



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 10-14-23 BEREISHEET

Ministry News

IF YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE ON THE LIST TO PRAY FOR YOU CAN SEND THEM TO US AT TOLMM@ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG OR BY TEXT MESSAGE TO 575 644-7706 AND I WILL SEND THEM BY EMAIL ONLY.

Remember that you can support the work of Tree of Life Messianic Ministries with a donation made via PayPal or by check to PO Box 467, Organ, NM 88052. Your donation helps our continued outreach to inmates and the time it takes to put this Newsletter together.

Donate



Tree of Life Messianic Ministries is a 501 C-3 non-profit. To donate go to etz-chayim.org and click on the PayPal or Venmo Link.

Tree of Life Messianic Ministries primarily focuses on its Prison Ministry and helping form groups in the prisons. TOLMM also seeks to help Home Groups and offers a covering for Home Groups and the combined experience of leadership

from Rabbi Philip Hammond and Rabbi Mordecai Silver. Group leaders can receive recognition as Elders under TOLMM, which will help in an advisory role. Your support is needed for the Prison Ministry due to continuing rising costs. We now have an Affiliate in Australia.

HOME GROUPS, CONGREGATIONS AND PEOPLE SEEKING FELLOWSHIP..

Shawn Warren lives in Arizona. If you know of someone who is looking for a group in that area, please let me know and I will send the information to Shawn. Elder Shawn Warren is an Elder affiliated with TOLMM and helps with one-on-one correspondence with inmates in our Prison Ministry Outreach. He also encourages people to contact us about affiliating with TOLMM through Home Groups and our help to group leaders.

Gabriel Martinez has a home group in El Paso. If interested let me know and I will send him the information. Gabriel is an Elder affiliated with TOLMM as is his Home Group, Ohr Ha'Brit Messianic Torah Assembly.

There is a new Home Group in Las Cruces. For more information email tolmm@etz-chayim.org.

Michael and Gayle Michelucci are forming a new Home Group in Idaho.

Rabbi Phillip Hammond has a Zoom Bible Study and a Erev Shabbat and Shabbat Service on Zoom Friday evening and Saturday morning at 11:00am. Rabbi Hammond is in Australia and the time difference would be 5:00pm Friday Mountain Time. Rabbi Hammond is looking into starting a men's group focused in the United States. You can contact Rabbi Hammond at Philip@etz-chayim.org. Rabbi Hammond is now affiliated with Rabbi Mordecai Silver and his ministry, Tree of Life Messianic Ministries. Check out Rabbi Hammond at <https://www.etz-chayim.org/australia-affiliate/>.

We thank you for your support. Blessings in Messiah Yeshua, Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph. D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D. and our team

General News

TO SEARCH FOR MY BOOKS ON AMAZON ENTER “**BOOKS BY RAV MORDECAI SILVER**”. MINE ARE AVAILABLE IN PRINT FORMAT ONLY. I HAVE TWO NEW BOOKS ON AMAZON: RAV SHA’UL AND REFLECTIONS ON TORAH. TO SEE MORDECAI’S BOOKS, GO TO: [HTTPS://WWW.ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG/SHOP-OUR-STORE/PRINT-AND-KINDLE-BOOKS/](https://www.etz-chayim.org/shop-our-store/print-and-kindle-books/)

RABBI MORDECAI HAS A NEW BOOK AVAILABLE. IT IS A SPANISH TRANSLATION OF THE TORAH IS VALID: THE COVENANT OF ISRAEL. IT’S AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.

FOR RABBI HAMMOND’S BOOK, **HIS PERFECT GRACE**, GO TO AMAZON.COM AS WELL.

CHECK OUT RABBI MORDECAI SILVER’S 3 YEARS OF VIDEO TEACHINGS ON THE TORAH PORTIONS AND FESTIVALS ON YOUTUBE.

WE HAVE 7 PRISON AFFILIATES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

MESSIANIC TEACHING ON THE WEEKLY TORAH, HAFTARAH, AND APOSTOLIC SCRIPTURE PORTIONS...



