



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 1-6-24 SHEMOT

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 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 8 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 1-6-24 SHEMOT

SH'MOT - NAMES

Exodus - Shemoth 1:1-6:1

Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23

Jeremiah 1:1-2:3

1 Corinthians 14:18-25

This week we start a new Book of the Bible. The Book of Shemoth-Exodus. The story of Moses. But before we embark on the story of Moses, we need to close out the story of Joseph and his brothers.

We read in Exodus 1:6-7 the following:

And Yoseph died, and all his brothers, and all that generation. And the children of Yisrael bore fruit and increased very much, multiplied, and became very strong, and the land was filled with them.

Beginning of the fulfillment of the covenant between G-d and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Fulfillment of God's word to them in that they needed to come into Egypt to become a nation. God was preparing the people. This was just the beginning.

In Exodus 2:23-24 we read this:

And it came to be after these many days that the sovereign of Mitsrayim died. And the children of Yisrael groaned because of slavery, and they cried out. And their cry came up to Elohim because of the slavery.

And Elohim heard their groaning, and Elohim remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Yitzhaq, and with Ya'aqob.

Exodus 3:1-15

3:1 Now Moshe was tending the sheep of Yitro his father-in-law, the priest of Midyan. Leading the flock to the far side of the desert, he came to the mountain of God, to Horev. ² The angel of ADONAI appeared to him in a fire blazing from the middle of a bush. He looked and saw that although the bush was flaming with fire, the bush was not being burned up. ³ Moshe said, "I'm going to go over and see this amazing sight and find out why the bush isn't being burned up." ⁴ When ADONAI saw that he had gone over to see, God called to him from the middle of the bush, "Moshe! Moshe!" He answered, "Here I am." ⁵ He said, "Don't come any closer! Take your sandals off your feet because the place where you are standing is holy ground. ⁶ I am the God of your father," he continued, "the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya'akov." Moshe covered his face because he was afraid to look at God. ⁷ ADONAI said, "I have seen how my people are being oppressed in Egypt and heard their cry for release from their slavemasters, because I know their pain. ⁸ I have come down to rescue them from the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that country to a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey, the place of the Kena'ani, Hitti, Emori, P'rizi, Hivi and Y'vusi. ⁹ Yes, the cry of the people of Isra'el has come to me, and I have seen how terribly the Egyptians oppress them. ¹⁰ Therefore, now, come; and I will send you to Pharaoh; so that you can lead my people, the descendants of Isra'el, out of Egypt." ¹¹ Moshe said to God, "Who am I, that I should go to Pharaoh and lead the people of Isra'el out of Egypt?" ¹² He replied, "I will surely be with you. Your sign that I have sent you will be that when you have led the people out of Egypt, you will worship God on this mountain." ¹³ Moshe said to God, "Look, when I appear before the people of Isra'el and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you'; and they

ask me, 'What is his name?' what am I to tell them?"¹⁴ God said to Moshe, "Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh [I am/will be what I am/will be]," and added, "Here is what to say to the people of Isra'el: 'Ehyeh [I Am or I Will Be] has sent me to you.'"¹⁵ God said further to Moshe, "Say this to the people of Isra'el: 'Yud-Heh-Vav-Heh [ADONAI], the God of your fathers, the God of Avraham, the God of Yitz'chak and the God of Ya'akov, has sent me to you.' This is my name forever; this is how I am to be remembered generation after generation. (CJB)

This is probably one of the most famous arguments in the Bible. Moses standing before Elohim and arguing with Him. It represents the same battle that we have when He calls us.

Now we come to Exodus 5:21. Listen to what it says here because it sets the stage for not only what is going to happen between Moses and the people, but the people and Elohim.

And they said to them, "Let Adonai look on you and judge, because you have made us loathsome in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of his servants.

12. Isaiah 28:1-13

28:1 Woe to the proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim, And to the fading flower of its glorious beauty, Which is at the head of the fertile valley Of those who are overcome with wine!² Behold, the Lord has a strong and mighty agent; As a storm of hail, a tempest of destruction, Like a storm of mighty overflowing waters, He has cast it down to the earth with His hand.³ The proud crown of the drunkards of Ephraim is trodden under foot.⁴ And the fading flower of its glorious beauty, Which is at the head of the fertile valley, Will be like the first-ripe fig prior to summer, Which one sees, And as soon as it is in his hand, He swallows it.⁵ In that day the LORD of hosts will become a beautiful crown And a glorious diadem to the remnant of His people;⁶ A spirit of justice for him who sits in judgment, A strength to those who repel the onslaught at the gate.⁷ And these also reel with wine and stagger from strong drink: The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink, They are confused by wine, they stagger from strong drink; They reel while having visions, They totter when rendering judgment.⁸ For all the tables are full of filthy vomit, without a single clean place.⁹ "To whom would He teach knowledge, And to whom would He interpret the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just taken from the breast?"¹⁰

