

Ask The Rabbi – June 1, 2021

Question:

I feel I don't have a clear understanding of the timeline of end times. The what and when of events we can expect. Growing up I was taught about the rapture or the catching away. What is this and how should I understand the meaning of it?

How do I come back with an answer when others argue the following verses that they see as “rapture” verses?

If the Rapture is not true, how do you explain Matt 24:40-41 and Luke 17:34-37.

Response:

The term Rapture has become synonymous in Church teaching and is understood to be a “hidden” or “secret” return of Yeshua, prior to His very public return. Unfortunately, there are no distinct verses that speak specifically to this event occurring. What has occurred is a misappropriation of verses speaking specifically of one event, that being the return of Yeshua and identified as the Resurrection...

Joh 11:23 Yeshua said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Joh 11:24 Marta said, "I know that he will rise again at the Resurrection on the Last Day."

Joh 11:25 Yeshua said to her, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life! Whoever puts his trust in me will live, even if he dies;

Joh 11:26 and everyone living and trusting in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Joh 11:27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

And another event that appears to be supported by Scripture, yet is using the very verses that speak of Yeshua's return as the resurrection, not the “Rapture”

Before we start to unpack the perceived event of the Rapture and ultimately look at the time line pertaining to the events that must take place in order for Yeshua's return to occur, you should be aware of the terminology first.

Terminology:

Pre-Tribulation: The pre-tribulation position advocates that the rapture will occur before the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period, while the second coming will occur at the end of the seven-year tribulation period.

Mid-Tribulation: The mid-tribulation position espouses that the rapture will occur at some point in the middle of what is popularly called the tribulation period, or during Daniel's 70th Week.

Post-Tribulation: The post tribulation position places the rapture at the end of the tribulation period. Post-tribulation writers define the tribulation period in a generic sense as the entire present age, or in a specific sense of a period of time preceding the second coming of Christ. The emphasis in this view is that the church will undergo the tribulation — even though the church will be spared the wrath of God

Prewrath: The prewrath rapture view also places the rapture at some point during the tribulation period

before the second coming. This view holds that the tribulation of the church begins toward the latter part of the seven-year period, being Daniel's 70th week, when the Antichrist is revealed in the temple. This latter half of the seven-year period [i.e. 3 1/2 years] is defined as the great tribulation, although the exact duration is not known.

Partial: The partial or selective rapture theory holds that all obedient Christians will be raptured before, in the midst of, or after the tribulation depending on one's personal fellowship with God and the faith. Therefore, the rapture of a believer is determined by the timing of his conversion during the tribulation.

So, the concept of the "Rapture" is not clear cut. There are different schools of thought pertaining to one's interpretation of the misappropriated verses in question. This is further conveyed in the link I am providing from Wikipedia that offers a great deal of information on the different positions for which I will not be digging into here, in that I consider this to be a rabbit trail that will only lead to further confusion. Needless to say, I am providing the link for anyone who desires to venture through the looking glass into the land of confusion. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture>

My experience has led me to believe that what Adonai has revealed through His Word is not confusing or even complicated, but complex in that it offers layer upon layer of understanding whereby even such complexity can even be embraced by a child.

Mat 18:1 At that moment the talmidim came to Yeshua and asked, "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?"

Mat 18:2 He called a child to him, stood him among them,

Mat 18:3 and said, "Yes! I tell you that unless you change and become like little children, you won't even enter the Kingdom of Heaven!"

Mat 18:4 So the greatest in the Kingdom is whoever makes himself as humble as this child.

Mat 18:5 Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me;

Mat 18:6 and whoever ensnares one of these little ones who trust me, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the open sea!

Thus, we tend to over complicate matters, for when we look at the verses of the passages pertaining to what is identified as the Rapture, I implore you to focus on the P'shat, the plain and simple understanding of the verses themselves. Focus on what they say and allow your mind to instill the mind of Messiah.

Luk 24:44 Yeshua said to them, "This is what I meant when I was still with you and told you that everything written about me in the Torah of Moshe, the Prophets and the Psalms had to be fulfilled."

Luk 24:45 Then he opened their minds, so that they could understand the Tanakh,

Luk 24:46 telling them, "Here is what it says: the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day;

Luk 24:47 and in his name repentance leading to forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to people from all nations, starting with Yerushalayim.

