



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 11-25-23 VAYETZE

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 11-25-23 VAYETZE

Vayetse – And He Went Out

Genesis 28:10-32:2

Hosea 11:7-14:9

Revelation 7:1-17

Genesis 28:10-15

*Jacob departed from Beer-sheba and went toward Haran. He encountered the place and spent the night there because the sun had set; he took from the stones of the place, which he arranged around his head, and lay down in that place. And he dreamt and behold! A ladder was set earthward, and its top reached heavenward; and behold! Angels of God were ascending and descending on it. And behold! The Lord was standing over him, and He said, "I am the Lord, God of Abraham your father and God of Isaac; the ground upon which you are lying, to you will I give it and to your descendants. Your offspring shall be as the dust of the earth, and you shall spread out powerfully westward, eastward, northward, and southward; **and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you and by your offspring.** Behold, I am with you; I will guard you wherever you go, and I will return you to this soil; for I will not forsake you until I will have done what I have spoken about you."*

Hosea 14:5-10

I will rectify their waywardness; I will love them gratuitously; for My anger has turned away from them. I will be to Israel like the dew, and he will blossom like a rosebush, and his roots will strike out like the (cedars of) Lebanon. His tender branches will go forth, and his glory will be like (that of) the olive tree and his fragrance like that of Lebanon. Those who dwell in his shade will return; they will revive (like) grain and blossom like a vine; their repute (will be) like the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim (will say), 'What more need have I of idols?' I will respond and I will gaze upon him. I am like an ever-fresh cypress tree; your fruit will be provided from Me. Who is wise and will understand these things; (who is) understanding and will know them? For the ways of the Lord are straight; the righteous walk in them and sinners will stumble over them.

Jewish commentary says this about this passage: An essential part of repentance is that one feels remorse for his past failings and sincerely resolves to improve. Thus, the penitent begins by begging God to look favorably upon his good intentions and to accept the prayers, confession, and pledges of his lips in place of, and as more worthy than, fatted bull offerings, which may look superficially impressive but are lacking in inner content.

Revelation 7:16-17

"They will never again be hungry, they will never again be thirsty, the sun will not beat down on them, nor will any burning heat. For the Lamb at the center of the throne will shepherd them, will lead them to springs of living water; and God will wipe every tear from their eyes.

There is a passage in the Midrash that describes our relationship with God as that of a child to his father, a sister to her brother, a bride to her groom, a vineyard to its watchman, and so on.

Each of these examples expresses another part of the relationship: the inherent bond between God and those who believe in Him, the love and affection, God's guardianship over us, our being a source of joy to Him, etc.

But what does the sheep/shepherd example represent?

If the point is that God provides for us and protects us, or that we are subservient and devoted to Him, these elements also exist in the father/child relationship. What unique aspect of our relationship with God can be expressed only by describing us as His sheep?

The sheep's dominant trait is its meekness and obedience. The child obeys his father but does so for many reasons; the sheep does not obey for any reason - it is simply obedient by nature. It is this element of our relationship with God that the sheep represents: an unquestioning subservience which derives not from our understanding of His greatness and our feelings toward Him (in which case it would be defined by the limits of our understanding and feelings), but from the recognition that "I am His sheep."

To be a follower of God you must become like a sheep, because our self-negation and unquestioning obedience to God is the foundation of our walk of faith.

Of course, we are not only God's sheep - we are also His children, His bride, His sister, and His vineyard.

Being a believer in God means studying His Word, developing a passionate love and reverent awe for God, and teaching His wisdom and implementing His will in an oft-times hostile world. But the foundation of it all – the base from which all these derive and upon which they are all based - is our simple commitment to God, a commitment that transcends reason and emotion.

Isaiah 49:10 echoes the passage from Revelation 7:

They will not hunger, and they will not thirst; heat and sun will not afflict them, for their Merciful One will lead them, and along streams of water will He guide them.

I want to close with this passage from Isaiah 25:9

And they will say on that day, 'Behold, this is our God; we hoped to Him that He would save us; this is the Lord to Whom we hoped, let us exult and be glad in His salvation.'

His Y'shua...

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 Vayetzei: Summary Genesis/Bereisheet 28:10-32:3

Jacob flees to his uncle Laban's household and lives there for several years, marrying Laban's daughters, Leah, and Rachel, and building a large family.

Genesis 28:10 - 32:3

On his way to his uncle Laban's, Jacob dreams of a ladder that stretches up from earth to heaven. There are angels of God ascending and descending the ladder.