Rabbi Mordecai Silver tolmm@etz-chayim.org

MESSAGE FOR 10-14-23 BEREISHEET

B'Reisheet - In the beginning

Gen. 1:1-6:8

Is. 42:5-43:10

2 Peter-Kefa 3:3-16

Genesis-Bereisheet 1:26-31

26: And God said, "Let us make Man in Our image, after Our likeness. They shall rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and over the animal, the whole earth, and every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." 27: So God created Man in His image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

******Among all living creatures, Man alone is endowed, like his Creator, with morality, reason and free will. He can know and love God and can have spiritual communion with Him; and Man alone can guide his actions through reason. It is in this sense that the Torah describes Man as having been created in God's image and likeness.******

28: God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea, the bird of the sky, and every living thing that moves on the earth." 29: God said, "Behold, I have given to you all herbage yielding seed that is on the surface of the entire earth, and every tree that has seed-yielding fruit; it shall be yours for food. 30: And to every beast of the earth, to every bird of the sky, and to everything that moves on the earth, within which there is a living soul, every green herb is for food." And it was so.

*****in this translation life is referred to as a living soul...the Hebrew for soul is nefesh and is the same word used to describe man's soul...other translations use living thing...**

31: And God saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

Genesis-Bereisheet 2:7

And the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground, and He blew into his nostrils the soul of life; and man became a living being.

Genesis-Bereisheet 6:5-8

5: The Lord saw that the wickedness of Man was great upon the earth, and that every product of the thoughts of his heart was but evil always. 6: And the Lord reconsidered having made Man on earth, and He had heartfelt sadness. 7: And the Lord said, "I will blot out Man whom I created from the face of the ground - from man to animal, to creeping things, and to birds of the sky; for I have reconsidered My having made them." 8: But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

Isaiah-Yeshayahu 42:10-13

10: Sing to the Lord a new song, His praise from the end of the earth, those who go down to the sea and those that fill it, the islands and their inhabitants. 11: The wilderness and its cities will lift their voices, the open cities where Kedar dwells; those who dwell on bedrock will sing out, they will shout from mountain peaks. 12: They will render glory to the Lord and relate His praise in the islands. 13: The Lord will go forth like a mighty warrior, He will arouse vengeance like a

man of war; He will shout triumphantly, even roar; He will overpower His enemies.

2 Peter-Kepha 3:3-16

3: First, understand this: during the Last Days, scoffers will come, following their own desires 4: And asking, "Where is this promised 'coming' of His? For our fathers have died, and everything goes on just as it has since the beginning of creation." 5: But, wanting so much to be right about this, they overlook the fact that it was by God's Word that long ago there were heavens, and there was land which arose out of water and existed between the waters, 6: And that by means of these things the world of that time was flooded with water and destroyed. 7: It is by that same Word that the present heavens and earth, having been preserved, are being kept for fire until the Day of Judgement, when ungodly people will be destroyed. 8: Moreover, dear friends, do not ignore this: with the Lord, one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. 9: The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some people think of slowness; on the contrary, He is patient with you; for it is not His purpose that anyone should be destroyed, but that everyone should turn from his sins. 10: However, the Day of the Lord will come "like a thief." On that Day the heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will melt and disintegrate, and the earth and everything in it will be burned up. 11: Since everything is going to be destroyed like this, what kind of people should you be? You should lead holy and godly lives, 12: As you wait for the Day of God and work to hasten its coming. That Day will bring on the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt from the heat; 13: But we, following along with His promise, wait for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness will be at home. 14: Therefore, dear friends, as you look for these things, do everything you can to be found by Him without spot or defect and at peace. 15: And think of our Lord's patience as deliverance, just as our dear brother Shaul also wrote you, following the wisdom God gave him. 16: Indeed, he speaks about these things in all his letters. They contain some things that are hard to understand, things which the uninstructed and unstable distort, to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.

Let there be light!

There was once a group of students who had come together, with their Rabbi, to celebrate the Shabbat.

The Rabbi prayed for many hours that Shabbat morning, as was his custom. Meanwhile, his students celebrated kiddush and consumed a respectable quantity of 'l'chayim's. Later, when the Rabbi had finished his prayers, his students came and joined him for the Shabbat meal. Then one of the students asked this question of the Rabbi.

"Rabbi, what is a righteous person?"

Replied the Rabbi: "A righteous person is a lamplighter. The lamplighter walks the streets carrying a flame at the end of a stick. He knows that the flame is not his. And he goes from lamp to lamp to light their flame."

Asked another student: "What if the lamp is in a desert?"