"For He says, 'Order on order, order on order, Line on line, line on line, A little here, a little there.'" ¹¹ Indeed, He will speak to this people Through stammering lips and a foreign tongue, ¹² He who said to them, "Here is rest, give rest to the weary," And, "Here is repose," but they would not listen. ¹³ So the word of the LORD to them will be, "Order on order, order on order, Line online, line on line, A little here, a little there," That they may go and stumble backward, be broken, snared and taken captive. (NAU)

Isaiah 29:22-24

Therefore, thus said Adonai, who ransomed Abraham, concerning the house of Ya'aqob, "Ya'aqov is no longer put to shame, no longer does his face grow pale. For when he sees his children, the work of My hands, in his midst, they shall set apart My Name, and set apart the Set-apart One of Ya'aqov and fear the Elohim of Yisrael. And those who went astray in spirit shall come to understanding, and the grumblers accept instruction.

Jeremiah 1:5

Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you came out of the womb, I did set you apart.

He knew us and set us apart. We are called to Him before our birth.

Jeremiah 2:1-3

And the word of Adonai came to me, saying, Go, and you shall cry in the hearing of Yerushalayim, saying, Thus said Adonai, I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your bridehood, when you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Yisrael was set-apart to Adonai, the first fruits of His increase. All who ate of it became guilty - evil came upon them, declares Adonai.

I Corinthians 14:21

In the law it has been written, with men of other tongues and other lips I shall speak to this people. And even so, they shall not hear Me, says Adonai.

Are we like the Israelties? Are we like Moses when he was first called by Elohim? Are we the set-apart ones of Elohim? A people peculiar to Elohim. I would hope so.

Can you say honestly that you have heard the call of Elohim on your life and followed it? Have you had your time of struggle like Moses did? Have you seen the wonders of Him in your life and followed?

If you are still struggling with Him, stop. Don't worry about what will come. Trust in Him. Follow Him. He will take care of the rest of it.

Moses struggled but, in the end, gave himself over to Him. Jeremiah struggled but, in the end, listened. The people of Israel are still struggling but some have listened to His voice. The children of Ephraim are struggling, but many have heard His voice and followed.

Are you one of them? Stop struggling.

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 Shemot: Summary

Exodus-Shemot 1:21-6:1

A new Pharaoh rises.

A New Pharaoh Rises

The sons of Israel in Egypt were fruitful in births, and the people grew strong. Now a new Pharaoh rose up over Egypt who knew nothing of Joseph. This Pharaoh was worried that the Israelite nation was too mighty. First he levied a tax on them, then he decided to make them slaves.

Next, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah, to kill all the Hebrew baby boys. But the midwives feared God and told Pharaoh that the Hebrew woman gave birth before they could arrive. God dealt well with the midwives and the Hebrews continued to multiply. The Pharaoh then commanded the people to throw every Hebrew baby boy into the river.

Moses is Born

Now, a Hebrew couple from the house of Levi had a son and kept him hidden for three months. When the mother could hide him no longer, she wove a basket, laid the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the banks of the river. Her sister placed herself at a distance to see what would happen to him.

When the Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe, she saw the basket with the crying child. She took pity on him so that when the baby's sister asked, "Shall I call a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby for you?" she said yes. The sister then fetched her mother. When the child had grown sufficiently, the mother brought him to the Pharaoh's daughter. She named him Moses because "I drew him from the water."

Moses Strikes an Egyptian

When Moses was an adult, he could see the burdens of his Hebrew brethren. One day, he saw an Egyptian man beating a Hebrew man. Moses turned this way and that and when he saw that no one was there, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

The next day Moses came upon two Hebrew men fighting. Moses said to the one in the wrong. "Why are you striking down your neighbor?" The man replied, "Who has made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"

"So, the matter is known," Moses said in fear.

Pharaoh heard too and sought to kill Moses. Moses thus fled to the land of Midian. There he watered the sheep for the daughters of the priest of Midian and later married the priest's daughter, Tziporah. She bore a son whom he called Gershom, for "I was a stranger in a foreign land."

