



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 1-27-24 BESHALACH

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 1-27-24 BESHALACH

B'Shallach When He let go

Exodus 13:17-17:16

Judges 4:4-5:31

Yochanan-John 8:58

Mattiyahu-Matthew 10:32-33

Today I want to share with you a story within a story. What I mean by this is how Scripture speaks to us in a more intimate manner. And how once again the Scriptures of the Tanach and the Apostolic Scriptures are connected to each other.

Exodus 15:6

Your right hand, Lord, is glorified with strength; Your right hand, Lord, smashes the enemy.

Exodus 15:13

With Your kindness You guided this people that You redeemed; You led with Your might to Your holy abode.

Yochanan-John 14:2-3

In the Beit Avi (House of the Father) there are many me'onot (dwelling places, permanent residences, homes); if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a makom (place) for you? And if I go and prepare a makom for you, I am coming again and will receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.

Yochanan-John 8:58

Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach said to them, Omein, omein, I say to you, before Avraham came into being, Ani hu (I Am).

Judges 4:14

...Behold, the Lord has gone before you!

Exodus 17:14-16

The Lord said to Moses, "Write this as a remembrance in the Book and recite it in the ears of Joshua, that I shall surely erase the memory of Amalek from under the heavens." Moses built an altar and called its name "The Lord Is My Miracle"; And he said, "For the hand is on the throne of God: The Lord maintains a war against Amalek, from generation to generation."

Amalek's enmity against Israel stems not only from its legacy as Esau's grandson, but from what it represents. The prophet Bilaam referred to Amalek as the first among nations (Numbers 24:20), meaning the leading force of evil, just as Israel represents the leading force of good. Consequently, their struggle is the eternal struggle of good versus evil.

...*Story about why God allows evil to happen.

The other day I was talking with someone who shared with me that they do not understand why God allowed their loved one to die. I have heard this question many times before; sometimes people use this to deny God. I know that the person that I was talking with knows God in a real and special way. But I really did not have an answer.

I do not deny that things happen in our lives that I cannot explain. Why does God allow bad things to happen to us? I could give you an answer like, "Well, He's God and He can do whatever He wants to."

But in truth, I do not always know why God allows some things to happen. I do know this. That in this life we are under the authority of Satan as long as we live a mortal life in this world. God can intervene in our lives. Why He does or does not, I do not always have an answer for. But I can tell you this much. God calls us to follow Him by Emunah-faith. We have to put our trust-khasah in Him. He asks for no less than this.

Mattiyahu-Matthew 10:32-33

Therefore, everyone who shall declare publicly the Ani Maamin hodaah (confession) of me (as Moshiach), before Bnei HaAdam (the House of Man), I will make hodaah (acknowledgement) of him before Avi shbaShomayim (the Father in Heaven). But everyone who makes hakhchashah (denial) of me (as Moshiach), I also will make hakhchashah (denial) of him before Avi shbaShomayim.

Don't fool yourselves into thinking that you have all the time in the world to accept Him as your Messiah. Don't think that because it is not the cool thing to do that you turn your backs on Him. The Scripture tells otherwise. If you deny Him, He will deny you. Wise up before it is too late. He could return today, or you could die today.

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 Beshalach: Summary Exodus-Shemot 13:17-17:16

Moses leads the Israelites into the wilderness after their escape from Egypt. God sends manna to feed them, and Amalek attacks the Israelites.

An Indirect Route

Now God did not lead the Jews out of Egypt on the most direct route but took the people by way of the wilderness. God went before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire at night so they could travel day and night.

Upon leaving Egypt, Moses takes Joseph's bones with him, recalling Joseph's dying words, "God will surely remember you and then bring my bones with you to the promised land."

God told Moses to camp by the Sea of Reeds. "I will then harden Pharaoh's heart so he will try to capture you there. Then I shall assert My authority over Pharaoh, and everyone will acknowledge that I am the Lord." It happened just as God predicted. Pharaoh went after the Jews with his best army.

As Pharaoh's army approached, the Israelites cried out to the Lord and Moses in fear. "Why did you bring us here to die? Let us go back to Egypt and be slaves."

“Don’t be afraid.” Moses answered. “Stand firm. Watch how God will deliver you.”