God stands behind Jacob and says, "I am God, the God of your father Abraham and the God of your father Isaac. I will give to you and your seed the land where you are sleeping. And your seed will be as dust of the earth and spread in all directions, and through you will all the families on earth be blessed. I am with you and will guard you. I will not leave you until I have accomplished what I have promised."

Jacob and Rachel Meet

Jacob awoke from his sleep, saying, "Truly, God is in this place and I did not know it. This is a house of God. This is a gate of heaven."

The next morning, Jacob anointed a memorial stone with oil and named the place Beth El. Then Jacob made a vow, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this path and give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, and I will return in peace to the house of my father, then God shall be God to me. And this memorial stone shall be a house of God, and all that God will give to me, I will tithe to God repeatedly."

Jacob continued his journey. He saw a well in the field and three flocks of sheep lying there. There was a rock that was to be moved from the well in order to access the water. Jacob said to the men gathered there, "Do you know Laban?"

"Yes," they answered. "He is well and his daughter, Rachel, the shepherdess, will soon be coming with her sheep."

Soon, Rachel did come with her father's sheep. When Jacob saw Rachel, he caused the rock to roll from the mouth of the well in order to water the sheep. Jacob kissed Rachel, then wept. Thereupon Jacob told Rachel that he was her kinsman, and she ran and told her father. Jacob ended up staying with Laban for a month.

Laban and Jacob Make a Deal

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Even if you are my kinsman, should you serve me without compensation? What shall your wages be?"

Now, Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was Leah and the younger daughter was Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel and said to Laban, "I will serve you seven years for your younger daughter, Rachel." Laban agreed. So Jacob served for Rachel seven years, but they were only a few days in his eyes because of his love for her. And Jacob said to Laban, "My working days are complete. Give me my wife."

Laban threw a big feast. When it was evening, he took his eldest daughter Leah, and brought her to Jacob for their wedding night. But when morning came and Jacob saw it was Leah, he said, "What have you done to me? Did I not serve you for Rachel? Why have you deceived me?"

Laban responded, "It is not our tradition to give the younger daughter before the elder. Complete the wedding week with Leah and we shall give you Rachel for another seven years of work."

The Tribes are Born

Jacob served another seven years, and Laban gave him Rachel. Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah. When God saw that Leah was the hated one, God opened her womb. Leah conceived and bore a son, Reuben, for, "God has looked into my affliction! Now my husband will love me!" She conceived another son, Shimeon, saying, "God has heard that I am the hated one and has given me another son." Then she had another son, Levi, saying, "Now my husband will attach himself to me for I have borne him three sons." Next she had Judah, saying, "Now I shall give thanks to God." Then Leah stopped conceiving children.

When Rachel saw she had not born Jacob any children, she envied her sister. She said to him, "Give me children or else I will die."

But Jacob was angry with Rachel saying "Am I in God's place? Who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

So Rachel gave Jacob her maidservant, Bilhah. Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son. Rachel said, "God has judged me and has heard my weeping and given me a son," and called him Dan. Bilhah then bore Jacob another son, Naphtali, for "I have fought a Divine struggle with my sister and I have prevailed."

When Leah saw she was no longer bearing children, she gave her maidservant Zilpah to Jacob. Zilpah bore Jacob a son, Gad, saying, "Good fortune has come." Zilpah then bore Jacob another son, Asher, for Leah said, "I am happy in my progress, for women have praised my progress."

Then Leah conceived a fifth son for Jacob. She called him Yissakhar, saying, "God has given me my wages because I gave my maidservant to my husband." Leah conceived a sixth son, Zebulun, for Leah said, "God has given me a good portion, now my husband will make his home with me, for I have borne him six sons." Leah also bore Jacob a daughter, Dinah.

God Remembered Rachel

Then God remembered Rachel. God opened her womb and she bore Jacob a son, saying, "God has taken away my disgrace." She named him Joseph, adding, "May God give me yet another son."

At this time, Jacob said to Laban. "I want to go home."

Laban answered, "I believe that God has blessed me for your sake. What shall I give you?"

They agreed upon an arrangement where Laban's animals were divided. God tells Jacob in a dream that it is time for him to return to his homeland.

While Laban is away from the house, Rachel steals her father's idols and Jacob leaves without saying good-bye. When Laban heard that Jacob had fled, he came after them. But God came to Laban in a dream saying, "Do not speak to Jacob either good or bad."

Stolen Idols

The next day, Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You have robbed my heart, taking my daughters like prisoners of war. Why did you flee in secret? I would have sent you away with joy and songs. It is within my power to hurt you, but your God told me not to. I can see you wanted to go home, but why did you steal my gods?"

"I left secretly because I was afraid you might take your daughters from me by force. But with whomever you find your idol gods, he shall not remain alive." Now, Jacob did not know that it was Rachel who had taken the idols. Rachel had them underneath her on the cushion of the camel, so when Laban searched, he could not find them.