In Egypt Pharaoh died, but the sons of Israel remained slaves. God heard the Hebrew slaves' cry of distress and remembered the covenant God had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

The Burning Bush

Meanwhile Moses was tending sheep for his father-in-law, Yithro, near the mountain of God at Horeb. An angel of God appeared to him in the heart of a fire from the midst of a thorn bush. He saw and lo! the thorn bush was on fire but was not consumed. Moses looked at this great sight and went to see why the thorn bush did not burn up.

God called to Moses from the middle of the bush, "Moses, Moses."

"Here I am!" Moses said.

"Do not step here!" said God. "Take off your shoes for the place you are standing on is ground with a holy destiny. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."

And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look toward God.

God continued, "I have seen the affliction of My people in Egypt and have heard their cries as slaves. Now I have come down to rescue them from the hand of Egypt and bring them to a good and spacious land, a land that can flow with milk and honey. Now, therefore go, I will send you to Pharaoh and to bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" asked Moses.

"I will be with you. If you will bring the people out from Egypt, you will become the servants of God upon this mountain."

“But,” Moses said, “when I tell this to the sons of Israel, they will ask me ‘What is God’s name?’”

“I shall be that which I wish to be,” replied God. “So say to them, ‘God, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has sent me to you.’ This is My Name for the distant future and this is My memorial for every generation. Go and gather the elders of Israel and tell them. They will hearken to your voice. Then go to Pharaoh and say, ‘God, the God of the Hebrews has met with us and now please let us go on a three day’s journey into the wilderness to offer up a sacrifice to God, our God.’”

God Gives Moses The Signs

“Now,” God continued, “I know that Pharaoh will not let you go, not even by the threat of a mighty hand. Then I will stretch out My hand and strike down Egypt with all My miracles. After that, he will send you away and you shall leave with gold and silver and clothing.”

“But what if they do not believe that God appeared to me.”

“What is that in your hand?” God said.

“A staff.”

“Throw it on the ground.”

Moses threw his staff on the ground and it turned into a serpent and Moses fled from it.

“Put out your hand,” God said “and grasp it by its tail.” Moses did and it turned back into a staff.

God then had Moses put his hand to his chest. When Moses took out his hand, it turned leprous. When he put it back into his chest, it turned to flesh again.

“If they do not believe the first sign,” said God, “they will believe the second sign. But if they still do not believe, you shall take the waters of the river and pour it on dry land. The water will then turn into blood.”

“O Lord, I am not a man who is good at speaking.”

“Who has made man’s mouth or who makes one mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, God? And now, go! I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say.”

“Oh Lord,” said Moses. “Please send this message through someone else.”

Then the anger of God was kindled against Moses. God said, “Aaron, your brother, will gladly speak for you. Behold! He is coming to meet you. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what you shall do. And you shall take into your hand this staff with which you are to perform the signs.”

So Moses took his wife and his sons and returned to Egypt.

Let My People Go

God said to Moses, "You shall perform convincing wonders before Pharaoh, but I shall harden his heart and he will not let the people go until you will say to Pharaoh: This is what God has said, 'Israel is My son, My first-born. I have told you, let My son go so that he may serve Me, but you have refused to let him go. I will therefore kill your own son, your own first-born.'"

God told Aaron to meet Moses. Moses told Aaron what God said. Moses and Aaron then gathered the elders of the sons of Israel. Aaron uttered the words that God had spoken to Moses and the signs were performed. The people bowed their heads in trust.

Afterwards, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh saying, "God, the God of Israel says: 'Let My people go so that they may celebrate a festival for Me in the wilderness.'"

"Who is God that I should let Israel go?" said Pharaoh. "I do not know God and I will not let Israel go." That same day Pharaoh commanded that the slaves were to no longer to be given straw to prepare bricks. "Instead," said Pharaoh, "the slaves are to go and gather themselves their own straw. But the quota of bricks they are to make remains the same. Because they are lazy, they cry for this holiday to worship their God."

The Hebrew slaves went to Moses and Aaron and said, "May God look down upon you and judge, because you have brought us into foul odor in the eyes of Pharaoh!"

Moses returned to God and said, "My Lord! For what purpose have you made this misfortune for the people? Why did You send me to do this? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, Pharaoh has abused the people even more and You have not rescued Your people even from this?"

And God said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh; for by a strong hand will he let them go. Indeed, by a strong hand will he drive them out of his land!"

Parashat Shemot Discussion Questions

- 1. God heard the cry of the Hebrew slaves. Do you feel God hears your cries of distress? How can you tell if God is listening? How can you tell if God cares?**
- 2. Do you think God could make a burning bush not consume from the fire? Why or why not?**
- 3. God tells Moses what actions to take and how Pharaoh will respond. God foresees exactly what will happen. Do you believe that God foresees what will happen to people? What do you think God foresees for you?**
- 4. Moses wants proof to show the elders of Israel that God spoke to him. What proof would you give that God speaks to you?**

5. Do you believe that God makes people mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Why or why not?

Haftarah for Shemot

Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23

Promises of hope, threats of destruction.