Pro 3:5 Trust in Adonai with all your heart; do not rely on your own understanding.

Pro 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him; then he will level your paths.

Pro 3:7 Don't be conceited about your own wisdom; but fear Adonai, and turn from evil.

Pro 3:8 This will bring health to your body and give strength to your bones.

Does the "Rapture" align with the Tanakh, that is can such a theory be supported not by the Brith Hadoshah verses only but also by Torah and the Prophets? For we know that Yeshua did not do away with them and it

was Torah and the Prophets by which He opened their minds to understanding all that had to be done. If this is true for His first appearance, would it not be true for His second appearance?

Focus on what the Word of Adonai says. Trust in Adonai and the Ruach Ha Kodesh that resides in you as a believer in Messiah.

For starters, we learn of Yeshua conveying to Yochanan in Revelation that He will return soon. Four times in Revelation, Yeshua reveals to Yochanan that He is coming soon.

Rev 3:11 I am coming soon; hold on to what you have, so that no one will take away your crown.

Also conveyed in Revelation 22:7; 22:12 and 22:20

Yet what is soon? Or should I say, when is soon. These verses were revealed to Yochanan towards the end of the first century CE.

Yet, what is soon? By definition it is after a short time. Yet, what is a short time?

An hour is shorter than a day.

A day is shorter than a week.

A week is shorter than a month.

A month is shorter than a year.

I could go on, but hopefully you get the picture. Soon is a non-specific duration of time indicating that it is short, yet short relative to what?

Consider Adonai exists outside of the confines of Time and thus within Eternity. Technically because time does not exist within eternity, then “soon” doesn't exist either. Therefore, “soon” relative to Adonai existing outside of our finite understanding of time by any other means of understanding is a short period of time. Thus, it is not by our standard of how we choose to define “soon”, but His.

We read elsewhere of Yeshua returning.

Act 1:8 But you will receive power when the Ruach HaKodesh comes upon you; you will be my witnesses both in Yerushalayim and in all Y'hudah and Shomron, indeed to the ends of the earth!"

Act 1:9 After saying this, he was taken up before their eyes; and a cloud hid him from their sight.

Act 1:10 As they were staring into the sky after him, suddenly they saw two men dressed in white standing next to them.

Act 1:11 The men said, "You Galileans! Why are you standing, staring into space? This Yeshua, who has been taken away from you into heaven, will come back to you in just the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Barely a moment of time had passed and it was already being proclaimed that Yeshua would be coming back. Even before Yeshua's Resurrection His talmidim asked about His return...

Mat 24:3 When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the talmidim came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that you are coming, and that the `olam hazeh is ending?"

Where and when did the origin of the Rapture?

- 15 year old Scottish-Irish girl by the name of Margaret MacDonald had a vision around 1830 that was later published in 1861 - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_MacDonald_\(visionary\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Margaret_MacDonald_(visionary))
- John Nelson Darby popularized the "secret rapture" during the 19th century. Within the same link above, JND is identified as presenting his Pre-Tribulation Rapture theory as early as 1827.
- William Eugene Blackstone wrote "Jesus is Coming" in 1908 where the word rapture was first used
- Popularized by Hal Lindsey's book "The Late Great Planet Earth" in the 1970s
- Further popularized by Tim LaHaye's "Left Behind" series of books and movies

This link was provided earlier in this document - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture> conveying further details about The "Rapture" theory.

The assumption is that the "Rapture" and the Return of Messiah, that is the Resurrection of the dead are two separate and distinct events. Yet, as we explore the passages used to convey the "Rapture" you will come to realize that the Scriptures pertaining to Resurrection has been misappropriated and applied to the "Rapture".

First we will look at Sha'ul's writings pertaining to the Return of Yeshua as conveyed to believers in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15. Then we will look at Yeshua's response to His Talmidim in Matthew 24. These are the primary passages used when referencing the Rapture theology.

1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18:

Sha'ul's letter to believers in Thessalonica addressed several issues of either misunderstanding or confusion.

Apparently some in Thessalonica expected the return of Yeshua and the end of history so imminently that they had stopped working (1Th 4:11)-just like the cults that appear from time to time announcing that Yeshua is coming back on such-and-such a date: "Sell all your goods! Head for the hills!" (What Yeshua's return has to do with selling one's possessions or living in the mountains is less than self-evident.)