Now this made Jacob angry. He said, "What is my crime and what my sin that you pursued me? For twenty years, I have worked for you, serving fourteen years for your two daughters, six years for your flock and you changed my pay ten times. Had it not been for my God, you would now have sent me away empty-handed. God saw my misery and proved it in your dream last night."

Laban answered, "Now, all that is here is mine. Let us make a covenant, between us. If you should cause my daughters to suffer or if you take wives besides my daughters, God is our witness." And they took stones and raised it high as memorial stones and then had a feast.

The next day, Laban rose early and blessed them and returned home. Jacob went upon his way and angels of God met him. Jacob then called this place, Mahanayim, "a camp of God."

Parashat Vayetzei Discussion Questions

1. Do you believe that God determines who shall conceive children and who shall be barren? Why or why not?

2. After deceiving his father, Isaac, Jacob then becomes deceived by his mother's brother, Laban, with his marriage. Do you believe people get what they give? If so, does it always work as clearly as with Jacob? Can you give an example of it happening in your life?

3. Why do you think Rachel stole the idols? Have you ever stolen anything? If so, why did you steal?

4. The mothers in the story are very specific with the naming of their children, with each name having meaning. What does your name mean?

Haftarah for Vayetzei Hosea 12:13-14:10

Hosea tells the Israelite kingdom: God's punishments will be harsh, but repentance is possible.

This week's Torah portion tells of Jacob fleeing his home and agreeing to work for seven years for the right to marry Rachel. Haftarah Vayetze begins with an allusion to this event.

Hosea mentions this part of Jacob's life story as he speaks about the sinful ways of Jacob's descendents—the northern tribes of Israel, which he refers to by the name of one major tribe, "Ephraim."

Hosea explains their iniquity: "When Ephraim spoke with trembling, he was lifted high in Israel, but through an idol he incurred guilt and died" (13:1). He then adds: "They [the people] add sin to sin, making for themselves molten images" (13:2). Ever since the northern kingdom of Israel split from Judah, under the reign of King Jeroboam I, the people of Israel had been guilty of idolatry. Generations later, while Hosea prophesies, this problem still exists.

Hosea uses metaphors from nature to describe how God will punish Israel. Israel will disappear like the morning clouds and the dew (13:3). God will act violently, like a lion, leopard, and bear—and Israel will be the prey (13:8). Hosea mocks the people of Israel, "Where now is your king? Let him save you!" (13:10). The message is clear: God will punish harshly, and salvation can come from nowhere but God.

In the second half of the haftarah, Hosea pleads with the Israelites to repent (14:2). Again, Hosea uses metaphors from nature, but this time in a positive way: "He (Israel) shall blossom like the lily, shall strike root like the Lebanon tree" (14:6). This part of the haftarah, which stresses repentance and the potential for change, is also read on Shabbat Shuva—the Shabbat between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

In the end, Hosea promises that the people of Israel will abandon their idolatry and return to God. And they will come to understand: "Straight are the ways of the Eternal: while the righteous walk in them, transgressors stumble on them" (14:10).



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

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

WHO WANTS TO PLEASE THE FATHER?

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ Stop worrying about what the world thinks of you, worry about what YHVH thinks of you!
- ▶ Stop thinking about what the world can give you, think about what YHVH can give you!
- ▶ Stop building kingdoms that reflect the world, but rather build that which reflects YHVH!
- ▶ Stop thinking what about the loses, but think about the gains in YHVH!
- ▶ Stop putting ourselves 1st, instead put YHVH 1st and foremost!

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ And *when* the people complained, it displeased YHVH: and YHVH heard; and his anger was kindled; and the fire of YHVH burnt among them, and consumed *them that were* in the uttermost parts of the camp.² And the people cried unto Moses; and when Moses prayed unto YHVH, the fire was quenched.³ And he called the name of the place Taberah: because the fire of YHVH burnt among them.⁴ And the mixt multitude that *was* among them fell a lusting; and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat?⁵ We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: ⁶ but now our souls dried away: *there is* nothing at all, beside this manna, *before* our eyes.⁷ And the manna *was* as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium.⁸ And the people went about, and gathered *it*, and ground *it* in mills, or beat *it* in a mortar, and baked *it* in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil.⁹ And when the dew fell upon the camp in the night, the manna fell upon it.¹⁰ Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of YHVH was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased. Numbers 11:1-10

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ Read the bible with focus and intent– you will see pattern after pattern...
- ▶ One such pattern is YHVH bringing His people up and out of Egypt.
- ▶ Another sad pattern is the continued disobedience of Israel as a nation.
- ▶ Another encouraging pattern is even amongst all the disobedience and complaining is a remnant who remain loyal to YHVH.
- ▶ Great news– YHVH will remain faithful to the remnant... those who please Him through heart circumcision, even if they have been led astray by false shepherds.

