



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 11-26-22 TOLDOT

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.

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

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. 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.

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

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



MESSAGE FOR 11-26-22 TOLDOT

**Message originally shared 11/21/98
Tol'Dot - generations
Gen. 25:19-28:9
Rom. 9:6-11**

I have a story to tell. The name of the story is:

The Sound of Work

Joha was looking for work, and there was a man who had a job for someone to split wood with an ax. A heavy-duty job. But Joha really did not have his heart set on doing such manual, heavy labor. Just then a *casalino* (a peasant) comes along who wants the job. The problem is that the *casalino* is mute. So, the foreman motions to him what they need him to do.

That gives Joha an idea. He tells the boss, "The two of us will make a pair. Because he's mute, I will help him out." So, the *casalino* takes the ax and begins to chop. And with every blow, Joha goes, "Uhh!" He grunts. And the mute man swings the ax and Joha grunts, "Uhh." And he swings the ax and he: "Uhh!" So, all day long the *casalino* is chopping wood and Joha is grunting, "Uhh!"

At the end of the day, the boss arrives with the money to pay for splitting the wood. He gives the money to the casolino. Joha says, "Wait a second, this is a two-man job. He does the swinging and I do the 'Uhh!' " The boss man is not at all sure about this line of reasoning.

So, the boss takes them to a judge, and the judge says, "Tell me what happened." So, the mute man stands there, and Joha says, "Este aqui no puede hablar (this man doesn't speak). He was swinging the ax, and I was going, 'Uhh!' With every blow he swung, and I went 'Uhh!' "

So, the judge says, "Bring me the sack of money. Bring it over here now, in front of me." And the judge pours the coins from the sack into a bowl, slowly. And Joha reaches for the money. The judge says, "No, no, no, you don't touch the money. You already got paid.

Joha says, "What do you mean?"

The judge says, "For the sound of work, you hear the sound of money. But money you do not get."

What is the moral of this story? And what does it have to do with this week's Parashah-reading from the Torah? Well, we'll get to that in a little while.

Genesis-Bereisheet 28:3-5

3: And may El Shaddai (God Almighty) bless you, make you fruitful and make you numerous, and may you be a congregation of peoples.

4: May He grant you the blessing of Abraham to you and to your offspring with you, that you may possess the land of your sojourns which God gave to Abraham. 5: So, Isaac sent away Jacob...

****When God is the maker of the covenant He sticks to His part. If He stays faithful to His end of the agreement, then we are expected to do the same. If we don't how can we expect Him to carry out His end? But guess what? He keeps His part of the agreement even when we don't. And the covenant with Abraham was kept by Abraham and then by his son Isaac and then by Jacob. The interesting thing is that part of the consummation process of the covenant is that Abraham's name was changed from Abram, indicating a difference. With Jacob he became Israel. But with Isaac he remained the*

same. To me I see a focal point in Isaac. That focal point was the Akeidah-the Binding of Isaac. We spend a lot of time focusing on Abraham and his faithfulness in his willingness to sacrifice Isaac. But what about the faithfulness of Isaac? He could have easily overpowered his father, who was very old at this point in his life, but Isaac allowed his father to bind him and was willing to let him sacrifice him. Was this just trust in his father or did Isaac also have faith in God? Isaac is the pipeline through which the promises of God travelled from his father Abraham and to his son Jacob. I believe that Isaac had a faith in God that was all powerful. He was anchored in that faith.

Now listen to what Rav Shaul-the Apostle Paul has to say:

Romans 9:6-11

6: But the present condition of Israel does not mean that the Word of God has failed. For not everyone from Israel is truly part of Israel; 7: Indeed, not all the descendants are seed of Avraham; rather, "What is to be called your 'seed' will be in Yitzchak." 8. In other words, it is not the physical children who are children of God, but the children the promise refers to who are considered seed. 9: For this is what the promise said: "At the time set, I will come; and Sarah will have a son." 10: And even more to the point is the case of Rivkah; for both her children were conceived in a single act with Yitzchak, our father; 11: And before they were born, before they had done anything at all, either good or bad (so that God's plan might remain a matter of his sovereign choice, not dependent on what they did, but on God, who does the calling) ...

