



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 11-12-22 VAYERA

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 an approved Giving Charity by PayPal. To donate go to etz-chayim.org and click on the PayPal 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.

Marcia Hedrick would like to host a group on the west side of El Paso in her home. She also needs someone to lead the group while she will be the host. If you are interested let me know and I will send her the information.

Gabriel Martinez has a home group in El Paso (different area). 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 Assembly.

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/>.

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.

We thank you for your support.

Blessings in Messiah Yeshua,
Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph. D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D.

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.

FOR RABBI HAMMOND'S BOOK GO TO AMAZON.COM AS WELL.

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



MESSAGE FOR 11-12-22 VAYERA

*Message for 11/14/97
Vayera – And He Appeared
Genesis 18:1-22:24
2 Kings 4:1-37
Luke 1:26-38; 24:36-53*

Genesis 22:1-3

And it happened after these things that God tested Abraham and said to him, “Abraham,” and he replied, “Here I am.” And He said, “Please take your son, your only one, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the land of Moriah; bring him up there as an offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell you.” So, Abraham woke up early in the morning and he saddled his donkey; he took his two young men with him and Isaac, his son; he split the wood for the offering and stood up and went to the place of which God had spoken to him.

Genesis 22:7-8

Then Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “Father—” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering?” And Abraham said, “God will seek out for Himself the lamb for the offering, my son.” And the two of them went together.

Acts 8:32

*Now the portion of the Tanakh that he was reading was this: **He was like a sheep led to be slaughtered; like a lamb silent before the shearer, he does not open his mouth.***

Genesis 22:9

They arrived at the place of which God had spoken to him; Abraham built the altar there, and arranged the wood; he bound Isaac, his son, and he placed him on the altar atop the wood.

**note: Isaac was about 37 years old and Abraham well over 100*

Genesis 22:12

And he said, "Do not stretch out your hand against the lad nor do anything to him for now I know that you are a God-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son, your only one, from Me."

Luke 9:35

And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, whom I have chosen. Listen to him!"

Genesis 22:18

And all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves by your offspring, because you have listened to My voice."

John 1:29

The next day, Yochanan saw Y'shua coming toward him and said, "Look! God's lamb! The one who is taking away the sin of the world!"

Matthew 26:39

Going on a little farther, he fell on his face, praying, "My Father, if possible, let this cup pass from me! Yet—not what I want, but what you want!"

Matthew 26:42

A second time he went off and prayed. "My Father, if this cup cannot pass away unless I drink it, let what you want be done."

Mark 14:35-36

Going on a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that if possible, the hour might pass from him: Abba! (that is Dear Father!) "All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me! Still, not what I want, but what you want."

Luke 22:42

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me; still, let not my will but yours be done."

WHAT IS A JEW? WHO IS A JEW OR THE NATIONS / THE GOYIM? by Jane Davis

I was born "Jewish." I was raised "Jewish." I felt different because i was "Jewish." But I never stopped to sit quietly with me and "Jewish," to think about or to feel deeply what it meant. I was aware it came with a sense of pride. A sense of belonging to something special. I was aware that it taught me to be a giver. Even as youngsters we were always collecting for something. The blue and white can where coins were saved and sent to Israel, a distant land that somehow i was a part of. I was aware of my grandparent's always being honored for their support of various Jewish causes.

I went to religious school and Hebrew school. I was confirmed. my mother's family was Orthodox, my fathers reformed. Very reformed. We lit the Shabbos candles every Friday night. We kept a kosher home. These things came from my mother's side. The Orthodox side.

I wondered why we went to a Reform Temple, and I felt "less than" Jewishly, around my more religious friends who went to the Conservative and Orthodox shuls. I wanted more. More of this "Jewish" that I sensed was very significant and very special. The others at the Reform Temple didn't keep kosher or Shabbos and so even among my own I was different.