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ **Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith YHVH. ²Therefore thus saith YHVH God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith YHVH. ³And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase. ⁴And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith YHVH. ⁵Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. ⁶In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this *is* his name whereby he shall be called, YHVH our righteousness.**

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ Intentionally or unintentionally many Pastors, Priests, Teachers, Leaders have led the Children of Israel astray.
- ▶ Having been brought up on a sheep farm, I know the importance of good animal husbandry– shepherding. Protecting the flock, in all areas of welfare.
- ▶ What a warning and statement **Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith YHVH.** This has been a problem down through the ages...
- ▶ **For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: ¹¹ whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.** Titus 1:10-11

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.² And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.³ And through covetousness shall they with feigned [fabricated, fictitious, artificial] words make merchandise of you: 2 Peter 2:1-3a
- ▶ Destroy and scatter... that is what false prophets, false teachers, do. Yet we must also realise that sheep will destroy and scatter themselves, even if a good shepherd is in charge.
- ▶ Yeshua is the perfect Shepherd but we see...

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard *this*, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it? ⁶¹ When Yeshua knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you? ⁶² *What* and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before? ⁶³ It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life. ⁶⁴ But there are some of you that believe not. For Yeshua knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. ⁶⁵ And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. ⁶⁶ From that *time* many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. John 6:60-66
- ▶ Not every lost sheep can be blamed onto bad shepherds. In fact most of the blame is due to decisions people make by themselves.
- ▶ Yeshua had some strong words about doing things our own way...

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.² But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep.³ To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out.⁴ And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.⁵ And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers.⁶ This parable spake Yeshua unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them.⁷ Then said Yeshua unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep...

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ ⁸ All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them.⁹ I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.¹⁰ The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.¹¹ I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.¹² But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep.¹³ The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep.¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine...

Who wants to please The Father?

- ▶ **15 As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. 17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. 18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.**

John 10:1-18

- ▶ Shepherds and sheep have a responsibility...
- ▶ The good news is [we need plenty of that] despite the interference of questionable shepherds, if we stay faithful to Yeshua through teshuvah - embrace His instruction YHVH will gather us from:

- ▶ therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; ¹⁰ Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. ¹¹ For thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I, even I, will both search my sheep, and seek them out. ¹² As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out my sheep, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. ¹³ And I will bring them out from the people, and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. Ezekiel 34:9-13

Who wants to please The Father?



- ▶ Who wants to please The Father? All children of Israel should... as
- ▶ We serve a wonderful God, as there is no God like the God of Israel and no nation like the nation of Israel.

Insights into Judaism



12 Things To Know About the Temple in Jerusalem

On Tisha B'Av, Jews mourn the destruction of the Temple. But how much do you know about what it was really like?

Long ago, as prescribed by the Hebrew scriptures, Jewish worship revolved around the Temple in Jerusalem. For a thousand years, the Temple was a hub for offering sacrifices of all sorts (peace offerings, thanksgiving offerings, atonement offerings and more) every day of the year. On the three annual pilgrimage festivals — Passover, Shavuot and Sukkot — all Israel was invited to ascend to Jerusalem to offer special sacrifices and celebrate. The Temple also served as an important administrative center of the Jewish people.

All this came to a screeching halt in 70 CE when the Temple was destroyed in a devastating war with the Romans. In its wake, rabbinic Judaism (the Judaism practiced by virtually all Jews today) and its central text, the Talmud, laid the foundation for Jewish ritual and worship in a world without the Temple.

Though the Temple is long gone, it is far from forgotten. The construction of the Temple is described in great detail in the Hebrew Bible, and its practices are meticulously documented and parsed in the Talmud. An entire annual holiday — Tisha B'Av — is given over to mourning its absence from Jewish life. And a piece of the Temple — the western retaining wall of the platform on which it stood, called the Kotel or Western Wall — is today one of the holiest sites for Jews.

Even though remembering the Temple remains a central part of Jewish practice today, it can be difficult to grasp just how central the Temple was to ancient Jewish life. Here are 12 facts that help illustrate what the ancient Temple was really like, and what it has meant to Jews throughout history.