Then God said to Moses, “When you stretch forth your hand over the sea, it will split, and you shall cross safely. But with a stiffened heart, the Pharaoh’s army will go in after you. They may be mighty, but I will prove that I am Almighty.”

The Israelites Cross The River

Then the angel of God went behind the Jewish camp while a pillar of cloud went in front of the Egyptian camp so one would not come near the other.

Moses then stretched out his hand and the Lord commanded a strong east wind to split the water. With walls of water on either side, the Israelites crossed the river on dry land.

Then when the Egyptian army raced after them, God confounded them with mud to break their chariots’ wheels.

Afterwards, God told Moses to stretch out his hand again and let the water return. By morning the sea had covered Pharaoh’s army so that not even one of them remained.

When the Jewish people saw what the Lord did to the Egyptians, they trusted in God and Moses as God’s prophet. The Moses and the Israelites sang this song unto the Lord:

**Who is like Thee, O Lord,
Among all the gods who are worshipped?
Who is like Thee, majestic in holiness?
Awesome in splendor, working wonders!
The Lord will reign for ever and ever.**

Miriam, the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, with her drum in her hand led the women in song and dance. “Sing unto the Lord for God has triumphed gloriously.”

Searching for Water

From the Sea of Reeds, Moses led the people into a new wilderness. For three days they could find no water and when they finally did at Marah, the water was too bitter to drink. The Jewish people cried. So God showed Moses how to cast a certain tree into the waters to make it sweet. There God proclaimed, “If you will listen to Me and do what is right in God’s sight, then I will not plague you as I have the Egyptians, for I am the Lord and your Healer.”

As they journeyed, the Jews became hungry. They complained to Moses and Aaron, “You brought us into the wilderness to starve.”

The Lord spoke to Moses, “By evening you shall eat meat and, in the morning, you shall have your fill of bread. Then you shall recognize that I, The Lord, am your God.”

Food From God

That evening quail appeared, and, in the morning, there was dew all around. When the dew lifted, there was a fine, flaky substance everywhere. "This is food from God," Moses announced, "But only gather what you need to eat, one *omer* (portion of grain) per person."

When some families gathered extra, they woke up to find their food rotten with maggots. However, on the sixth day, Moses told the Israelites, "God instructs you to gather double the amount of food on the sixth day, for the seventh day is a day of rest, a holy Sabbath of the Lord. The extra you gather will be edible in the morning." And it was.

But there were some Jews who went out to gather food on the Sabbath anyway. They found nothing.

God lamented to Moses, "How long will you refuse to follow My commandments and My teaching? Mark the seventh day as My Sabbath and keep it holy for all generations."

The People Protest

The Israelites named the food "manna" and it tasted like honey wafers. God instructed them to keep one omer of manna in a jar by the Ark of the Testimony for all generations to remember how the Lord fed the Israelites for forty years in the wilderness.

At the next camp, at Rephidim, again, there was no water. The people got angry with Moses.

"Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put God to the test?" retorted Moses to the people. To God, however, Moses says, "What shall I do with these people? A bit more and they will stone me."

God instructs Moses to go in front of the elders of Israel at Horeb and strike a rock to bring water for the people to drink. Moses does so. The place is named Massah and Meribah because the people tested and contended the Lord, saying, "Is the Lord present among us or not?"

At this camp, an enemy, Amalek came to fight with Israel. Moses sent Joshua with an army to do battle against Amalek. Meanwhile Moses stood at the top of the hill with the rod of God in his hand. As the fighting began, whenever Moses held up his hand, Israel prevailed but whenever he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed.

But Moses' arms grew heavy. So, Aaron and Hur, one on each side, supported Moses' hands until Joshua beat the Amalekites. Moses built an altar on the site knowing that war with Amalek would be present throughout the generations.

Parashat Beshalach Discussion Questions

1) When God parted the Sea of Reeds, it was a miracle. Can you think of a miracle God performed for you in your life?

2) If you were one of the Israelites with Moses, how would you feel upon seeing the Egyptian army drowned? How do you feel when someone who is your enemy is hurt or defeated?