"Then one must go and light it," said the Rabbi. And when one lights a lamp in a desert, the desolation of the desert becomes visible. The barren wilderness will then be ashamed before the burning lamp."

Again, another student asked: "What if the lamp is at sea?"

"Then one must undress, dive into the sea, and go light the lamp."

"And this is a righteous person?" the student asked.

For a long while the Rabbi thought. Then he said: "Yes, this is a righteous person."

"But Rabbi, I do not see the lamps!"

Answered the Rabbi: "Because you are not a lamplighter."

"How does one become a lamplighter?"

"First, you must reject the evil within yourself. Start with yourself, cleanse yourself, refine yourself, and you will see the lamp within your fellow. When a

person is himself coarse, God forbid, he sees coarseness; when a person is himself refined, he sees the refinement in others."

The student then asked: "Is one to grab the other by the throat?"

Replied the Rabbi: "By the throat, no; by the lapels, yes."

We include a Traditional Torah Commentary and my Messianic Commentary. The reason for this is so you can see a Messianic Perspective and a Traditional Jewish one. Remember to use discernment in approaching Traditional Jewish teachings as they do not recognize Yeshua as the Messiah. There are various ideas in traditional Jewish circles about the Messiah and even that there is no Messiah, the thinking in Reform Judaism. So, please be careful to balance the teachings.

We do not agree with the Jewish position on Yeshua, but Believers need to know the Jewish thinking on Yeshua and not buy into this thinking and forsake faith in our Messiah. For those who say they would never do this, we must beg to differ, because we have seen it over our lives as Jewish Believer's in Yeshua. We have been Believer's in Messiah Yeshua for decades. We have seen a lot and had many discussions with our fellow Jews and non-Jews who ultimately turned away from Yeshua because they steeped themselves in Jewish teachings. One does not come out of either traditional Judaism or Christianity and come into the Messianic walk, and then going back, or into, traditional Judaism. *There are many good things in Judaism but denying Yeshua as Messiah is not one of them.* Berachot (Blessings), Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph.D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D.

A TRADITIONAL JEWISH PARASHAH AND HAFTARAH COMMENTARY



Parashat Bereshit: Summary Genesis 1:1-6:8

A summary of the first portion of the Torah.

In the beginning of God's creating the heavens and the earth, when the earth was astonishingly empty and dark, God's spirit hovered upon the surface of the waters.

God said, "Let there be light. God saw that the light was good. There was light of day and a dark of night, morning, and evening, one day." God said, "Let there be a firmament, a Heaven, separating the waters and dry land." God named the dry land Earth, and the waters Seas and then God brought forth from the earth seeds and plants and fruit trees. God said, "Let there be for earth light-bearers of a sun for the day, the moon and stars for the night. Let the seas swarm with living creatures and let there be birds to fly in the sky. God saw all that God created was good."

On the sixth day, God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures, each according to its kind, livestock, land animal, beast, or creeper of the ground. Let us make a human, male and female, in Our image. They shall rule over all the living things." So, God created humans and blessed them saying, "Be fruitful and multiply." God saw that all God created was good.

After Heaven and Earth and their array came to exist in six days, God ceased creating on the seventh day and sanctified the day of rest and made it holy.

When God completed Heaven and Earth and there had yet to be rain or man to work, a mist ascended from the earth and watered. And God formed man from the ground and blew into his nostrils the soul of life and man became a living being. God placed the man in the Garden God planted in Eden with its many trees, including The Tree of Life and The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. God said to the man God had created, "You are to work in the Garden and guard it. You can eat fruit from all the trees except the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Bad. For on the day, you eat it, you shall definitely die."

God told the man, Adam, to name all the living things. Afterwards God saw Adam alone. God said, "it is not good for man to be alone" and God cast him into a deep sleep and brought forth what Adam would call "the bone of my bones, the flesh of my flesh," a woman, and named her Eve. "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and cling to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Adam and Eve were naked and not ashamed.

The serpent, now, was the most cunning of all the wild beasts made by God. The serpent said to the woman, "You will certainly not die! God knows on the day you eat from it, your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Eve saw the fruit was beautiful to look at and could be a means to wisdom and ate of it, as did Adam, and their eyes were opened. With open eyes they realized they were naked and rushed to make clothes out of leaves.

The man and the woman heard God in the Garden and hid. God called to man, "Where are you?" And the man replied, "hid because I was naked." God said "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree you were commanded not to eat?" Adam said, "I got it from the woman." And the woman said, "The serpent seduced me and I ate it."