1. There were actually two Temples on the same spot

The first Temple, built by King Solomon in approximately 1000 BCE, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. When the Persians conquered the Babylonians almost a century later, they agreed to let the Jewish leaders who had been taken into exile return to the land of Israel where they would rebuild the Temple. This Second Temple stood for hundreds more years, then was thoroughly renovated and expanded by Herod the Great in the last few decades before the beginning of the Common Era. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

According to Jewish tradition, both Temples were destroyed on the ninth day of the month of Av. Tisha B'Av (literally: Ninth of Av) commemorates the destruction of both Temples, as well as other disasters in Jewish history, both ancient and modern.

2. The Temple was built on a mountain that goes by many names

Jerusalem is in the hill country. The Temple was situated on one particular rise that goes by many names in the Hebrew scriptures. The Torah never identifies the mountain, but simply talks about “the place God will choose to rest His name” (e.g. [Deuteronomy 12](#)).

The specific mountain is identified in Isaiah and the Book of Psalms as Mount Zion (e.g. [Isaiah 60:14](#), [Psalms 125:1](#)). The biblical Book of Chronicles, however, calls it Mount Moriah ([2 Chronicles 3:1](#)). [Micah 4:1](#) refers to it generically as Har Beit Adonai — meaning “The Mount of the House of the Lord.” [Jeremiah 26:18](#) shortens this to Har HaBayit, “The Mountain of the House,” commonly translated as the Temple Mount. This last name, Temple Mount, is used frequently in the Mishnah and Talmud and other rabbinic literature.

3. The Temple stood on the spot where the world began

According to the Talmud, on the top of Mount Moriah is a foundation stone from which God created the whole world ([Yoma 54b](#)). This same foundation stone later lay under the Holy of Holies, the most sacred room of the Temple. Ancient interpreters also believed that more than a millennium before the Temple was built, the stone was the site of the Binding of Isaac.

4. The exact location of the Temple is still debated today

The Temple definitely stood on the Temple Mount — that has always been an agreed fact and has been confirmed by archaeologists. However, where *exactly* it stood is a matter of debate. Some believe that it was in the exact location of the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim shrine (highly recognizable on the Jerusalem skyline) which houses the foundation stone. Another view agrees with a statement in the Talmud (Berakhot 54a) which says it was aligned with the Eastern Gate, which would place it slightly north of the Dome of the Rock. There is also a theory that it was situated slightly east of the Dome of the Rock.

5. After the First Temple was destroyed, the priests returned the keys to God

[Taanit 29a](#) describes a remarkable scene that took place as the First Temple was being destroyed by the Babylonians:

When the Temple was destroyed for the first time, many groups of young priests gathered together with the Temple keys in their hands. And they ascended to the roof of the Sanctuary and said before God: Master of the Universe, since we did not merit to be faithful treasurers, and the Temple is being destroyed, let the Temple keys be handed to You. (Taanit 29a)
The priests' final act of divine service was to throw the keys up to heaven, where a divine hand reached out of the clouds to catch them. Then the priests threw themselves into the flames consuming the Temple.

6. The Temple was enormous

Picturing something the size of a synagogue? Not even close. In the first century, when Herod renovated the Temple, he began by building a retaining wall around the Temple Mount and then constructing a platform over the top, turning the mount into a four-sided plateau 37 acres in area.



Pictured: A 1:50 scaled model of the Second Temple and the Old City as it is believed to have looked in 66 CE. The model is located at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, Israel.

The Temple complex itself contained a series of courtyards surrounding the central room, the Holy of Holies, which was only entered once a year, on Yom Kippur, by the high priest. In addition to the large courtyards and Holy of Holies, the Temple complex contained many other storage and administrative rooms, plus numerous ritual baths for purification. The whole system was fed by an aqueduct that brought water from 10 kilometers away, and it was protected by high walls and a series of gates.

To get a sense of the scale, consider that the Kotel, the famous Western Wall that is a central Jewish holy site, is what remains of just a piece of the western side of the retaining wall built around the Temple Mount.

The Western Wall in Jerusalem. (Photo by Anton Mislawsky)

7. The Temple was messy — and smelly

The primary purpose of the Temple and its staff (the priests and Levites) was to offer sacrifices to God. It was open for business 365 days a year. Many of these sacrifices were animals that were brought live into the Temple and slaughtered in the courtyard before some or all of their flesh and/or blood was offered on the altar. On pilgrimage festivals, all of Israel came from near and far to offer sacrifices. As a result, the courtyard of the Temple ran almost constantly with animal blood, while the smell of sacrifices on the fire probably pervaded most of Jerusalem. (The smell was largely the point — that fragrant smoke is what went up to God.)