Others in Thessalonica seemed to be unsure of the fate of believers in Yeshua who had died. Sha'ul was well aware that such uncertainty could wreak havoc with Messianic faith that was also prevalent in Corinth for which I will address when we look at Sha'ul's letter to the Corinthians (1Co 15:12-19).

Still others may have been diverted by some false teaching (see 2Th 2:1-3).

2Th 2:1 But in connection with the coming of our Lord Yeshua the Messiah and our gathering together to meet him, we ask you, brothers,

2Th 2:2 not to be easily shaken in your thinking or anxious because of a spirit or a spoken message or a letter supposedly from us claiming that the Day of the Lord has already come.

2Th 2:3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way. For the Day will not come until after the Apostasy has come and the man who separates himself from Torah has been revealed, the one destined for doom.

Thus Sha'ul needed to address misinformation, false teaching or just sheer deception on two separate occasions.

1Th 4:13 Now, brothers, we want you to know the truth about those who have died; otherwise, you might become sad the way other people

1Th 4:14 do who have nothing to hope for. For since we believe that Yeshua died and rose again, we also believe that in the same way God, through Yeshua, will take with him those who have died.

What is the primary subject Sha'ul is addressing in these two verses?

The issue has to do with those who have already died and believers understanding as to what happens to them. Apparently through experience Sha'ul witnessed great stress amongst believers who did not fully understand what happens upon one's dying as a believer in Yeshua. Unlike today where we have our reference Bibles and are reassured by a passage such as

Luk 23:39 One of the criminals hanging there hurled insults at him. "Aren't you the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

Luk 23:40 But the other one spoke up and rebuked the first, saying, "Have you no fear of God? You're getting the same punishment as he is.

Luk 23:41 Ours is only fair; we're getting what we deserve for what we did. But this man did nothing wrong."

Luk 23:42 Then he said, "Yeshua, remember me when you come as King."

Luk 23:43 Yeshua said to him, "Yes! I promise that you will be with me today in Gan-'Eden."

the conveyance of information was not always as fluid, even with the Ruach Ha Kodesh empowering individuals. These letters written by Sha'ul were intended to address many foundational questions that could potentially undermine one's faith.

Sha'ul is relating the very aspect of Yeshua's death and resurrection whereby, they should believe that the same power by Adonai and through the Ruach Ha Kodesh will also do the same for them as well as for their loved ones who's fate rests on their minds.

And thus the words of Sha'ul are based upon the testimony of the Word of Adonai...

1Th 4:15 When we say this, we base it on the Lord's own word: we who remain alive when the Lord comes will certainly not take precedence over those who have died.

Is Sha'ul conveying a direct quote of Yeshua or something more? I see three distinct possibilities.

The Lord's own word, could be referring to something Yeshua said that is not recorded in the Gospels:

Joh 21:25 But there are also many other things Yeshua did; and if they were all to be recorded, I don't think the whole world could contain the books that would have to be written!

Another alternative could be in the manner by which His guiding Sha'ul as he thought about the question troubling the Thessalonians, namely, what would be their share in the events of the Messiah's Second Coming.

1Co 2:15 But the person who has the Spirit can evaluate everything, while no one is in a position to evaluate him.

1Co 2:16 For who has known the mind of Adonai? Who will counsel him? But we have the mind of the Messiah!

And yet a third possibility is by the Word of Adonai (Lord) by which Yeshua conveyed extensively...

Joh 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Joh 1:2 He was with God in the beginning.

Joh 1:3 All things came to be through him, and without him nothing made had being.

Thus, such passages conveying the power of Adonai aligns with the testimony of Yeshua...

Psa 119:145 ק (Kuf) Wholeheartedly I am calling on you; answer me, Adonai; I will keep your laws.

Psa 119:146 I am calling on you; save me; and I will observe your instruction.

Psa 119:147 I rise before dawn and cry for help; I put my hope in your word.

Psa 119:148 My eyes are open before the night watches, so that I can meditate on your promise.

Psa 119:149 In your grace, hear my voice; Adonai, in keeping with your justice, revive me.

Thus the Word of Adonai and the Words of Yeshua are one and the same.