Isaac was the child of promise. Through him the promises of God would be carried on, passed on down to one of his sons who God had called before his birth.

Isaac blessed Jacob of his own free will and specifically gave him the Abrahamic promises, which meant that the destiny of Israel would be carried only by his son.

Jacob's nation would be a congregation of people in the sense that all who accept Y'shua as Messiah, whether Jew or non-Jew, would be united as part of the same body.

So, what is the moral of the story of Joha? Are you a child of the promises given to Abraham the Gentile and Abraham the Hebrew? Or are you just there making the noise, going through the motions but in reality, you are just doing nothing. Are you a part of God's congregation or are you like Joha, who wanted something for nothing?

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 Toldot: Summary

Genesis 25:19-28:9

Rebecca and Isaac want a child. They pray to God. Rebecca soon feels violent movement within her womb. She asks God why she feels fighting within her, and God answers, "Two nations are in your womb and two states. They will be divided from one another, starting from within you. One state shall become mightier than the other and the mighty one shall serve the lesser."

When Rebecca gives birth, she has two boys. The first baby comes out red-cheeked and hairy and they name him Esau. The second is a smooth-skinned baby whom they name Jacob.

When the lads grow up, Esau who understands hunting and farming. Jacob is a single-minded man, living in tents. Isaac favors Esau while Rebecca favors Jacob. One day Esau comes from the field feeling hungry and faint and sees Jacob with a pot of stew. "Jacob," Esau asks, "May I have a bit of your stew please. I am faint with hunger."

"Sure, if you sell me your birthright," answers Jacob.

Esau stares at his brother. "If I am going to die from hunger, what good is my birthright to me?" Esau then sells his birthright to Jacob.

Esau eats and drinks and leaves. Thus did Esau despise his birthright.

After many years Isaac becomes old and blind. He calls to Esau, "My son. Go hunt some venison for me and prepare the tasty dish that I love. Bring it to me and I will eat it and then my soul will bless you before I die."

Rebecca overhears this conversation between Esau and Isaac and tells Jacob what she had heard. "Now, son," Rebecca says to Jacob, "go to the flock and fetch me two good young goats so that I may make a tasty dish for your father. Then you will bring it to your father so that he shall eat and bless you before his death."

"But Mother," Jacob replies. "Esau, my brother is a hairy man, and I am smooth. Perhaps my father will feel me, and I will seem in his eyes an impostor and bring a curse upon myself and not a blessing."

"Upon me be your curse, my son," says Rebecca. "Now obey me and go get the goats so I can make a stew."

Jacob does as his mother told him to do. His mother then prepares the dish that his father loves. Before Jacob delivers the meal to his father, his mother puts hairy goat skins upon his hands and neck and dresses him in the Esau's clothing.

Jacob then goes to see his father. "Father," he says.

"Here I am!" Isaac replies. "Who are you, my son?"

"It is I, Esau, your first-born," says Jacob. "I have done as you told me, please come eat of my venison so that your soul may bless me."

"How is it that you have found the venison so quickly?"

"Because God, your God, caused it to happen before me," answers Jacob.

"Please come closer so that I may feel you and see whether you are really my son Esau or not."

So, Jacob goes up to his father. Isaac feels Jacob's skin and said, "The voice is the voice of Jacob but the hands are the hands of Esau. Is it indeed you, my son, Esau?"

"I am," says Jacob.

Satisfied that the man is Esau, Isaac eats the stew and drinks the wine. Afterwards, Isaac says to Jacob, "Come closer and kiss me my son." When Jacob comes forward, Isaac smells his son's clothes one more time to make sure it is Esau. He then gives his blessing.