Some sacrificial blood was carefully collected and sprinkled on the altar as part of the ritual. Much of it, however, was rinsed away via channels that were built into the floor and conducted it out to the nearby Kidron River. The water of this river, enriched by this blood, was sold to farmers as fertilizer ([Mishnah Yoma 5:6](#)). Despite this impressive ancient plumbing system, the Temple stones required regular deep cleaning. [Mishnah Middot chapter 3](#) indicates that there was also a schedule for whitewashing the stones of the Temple, as well as the altar and ramp leading up to it.

8. The Second Temple was missing a few key items

In Tractate Yoma of the Babylonian Talmud, the Gemara lists significant items in the First Temple that were not in the Second Temple:

The Ark of the Covenant, and the Ark cover upon it, and the cherubs that were on the cover; fire; and the Divine Presence; and the Divine Spirit; and the *urim v'tummim* (the stones in the high priest's breastplate). (Yoma 21b)

Some of the most religiously charged items in the First Temple were apparently already lost to history in the time of the Second Temple. Whereas the first Holy of Holies contained the Ark of the Covenant that housed the Ten Commandments Moses had brought down from Sinai (both pairs: the one he smashed when he discovered the Golden Calf and its replacement), the second Holy of Holies stood empty. Likewise, the special stones the high priest used for divination purposes (*urim v'tummim*). Even God's presence, this text suggests, which literally dwelt in the First Temple, was absent from the second.

There is a rabbinic legend (Shekalim 16) that the Ark of the Covenant was not destroyed with the First Temple, but secreted away beneath one of the flagstones in the floor of the Temple. When a priest accidentally discovered it and tried to tell others, God smote him before he could get the words out. Clearly, it was meant to stay hidden.

9. The Temple was a party zone

Think Jewish Temple worship was all serious business? Not at all. Joy was an integral aspect of Jewish worship. On Sukkot in particular, the Temple became the site of a carnival that, according to the Talmud, was unlike anything else around:

One who did not see the festival of water-drawing never saw celebration in his days. (Sukkah 51a)

The Talmud continues describing Simchat Beit Hashoevah, the water-drawing festival. During this nighttime celebration, golden candelabras hoisted onto poles burned so brightly they illuminated the entire city. The festival featured dancing, juggling, singing and a full orchestra of Levite musicians.

10. Synagogues are designed to mirror the Temple

Since it was destroyed for the second time in 70 CE, Jews have not been able to worship at the Temple. But elements of the Temple ritual are brought into Jewish practice, including in the architecture of the synagogue. The ark of the synagogue, which houses the Torah scrolls, mirrors both the Ark of the Covenant that held the original Ten Commandments and also the Holy of Holies, the chamber where it was stored — which was also screened by a curtain. The *ner tamid*, or eternal light, that hangs above the ark recalls the fire of the altar. And in synagogues where men and women sit separately, the women's section is called the *ezrat nashim*, the courtyard of the women, as was the area of the Temple permitted to women.

As the synagogue mirrors the Temple, the prayers said inside it are explicitly linked to the sacrifices. In particular, the three traditional recitations of the Amidah each day — Shacharit (morning), Mincha (afternoon), and Maariv (evening) — parallel the sacrifices offered at those times in the Temple.

11. Real Temple treasures might still be in the Vatican

The Arch of Titus, a first-century monument built to celebrate the destruction of Jerusalem, depicts the Romans marching back to Rome after having destroyed the Second Temple. Their hands are full of treasure, including vessels of gold and silver and the famous seven-branched menorah made entirely of pure gold that was lit at all times in the Temple. Though these treasures have never been recovered, some speculate they may remain locked in the vaults of the Vatican.

12. Jews don't agree about whether a Third Temple should be built

For thousands of years, Jews have mourned the destruction of the Temple on Tisha B'Av and prayed for its reconstruction. But it has never happened, even now that a Jewish state exists in the land of Israel. There are many reasons for this.

First, the Temple Mount is under Muslim authority and home to a sacred Islamic shrine, the Dome of the Rock. A Temple could not be built on that spot without destroying it.

Second, not all Jews believe God has granted them authority to rebuild the Temple. Many hold that only God will build it.

Third, Judaism has flourished for thousands of years without a Temple. Since the rabbis say that Torah study and prayer can replace Temple service, there is less urgency to bring back a Temple. And many Jews agree with Maimonides that sacrifices are no longer the best way to worship God. Early leaders in the Reform movement even named their houses of worship temples to signify they had abandoned the traditional Jewish longing to rebuild the Temple.

There are, however, a minority of Jews who are preparing to build a Third Temple, by studying Temple worship practices and constructing implements to be used in the Temple when it is rebuilt.



Early Jewish Conceptions of God

Early Jewish literature was not concerned with proving God's existence or categorically defining God's nature.