3) God tells the Jewish people that the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest. What is your definition of rest? How is that the same or different from God's definition in this portion?

4) The Israelites test God in this portion. Do you ever test God? Why? How?

Haftarah for Beshalach *Judges 4:4-5:31*

Deborah leads a nation in war and sings a victory song.

Most of the Bible is written as prose, though there are examples of poetry (such as in Psalms), as well as song. The two most famous biblical songs are the Song of the Sea, which is in this week's Torah portion, and the Song of Deborah, which is in this week's Haftarah.

Deborah is one of the Israelite leaders in the Book of Judges. She is a prophet and a judge, and she keeps court under a palm tree in the hill country, where people come for guidance.

Barak & Deborah Fight Sisera

Deborah also communicates God's wishes to the people, and one day she calls for Barak, a general in the military, and tells him that God commands him to report to Mount Tabor, with a company of 10,000 soldiers. There, she tells him, he will meet Sisera, the commander of the army of Hazor. They will fight, and Barak will win.

Barak answers that he will go into battle only if Deborah accompanies him. She accedes to this request but warns him that he will receive no glory if she comes, "for now the Eternal will hand Sisera over to a woman" (Judges 4:9).

Barak accepts these terms and together with Deborah and his warriors, he ascends the mountain. At once, "the Eternal throws Sisera, his chariots, and his whole army into disarray" (Judges 4:15). Sisera himself is thrown from his chariot and runs away on foot. All his troops are killed, but Sisera is kept alive. He retreats to the camp of Yael, a powerful woman who is married to one of Sisera's allies. Yael takes him in and covers him with a blanket.

Yael Secures A Victory

When Sisera asks for water, Yael instead gives him milk, which lulls him to sleep. Once asleep, she takes a tent-peg and a mallet and drives it through his head. Then, when Barak comes searching for him, Yael shows him Sisera's pierced head.

To commemorate this victory, and in particular Yael's role in it, Barak and Deborah sing a song. The song dramatizes this battle, as well as others fought by Barak, and tells of the military victories of different tribes of Israel.

It concludes with a tribute to Yael, retelling her murder of Sisera in more detail than the original verses, and a plea to God to continue to support the Israelites in battle, so long as they continue to love God.

Both the Torah portion this week and the Haftarah are a curious combination of military battles and victory songs. But, while Miriam's song in the Torah straight forwardly praises God for defeating Egypt, the Song of Deborah is a testament to both God and Israel, extolling both divine miracles and human effort.



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

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Statutes-Chuqqah...

Statutes – chuqqah חֻקִּים

- The text we are about to read is dated approx. B.C 1491 – 3200-3300 years ago. Why bring this up... because it was at a time when all the tribes of Israel were still “together” and thus the message given was given to all of Israel.
- **Leviticus 25:55-26:46**
- **We begin at the statement:** ...the children of Israel are my servants.
- **Servants/Ebed עֶבֶד** = Root meaning: Do that which is according to another 's will. Hence the words of The Master: ...**not what I will, but what You will** . Mark 14:36b
- At the moment we are poor servants, but servants none the less ...
- We again witness a pattern: Embrace, and follow Torah [YYHVH 's instructions] blessings. Reject Torah – curses...
- How simple all this seems, yet our struggle to embrace, and obey continues ...
- So often we ask this question – why is it so? Especially for those who are of the Christian faith – who many including myself would label such as a large proportion of Ephraim ...

Statutes

- So, when we consider the fact that “Ephraim” seems very reluctant to obey the Fathers’ instructions, we must ask, why may this be so? Emotion, pride, arrogance, evil intentions, good intentions, and information to name a few. If we make a decision through pride and arrogance, it will usually result in a down fall. A few scriptures will support this:
- **The fear of YHVH is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, the evil way, and the perverse mouth, do I hate.** Proverbs 8:13
- **Pride before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.** Proverbs 16:18
- Just before we move on let’s review the word translated as Statutes, and possible relationship with Ebed/Servant.
- **Statutes – chuqqah חֻקָּה** = Regulation, prescription – as Hirsch says: “To circumscribe to protect basic value .
- Wise decisions come from gathering as much information as possible on the subject at hand. However, when gathering information, one needs to ensure the information gathered is reliable and truthful. The rebellion of Ephraim has come through the decision-making process... this is recorded in **1Kings chapter 12: 16-33.**

Statutes...