A few years ago, after searching for a Rabbi, a teacher, I found one. Amazingly enough he wasn't in my backyard. He was in cyberspace. And, unlike most Rabbi's I know, he was available. I mean really available to discuss and explore and guide and teach. The opportunity to learn with him has been a Jewish gift.

When I learned that there are 613 characters in the Ten Commandments to mirror the 613 Mitzvoth, I was excited. When I heard there are 248 positive

commandments and 365 negative commandments that match the same number of veins, arteries and limbs in the human body, I was excited. In awe, actually.

And I wondered, was I done a disservice as a Reform Jew? As a Reform Jew I was not expected to maintain the rituals. I wondered what I had lost by not practicing the gifts of my religion. Is a Reform Jew and an Orthodox Jew practicing the same religion? I don't think so. Is one Jewish and one simply a different religion? Did God give the Ten Commandments to "Orthodox Jews" or just to Jews, expecting "Jews" to follow the ways of the Torah?

In a few weeks I will be speaking at a conference called "World Without Violence". It is a conference bringing together religious and spiritual leaders to discuss the issue of the death penalty. In the most recent poll done by the American Jewish Congress 80% of Jews support the death penalty. This figure is about individuals who call themselves "Jews". But are they "Jewish?" Are they learned in the teachings of the Torah? And I come back to the original question. Who is a Jew? What is a Jew? Maybe the answer is, there is no answer. If we are not following the basic demands that our religion asks of us like honoring the Shabbos and keeping kosher what makes us "Jewish?" What do we collectively lose when the majority of our people are not following the most basic of rituals through which we are challenged and humbled? I wonder if I am a Jew although I strive to be one. I'm not sure that I can rise to the demands of it.

We are alarmed at the Orthodox saying Conservative and Reform essentially "don't count." So, instead of being defensive perhaps it is a time to define who we are. When I am asked "what is the Jewish perspective on the death penalty?" I will have to say, "First, you must understand what Jewish is."

And so, I continue to ponder, and question and learn and grow and wonder..... who is a Jew; what is a Jew and what is the difference between being a Jew and Jewish or someone from the Nations-the Goyim?

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



Summary of Parashat Vayera: Gen. 18:1-22:24

Isaac's birth, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the exile of Hagar and the ultimate sacrifice.

As Abraham was sitting before his tent, after having circumcised himself, God appeared. Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw three men standing there. Abraham invited them to come in and made a fine meal for them.

One of the men said that Sarah would have a son by the time he returns to their tent. Sarah heard this comment and laughed to herself, saying, "Oh, that I shall have the greatest fulfillment now that I am already worn out and my husband is an old man!"

God said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Is there anything too wondrous for God?"

The visiting men left, and Abraham escorted them on their way to Sodom. Now, God said, "Should I keep undisclosed from Abraham that which I am doing? The sin of Sodom and

Gomorrah already weighs very heavily. I will go down and see if I need to destroy it. If not, I shall handle it case by case.”

Now, Abraham stood before God asking, “Will you ruin the righteous along with the wicked? Perhaps there are fifty righteous in the city. To kill the righteous along with the wicked such that the righteous should be like the wicked—to do such a thing, I know would be a profanation to You, God. Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?”

And God said, “If there be 50 righteous, I will forgive the city because of them.”

Abraham continued, “See, now, I have begun to speak with my Lord, and I am only dust and ashes. How about if there were only forty-five righteous? Or 40? Or 30? Or 20? Or 10?”

And God responded to each. “I shall not destroy the whole city if there are forty, or thirty, or twenty or even ten righteous people.”

After Abraham and God parted, the two angels went to Sodom in the evening. Lot greeted them with a reverent bow and urged them to stay at his house overnight. At first, they refused, but then they agreed and Lot made them a feast.

But before they lay down to sleep, the men of Sodom surrounded the house. They wanted Lot to reveal his guests, but Lot refused, begging them to not act wickedly. But the men pushed harder until they almost pushed down Lot and his door. The visitors grabbed Lot and brought him inside, then struck down the men with blindness so that they could no longer find the entrance.