God said, "Serpent beast, you are cursed to slither on the ground. Woman, you are cursed to suffer in childbirth. Man, you listened to your wife and ate what you were told not to eat. Accursed is the ground because of you and you will work by the sweat of your brow. You will work until you return to the ground from which your life began. For you are dust and to dust shall you return."

Thereafter God banished Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and guarded the Tree of Life and Immortality with a cherubic angel and the flame of an ever-turning sword.

Adam knew his wife Eve and when she conceived and bore Cain she said, "I have born a man with the help of God." Eve then bores Cain's brother Abel. Cain became a farmer and made an offering of his fruit to God. Able became a shepherd and gave the best from his flock of sheep. God smiled upon Abel but not upon Cain. Cain became greatly distressed. God said to Cain, "Why are you sad? You can improve. Now is the time you must choose to act good or bad. Sin lusts after you but you can dominate it. Evil tempts you so that you can learn to master it."

In time, Cain killed Abel. God said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" God said, "Your brother's blood cries to me from the ground so now this soil shall no longer give you strength and you shall become restless upon the earth." And Cain replied, "My sin is greater than I can bear, and someone will kill me" God said, "I shall put a mark on your forehead so any would be killers will know your death will be avenged seven-fold."

Cain left God's Presence and settled in the land of Nod with his wife. He became a city-builder, and they had a son Enoch to begin the lineage of Cain. The lineage of Adam begins with Eve giving birth to Seth and then Enosh.

Many generations later, God saw that man's wickedness on earth was increasing. Everyday man's innermost thoughts were plotting evil. God reconsidered God's creation of humans and grieved deeply. God said, "I will obliterate all of my creations, from humans to birds, I will destroy every living thing on the earth." But Noah found favor in the eyes of God.

Discussion Questions for Parashat Bereshit

- 1) How do you separate the light and darkness in your life?**
- 2) Is it the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil or Good and Bad? Why?**
- 3) How do you handle temptation?**

4) What actions have you reconsidered?

Haftarah for Bereshit

To complement the creation of the world, a promise of redemption.

This week's Torah portion tells the story of the world's creation, and the Haftarah provides its own sort of commentary on the Torah's first portion. Isaiah introduces God at the beginning of this Haftarah as "the One who created the heavens and stretched them out, who made the earth and all that grows in it" (Isaiah 42:5).

But Isaiah doesn't stop there. Instead, he draws a connection between creating the world to fulfill a specific task and creating the Israelites to fulfill their covenant. And he urges everyone to proclaim the glory of God: "Let the desert and the villages rejoice?let those who live in Sela sing out, and shout from the mountaintops!" (Isaiah 42:11).

Isaiah's prophecy was delivered to a world in tumult. The Babylonians, who forcibly removed the Children of Israel from the Land of Israel around 605 BCE, were subsequently overthrown by other armies, and the Israelites hoped that they might be allowed to return to their country. God is coming, Isaiah tells them: coming "like a soldier in fury ready for battle?Long enough have I held My peace, I have kept still and held Myself back. Now, I cry out like a woman in labor" (Isaiah 42:14).

The prophet then offers a description that is both frightening and thrilling—of God sweeping through the land in order to reclaim Israel for God's people, destroying mountains and rivers, but also leading the blind and "guiding them along roads they have not traveled" (Isaiah 42:16).

The next verses suggest that it's not physical blindness that Isaiah's talking about, but spiritual blindness: "All who trust in idols and call metal things their gods shall fall back in shame" (Isaiah 42:17). He proceeds to rebuke the Israelites and blame them for their own exile: "Who gave Israel to the despoilers?" Isaiah asks. "It was none other than the Eternal" (Isaiah 42:24). But Isaiah's focus is praise, not punishment, and he follows with a rejoinder to remind Israel of God's promise of a better future: "Have no fear, for I will redeem you; I have called you by name, you are Mine" (Isaiah 43:1).

The Babylonian Exile, Isaiah says, was punishment for Israel's sins. He continues, promising a safeguard through their hardships — "When you walk through fire, you shall not be scorched" (Isaiah 43:2) — promising an eventual redemption. "Have no fear," Isaiah says, now speaking in God's words in a speech that rises into a flurry of triumph, "I will bring your

offspring from the east, I will gather you in from the west. Be sure that I am God, and I alone can deliver you” (Isaiah 43:10-11).