"The smell of my son Esau is like the smell of a field which God has blessed. So may God give you of the dew of heaven and of the fat places of the soil and an abundance of corn and wine. Peoples will serve you and nations will bow down to you. You will be a man to your brothers, so that the sons of your mother may bow down to you. Then he who curses you will be cursed, and he who blesses you will be blessed."

When Isaac finishes blessing the child, he thinks is Esau, Jacob leaves his father. Later Esau returns from his hunt and brings a venison stew to his father. "Father, come eat of my venison, that your soul may bless me."

"Who are you?" Isaac asked.

"I am your son, your first-born, Esau."

Immediately great terror seizes Isaac. "Who, then, is the one who already brought me hunted venison and I blessed?"

When Esau hears the words of his father, he cries out with an exceedingly loud and bitter cry, and says, "Bless me, also, O my father!"

"Your brother Jacob has come with deceit to me," said Isaac. "He has taken away your blessing."

“Jacob, he has already gone behind my back twice,” says Esau. “He took away my birthright and now he has taken away my blessing as well! Have you not reserved a blessing for me?”

Isaac replies, “Esau, I have made Jacob a master to you and all your brothers. I have sustained him with corn and new wine.”

Esau cries, “Is this the only blessing you have? Bless me too my father!”

Isaac creates a blessing for Esau, “Esau, the fat places of the earth will be your dwelling place. You will live upon your sword, and you will serve your brother. Only when you humble yourself will you loosen his yoke from your neck.”

Esau hates Jacob because of this blessing. Esau says in his heart, “Let the days of mourning for my father draw near and then I will kill my brother, Jacob.”

When Rebecca finds out Esau’s plan to kill Jacob, she says to Jacob, “Go to my brother, Laban, in Haran. Stay with him until your brother’s wrath has subsided. Then I will send for you, for why should I lose both of you in one day?”

Rebecca approaches Isaac to tell him that she doesn’t want Jacob to take a wife from the local women. She tells Isaac that it would be best for Jacob to go to her brother Laban’s and find a wife from among the women there.

Isaac agrees. He calls Jacob and blesses him and commands him not to take a wife from the daughters of Canaan. “Arise and go to your mother’s brother and take a wife from among his daughters. God, the all-sufficing, will bless you and make you fruitful. You will multiply into a great nation. God will give you the blessing of Abraham so that you and your children may inherit the land which God promised my father Abraham.” Thus, Jacob is sent away to his mother’s brother, Laban’s house.

Esau soon hears of his father’s order that Jacob not marry a Canaanite. Knowing that the daughters of Canaan are displeasing to his father, Esau goes to the family of Ishmael, Abraham’s other son, and takes one of Ishmael’s daughters for a wife.

Parashat Toldot Discussion Questions

1) What is a birthright? Why do you think Jacob asked Esau to trade his birthright for food? Why do you think Esau agreed? What is your birthright?

2) How do you feel about Rebecca, a mother, asking her son, Jacob, to lie to his father? Do you ever lie? Is it ever right to lie? How do you feel about yourself when you lie?

3) Esau hates his father and his brother for taking away his blessings. Is it okay to hate? Do you hate anyone? Why?

Haftarah for Toldot Malachi 1:1-2:7

God's expectations for the Israelites and the priests.

Malakhi lived in the 5th century BCE and was the last of all of the prophets. Because Malakhi means “my messenger,” it is probably not a personal name, but rather a vague title for a man who was known only as a messenger from God. His short book of prophecy is full of frustration and disappointment with the people and their lackluster Temple service.

The opening of Haftarat Toldot contains a direct allusion to the Torah portion: “I have shown you love, said the Lord. But you ask, ‘How have You shown us love?’ After all—declares the Lord—Esau is Jacob’s brother; yet I have accepted Jacob and rejected Esau.”