The visitors then told Lot to get his family and leave Sodom, for God had sent them to destroy the city. Lot lingered, but God took pity on him and had the men seize him and his wife and two daughters and lead them out of the city. They warned them, “Do not look back and do not stand still. Escape.” God caused sulfur and fire to rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah. When Lot’s wife looked back, she became a pillar of salt.

Lot ended up in a cave with his daughters. Because the daughters wanted to give descendants to their father, they made their father drunk with wine. Each slept with their drunken father, but he did not know when each daughter lay down or when each rose up. The elder daughter bore a son and named him Moab. He is the ancestor of Moab. The younger bore a son and she named him Ben-Ami. He is the ancestor of the sons of Ammon.

Abraham journeyed to the land of Abimelekh, king of Gerar. He said that Sarah was his sister, so Abimelekh took Sarah for his wife. Now, God came to Abimelekh in a dream and said, “You shall die, because the woman you have taken is already married.” But Abimelekh responded, “My God, will you even slay a righteous nation? They both told me they were siblings. In my innocence I have done this.”

And God answered, "I know you did this out of innocence. That's why I prevented you from sinning against Me and touching her, even indirectly. Now, restore the wife to her husband, for he is a prophet, so he will pray for you, and you will remain alive."

Abimelekh returned Sarah and gave Abraham animals and servants, money and the right to settle on his land. He told Sarah she no longer had to disguise her marriage. So Abraham prayed to God, and God healed Abimelek, his wife and his handmaids, and they gave birth.

Now, God remembered Sarah, and she conceived and bore Abraham a son, Isaac, at the appointed time, which God had spoken. Abraham circumcised his son Isaac on the eighth day. Isaac grew, and on the day, he was weaned, Abraham made a great feast.

But Sarah saw Ishmael, the son of Hagar, the Egyptian woman, making mockery. Sarah said to her husband, "Cast out this handmaid and her son, for the son shall not share the inheritance with our son, Isaac."

But the matter was very displeasing in the eyes of Abraham because of his son. And God said to Abraham, "Let it not be evil in your eyes because of the lad and your handmaid. Harken to Sarah's wishes, for in Isaac shall be your seed. And also, for the son of the handmaid, I will make a nation, for he is your seed."

Abraham rose early in the morning, took bread and water and gave it to Hagar and Ishmael and sent them away. Hagar lost her way in the wilderness of Beer Sheva and the water came to an end, and she threw the child under a shrub. She sat away from him, saying "Let me not look upon the death of the child." Then she cried.

But God heard the voice of the lad, and an angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said, "What ails you, Hagar? Do not be afraid! For God has already heard the voice of the lad. Arise, pick him up and strengthen your hand upon him for I will make him a great nation." And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. God was with the lad, and he grew up and became a master archer.

And it came to pass that God tested Abraham and said to him, "Abraham."

"Here I am," Abraham responded.

God said, "Take, I beg of you, your only son whom you love, Isaac, and get yourself to the land of Moriah and offer him on one of the mountains."

So, Abraham did as he was told, journeying with his wood for the offering and with his son and his servants to the place that God had told him. On the third day, Abraham and Isaac left the servants and took the wood for the offering, some fire and a knife. So they went, both of them, together.

Isaac spoke to his father, Abraham, "My father!"

Abraham said, "Here I am, my son."

"Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the offering?" asked Isaac.

"God will see that we have a lamb for the offering, my son. "They came to the place of which God had spoken, and Abraham built the altar and arranged the wood and bound Isaac, his son, and placed him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son. And an angel of God called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am!" said Abraham. And God said, "Do not stretch your hand toward the lad, nor do the slightest thing to him, for now I know that you are God-fearing and did not withhold from Me."

Abraham lifted up his eyes and looked and lo! There was a ram caught in the hedge. Abraham took the ram and offered it up as offering in place of his son. Abraham named this place, "God sees."