From the Desk of Rabbi Philip Hammond. Ph.D.

Rabbi Hammond can be contacted at – Philip@etz-chayim.org

LIFE IS WHAT IT IS??

TIME TO TAKE STOCK!

There are defining moments in our lives. These can arrive at any time. Sometimes we are given forewarning, other times we have them arrive on our doorsteps unannounced. These moments can be difficult to navigate, resulting in positive to negative outcomes. A number of these defining moments are due to our own decisions whilst others are “forced” upon us. Some of these defining moments allow us to have an influence on the outcomes, yet there are many we have little if any influence over. It is how we handle these moments that is vital to our health and wellbeing. At times positive outcomes can eventually turn into negative outcomes. The same goes for what can appear to be negative outcomes. They can often turn out to have positive outcomes.

The bible is full of examples where this is the case. The nation of Israel is a prime example. Take the time to evaluate the relationship change between the Children

of Israel and HaShem when “things” are going well and when “things” are not going so well. You will notice that when Israel is doing well, the people will find themselves drifting further and further from HaShem. What starts out as a “positive” position ends up becoming a “negative” position. Taking the reverse position, we quickly discover that when Israel is in a challenging or “negative” position, they will often end up in a very “positive” position. This is due to their despair, causing them to turn to the Holy One of Israel, who rescues and directs them along a path that results in a change of direction and attitude. The exodus from Egypt is a prime example.

As a people we can learn much from this. It is my opinion that we are presently under the system of Pharaoh. We are under hard task masters who have no interest in us as individuals. I am becoming more convinced that we are fast finding ourselves in positions that we have no control over, thus defining moments are being thrust upon us. Very few people who are in positions of power have any interest in showing faithfulness to HaShem. In fact, most, if not all, reject the Torah and prefer to install their own rules and regulations. This puts those of us who want to be faithful to HaShem in a “negative” position. We are being forced out of the “conversation” to the extent that we can quickly find ourselves before the courts of the land if we show our faithfulness to HaShem. Are we coming to the point whereby this defining moment is bringing us back to HaShem the Holy One of Israel? Only HaShem can rescue us from this dilemma that has been thrust upon us. We must beseech Him with a contrite heart, asking Him to supply us with the strength, wisdom, and faithfulness we require to fight the good fight.

I am convinced that we face a continuing hatred of HaShem, HaMoshiach and Torah from most of the populace. Not only are we facing this challenge, but I am persuaded this hatred will increase with new dangers arriving on our doorstep. We often hear the quote, “never again” in relation to the holocaust, but these words ring hollow when you witness the support for those who hate Israel and the Jewish people.

Friends, I fear it may not be far into the future when we experience another defining moment in our lives. It would be a relief to be totally wrong on this occasion, but I think not.

I suggest you find HaShem whilst He can be found and turn this negative into a wonderful positive.

“Seek HASHEM, all you humble of the land who have fulfilled His law; seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be concealed on the day of HASHEM’S anger.” Zephaniah 2:3 [AST]

Insights into Judaism



Why Hebrew is of Central Importance in Judaism

Hebrew is the sacred language of Jewish scripture and prayer and also the language of the modern Jewish state.

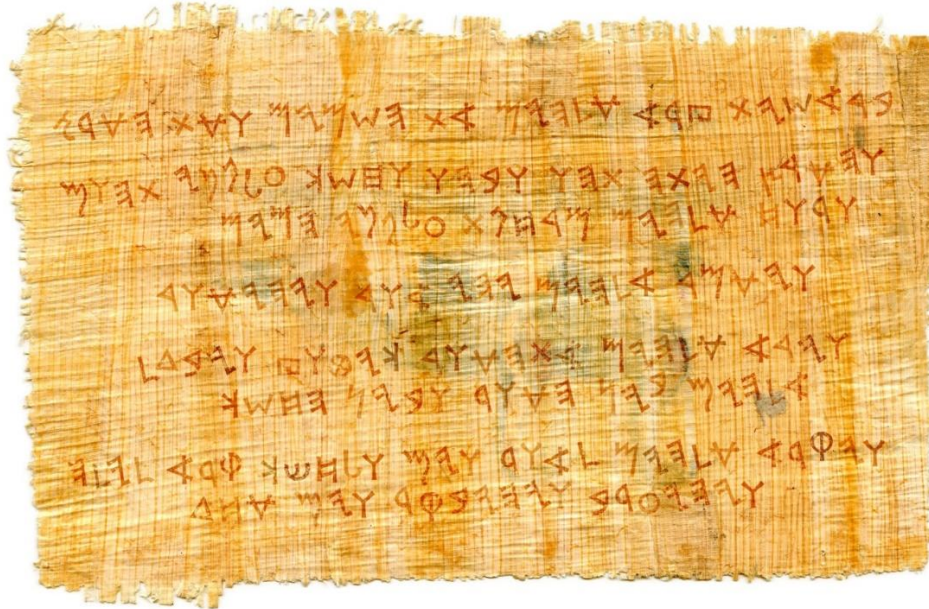
Hebrew is one of the oldest spoken languages in the world and the sacred language of the Jewish people. It is the only language ever to be revived as a spoken language — nearly 2,000 years after it ceased being one.