Samaria, the capitol of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 BCE. In the Haftarah read by Ashkenazi Jews this week, Isaiah gives a prophecy concerning Israel, explaining why it fell to its enemies, but also giving hope for a future of redemption.

Though Isaiah's primary concern is to bring a message of doom for Israel, he begins noting that eventually, "Israel shall sprout and blossom, and the face of the world shall be covered with fruit" ([Isaiah 27:6](#)).

Immediately following this statement of forthcoming redemption, Isaiah launches into a tirade against the Israelites and their worship of the Syrian goddess Asherah. He chastises the leaders and priests of Israel, calling them drunk, implying that their judgment is poor. Isaiah is outright disgusted by the behavior of Israelites, saying, "Yea, all tables are covered with vomit and filth, so that no space is left" ([Isaiah 28:8](#)).

But the people are not receptive to the words of the prophet, and Isaiah promises that as long as they refuse to repent, "they shall fall backward, and be injured and snared and captured" ([Isaiah 28:13](#)).

Though much of what Isaiah has to say is pessimistic and angry, the rabbis chose to end the haftarah with two lines from a later chapter ([Isaiah 29:22-23](#)). These lines emphasize the redemption that will come to the people from God, just as it came for Abraham and his descendants.

Connection to *Parashat Shemot*

In Parashat Sh'mot the people of Israel are enslaved by the Egyptians, suffering greatly at the hands of others. Finally, Moses arrives and begins to move the people toward redemption.

Similarly, in Isaiah, the people in the Kingdom of Israel suffered greatly, though in this case it is suffering that has been brought on by their own lack of faith in God, and by the corruption and greed of their leaders. Isaiah brings them a message of hope and redemption.

Jeremiah As Moses

In Sephardic congregations the Haftarah is taken from the beginning of the Book of Jeremiah. When God first begins speaking to Jeremiah and charges him with a mission, Jeremiah is

reticent to receive the word of God. Just like Moses, Jeremiah tells God that he will not be a good messenger. He is just a boy, he protests.

But God will not take no for an answer and immediately gives Jeremiah two metaphorical visions of an almond branch and steaming pot. These visions are meant to motivate Jeremiah to embrace his mission and to inspire him to go to Jerusalem where he will remind the people not to dishonor God, and not to eat of the first fruits that are set aside for God.

Jeremiah's leadership and the way he is anointed as a leader are parallel to Moses' initial encounter with God and ascension to leader of the Israelites.



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

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

HOME SWEET HOME...

Home Sweet Home...

- “Home is where the heart is” attributed to Pliny the Elder, Roman author, naturalist, philosopher and commander of army and navy – [CE 23-79]



Home sweet Home...

- I am absolutely confident that the Creator of heaven and earth [YHVH] is calling His children home. The shofar is sounding loudly. Will we take any notice?
- There is no doubt we have been wayward children – individually and nationally.
- House holds or homes can be very different in how they operate. Even those homes who profess biblical faith, operate very differently. Some households you may be pleased to reside in, others you would be very hesitant to reside in.
- This weeks Parasha shows some very confused, and not so healthy households. Children behaving badly, and not showing respect for their household, and indeed their father Jacob. Let's remind ourselves of the situation in Jacobs home...

Home Sweet Home...

- ¹ 37 Now Jacob dwelled in the land where his father had sojourned, in the land of Canaan. ² These are the genealogies of Jacob. When Joseph was 17 years old (he was a youth), he was shepherding the flocks with his brothers —with the sons of his father's wives Bilhah and Zilpah. Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father. ³ Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his other sons because he was the son of his old age. So he had made him a long -sleeved tunic. ⁴ When his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak to him in *shalom*. ⁵ Then Joseph dreamed a dream and told his brothers —and they hated him even more. ⁶ He said to them, "Please listen to this dream I dreamed. ⁷ There we were binding sheaves in the middle of the field. All of a sudden, my sheaf arose and stood upright. And behold, your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." ⁸ "Will you truly be a king over us?" his brothers said to him. "Will you really rule over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and because of his words. ⁹ But then he dreamed another dream and told it to his brothers, saying, "I have just dreamed another dream. Suddenly, there was the sun and the moon and the eleven stars bowing down to me!" ¹⁰ He told it to his father as well as his brothers. Then his father rebuked him and said to him "What's this dream you dreamed? Will we really come —your mother and I with your brothers — to bow down to the ground to you?" ¹¹ So his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the speech in mind. Genesis 37:1-11
- We know what happened later on...