An angel of God called to Abraham a second time out of heaven and said, "By Myself have I sworn, says God, because you have done this thing and not withheld from Me your son, your only son, that I will bless you without fail, and without fail multiply your descendants as the stars in heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore, and your seed shall inherit the gate of its enemies. And all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves through your seed, as a consequence of your having hearkened to My voice."

Then Abraham and Isaac and the servants returned to Beer Sheva.

Parashat Vayera Discussion Questions

- 1. Why does Abraham argue with God over the righteous in Sodom and Gomorrah, but not over sending Hagar and Ishmael away or the notion of using his son Isaac as an offering? Do you ever argue with God? How?**
- 2. When Hagar and Ishmael are sent away by Abraham, why does he only give them bread and water? What would you have done in the same situation?**
- 3. God appears to Abimelekh in a dream. Has God ever appeared to you in a dream? In what way?**
- 4. There are many angels of God in this portion. What exactly is an angel of God? Have you ever met an angel of God? When?**

Haftarah for Vayera: 2Kings 4:1-37

The prophet Elisha performs two miracles.

This week's Haftarah contains two stories about the prophet Elisha, a protégé of Elijah. In the first story an unnamed woman, traditionally identified as the wife of Obadiah, one of the minor

prophets, comes to Elisha with a complaint. Her husband has died, and she is so destitute without him that her children are about to be taken away from her to be sold as slaves.

Elisha asks her if she has anything of value in her house, and she replies that all she has is a single jug of oil. Elisha then instructs her to borrow as many vessels as she can from her neighbors. Then, he tells her to pour the oil from her vessel into the other ones. Miraculously, the oil does not run out, ultimately lasting long enough to fill all the borrowed jugs. She returns to Elisha, who tells her, "Go sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your children can live on the rest."

The Shunamite Woman

Elisha frequently visited Shunem, a city in the tribal territory of Issachar. Whenever Elisha was there, he and his servant Gehazi were hosted by a married Shunamite woman, who fed them and gave them a special room in which to sleep. One day Elisha asks how he can reward the woman.

She responds by saying that she does not want any kind of public recognition. But because she was childless, Elisha says, "At this season next year, you will be embracing a son." The woman responds with doubt, telling Elisha not to delude or disappoint her. However, his prophecy comes true in the very next sentence, when she is blessed with a son.

Years later, while out in the fields with his father, the boy cries out, "My head! My head!" He is taken back to his mother who holds him on her lap as he dies. She lays him on a bed and immediately goes out to bring Elisha to her child. When she reaches the prophet, she falls at his feet.

The woman does not tell Elisha what happened to her son. Instead, she asks, "Did I ask my lord for a son? Didn't I say, 'Don't mislead me?'" Elisha understands what has occurred and sends Gehazi ahead with his walking stick and instructions to lay the staff on top of the boy's face. The effort to save the boy is unsuccessful.

The Second Miracle

When Elisha and the boy's mother arrive at the house, the boy is still dead, his body lying on a couch. Elisha closes himself in a room with the boy and prays to God. Then he lies on top of the boy, putting "his mouth on his mouth, his eyes on his eyes, and his hands on his hands, as he bent over him."

The boy's body begins to warm. Elisha gets up, walks around and lies on top of the boy again. The boy sneezes seven times and opens his eyes, revived. Elisha summons the boy's mother who falls at Elisha's feet again and then leaves with her son.

Connection to Vayera

Many of the themes in Parashat Vayera also appear in the Haftarah. *Hakhnasat orhim*, welcoming guests, is a prominent feature in both Vayera and in the stories of Elisha's miracles.

In both stories, a messenger of God comes to a childless woman (Sarah and the Shunamite woman) and tells her that she will soon give birth. Both messages are skeptically received, but both women ultimately have sons.