Though Esau was the firstborn, and thus had the birthright to his father’s inheritance, it was Jacob who received the more prestigious blessing, and who went on to be the patriarch of the family. Malakhi is likely mentioning Jacob and Esau because Esau was also known as Edom (Gen 25:30), the progenitor of the Edomites. During Malakhi’s life, the Edomites looted Jerusalem and killed many of those who fled. The people of Israel might reasonably have questioned whether Jacob and the people of Israel really were being accepted and Esau and the Edomites rejected, but Malakhi assures the Jews that God is still on their side.

A Different Kind of Prophecy

Much of the haftarah is written in a back-and-forth style as an argument between God and the people of Israel. This is unique to the book of Malakhi. In many ways it points away from the traditional prophesy and toward the question-and-answer style of Talmudic discussion that will become popular in the legal texts that star in the next era of Jewish history.

Yet Malakhi maintains the classic message of the prophets: that the people have been doing wrong and need to repent. In 1:7 he says, “You offer defiled food on My altar. But you ask, ‘How have we defiled You?’ By saying the table of the Lord can be treated with scorn.” He is scolding the people for their lax treatment of sacrifices and their subsequent surprise when the sacrifices do not elicit positive responses from God.

This theme of dissatisfaction with the sacrifices being offered in the Temple is repeated throughout the first chapter of the book of Malakhi. The people have been offering animals that are blemished, stolen, lame, and sick, and God will not accept them. God chastises the people, reminding them that “My name is honored among the nations, and everywhere incense and pure oblation are offered to My name” (1:11).

In addition to the problems with the goods sacrificed, Malakhi takes issue with the priests, who have been neglecting their duties. The haftarah closes with a charge to the

priests, reminding them that they are examples for the rest of the Israelites, and that they need to serve with loyalty. They, like Malakhi, are messengers of God.



From the Desk of Rabbi Philip Hammond

WORDS OF WISDOM.

It would be hoped that wisdom would go some way to help protect us against deception that would harm us in numerous ways.

“The plans of the upright are honest, the intrigues of the wicked are full of deceit.” Proverbs 12:5 [NJB]

“To tell the truth is to further justice, a false witness is nothing but deceit.” Proverbs 12:17 [NJB]

“Deceit is in the heart of the schemer, joy with those who give counsels of peace.” Proverbs 12:20 [NJB]

Deceit has a sinister purpose, especially in the context of biblical matters. The Hebrew word used for deceit in the above scriptures is **mirmah** and points to fraud, false, guile, treachery.

It is not just important that we Children of Israel guard against deceit, it is vital. We face serious trouble if we allow ourselves to be deceived and

removed from the wisdom and protection of HaShem, HaMoshiach Yeshua and Torah.

“Make sure that no one captivates you with empty lure of ‘philosophy’ of the kind that human beings hand on, based on the principles of this world and not on Moshiach.” Colossians 2:8 [NJB]

To guard against deceit, one needs to be confident and knowledgeable in the subject of interest. Biblically this translates to knowing the promises and will of HaShem as given to us through Torah and the examples set by Yeshua HaMoshiach. It is a fact that the Children of Israel have a history of being deceived by “the enemy”. It is the opinion of this author that this will continue for a time and the tools of the deceiver will become more sophisticated as the “end times” draw nearer. Wisdom that the Father imparts is given in a manner which can be understood by those who have ears to hear. Wisdom needs to give in a form that can be understood by the audience for whom it is meant. Those who have hard hearts and blocked ears will find it almost impossible to absorb the wisdom of HaShem. We also know that Satan is the father of lies and Yeshua addresses these issues with the following.

“Yeshua answered, ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, since I have my origin in God and have come from him; I did not come of my own accord, but He who sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? Because you cannot bear to listen to my words. You are from your father, the devil, and you prefer to do what your father wants. He was a murderer from the start; he was never grounded in the truth; there is no truth in him at all. When he lies, he is speaking true to his nature, because he is a liar, and the father of lies. But it is because I speak the truth that you do not believe me.” John 8: 42-45 [NJB]

Lies are attached to deceit. Not only is Satan a master liar but he is a master deceiver. When you couple his natural talents with the pride of mankind then you have fertile ground for sowing seeds of deception. Sadly, we witness this in both Christianity and Rabbinical Judaism. With

the mix of Satan's messages and pride of mankind we have Christianity swallowing the lie that the Torah has been done away with and the so-called Church has control of the "rule book". Then we have Rabbinical Judaism swallowing the lies that Yeshua is not the Messiah and must be avoided at all costs. Both have been deceived by the master of deception and their own pride.