Home Sweet Home...

- Here was a home in turmoil, a home that was far from ideal, and far from what the House of Biblical Israel should look like. Instead it is a home that reflects the current condition within the House of Biblical Israel.
- This needs to change and Baruch YHVH it will change. However before this happens, some pain is coming our way.
- Whenever a house is outside the instructions of YHVH, there are problems. Most times those problems are scaled to the degree of torah rejection.
- Our focus today is the whole house of Israel, and the condition thereof:

Home Sweet Home...

- *“The sin of Judah is written with a pen of iron; With the point of a diamond it is engraved On the tablet of their heart, And on the horns of your altars;² While their children remember Their altars and their wooden images By the green trees on the high hills³. O My mountain in the field, I will give as plunder your wealth, all your treasures⁴ and your high places of sin within all your borders⁴. And you, even yourself, Shall let go of your heritage which I gave you; And I will cause you to serve your enemies In the land which you do not know; For you have kindled a fire in My anger⁵ which shall burn forever.⁵ Thus says the LORD: “Cursed is the man who trusts in man And makes flesh his strength, Whose heart departs from the LORD.⁶ For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, And shall not see when good comes, But shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness⁷ in a salt land which is not inhabited.⁷ “Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, And whose hope is the LORD.⁸ For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.” Jeremiah 17:1-8*

Home Sweet Home...

- 3 Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel."² So I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll.³ And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give you. So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in sweetness."⁴ Then He said to me: "Son of man, go to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them."⁵ For you *are* not sent to a people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, *but* to the house of Israel,⁶ not to many people of unfamiliar speech and of hard language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely, had I sent you to them, they would have listened to you. *But* the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me; for all the house of Israel *are* impudent [strong forehead] and hard-hearted.⁸ Behold, I have made your face strong against their faces, and your forehead strong against their foreheads.⁹ Like adamant stone, *harder than flint* I have made *your forehead*; do not be afraid of them, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they *are* a rebellious house."¹⁰ Moreover He said to me: "Son of man, receive into your heart all My words that I speak to you, and hear with your ears.¹¹ And go, get to the captives, to the children of your people, and speak to them and tell them, 'Thus says the Lord God,' whether they hear, or whether they refuse." Ezekiel 3:1-11

Home Sweet Home...

- Now we are going to look at one of the greatest home coming stories of all time:
- Luke 15:11-32.
- What a wonderful feeling it is to come home to a house prepared especially for you:
- "Do not let your heart be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me. In My Father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to Myself, so that where I am you may also be. And you know the way to where I am going."³ Thomas said to Him, "Master, we don't know where You are going. How can we know the way?" *Yeshua* said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life! No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:1-6
- Truly there is no God like our God...

Insights into Judaism



How the Jewish People Invented Hope

Judaism is a sustained struggle against the world that is in the name of the world that could be — but is not yet.

One of the most formative moments in the history of Judaism came in the encounter between Moses and God in the burning bush. Moses asks God what name he should use when people ask him who He is. God replies enigmatically, in a phrase that occurs nowhere else in Tanach: *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*.

Non-Jewish translations read this to mean, “I am what (or who, or that) I am.” Some render it, “I am: that is who I am,” or “I am the One who is.” These are deeply significant mistranslations. The phrase means, literally, “I will be what I will be,” or more fundamentally, God’s name belongs to the future tense. His call is to that which is not yet. If we fail to understand this, we will miss the very thing that makes Judaism unique.

Consider the structure of biblical narrative. In literature there are many kinds of narrative but they all have one thing in common, what Frank Kermode called “the sense of an ending.” They reach closure. Some end with “they all lived happily ever after.” We call these fairy tales. Others end in death and defeat. We call them tragedies. There are other types, but they all have a beginning and an end. That’s what makes them stories.

Now consider Genesis. The Jewish story begins with God’s call to Abraham to leave his land, his birthplace and his father’s house to travel “to the land that I will show you.” Seven times God promises Abraham the land, yet he has to haggle with the Hittites to buy one small plot in which to bury Sarah. Jacob and his family are forced into exile in Egypt. Genesis ends with the promise unfulfilled.

Then Exodus begins. God calls Moses to lead the Israelites back to freedom and the promised land. Now, we feel, the story is about to reach closure. But it doesn’t come. Instead, a journey that should have taken days lasts 40 years. In the final scene of Deuteronomy, we see Moses,

still on the far side of the Jordan, granted only a distant vision of the land. Again, the natural ending is deferred.