Finally, and perhaps most poignantly, both the Torah portion and the haftarah close with stories of sons who miraculously survive what would otherwise be a deadly experience. Isaac is almost sacrificed by his father on top of Mount Moriah but is saved at the last minute by an angel and a strategically placed ram. The Shunamite boy dies but is revived by a prophet and his prayer.

From the Desk of Rabbi Philip Hammond

WORDS OF WISDOM.

Trying to bring people together for a common cause can be a very difficult task. Such a task often begins with enthusiasm and vitality only to end in bickering and destruction.

As a nation, Israel has often behaved in similar manner. This has happened to us because we have failed to **shema** the wisdom of HaShem. We have failed this because we have in actual fact failed to adhere to what is commonly known in Judaism as “The Shema”.

Let us take a look at the “Shema”.

Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One.

Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom for all eternity.

You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your resources. Let these matters that I command you today be upon your heart. Teach them thoroughly to your children and speak of them while you sit in your home, while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise. Bind them as a sign upon your arm and let them be tefillin between your eyes. And write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates.

And it will come to pass that if you continually hearken to My mitzvot that I command you today, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him, with all your heart and with all your soul – then I will provide rain for your land in its proper time, the early and late rains, that you may gather in your grain, your wine, and your oil. I will provide grass in your field for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.

Beware lest your heart be seduced, and you turn astray and serve gods of others and bow to them. Then the wrath of God will blaze against you. He will restrain the heaven so there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce. And you will swiftly be banished from the goodly land which God gives you.

Place these words of Mine upon your heart and upon your soul; bind them for a sign upon your arm and let them be tefillin between your eyes. Teach them to your children, to discuss them, while you sit in your home, while you walk on your way, when you retire and when you arise. And write them on the doorposts of your house and upon your gates. In order to prolong your days and the days of your children

upon the ground that God has sworn to your ancestors to give them, like the days of the heaven on the earth.

And God said to Moses saying: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them that they are to make themselves tzitzit on the corners of their garments, throughout their generations. And they are to place upon the tzitzit of each corner a thread of blue (techelet). And it shall constitute tzitzit for you, that you may see it and remember all the mitzvot of God and perform them; and not explore after your heart and after your eyes after which you stray. So that you may remember and perform all My mitzvot; and be holy to your God. I am God, your God, Who has removed you from the land of Egypt to be a God to you. I am God your God... it is true.

How many of us walk the walk of “The Shema” as opposed to just talking the talk? How many of us actually believe in our hearts that HaShem is the One and only God? Notice that the “Shema” begins with the same commandment found in the opening of the “Ten Words”. We the people of Israel are commanded to worship and trust HaShem and only HaShem. HaShem is to be our only God. He and He alone is the One we are to seek for all our needs. HaShem is to be our only guidance as regards our lifestyle and character. The Torah is to be our guiding Light, and the Torah made flesh is to be our guiding example.

Is it not sensible to listen to wise counsel? When the Maker of heaven and earth speaks, should we not listen with intent? Not sure about you but I am convinced that we should not only listen but do our best to obey. I say this because not only does it show our love for HaShem, but His counsel is the best available. Please remember Hashem is in complete control of “our world”. He causes and He allows.

What a tremendous challenge it is to love HaShem with all our heart, soul and resources. I encourage you to take a moment and reflect on what this actually entails. To understand this, let us remind ourselves what the word **love/ahab** means. Simply put, it means, “**to devote oneself completely to another**”. I suggest this is an almost if not impossible task for us in our “fallen” state. How many of us can honestly claim to **love/ahab** HaShem at all times with all our heart, soul and resources? None the less this shouldn’t prevent us from trying our best to fulfil this wonderful commandment. Yeshua Himself said we should strive [struggle, continue pushing, labour, fight for, try our hardest] to walk the straight and narrow path of Torah.