Early Jewish literature was not concerned with proving God's existence or categorically defining God's nature.

In the Hebrew Bible, God plays many roles and has many personalities. God is a judge, lawgiver, liberator, creator, father, king, and shepherd. Oftentimes, God's attributes seem contradictory. God is said to be, "merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (Exodus 34:6), but God is also a vengeful warrior. Unlike the conception of God as perfect, all-knowing, and all-powerful developed by the medieval philosophers, the God of the Bible is conflicted. As Jack Miles puts it in *God: A Biography*: "After each of His major actions, He discovers that He has not done quite what He thought He was doing or has done something He never intended to do."

The God of the Bible has real personality. God is depicted in nonphilosophical, human terms. God experiences anger and patience, jealousy and love. God is even described using physical imagery. God delivered the Israelite slaves from the Egyptians with, "a mighty hand and an outstretched arm" (Deuteronomy 26:8). In addition, the God of the Bible is accessible to humankind. God speaks through prophets and performs miracles for all to see. God's dialogue with humankind is not a one-way relationship. God listens to the complaints of humans, even when they concern God Himself. Abraham, disturbed that God wants to destroy Sodom, challenges God to reconsider, "Will You sweep away the innocent along with the guilty?...Shall not the Judge of the earth deal justly?" (Genesis 18:23,25)

Two attributes of the biblical God—God's creative capacity and God's oneness—stand out in both their centrality and their novelty. The Bible begins with the creation story, in which God orders

a chaotic, cosmic mess into an orderly world in six days. The Bible does not discuss where God came from. This makes it unique in ancient Near Eastern literature, whose stories about the world's creation begin with the birth of the gods. God's role as a creator is especially significant because it is in the context of creation that humans are described as being "in the image of God." Monotheism is, arguably, the fundamental teaching and contribution of the Hebrew Bible. "Hear O Israel, the Lord is your God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4), for Jews perhaps the best-known verse in the Torah, is recited in the *Shema* prayer, a central element of Jewish liturgy.

God as portrayed in rabbinic literature (the Talmud and midrash) is very similar to the God of the Bible. The Rabbis do not try to define God, and they continue to describe God in multiple, human terms. However, some differences do emerge. In rabbinic literature, God is a bit more removed from humankind. God no longer communicates with humans through prophets and is no longer considered an active religious legislator (the rabbinic sages occupy this role). In a famous talmudic dispute, a group of rabbi's rule in favor of a majority opinion that directly contradicts a heavenly voice. The passage concludes that, "the Torah is not in heaven." God, it seems, is not the final arbiter of religious law.

The conception of God in the heikhalot literature (a genre of mystical literature contemporaneous with the classical texts of rabbinic literature) is also worth noting. The mystics who wrote and studied heikhalot literature tried to achieve visions of the divine throne similar to the one described in the first chapter of the biblical book of Ezekiel. The representation of the physicality of God is striking in this form of mysticism. In the *Shiur Komah*, the most radically anthropomorphic mystical text, God's physical proportions are described in detail. For example, God is said to have a neck 130.8 million miles in length and fingers each 150.3 million miles long.

Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE), a contemporary of the early *tannaim* (the authors of early midrashic works and of the Mishnah) was the first Jewish philosopher. He deviated from the norms of early Jewish discourse about God, integrating Greek thought with Jewish tradition and explaining God in an abstract philosophical way, quite similar to the methods eventually employed by the medieval Jewish philosophers.

עֵבְרִי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

Always, Forever / תָּמִיד

Pronounced: tah-MEED

A ner tamid, or "eternal lamp," stays lit in synagogues at all times.

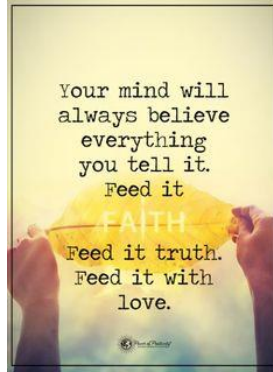


A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Dying Language?

A funeral procession was moving slowly down a narrow street on the Lower East Side of New York. Their route took them past the offices of the last Yiddish Newspaper left in the city.

One of the editors saw the funeral procession and called to his colleague, "Hey Mottel, print one less!"



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



Macaroons made with ground pistachios, almonds or cashews are Sephardic Passover favorites.

Macaroons made with ground pistachios, almonds or cashews are nothing like their coconut cousins. They're soft and pillowy on the inside with a delicate, flaky shell. The French sandwich a soft layer of ganache between two of them, while the Italians cover them with slivered almonds or pine nuts.