A Brief History of Hebrew

Hebrew was the language spoken in biblical times by the ancient Israelites. One of the original names for this language, and the one it is called today, is *ivrit*, because it is the language spoken by a people called the *ivrim*, or the Hebrew people. But it goes by many names in ancient Jewish texts, most frequently *lashon hakodesh* — the holy tongue.

Archaeologists have uncovered examples of written Hebrew that are 3,000 years old, though people only familiar with modern Hebrew script find them indecipherable because they are written in an older alphabet. Scholars refer to this ancient Hebrew script as paleo-Hebrew and

ancient rabbis called it *libona'ah*, perhaps from the word *livanah* meaning brick or tile — a nod to the blocky shape of the letters. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls are written in this ancient script and today Samaritan Hebrew continues to use an alphabet derived from it.



Genesis 1:1–5, written on a 3,000-year-old papyrus fragment in paleo-Hebrew. (Getty)

Everything changed for the Jewish people and their language in 586 BCE, when the Babylonians destroyed the First Temple and sent a large portion of the populace into exile. In the wake of that disaster, scholars believe, many if not most Jews began to speak other languages, especially Aramaic, which became ascendant with the rise of the Persian Empire less than a century later. In this period, Hebrew did not disappear, but it became the language of scripture and liturgy while other languages were spoken in the street. Also in this period, Jews began to write Hebrew in a new script heavily influenced by Aramaic, a precursor of the modern Hebrew script.



Commentary on Habbakuk ca. 1st century CE, found at Qumran, that uses the newer Hebrew script. (Wikimedia Commons)

By late antiquity (somewhere between the 2nd and 4th centuries CE), in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple, Hebrew completely ceased to be a spoken language among Jews. However, it remained an important language of scripture, prayer and learning. Over the next millennium and a half, Jews scattered across the globe spoke the languages of the countries in which they found themselves, but they were able to communicate with other Jews using Hebrew. This common language made it possible for Jews to become prominent global traders in the medieval and early modern periods and kept Jewish communities connected through centuries of dispersion.

Modern Revival

Hebrew is the only known example of a language being revived as a spoken language millennia after it stopped being one. This achievement is due largely to the efforts of one man, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who championed Hebrew as the language of the future State of Israel. Many of his contemporaries suggested languages like Yiddish that were already spoken by many Jews should be the Jewish national language. Ben-Yehuda, however, strongly believed that Hebrew was a better choice. He famously raised his son to speak only Hebrew (when no one else on the planet spoke Hebrew as a first language) and developed hundreds of modern words to update the language, eventually producing a 17-volume dictionary. His mission was successful and Hebrew became the official language of the State of Israel when it was created in 1948, 26 years after Ben-Yehuda's death.

Today, Hebrew is the native language of over 9 million people. The Academy of the Hebrew Language uses Ben-Yehuda's principles to continually invent and approve new Hebrew words. Because it was largely a language frozen in texts for so long, modern Hebrew is not terribly removed from ancient forms. It is grammatically different from biblical Hebrew, but not wildly so. It is closest to mishnaic Hebrew (a version used to write the Mishnah in the 3rd century), and more dissimilar to later rabbinic Hebrew, which adopted many Aramaic words and phrases.

Learn more about Eliezer Ben-Yehuda and his unprecedented efforts that led to revival of spoken Hebrew.