- We witness both pride and arrogance in this decision-making process. If we read 1 Kings **chapters 11 and 12**, we will see pride and arrogance played a major part in all this.
- Both Kingdoms were guilty of such. However, the decision of Israel/Ephraim/Northern Kingdom resulted in their downfall and being the “lost Kingdom”, called the “lost tribes of Israel.”
- They were lost to walking the way of YHVHs’ Torah... therefore lost their identity.
- This continues to this very day, but there is a change on the horizon. The children of “Ephraim” are beginning to question the information that they have been fed down through the ages, information that has meant the continuation of rebellion and distance from the House of David.
- Please notice the words recorded in **1Kings 12:19 and 20b**. Israel/Ephraim/Northern Tribes rebelled against the House of David [to this day] and it was only **Judah alone** who followed the House of David.
- Take a moment to absorb this! If Ephraim has not changed its’ ways down through the ages, then it goes without question that they are still in rebellion against the House of David.
- Which house does the Messiah Yeshua come from???

Statutes...

- So, let us now ask the question: Has Ephraim changed its ' ways? At this stage I suggest not. They still meet on their own appointed times, they still set up their own "golden calves" and they are still in severe opposition to Judah. The Kingdom who is still trying to follow the "House of David" through application of the Torah of Moshe, YHVH 's instructions.
- At this point some may be jumping up and down about the issue of Yeshua/Jesus and Judah. It is a valid and fair point until you understand this issue cannot be properly addressed until "Ephraim" comes to the point of embracing the holy Torah.
- Until you realise the importance of Torah - in a believer's life, you will fail to correctly understand the Messiah, the House of David and the Word of our Father.
- Yeshua followed the Torah perfectly, because after all He is the living Torah.
- You cannot divorce HaMoshiach from the Torah, and you cannot divorce the Torah from the "House of David." So, if you want to follow HaMoshiach/The Messiah then you have to follow "The House of David" – Yeshua the Head of the House.
- You begin this journey by learning about the Holy Torah, and as you do this you will begin to gather information that can be trusted; trusted because it comes from the Holy One of Israel.

Statutes...

- The torah [YHVH's instructions] allow you to make decisions that are biblically correct instead of the teachings of "Christian Church fathers." You will begin to change your view of the Holy Torah, of Moshe and begin to understand why Judah has stood so strong on the need for citizens of Israel to embrace and follow the Torah.
- You will begin to see Judah in a new light, not a perfect light, because Judah as it stands is not a perfect light, only HaMoshiach Yeshua provides us with the perfect light. None the less your view of Judah may change a little ... hopefully for the better.
- YHVH wants to bless His chosen nation, His chosen children, and for Him to do that, we as His children are required to embrace and follow His teachings and instructions.
- There is a great need for teachers and instructors who can show Ephraim the way, the way of Torah. The best teachers and instructors are those who either come from the House of David or who have been tutored under the guidance of those from the House of David.
- Am I saying others cannot teach or shepherd... absolutely not, but there are advantages with those who have experienced the House of David, and Judah.
- However, whilst on this subject, pride can be a real issue from some who come, or belong to these houses... as always, be a good Berean.

Statutes...

- We are living in exciting and challenging times, dare I say perhaps in a time as never before. I know that is a huge statement considering what has gone before us over history, but analysing the global situation as it now stands ... this is a reasonable statement.
- Protection, wisdom, and faithfulness is required to help us continue the journey, and to stay healthy in our spiritual condition.
- These comforting words of The Master come to mind:
- "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him. ²⁸ Come to Me, all who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and 'you will find rest for your souls.' ³⁰ For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Matthew 11:227-30
- **Yoke:** Years ago we would yoke [couple] two horses together to plough a paddock etc. The Greek word **Zugos** means the same.
- **Easy/Chrestos** = Kind, benevolent, profitable, very useful. **Burden/Phortion** = Cargo carried by ship, either heavy or light. Here referring to Messiah's commandments ...

Statutes...