Nut-based macaroons, in fact, are the original Passover cookie. Sicilians under Islamic rule in the 9th-10th centuries adopted these Persian almond-based confections and made them their own. They used almond paste, ground pistachios or pine nuts to make these small melt-in-your-mouth cookies, which are today known as amaretti or pignoli. To this day, Italian, Sephardic and Syrian Jews enjoy these soft, nutty cookies during Passover.

Italian Almond Cookies

If you don't have apricot jam, replace it with an additional 1/4 cup (50g) of sugar. You can also use **orange marmalade** in place of the apricot jam, whizzing it in a mini-food processor until smooth. (If your apricot jam isn't smooth, that'll smooth it out, too.) If you want to keep them extra-simple, you can also skip rolling them in sliced almonds and simply bake them nudi (see picture, below.) They're excellent like that way as well. As mentioned, I used pine nuts for some of the cookies, which you're welcome to use as well in place of the sliced almonds. Traditional Sicilian cookies often have bitter almonds added, which are very hard to find. (Amaretti di Saronno use **apricot kernels**.) Most almond extract is made from bitter almonds, so I often add a bit to desserts that use almonds, to highlight their flavor. But do go easy on the almond extract; it's a flavor that can quickly become overpowering. A few drops should do it.

Servings25 cookies

For the cookie dough

- 3 cups (290g) blanched almond powder, (see Notes)
- 1 cup (200g) sugar
- 3 large egg whites, at room temperature
- pinch of salt
- 3 tablespoons smooth apricot jam
- a few drops of pure almond extract

For finishing the cookies

- 1 large egg white
 - 1 1/2 – 2 cups (120-160g) sliced almonds, blanched or unblanched
1. In a large bowl, mix together the almond powder and sugar. In a separate bowl, whip the egg whites with a pinch of salt until they start to mound and form soft, peaks. They should not be stiff, but the consistency of softly whipped cream.
 2. Fold the beaten whites into the almond mixture (they'll lose volume, which is fine), then fold in the apricot jam and a drop or two of almond extract. Mix the dough until it comes together in the smooth ball. You may need to get into it with your clean hands to help knead it together.

3. Preheat the oven to 325°F (160°C.) Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.
4. Pinch of pieces of dough about 1 1/4-inch (4cm) in diameter and roll each into a ball, then roll them in your hands to make them into ovals, setting them on a dinner plate as you go. (You can also bake them in rounds, if you wish.)
5. In a small bowl, stir the egg white with a fork briskly for about ten seconds to break it up. Put the sliced almonds on a plate. Working with 3 or 4 at a time, roll each piece of rolled cookie dough in the egg white and place it in the dish containing the sliced almonds.
6. Roll and press the ovals of dough into the almonds, being extremely generous coating when coating with the almonds. I start with 1 1/2 cups of sliced almonds in the bowl, and add more as necessary. After coating each batch of cookies with the almonds, put them on a baking sheet, evenly spaced apart. (You may need to press the almonds well into the cookies to get a lot of them to stick, and the cookies may lose their perfect oval shape – which is fine, the cookies should be a bit rustic.)
7. Bake the cookies for 25 to 30 minutes, rotating the baking sheets in the oven, turning them around so the cookies bake evenly, until the cookies and nuts are light golden brown. Let cool before serving.

Notes

Storage: Once cool, the cookies can be stored in a container at room temperature for up to one week. I would not recommend freezing them as it will change their toothsome texture.

Notes: Almond powder often goes by the name almond meal, almond powder, or almond flour. It's simply ground up almonds. If in doubt, check the ingredients; the only one should be almonds. If you can't find it, you can pulverize the equivalent amount of sliced, blanched almond (by weight) in a food processor with the sugar called for in the recipe. You can read more at my post - [Almond Flour FAQs](#).

Almond flour is available in well-stocked grocery stores, natural food stores, and [online](#). (If you need help finding it, check out [How to Find Foods Mentioned on the Site](#).) If you can only find unblanched almond powder, that's fine to use, although the color will be different.

For a twist, you can try another powdered nut, such as pistachio or hazelnut.

Donate



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

Ministry Outreaches
 *Prison Outreach
 *Weekly Newsletter + more-subscribe (free)
 *Become an Affiliate
 *Bible Studies and Home groups
 *Erev Shabbat and Shabbat Zoom group

Contact us for more info -
 tolmm@etz-chayim.org

*Tree of Life Messianic Ministries
 Australia Affiliate*

Shabbat Service
 Saturday 11am
 [AEST]
 Zoom

Bible Study
 Wednesday
 7:00pm [AEST]

Men's Group
 Sun: 7:30pm

*Philip Hammond
 Phone: 0416087400 or
 61 + 416087400
 Philip@etz-chayim.org*

