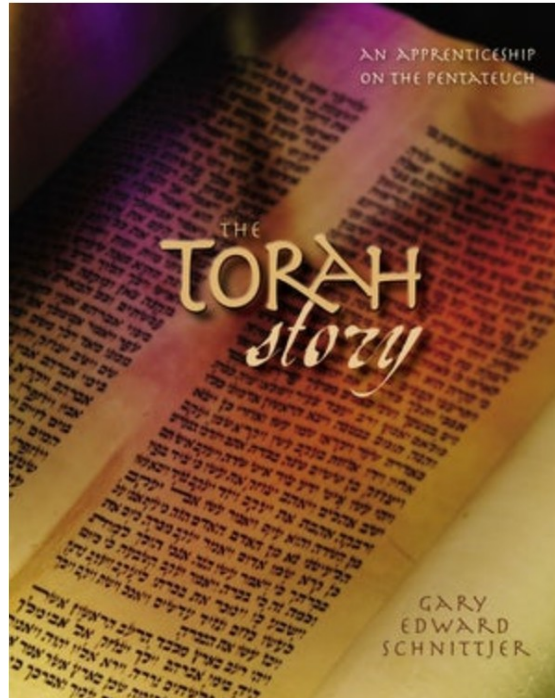
Numbers (scroll on the bottom right) – Bemidbar, meaning, “In the wilderness/desert

Deuteronomy (scroll on the bottom left) – Devarim, meaning “Words.”

The signs in Hebrew below each scroll bear each book's Hebrew name, except one. The sign under the Bemidbar scroll is not only upside down, but it also says “Book of Messages.”

As Gershon leaves, we see the prayer shawl Jesus is wearing. This ceremonial garment, called a tallit, is worn in synagogues and services mainly by men, but some women wear them too. It's a long, towel-shaped piece of material, with tassels on the corners, called tzitziyot (singular- tzitzit). A tallit is worn to remind the wearer of the blessing of being one of God's people. The tzitziyot (tassels) are a reminder of God's commandments from Num. 15:37-41 and Deut. 22:12.

In this scene, we can also see the cherubim on the curtain in the background. The red curtain behind Jesus as Gershon is leaving has a gold outline of a cherub on it. This depiction isn't typically what we think of when we picture a cherub. We probably think of a chubby baby with wings, but a cherub is a supernatural heavenly creature! It's depicted here as a bird-like creature. We know what they look like from the description of the cherubim that were to be atop the ark of the covenant in Exodus 25. Just a note on the Hebrew for cherub vs. cherubim – cherub (כְּרוּב ke-roov) is singular, and cherubim (כְּרוּבִים Ke-roo-veem) is the plural form.



[The Torah Story by Gary Edward Schnittjer](#)

## Torah Only

As John and Jesus discuss what Jesus should read in the synagogue, Jesus gently teases John with examples from Scripture of those who let their emotions get the best of them.

He mentions:

Moses striking the rock instead of speaking to it (Numbers 20).

Baalam hitting his donkey when he was mad (Numbers 22).

Moses breaking the tablets (Exodus 32:15-35).

Jonathan storming away from the dinner table (1 Samuel 20:34).

Samson striking down the men of Ashkelon (Judges 14:19).

After the last two examples, Jesus adds, “Oh wait. They don’t have those scrolls.” He says this because the first five books of the Bible are the only scrolls in this ark, and 1 Samuel and Judges are on separate scrolls that this synagogue apparently didn’t have.

## “I am who I am.”

Here, Jesus quotes God’s response when Abraham asks His name in Exodus 3:14. In Hebrew, God’s response reads literally, “I will be who I will be” (אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה eh-yeh ah-share eh-yah). Jesus refers to this here, and John clearly understands the reference.



The names of God make for a fascinating study! You can learn much about His character by looking for what He's called throughout Scripture.

### **By the Word of the Lord**

When he and John were discussing Creation, Jesus again quoted the Old Testament, as he does in so many times recorded in the New Testament. He quotes David in Psalm 33:6: "By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, And by the breath of His mouth all their host." This verse is simply astonishing. What an awesome Creator we have that can speak even the heavens into existence and a supernatural army to inhabit it! Wow!

### **Jesus's Reading**

Jesus carried the scroll to the bimah, the table on which the scroll is set. Before reading, he removed the mantle and picked up the yad, a pointer to follow along in the scroll while reading. You'll see it when they show a close-up of the scroll. It's a metal hand with a pointing finger. When reading a Hebrew scroll, it's sometimes challenging to keep your place. The scrolls aren't to be touched because oils from our fingers can damage the scroll and smear the ink, so you cannot follow your reading with your finger.

He reads in English because that's what language The Chosen is written in, but these scrolls are read in Hebrew. He starts at the top right corner of the column, reading Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." He reads from right to left, as Hebrew is read.

But would you like to know something interesting? What he's reading isn't Genesis 1:1. In fact, he's not reading from a scroll of Genesis at all! The top of the column on this scroll is Isaiah 4:1, "For seven women will take hold of one man in that day, saying, "We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach!" (NASB). The column continues through Isaiah 5:18, ending in the middle of the verse.

I'm not sure why the creators of The Chosen would have used an Isaiah scroll instead of Genesis. Maybe they didn't have access to one, but I'm sure most of their audience didn't notice the switch anyway.



[Messianic Silver Menorah at Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08K9K9K9K)

## Menorah

You'll notice the synagogue is lit by menorahs (plural is menorot in Hebrew). The menorah is the 7-branch lamp stand mentioned throughout the Old Testament, described in detail in Exodus 25:31-40.

Jewish tradition infers that there's more significance to the menorah than just an item to illuminate a room. It's been compared to the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden and the seven days of creation. For an intense study on the menorah and its relation to creation, check out [The Creation Gospel](#) by Believer Holisa Alewine. Her study and videos are quite compelling!

With the surprise introduction of the thief in the Good Samaritan story, a Torah reading from Jesus, and an idea of where John may have gotten the inspiration for the beginning of the book of John, this episode was just as well done as the others! Keep an eye out for upcoming posts on more episodes of Season 2 of The Chosen.

© 2023 Hebrew Roots Mom, all rights reserved