- We often overlook the simple and engage in the complicated, or look for things that make us seem more special than we are. Those of us who embrace the walk of Torah can fall into this trap.
- Faith and faithfulness is simple – that is one reason why our Saviour spoke the words:
- **At that hour the disciples came to Yeshua, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" ² And He called a child to Himself, set him in the midst of them, ³ and said, "Amen, I tell you, unless you turn and become like children, you shall never enter the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 18:1-7**
- Remember our opening text: .. **the children of Israel are my servants.**
- We would do well to submit to our Father in heaven and follow His Statutes - they provide, protect, are kind, give hope ... because:
- There is no God ...

Biblical Personalities



Balaam the Prophet

The infamous story of the prophet with the talking donkey demonstrates the Bible's awareness that powers of divination were not limited to Israelite seers.

As the Israelites traveled through the wilderness on their way to the promised land, Balak, the king of Moab, began to get anxious: Too many foreign people, too close to his territory, spelled trouble. Unable to force them to leave, Balak called on a professional prophet to curse them, hoping that might do the trick. The prophet was Balaam, and the story of his interactions with Balak, Israel, and his donkey take up a full three chapters of the Book of Numbers.

The plot of Balaam's story is simple enough: Balak sends Moabite emissaries to hire him, but it takes some convincing because God has told Balaam not to agree to curse Israel. When Balaam finally relents, he cannot understand why his donkey refuses to walk in a straight line, eventually just lying down in the road. As Balaam hits the donkey, the donkey speaks—which seems not to be all that surprising to Balaam—and it is revealed that a divine messenger has been blocking the donkey's path the whole time.

The messenger gives Balaam permission to go on to Moab, but on the condition that the prophet speak only what God tells him. Upon arriving, Balaam doesn't curse the Israelites as Balak requested, but blesses them. Furious, Balak demands Balaam do what he was hired to do, but Balaam again blesses Israel. And so, on repeatedly, from different vantage points and with different words, but always with the same outcome.

Here then, in the middle of Israel's trek through the wilderness, we find an extended discourse not just on Israel's blessedness, but even more so on the nature of prophecy and the power of the word.

The Bible is generally opposed to what we might call non-standard forms of divination: sorcery, witchcraft, and the like. These are forbidden not because they are some sort of false magic, but

because they are in fact effective. So too with words of blessing and curse, even from a foreigner.

Balak knows that Balaam's words are effective. "He whom you bless is blessed indeed, and he whom you curse is cursed," Balak tells him in [Numbers 22:6](#). So too, implicitly, does God, who instructs Balaam not to curse Israel "for they are blessed." Words have real power in the Bible — oaths are binding, blessings are permanent. Balaam's story is built on the recognition that a word of curse could spell Israel's doom, even if that word came from a foreigner. Even if that word had been bought and paid for.

But Balaam also reveals that the true prophet cannot say just anything. As he says repeatedly, "I can utter only the word that God puts into my mouth." Balaam is obedient to the divine will—indeed, he even goes so far as to refer to Israel's deity as his own. Balaam thus also symbolizes the extent of God's power and influence.

That power and influence is manifest at this particular moment in Israel's story. Here, as Israel has become so numerous and is about to enter the promised land, Balaam comes to fulfill the promise God made to Abraham in Genesis to bless those who bless him and curse those who curse him. Balaam uses identical language here: "Blessed are they who bless you," he says. "Accursed they who curse you." Balaam even echoes God's promise that all the peoples of the earth shall be blessed through Abraham, saying, "May my fate be like theirs."

Though a foreigner, Balaam holds a lasting place in Judaism. His words—"How fair are your tents, O Jacob, your dwellings, O Israel" ([Num 24:4](#))—are part of the regular prayer liturgy and adorn synagogue sanctuaries around the world. Yet despite what appears in these chapters to be an unstintingly positive portrayal—of a foreigner who is compelled to say only what Israel's deity tells him, who is true to God rather than following Balak's money—a tradition runs through the Bible that understands Balaam to have been almost entirely the opposite.

In Deuteronomy, we read that though Balaam was hired to curse Israel, it was God who turned the curse into blessing — as if Balaam wanted to curse Israel but failed. Even worse, according to [Numbers 31](#), the Israelites killed Balaam when they conquered Midian because Balaam incited them to worship foreign gods.