“He answered, “Struggle to get in through the narrow door, because I am telling you; many will be demanding to get in and won’t be able to, once the owner of the house has gotten up and shut the door. You will stand outside, knocking at the door and saying, ‘Lord! Open up for us!’ But he will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you’re come from!’ Then you will say, ‘We ate and drank with you! You taught in our streets!’ and he will tell

you, I don't where you're from. Get away from me, all you workers of wickedness!' Luke 13:24-27 [CJB]

All Children of Israel should be united in the common cause of keeping, guarding, promoting Torah and HaMoshiach. This should be a delight for us to do so, but sadly this is not the case. How many of us that claim to be Children of Israel actually unite for this cause? The "Orthodox" arms of Judaism try and unite in this cause, the "Liberal" arms of Judaism do not and Christianity does not. We have to conclude that majority of the "Children of Israel" are **NOT UNITED** in the cause of loving HaShem with all our heart, soul and resources. Imagine the difference within our communities if we were united in this wonderful cause. It would be wise to take the time to remind ourselves of the promises associated with listening to and obeying the Torah and thus HaMoshiach. It would also be wise to make the effort to remind ourselves of the promises associated with rejecting the Torah and HaMoshiach.

This "common cause" is to be a family tradition. The Torah and belief in Ha Moshiach is to be embedded in our very being. All our decisions and actions are to be influenced by the Torah and actions of HaMoshiach. How many of us who would label ourselves as "Children of Israel" open the bible and study Torah each and every day? How many of us encourage other "Children of Israel" to do such? I suggest precious few.

We are told to be very careful that we do not become seduced by other gods and serve them; wise words; indeed, but words that we reject far too often. To help us achieve this commandment we are commanded to wear tzitzit on the four corners of our clothing, yet so few follow this commandment. We are told do this, so we remember the commandments of HaShem. Not only are we to remember them but we are performing them. This is the essence of "The Shema".

Our common cause is to come together as a nation, learning and performing the Torah as best as we can. We are to be continually helping and encouraging each other to do the same, with compassion and the patience of HaShem. I can think of no better "cause" and I pray and hope that those reading this would find themselves agreeing, as after all it is the commandment of the Holy One of Israel.

**May the grace, love and wisdom of HaShem and Yeshua
HaMoshiach be with you!**

This, that and the other ...



Kohelet: Torah for the 21st Century

The Book of Ecclesiastes may be the section of the Hebrew Bible most relevant to the way we experience the world today.

The Book of Ecclesiastes, written in the centuries before the Common Era by an anonymous sage called Kohelet (“Assembler of Wisdom” is one translation), is the most honest of the Hebrew Bible’s 27 books and, as such, may well be the ideal Torah for our time.

Traditionally read during the fall festival of Sukkot, Kohelet is the most honest book of the Bible because it speaks to those Jews (and others) who have outgrown the idea of a supernatural God who writes books, chooses one people from among all others, and dabbles in real estate. It may be the Torah for our time because it offers a way to live well in the wild world, we experience every day.

Kohelet refers to God as HaElohim, literally “The God.” His understanding of God leaves no room for a self-conscious and willful supernatural being who creates and governs the world. Kohelet is more of a naturalist who sees God in, with, and as the universe.

Kohelet’s world isn’t a fantasy realm where God rewards and punishes according to some divine standard, but rather our world where bad things happen to good people and good things happen to bad people, and that’s just the way it is because things happen.

At the heart of Kohelet’s teaching is the notion of *havel*, a Hebrew word most English translators render as futility, vanity or meaninglessness. Read this way, Kohelet appears to be a nihilist. But nothing could be farther from the truth.

Havel also means dew, vapor or breath. When Kohelet says *havel havalim, hakol havel* (“Utter futility! All is futile”), he is saying that life is impermanent, without a fixed

nature, as temporary as morning dew. Life is, as someone once said, just one thing after another.