1Th 4:16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a rousing cry, with a call from one of the ruling angels, and with God's shofar; those who died united with the Messiah will be the first to rise;

For we will compare this verse with other passages next week and see the similarity in the messaging Sha'ul conveys and that of Yeshua.

Another aspect of verse 16 to focus on is the order by which events will transpire. Verse 16 focuses on the dead first. Thus the dead united in Messiah will rise first. This doesn't mean only people from the first century CE onward but also includes those before Yeshua who were looking towards the promise of Adonai as was conveyed in Psalm 119:45 – 49 for they were trusting in Adonai (Lord). Now the Lord has revealed a Name by which all will be redeemed by.

Act 4:8 Then Kefa, filled with the Ruach HaKodesh, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people!

Act 4:9 If we are being examined today about a good deed done for a disabled person, if you want to know how he was restored to health,

Act 4:10 then let it be known to you and to all the people of Isra'el that it is in the name of the Messiah, Yeshua from Natzeret, whom you had executed on a stake as a criminal but whom God has raised from the dead, that this man stands before you perfectly healed.

Act 4:11 "This Yeshua is the stone rejected by you builders which has become the cornerstone.

Act 4:12 There is salvation in no one else! For there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by whom we must be saved!"

Not to mention a litany of promises that relate to this very proclamation by Kefa.

And then finally, Sha'ul addresses those who are still alive.

1Th 4:17 then we who are left still alive will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we will always be with the Lord.

Today, this verse is applicable to us, in that we are now the ones who are still alive and remain.

Is there anything in these verses inspired by the Ruach Ha Kodesh and written by Sha'ul that convey anything other than what Yeshua related to Marta...

Joh 11:21 Marta said to Yeshua, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.

Joh 11:22 Even now I know that whatever you ask of God, God will give you."

Joh 11:23 Yeshua said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Joh 11:24 Marta said, "I know that he will rise again at the Resurrection on the Last Day."

Joh 11:25 Yeshua said to her, "I AM the Resurrection and the Life! Whoever puts his trust in me will live, even if he dies;

Joh 11:26 and everyone living and trusting in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

Joh 11:27 She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

Sha'ul's focus is addressing uncertainty pertaining to the Resurrection, that is the Return of Yeshua and believer's concerns pertaining to the death of other believers and how it pertains to Yeshua's return.

The emphasis infused by others pertaining to 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18 is placed upon being “caught up” in the air. Yet there is a passage in Torah conveys what Adonai has promised to do as it relates to the Children of Isra'el...

Deu 30:1 "When the time arrives that all these things have come upon you, both the blessing and the curse which I have presented to you; and you are there among the nations to which Adonai your God has driven you; then, at last, you will start thinking about what has happened to you;

Deu 30:2 and you will return to Adonai your God and pay attention to what he has said, which will be exactly what I am ordering you to do today—you and your children, with all your heart and all your being.

Deu 30:3 At that point, Adonai your God will reverse your exile and show you mercy; he will return and gather you from all the peoples to which Adonai your God scattered you.

Deu 30:4 If one of yours was scattered to the far end of the sky, Adonai your God will gather you even from there; he will go there and get you.

Deu 30:5 Adonai your God will bring you back into the land your ancestors possessed, and you will possess it; he will make you prosper there, and you will become even more numerous than your ancestors.

And also in the Prophets:

Zep 3:16 On that day, it will be said to Yerushalayim, "Do not fear, Tziyon! don't let your hands droop down.

Zep 3:17 Adonai your God is right there with you, as a mighty savior. He will rejoice over you and be glad, he will be silent in his love, he will shout over you with joy."

Zep 3:18 "I will gather those of yours who grieve over the appointed feasts and bear the burden of reproach [*because they cannot keep them*].

Zep 3:19 When that time comes, I will deal with all those who oppress you. I will save her who is lame, gather her who was driven away, and make them whose shame spread over the earth the object of praise and renown.

Zep 3:20 When that time comes, I will bring you in; when that time comes, I will gather you and make you the object of fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth—when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says Adonai.

Next week I will go through 1 Corinthians 15.

It is important to understand the primary passages being used in promoting the “Rapture Theory” in order to be able to lay out an order or sequence of events that are to transpire as conveyed by Scripture. Thus, consider these next few weeks the laying of a foundation.