Tanach as a whole ends, in [II Chronicles 36](#), with the Israelites in exile again, this time in Babylonia, and Cyrus giving them permission to return. We are almost back where we began, in the same region from which Abraham and his family first set out.

I know of no other stories that have the same form, namely a beginning but no end. We would not think of them as stories at all, were it not that we know the ending. It has been there since the beginning: God's three promises to Abraham, of children, a land, and an influence on humanity such that "through you all the families of the earth will be blessed." So there is an ending, but it is always beyond the visible horizon. The Jewish story ends, as Moses' life ended, with a glimpse of the land not yet reached, a future not yet realized.

The same is true of Jewish belief. Judaism is the only civilization whose golden age is in the future: the messianic age, the age of peace when "nation will not lift up sword against nation" and "the Lord shall be one and His name One." This ultimately was the dividing line between Judaism and Christianity. To be a Jew is to reply to the question "Has the messiah come?" with the words "Not yet." In the fine phrase of Harold Fisch, the Jewish narrative is "the unappeared memory of a future still to be fulfilled." Why? What does this tell us about Judaism?

At the heart of Judaism is a belief so fundamental to Western civilization that we take it for granted, yet it is anything but self-evident. It has been challenged many times, rarely more so than today. It is the belief in human freedom. We are what we choose to be. Society is what we choose to make it. The future is open. There is nothing inevitable in the affairs of humankind.

The ancients believed that human destiny lay in the stars, or blind fate, what the Greeks called *ananke*. Spinoza argued that our lives are governed by natural necessity. Marx claimed that history was determined by economic interests. Freud held that human behavior was shaped by unconscious drives. Neo-Darwinians argue that we are governed by genetic codes hardwired into our brains. Freedom, in all these theories, is an illusion.

This view is challenged in the opening chapters of the Bible. For the first time, God is seen as beyond nature, creating nature by a free, un-coerced act of will. By creating human beings in His image, He bestowed something of that freedom on us. Alone among created life forms, we too are capable of being creative. Biblical narrative is the ongoing drama of human freedom.

The first four narratives are tragic. First Adam and Eve, then Cain, abuse their freedom. That is then repeated on a global scale by the generation of the flood and the builders of Babel. People use their freedom to transgress boundaries or deprive others of their freedom. So, a new beginning becomes necessary.

Abraham is told to leave all the things that constrain freedom – our land, birthplace and father's house – and begin a new kind of life in covenant with God. Genesis is about that covenant as it affects individuals and families. The rest of Tanach is about the covenant as it

applies to the life of a nation. The Jewish story, still unfinished, is about the journey from multiple forms of slavery to what Levinas called “difficult freedom.” Torah is the template of responsible freedom, our constitution of liberty.

Freedom, implies Genesis, is intimately related to language. God creates the world with words, and His first gift to humanity is the gift of speech. We know that other life forms – primates, dolphins, even bees – have rudimentary forms of language. But there is one form unique to human beings. The Torah signals this by making it the first word God speaks: *Yehi*, “Let there be.”

Human beings are the only life form capable of using the future tense. Only beings who can imagine the world other than it is are capable of freedom. And if we are free, the future is open, dependent on us. We can know the beginning of our story but not the end. That is why, as He is about to take the Israelites from slavery to freedom, God tells Moses that His name is “I will be what I will be.” Judaism, the religion of freedom, is faith in the future tense.

Western civilization is the product of two cultures: ancient Greece and ancient Israel. The Greeks believed in fate: the future is determined by the past. Jews believed in freedom: there is no “evil decree” that cannot be averted. The Greeks gave the world the concept of tragedy. Jews gave it the idea of hope. The whole of Judaism – though it would take a book to show it – is a set of laws and narratives designed to create in people, families, communities and a nation, habits that defeat despair. Judaism is the voice of hope in the conversation of mankind.

It is no accident that so many Jews are economists fighting poverty, or doctors fighting disease, or lawyers fighting injustice, in all cases refusing to see these things as inevitable. It is no accident that after the Holocaust Jews did not call it *Al Naqba*, nursing resentment and revenge, but instead turned to the future, building a nation whose national anthem is *Hatikvah*, “the hope.” It is no accident that Judaism has been opposed by every empire that sought to deny people the freedom to be equal-but-different. It is no accident that Israel is still today the only free society in the Middle East.