Sacred Language

Jews refer to Hebrew as *lashon hakodesh*, the sacred language (Berakhot 13a, Sotah 49b), in part because it is the language of the Jewish Bible, and also because, according to the Jewish scriptures, Hebrew played a key role in the creation of the world. In **Genesis 1**, God creates the world by speaking Hebrew.

Jewish tradition holds that Hebrew words are brimming with meaning, both manifest and hidden. In the Talmud, Rabbi Akiva is particularly skilled at teasing out the many hidden meanings in Hebrew words, teaching his students to adduce meaning not only from the words,

but from individual letters and even the decorations used by scribes to illuminate the script. The Talmud records:

When Moses ascended on High, he found the Holy One, Blessed be He, sitting and tying crowns on the letters of the Torah. Moses said before God: “Master of the Universe, who is preventing You (from giving the Torah without these additions)?” God said to him: “There is a man who is destined to be born in several generations, and Akiva ben Yosef is his name. He is destined to derive from each and every thorn of these crowns mounds upon mounds of *halakhot* (laws).

Menachot 29b

Another Jewish way of deriving meaning from Hebrew is through the practice of *gematria*, Hebrew numerology. Gematria assigns a numerical value to each letter of the Hebrew language, through which one can calculate the value of words and phrases to find additional insights. The best-known example is the Hebrew word *chai* (חַי), meaning life, which has the value of 18. Eighteen is considered a lucky number and Jews often give monetary donations in multiples of it. The Talmud contains many other examples of meanings derived through gematria. For instance, *hasatan*, meaning “the satan,” has the numerical value of 364. The rabbis explain that this is because the satan is allowed to prosecute humankind for 364 days out of the year, but on Yom Kippur, when humans are atoning and God is judging, he is not permitted to prosecute (Yoma 20a).

Ancient rabbinic authorities disagree as to why Hebrew is a sacred language. Maimonides (*Guide of the Perplexed*, 3:8) says that Hebrew is sacred because it has no words for things like male and female genitalia, sperm, urine, or excrement — preferring euphemisms in their place. Nahmanides (commentary to Exodus 30:13) disagrees, claiming that Hebrew is sacred because God created the world through Hebrew letters and spoke to the prophets in Hebrew.

Nahmanides was one of many Jewish mystics inspired by the idea that Hebrew was the vehicle through which God created the world. The kabbalists attached many interpretations to the letters themselves, which they believed could be arranged in 70 different ways to write the name of God. Kabbalistic exercises included many meditations on the letters, which were thought to represent various kinds of cosmic forces. This idea found early expression in *Sefer Yetzirah*:

He hath formed, weighed, transmuted, composed, and created with these twenty-two letters every living being, and every soul yet uncreated.

Sefer Yetzirah 2:2

Today, Hebrew continues to be the dominant language for Jewish prayer around the world. Though some Jewish movements have experimented with more prayer in the vernacular, virtually all Jewish communities conduct a significant component of the prayer service in Hebrew. This remains the case even though most non-Israeli Jews are not fluent in the language and many ancient Jewish sources assert that one can pray in any language.



Thoughts and Prayers

Don't be confused about the function of Jewish prayer.

“Our thoughts and prayers are with you.” What can this mean in the wake of something horrible? If prayer is a way of changing the world, it is too late. What good can prayers do for the victims now?

The 17th-century rabbi, Leon de Modena asked us to imagine watching a man pull his boat to shore. If you were confused, you might think that he was really pulling the shore to his boat. People have much the same confusion about prayer: Some believe that you are pulling God closer to you. But in fact, heartfelt prayer pulls you closer to God.

Seen this way, prayer is a sturdy rope of solidarity, one that acknowledges that we are in this together. In a free society when something terrible occurs, as Abraham Joshua Heschel taught, few are guilty but all are responsible. Prayer says: “I am with you. I might have done more. Your pain is not separate from my deeds and my life. I pray that you will have comfort, and that I, along with others who know of your suffering, will work to make a world in which such pain is banished.”