This weird mixture of positive and negative press is mirrored in the rabbinic literature, which both praises — or at least respects — Balaam as a recipient of the prophetic spirit, and condemns him as evil and, following the brief biblical allusions, as being responsible for Israelite apostasy.

The ambivalence that surrounds the depiction of Balaam may be a reflection of ambivalence around the status of foreigners in ancient Israelite and early Jewish society; a reticence, perhaps, to give too much credit to a non-Israelite, or to admit the possibility that God might have spoken through a foreigner. Whatever the reason, Balaam's reputation remains

somewhat up in the air, even as his words remain part of the Bible and Jewish liturgy to this day.



The Source Of Spirituality

The glorification of God in the Song at the Sea provides us with several models of attaining spirituality.

“Spirituality” has become a centerpiece of our contemporary vernacular. New books intending to help people find more meaning in their lives, to infuse their lives with spirituality, appear regularly. Even medical doctors, psychotherapists, and health care professionals have adopted spirituality as a modality for therapy.

What is Spirituality?

What is the Jewish understanding of this concept, and what are the means to attaining this phenomenal experience?

A brief verse from the *Shirah* (song) in today’s parashah provides some insight: “This is my God, and I will glorify Him.” These words were uttered by the entire Jewish nation at the crossing of the Red Sea, as the people experienced the highest level of spirituality—an unparalleled closeness to God. The manifestation of Godliness was so clear that every Jew, even the humblest, could literally point a finger and say, “This is my God, and I will glorify Him.”

Let us reflect on three definitions of the word *ve’anveihu*—“and I will glorify Him.” Rashi interprets this word to mean, “I will build Him a sanctuary,” from the root *neveh*—home. It expresses Israel’s longing to build a resting place for the *Shechinah*, God’s presence.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *zt"l*, once explained that Shechinah is related to the word *shachen*, neighbor. This Name of God conveys an overwhelming closeness to God. What an uplifting spiritual feeling we might attain as we enter our synagogues, imagining that we have entered God's Home!

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch (19th-century Germany) interprets the word *ve'anveihu*, "I will make myself a sanctuary." The greatest of all sanctuaries, he writes, is the human being who makes himself holy.

"*Ner Elokim nishmas adam*—The candle of God is the human soul." Judaism teaches that since each of us is endowed with a measure of Divinity—a soul—each has the potential to become a sanctuary. There is a Divine spark lodged within every Jewish heart. When that spark is ignited, the heart overflows with love, warmth, and spiritual energy. What an optimistic view of the potential of Jewish spirituality!

Our Sages also identify the word *ve'anveihu* with the root *naveh*—beauty. "This is my God, and I will adorn Him with beauty." How? By beautifying the *mitzvot* (commandments). I will acquire a beautiful *Sefer Torah*, build a beautiful *succah*, possess a beautiful new *lulav*, adorn myself with beautiful *tallit* and *tefillin*.

Adding an aesthetic dimension to mitzvot expresses how deeply we cherish the mitzvot. Who is not touched with emotions of spirituality upon entering a traditional home on the Sabbath Eve to see a family around the table, upon which rests a beautiful, glittering candelabra, a shiny *Kiddush* cup, an embroidered challah cover—the entire Sabbath decor! Beauty evokes spirituality!

Moreover, the great Talmudic Sage, Abba Shaul, teaches that the summit of Jewish spirituality goes beyond the realm of the aesthetic and reaches into the orbit of the ethical.

Refining Our Character

The mitzvah to refine our character and to develop into caring, loving, sensitive and ethical people is also learned from the word, *ve'anveihu*. By dividing the word in two—*ani vehu*, I and Him—we derive that the highest spiritual achievement is to emulate God's attributes. Just as He is gracious, compassionate, kind and forgiving, so, too, we must be gracious, compassionate, kind and forgiving. We must become Godlike. *Imitatio Dei* is the foundation of Jewish ethics.

The summit of spirituality is reached when, after internalizing these ethical traits, we reflect them in our thoughts, in our speech, and in our actions. While outer beauty is aesthetically appealing, we must develop an inner beauty that issues from the heart. Each of us who follows the Godly way becomes a beautiful Jew—*sheiner yid*.

