

Yeshua's Kingdom of Heaven Handbook

Yeshua read and spoke Hebrew at the Synagogue

By Jim Myers

Yeshua was a very skilled reader and speaker of the Hebrew language. Luke 4:16-17 provides us with important evidence that reveals just how skilled of a reader of Hebrew Yeshua was:

And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up and according to his custom on the Shabbat he went into the synagogue and stood up to read. And he was handed the roll of the prophet Isaiah, and having opened the roll he found the place where it was written.

It is surprising how much we learn about Yeshua and a first century synagogue service for this quote:

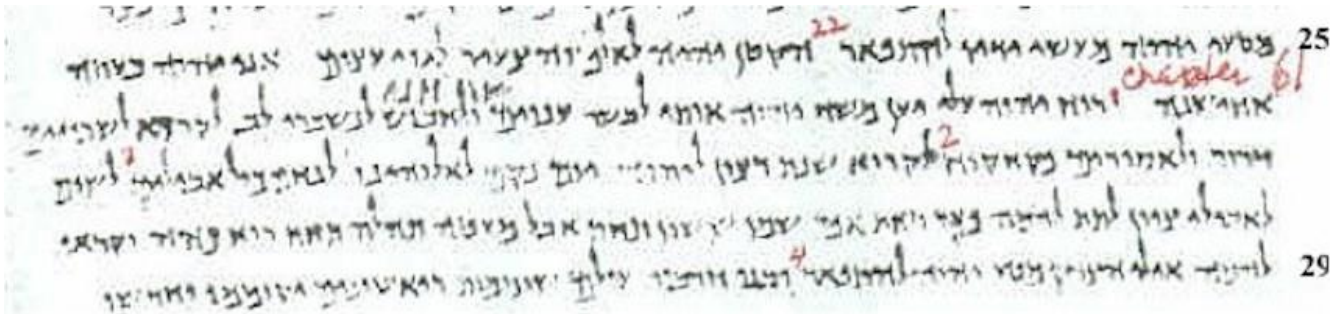
1. Yeshua is in his hometown.
2. It was his custom to go to the synagogue on Shabbat.
3. He stood up to read.
4. Someone handed him the roll of the prophet Isaiah.
5. He opened up the scroll.
6. He found the specific reading for the day.

Now I will add a few more details about the things listed above in order to help you see even more about what Luke's words reveal with a little research.

1. Yeshua's home town was Nazareth, a place with about 500 residents at that time.
2. Shabbat begins at sundown Friday and ends sundown Saturday. All work ceases on Shabbat.
3. This service at the synagogue was probably held on Saturday morning.
4. A synagogue official called the *hazzan* selected the people who will read the scheduled sections of the Torah and the Prophets.
5. The *hazzan* handed Yeshua the roll of *Isaiah*. One of the scrolls discovered at the Dead Sea in Qumran is called the *Great Isaiah Scroll*. It is pictured below and probably very similar to the one Yeshua read in the synagogue that day.



6. The Isaiah roll is made up of 17 strips of leather that were sewn together to make the scroll.¹ It is particularly large, being about 24 feet long and 11 inches high with 54 columns of text.² Yeshua found the portion he was to read at the 49th column, 4 lines from the bottom with no chapter or verse markers. Yeshua was more than just a reader of Hebrew, he had spent a great deal of time working with and studying the rolls of Scriptures in the synagogue too.
7. The portion he found is Isaiah 61:1-2 in Hebrew and English Bibles today. Below are the words he read to his friends and neighbors in the synagogue. The text is written in Hebrew.



Dr. David Flusser was a professor of Early Christianity and Judaism of the Second Temple Period at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He was a member of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and received the Israel Prize in 1980, for his contributions to the study of Jewish history. Lawrence Schiffman, chairman of the Skirball department of Hebrew and Judaic studies at New York University, credited Flusser with pioneering "the modern study of Christianity in the state of Israel in a scholarly context". David Flusser was a devout Orthodox Jew who applied his study of the Torah and Talmud to the study of ancient Greek, Roman and Arabic texts, as well as the Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls.³ Below are Flusser's words:

*Jesus was a Jew in every way. Jesus was part and parcel of the world of the Jewish sages. He was no ignorant peasant, and his acquaintance with the Written and Oral Law was considerable.*⁴

¹ <http://www.ao.net/~fmoeller/gum-intr.htm>

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isaiah_scroll

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Flusser

⁴ David Flusser, *Jewish Sources in Early Christianity* (New York: Adama Press, 1987), pp. 7, 19.