This is how Kohelet puts it:

Everything in this world has its moment, a season of ripening and falling away: Moments of birthing and moments of dying; moments of planting and moments of reaping. Moments of killing and moments of healing; moments of demolition and moments of building. Moments of weeping and moments of laughing; moments of mourning and moments of dancing. Moments of scattering stones and moments of gathering stones; moments of embracing and moments of distance. Moments of seeking and moments of losing; moments of clinging and moments of releasing. Moments of tearing and moments of mending; moments of silence and moments of talking. Moments of loving and moments of hating; moments of warring and moments of peacemaking.

(Translation from *Ecclesiastes Annotated & Explained*, by Rami Shapiro)

That life is a series of moments, each one flowing into the next, doesn't mean life is meaningless, only that life is fluid. Reality is like the tide flowing in and flowing out. The flowing tide isn't without purpose, but its purpose isn't other than its flowing.

Kohelet's world is purposeful in the same way: The purpose is in the happenings themselves and not some abstraction foisted upon them. To put it another way, there is no meaning to life, life itself is meaningful.

Living well in Kohelet's world requires knowing what moment you are in. Is this a time for laughter or tears? Love or hate? Kohelet isn't elevating one moment over another. He isn't saying laughter is better than tears, or love is superior to hate. He is simply noting that laughter happens, and tears happen, and love happens and hate happens.

The key is to relax into what is happening rather than seek to change what is into something else by appeals to God or acts of will. You cannot change what is. You can only relax into it, knowing that it will, of its own accord, soon change into something else.

This is like being caught in a rip tide. According to oceanographer and rip tide expert Jamie MacMahan, most rip tides flow in circles from the shallows to the breakers and back again. It's impossible to know which part of the circle you are in. If you swim against the tide, you'll be exhausted and drown. If you swim parallel to the beach, which is the standard advice, you still have a 50/50 chance of swimming against the tide and drowning. The best way to survive is to relax and allow the tide to release you as it flows back in. It seems counterintuitive, but the science bears this out.

What MacMahan says about rip tides, Kohelet says about life. Relax into what is and it will carry you into what is next. This too seems counterintuitive. We are taught, as Dylan Thomas

put it, not to go gently into that good night, to rage and struggle and pray and bend reality to our will. You can do this if you wish, and you will lose — but only, as Byron Katie puts it, 100 percent of the time.

So how do we live well in a fluid world, a world without certainty, surety, and security? Kohelet's instruction is simple, practical and, to me, compelling. Eat simply, drink wisely, find work that gives you joy, and cultivate a few loving friendships (Ecclesiastes 2:24; 4:8–12). For some, this is too private, too much about “me” and not enough about “us.” But this is too narrow a reading. What is good for the individual is good for society at large, and Kohelet is calling us to create a world where everyone has access to healthy food, clean water, joyous work, and the freedom to love whomever they love.

This is why Kohelet is the Torah for our time. It provides an honest assessment of life and how best to live it without recourse to jealous and violent gods, corruptible clergy and kings, jingoistic tribalism, and xenophobic ethnicity. And because it does, it scared the crap out of those who put the Bible together.

Claiming that Kohelet was promoting fake news, they added alternative facts to the end of the book in the hopes of perverting the message of Kohelet and prevent it from being enacted by the people:

The sum of the matter, when all is said and done: Revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all mankind: that God will call every creature to account for everything unknown, be it good or bad. Ecclesiastes 12: 13-14

This desperate attempt by the powers that be to deny the wisdom of Kohelet only attests to its truth. Read the book for yourself and see if this is not so.

Prayer Points



Brokenness

The Kotzker Rebbe taught that the only whole heart is a broken one.

Why is it customary for a mourner to lead the prayer service? In his book *Kaddish*, Leon Wieseltier quotes Solomon Luria's opinion that a mourner should lead because "the King of Kings prefers broken vessels." This lovely formulation is based on a striking passage from the Midrash:

Rabbi Alexandri said: "If a person uses broken vessels, it is considered an embarrassment. But God seeks out broken vessels for His use, as it says, '*God is the healer of shattered hearts.*'"

Leviticus Rabbah 7:2

That we are more whole when broken is the paradox embodied in the Kotzker's famous phrase that the only whole heart is a broken one. A well lived life is one in which we grow from pain, for the ills of existence are inseparable from its lessons. To live unscathed is to forfeit life's richness for a counterfeit safety.