Is it not remarkable that one Hebrew word from the Torah contains so many diverse and rich nuances? This is the greatness of the Torah—the source of all spirituality!

Hebrew - עֵבֶרִי

Word (s) of the Week

Love / אַהֲבָה

Pronounced: ah-hah-VAH

The first usage of *ahava* in the Bible is Isaac loving Rebecca.



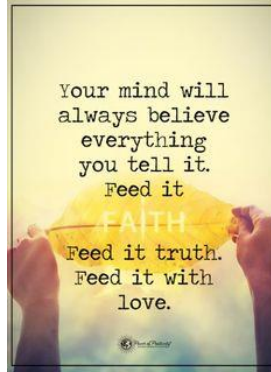
A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Full Hound

The brotherhood at congregation Beth Israel was having a poker night and when Barry Coleman arrived, he was astonished to find his friend Allan playing at a table with a few men and of all things – a dog.

"This is a very smart dog," Barry said to Allan in disbelief.

"Not so smart," Allan replied. "Every time he gets a good hand he wags his tail."



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



One-Pan Roast Chicken with Rosemary, Garlic and Potatoes

Flavorful pollo arrosto is a timeless Roman Jewish dish.

The history of the Jews in Rome stretches back more than 2,000 uninterrupted years, making theirs the oldest community outside of ancient Judea (and predating both the Ashkenazi and Sephardi Diaspora). Through the centuries, the community has been shaped by both the creative and determined people who have lived there and vast periods of unthinkable

discrimination and hardship. But out of strife grew a resilient, deeply knit community and a beguiling cuisine. The community is so long-standing that its traditions evolved alongside, and often overlapped with, Roman traditions. From a culinary perspective, it can be a challenge to untangle which dishes are prepared “alla Giudia” (Jewish style), and which are “alla Romana” (Roman style). In many cases, in fact, they are one and the same.

On an early research deep dive for this cookbook, I stumbled across a New York Times article from 1986 that described Lattanzi, an Italian restaurant located in Manhattan’s theater district with a menu that included Roman Jewish dishes.

“As children we lived near the Ghetto,” said executive chef Paolo Lattanzi in the article, which also included mention of this classic roasted chicken dish. “We didn’t know then that we were eating Jewish food. It was Italian, Roman, the food of my city, and it was very good.”

Lattanzi is still thriving today from its perch on New York City’s historic Restaurant Row. Perfumed with garlic and rosemary and sitting atop potatoes that turn creamy and flavorful in the oven, this dish is similarly timeless.

Ingredients

- ¼ cup (60 ml) extra-virgin olive oil
- 10 medium garlic cloves, 2 minced, and 8 smashed and peeled
- 1 ½ Tbsp finely chopped fresh rosemary + 4 rosemary sprigs
- 1 packed tsp grated lemon zest
- 1 ¼ tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper
- 3 medium Yukon Gold potatoes (about 1 ½ lb/680 g), peeled, halved and cut into ¼-inch-thick wedges
- 4 lb (1.8 kg) bone-in, skin-on chicken thighs and legs, excess fat trimmed
- ½ cup (120 ml) dry white wine or chicken broth
- chopped fresh flat leaf parsley for serving (optional)

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Whisk together the olive oil, minced garlic, chopped rosemary, lemon zest, salt and pepper in a medium bowl.
2. Arrange the potatoes, the whole garlic cloves and the rosemary sprigs in the bottom of a large roasting pan. Drizzle with about half of the olive oil-rosemary mixture and toss well with tongs or your hands to coat.
3. Arrange the chicken pieces on top of the potatoes. Brush the chicken evenly with the remaining olive oil mixture, then add the wine to the roasting pan, taking care to pour it around the chicken, not over the top.
4. Roast the chicken for 30 minutes. Spoon some of the pan juices over top, gently stir the potatoes (lifting up the chicken pieces as necessary) to facilitate even cooking and continue roasting until the potatoes are tender and the chicken is well browned and cooked through, another 20-25 minutes. Remove from the oven and let rest for about 10 minutes before serving.
5. Serve hot, sprinkled with parsley if desired.

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