Judaism is a religion of details, but we miss the point if we do not sometimes step back and see the larger picture. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope in a world serially threatened by despair. Every ritual, every mitzvah, every syllable of the Jewish story, every element of Jewish law, is a protest against escapism, resignation or the blind acceptance of fate. Judaism is a sustained struggle, the greatest ever known, against the world that is, in the name of the world that could be, should be, but is not yet. There is no more challenging vocation. Throughout history, when human beings have sought hope they have found it in the Jewish story. Judaism is the religion, and Israel the home, of hope.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks is the former chief rabbi of the United Kingdom.



What is Jewish Spirituality?

What matters in Jewish spiritual practice is less the experience itself than what we do with it.

The traditional view of prayer is relatively straightforward. The Bible, for instance, takes it for granted that people have conversations with God the same way they do with each other. To take but one example, Moses pleads with God to pardon Israel's sins, and God duly responds, "I have pardoned, just as you say" ([Numbers 14:20](#)). Sometimes God initiates the conversation; sometimes human beings do. But either way, God appears here as an all-knowing and all-powerful being who welcomes our praise and, if we are deserving, acts positively on our requests.

Talmudic Beliefs

By the second half of the second century B.C.E., the leaders whom we call the Rabbis were coming into being. So influential were they for all the rest of Jewish history that Jews today are rabbinic through and through. Jewish tradition is the Hebrew scriptures that Jews call the Bible plus the voluminous writings of the Rabbis of antiquity and the subsequent, equally monumental work of other Jewish leaders, also called rabbis, from the Middle Ages up to and including our own day. We customarily differentiate the Rabbis who laid the foundation for rabbinic Judaism until roughly the middle of the sixth century C.E. from the rabbis who are their spiritual descendants by capitalizing the first term but using lowercase for the second.

By the year 200 C.E., the Rabbis had recorded their views on prayer (as on everything else) in a compendium called the Mishnah. By 400 C.E., further generations of Rabbis in the Land of Israel had composed a larger work called the Palestinian Talmud. And sometime around 550 C.E., Rabbis in Babylonia (present-day Iraq) compiled a monumental work (some 16,000 pages in the standard English translation) called the Babylonian Talmud, or sometimes just the Talmud because of its size and influence.

From all of these works, we see that the Rabbis viewed God more or less as their biblical forbears. They knew that unlike the prophets, however, they themselves never heard God speak, so they concluded that actual prophecy had ceased. Apparently, God didn't initiate conversations any more.

Formalized Prayer

But the Rabbis were equally certain that God still hears our prayers, and sometimes even answers them by granting the things we pray for. They were sure, in fact, that God wants us to pray—and not just as the mood strikes us, but regularly, and in community, not alone.

That was an innovation beyond what biblical men and women had known. In the Bible, people pray only when they feel like it. Moses asks God to heal his sister Miriam. Solomon requests wisdom so that he can lead his people wisely. Miriam sings God's praises to celebrate crossing the Red Sea; Hannah asks for a baby boy. But once a prayer is said, it is over and done with. No one feels the need to pray the same words twice, and the prayers don't get fixed so that other people in the same situation are obliged to copy them.

The Rabbis did not question a person's right to speak directly to God with heartfelt praise, petition, and gratitude, just as biblical heroes had, but in addition, they took the next step of establishing the times and structure of a regular communal prayer cycle, the one we use to this very day. For the Rabbis, then, personal prayer was juxtaposed with communal liturgy — a far cry from biblical days, when the only public worship service had been the sacrificial cult. The God to whom the community spoke, however, was still portrayed as a personal deity who hears what people say and acts upon our words the way a powerful monarch—the Roman emperor himself, perhaps—did for powerful petitioners in court.

Answering the Question Today

Most of us grew up with that kingly image of God in mind. For those of us who still believe in a God who can be pictured that way, prayer is mostly not a problem. Such a God might easily demand prayers from us, the subjects of the divine kingdom. In return, since God is all-powerful just, and good, we might expect a positive response to our petitions, as long as we deserve it.

But here is where even those who still believe in the biblical notion of a personal God run into difficulty. It is hard to prove that God really does answer our prayers, and sometimes, as when "bad things happen to good people," it is hard not to wonder why God doesn't respond the way we think a good God would.

Hebrew - עֲבָרִי

Word (s) of the Week

Strength / כֹּחַ

Pronounced: KOE-ahch

Koach can refer to physical or emotional strength, but it also means "force." The Hebrew term for gravity is *koach hameshica*, "the pulling force."