עבריי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

ירא yare

Meaning: *to fear*



A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Crazy Knesset

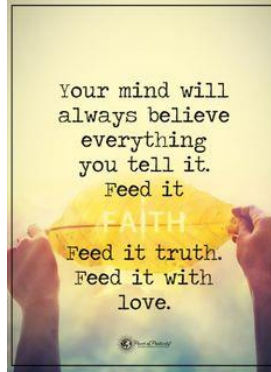
Israel's economy is in a bad way, inflation is getting higher, and immigrants are flooding in from all over the world. Problems, problems, problems, but what should they do? So, the Knesset holds a special session to come up with a solution.

After several hours of talking without progress one member, Yitzhak, stands up and says "Quiet everyone, I've got it, I've got the solution to all our problems. We'll declare war on the United States."

Everyone starts shouting at once. "You're nuts! That's crazy!"

"Hear me out!" says Yitzhak. "We declare war. We lose. The United States does what she always does when she defeats a country. She rebuilds everything; our highways, airports, shipping ports, schools, hospitals, factories, and loans us money, and sends us food aid. Our problems would be over.

"Sure," says Benny, another minister, "And what if we win?"



This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup Recipes shared by Cooks and Bakers

Jerusalem Bagels with Ranch Labneh



***They're not boiled and they are long and oval, but
they're still called bagels.***

Despite bearing the name of a bagel, Jerusalem bagels are uniquely Israeli, and rarely found outside of Israeli markets and restaurants... but I'm hoping that will change!

Jerusalem Bagels have very little in common with bagels as we know them across North America and much of Eastern Europe. Jerusalem bagels likely got their name from their ring-shape, but unlike other bagels, Jerusalem

Bagels are oblong, and oval rings, covered in a layer of nutty sesame seed, and lighter than their dense, round, traditional bagel cousins.

Traditional bagels are boiled before baking, whereas Jerusalem bagels skip that important step and are cooked only in a hot oven. This step of submerging bagels in a sweetened water bath can make bagel-making time consuming, messy, and intimidating, which is why I love making Jerusalem bagels, a simpler, streamlined process that still satisfies my bagel craving. The best part is that they are fully coated in sesame seeds, no skimping on toppings here!

While in Israel, it is common to dip Jerusalem bagels into fresh herby za'atar and enjoy it on the go, I like to think outside of the box, with a tangy, creamy, and herbaceous labneh-based ranch dip. Labneh is one ingredient I *always* have on hand. If you've never tried labneh, think of it as a mix between yogurt and cream cheese... but better! Labneh is a yogurt-based cheese made of strained yogurt. It's thick, creamy, and a little tangy. Because of the yogurt base, I find that my lactose-intolerant digestive system can digest it without any worries.

Ingredients

BAGELS:

- 2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 cup warm water
- 4 tablespoons olive oil divided
- 2 tablespoons [honey](#)
- 1 7 g package instant yeast
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 cup sesame seeds

RANCH

- 1/2 cup labneh
- 2 tablespoons mayonnaise
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh chives
- 1 garlic clove minced
- 1/4 teaspoon lemon zest

- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- ½ teaspoon salt

Directions

BAGELS

1. In a large bowl or base of a stand mixer, fitted with the dough hook, combine the flour, warm water, 3 tablespoons olive oil, honey, instant yeast, and salt. Mix using a wooden spoon or the stand mixer until a smooth dough forms, about 8-10 minutes by hand, or 5-7 minutes using a mixer. If needed, tip it onto a floured surface to roll. It will be slightly sticky.
2. Remove from the bowl and add 1 tablespoon olive oil to the bowl. Return the dough to the bowl, and cover with a clean dish towel. Let rise in a warm place for 45 to 60 minutes, or until doubled in size.
3. Once risen, punch down the dough to release any air bubbles. Divide the dough into 6 even balls, slightly smaller than a baseball.
4. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking tray with parchment paper.
5. Use your index fingers to poke a hole in the center of the dough, pulling and stretching into a 9 to 10 inch oval. Place on the lined baking tray. Repeat with remaining dough.
6. Fill a rimmed baking tray or dish with ½ to 1-inch of water. Add the sesame seeds to a separate tray or dish. Dip the shaped dough into the water, and cover with sesame seeds. Return to the lined tray. Repeat with remaining bagels.
7. Let rest for 10 minutes.
8. Bake for 18-20 minutes, or until golden.

RANCH LABNEH

1. Meanwhile, make the Labneh Ranch. Combine the labneh, mayonnaise, parsley, dill, chives, garlic, lemon zest, lemon juice, and salt in a medium bowl.
2. Dip the bagels into the ranch.

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