"Life breaks all of us," Hemingway famously said, "and most of us are strong in the broken places." The midrash's wisdom is gentler, and deeper. Sometimes it is from weakness that we reach toward God, and while we may end up stronger, we surely grow wiser and closer to the center of our own souls.

עִבְרִי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

עַל-כֵּן גְּדוֹלַת אֲדוֹנָי

Ahl-Kayn Gah-dahl tah Ah-doh-nai

Therefore, you are great, **ADONAI**, God

A Laugh a Day-Keeps the....? 🤔

“Doctor! Doctor! I feel like a pair of curtains!”

“Pull yourself together.” 😁

This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup



Pull-Apart Pumpkin Challah Rolls With Honey Butter Recipe

Perfectly pumpkin to enjoy all autumn long.

There are a lot of people who hate pumpkin. I am not one of them. I will put pumpkin in everything: mac & cheese, curries, enchiladas, and yes, of course, challah.

I dreamed these up with Thanksgiving in mind. They're the perfect accompaniment to sliced turkey, roasted veggies, and mashed potatoes, so they're a little more on the savory spectrum of baked pumpkin things, thanks to the addition of dried sage and thyme.

These rolls are adaptable in several ways. You can swap out savory spices for pumpkin spice mix, if that's your thing. You also don't have to shape these as rolls — just braid them into a regular challah.

Adding an extra glaze of melted butter and honey is completely optional but will add a delicious sweetness and irresistible shine.

Ingredients

- 1 ¼ cups lukewarm water
- 1 ½ Tbsp dry active yeast (instant yeast is fine, too) + ½ tsp sugar
- 5 ½-6 cups unbleached bread flour (preferably King Arthur brand)
- ½ Tbsp salt
- 2 tsp dried thyme or sage (optional)

- ½ cup granulated sugar
- ¼ cup oil
- 1 cup canned pumpkin
- 2 large eggs + 1 egg for glaze
- ¼ cup butter
- 3 Tbsp honey
- flaky sea salt

Directions

1. Place the yeast, ½ tsp sugar, and lukewarm water in a small bowl. Allow to sit for around 5 minutes, until it becomes foamy on top and smells “yeasty.”
2. In a large bowl or stand mixer fitted with the whisk attachment, mix together 1 ½ cups flour, salt, dried herbs (if using), and sugar. After the water-yeast mixture has become foamy, add to the flour mixture along with the oil and pumpkin. Mix thoroughly.
3. Add another 1 cup flour and the eggs, then mix until smooth. Switch to the dough hook attachment if you are using a stand mixer.
4. Add the remaining flour, mixing thoroughly, and then remove the dough from bowl and place on a floured surface to knead for a few minutes. Add additional flour (¼ cup at a time) if the dough is overly sticky but take care not to add too much flour. The dough is ready when it is smooth and bounces back when touched, though it still may be a smidgen sticky (that’s OK!).
5. Place the dough in a greased bowl and cover with plastic wrap. Allow to rise for around 2-3 hours at room temperature, or overnight in the fridge.
6. Preheat your oven to 350 degrees F. Braid challah into desired shape, or form into 2-2.5 oz balls using a digital food scale, using the palm of your hand to roll. If making rolls, place in two greased 9×13 baking pans. Allow the challah to rise for another 25-30 minutes.
7. In a small bowl, beat 1 egg. Brush the egg wash liberally over the challah rolls.
8. Bake for 22-24 minutes, or until golden on top and the dough does not look wet or sunken in the cracks.
9. **Optional:** Melt butter and honey in the microwave for 20-30 seconds. Brush the rolls (or challah) with the melted butter and honey mixture, and sprinkle with coarse sea salt, if desired.

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