A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Freudian Field Day

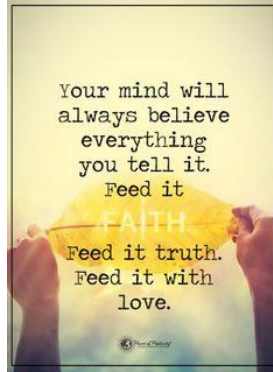
Mrs. Goldfarb takes her little boy to the beach, and as soon as she settles under an umbrella, the routine begins:

"Alan, come over here. Don't go into the water, you'll drown!"

"Alan, don't play in the sand. It'll get in your eyes."

"Alan, come out of the sun. You'll get sunstroke!"

"Oy vey, such a nervous child."



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

Chocolate Chip Babka Crunch Recipe

Believe it not, therapists like me also get stressed sometimes. Thankfully, the act of kneading dough gives us the same relief as squeezing a stress ball. Plus, you get to enjoy a gorgeous treat, like this babka crunch, once it's fully baked. Talk about a win-win. Sift the flour. Measure the sugar. Crack that egg. All these baking techniques can help reduce stress. Why? Because they're small, easily accomplished steps that put you in control.

I love a good crumb. More than I know how to express in words. My Chocolate Chip Babka Crunch is the best of both worlds: It's bread and dessert, all at once! The knots are super simple but lend a sophisticated air to this scrumptious dessert. It also freezes beautifully, so feel free to double the recipe and stash one in the freezer.

Ingredients

For the bread:

- 1/2 cup [120 ml] warm water, about 110°F [45°C]
- 3 1/2 tsp active dry yeast
- 3/4 cup [150 g] plus 2 tsp sugar, plus a pinch for the egg wash
- 4 1/2 cups [630 g] bread flour
- 1 1/2 tsp table salt, plus a pinch for the egg wash

- 1/4 cup [55 g] unsalted butter, melted
- 1 large egg
- 1 tsp honey
- 2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 egg yolk
- 1 cup [180 g] semisweet chocolate chips

For the crumb:

- 1/4 cup [55 g] salted butter, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup [100 g] granulated sugar
- 1/2 tsp vanilla extract
- 1/2 cup [70 g] all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup [45 g] chocolate chips

Instructions

1. **To make the bread:** In a small bowl, combine the warm water, yeast, and 2 tsp of the sugar. Set aside for 10 minutes while the yeast activates.
2. In a large bowl, whisk together the remaining 3/4 cup [150 g] sugar, the bread flour, and salt. Add the melted butter, egg, honey, vanilla, and 1/2 cup plus 2 Tbsp [150 ml] water. Use a wooden spoon to just combine the ingredients, then pour in the yeast mixture. Continue mixing until you have a mostly combined and workable dough.
3. Turn out the dough onto a lightly floured surface and knead for 5 to 8 minutes, or until the dough is smooth and elastic. Spray a large bowl with nonstick cooking spray and set the dough inside.
4. In a small bowl, whisk the egg yolk and a pinch each of sugar and salt to form an egg wash. Use a pastry brush to brush the entire surface of the dough. Reserve the remaining egg wash. Cover with plastic wrap and allow the dough to rise in a warm place for about 1 hour or until it has doubled in size.
5. Punch down the risen dough and cut it into six equal pieces. Roll each piece into a 12 in [30.5 cm] long strand and use your fingers to sprinkle 2 to 3

Tbsp of chocolate chips down each strand, pinching the dough over them as you go. This will create a gooey chocolate center.

6. Coat a 9 in [23 cm] round pan with nonstick cooking spray and begin forming the dough into knots. Simply grab each end of each strand, tie it into a knot, and pinch the ends together, tucking them underneath the knot.
7. Place the knots in the pan in a flower shape, with one knot in the middle and five knots spread in a circle around it. The dough will touch and that's OK!
8. Brush the entire surface with the egg wash once more, reserving any remaining egg wash. Cover the babka with plastic wrap and let rise a second time for 1 hour. Brush it with the egg wash one more time.
9. Preheat the oven to 350°F [180°C].
10. **To make the crumb:** Place the butter, sugar, and vanilla in a small bowl. Use your fingers to incorporate the butter and create a nice crumbly texture with the sugar. Add the flour and continue working the mixture, using your fingers in a pinching motion. Sprinkle the crumb over the babka dough, making sure to get it into the crevices as well. Add chocolate chips on top of the crumb. Don't be afraid of a thick crumb.
11. **To bake and serve:** Bake the babka for 35 to 40 minutes, or until it is a lovely golden brown on top. Remove from the oven and allow to cool slightly, but be sure to eat it while it's still warm.
12. Babka can be stored in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 2 months.

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