Make no mistake we can all be deceived, and I can guarantee that there are more than a few who believe the position we at JSI take is built on lies and deception. We can defend our position using HaShem's Word along with equal weights and measures. Those who defend celebrating Christmas, Easter and Sunday worship cannot do this from HaShem's Words and Rabbinical Judaism has to use unequal weights and measures of scripture to defend their position. I don't write this to demean or ridicule anyone, I write it because it is a fact and people need to be aware of the facts. If you have the facts in front of you, then you can make valued decisions, having a better chance of avoiding deception. If you do not have the facts in front of you then you cannot make valued decisions and the chances of becoming deceived are greatly enhanced. It is the Holy Torah that gives you the information to guard you against deception. It is the Holy Torah that allows you to make valued decisions. Did not Yeshua Himself use the Torah to rebuke Satan and make a valued decision?

"Then Yeshua was led by the Spirit out into the desert to be put to the test by the devil. He fasted for forty days and forty nights, after which He was hungry, and the tester came and said to Him, 'If You are Son of God, tell these stones to turn into loaves.' But He replied, 'Scripture says; Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God'. The devil then took Him to the holy city and set Him on the parapet of the Temple. 'If You are Son of God, he said throw yourself down; for scripture says: 'He has given His angels orders about You, and they will carry You in their arms in case you trip over a stone.' Yeshua said to him, scripture also says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' Next taking Him to a very high mountain, the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. And he said to Him, 'I will give you all these, if You fall at my feet and do me homage.' Then

Yeshua replied, 'Away with you Satan! For scripture says: 'The Lord your God is the One to whom you must do homage, and Him alone you must serve.' Then the devil left Him, and suddenly angels appeared and looked after Him.' Matthew 4:1-11 [NJB]

I believe I am on safe ground if I say, "If it is good enough for Yeshua to adhere to the wisdom of Torah, then surely it is good enough for you and I". Far too many of us [The Children of Israel] have fallen fowl to the promises of Satan due to our pride and ignorance. We have a history of wanting all the "kingdoms of the world" instead of Torah. Our fallen nature and refusal to be born from above, according to a true biblical position, has caused untold damage to our nation. The Children of Israel have been deceived into putting their faith and faithfulness into the words of men rather than the Word of HaShem.

I am absolutely persuaded, that unless we learn to adhere to the Torah and HaMoshiach Yeshua we will not be able to withstand the deceptions that are coming when coupled with the "offerings" attached. There is constant talk about the "immediate" appearance of Moshiach amongst Orthodox Judaism and within much of Christianity. Some within the Orthodox community are stating that HaMoshiach is already walking the earth. The scene is ripe for one major deception concerning HaMoshiach. The very words of Yeshua echo in my ears.

"If anyone says to you then, 'Look, here is Moshiach,' or 'Over here,' do not believe it; for false Messiahs and false prophets will arise and provide great signs and portents, enough to deceive even the elect, if that were possible. Look! I have given you warning." Matthew 24:23-25 [NJB]

It is the word of Yeshua that warns us, and the word of Yeshua is Torah. Without both Yeshua and Torah in your life, you will be deceived. It is going to be difficult to withstand deception with knowledge of Yeshua and Torah but without these you will have no hope.

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

This, that and the other ...



Where the Word ‘Anti-Semitism’ Comes From

Hatred of Jews has been around for centuries, but only in the 1800s did it begin to be referred to as 'anti-Semitism.'

Hatred of Jews has been a feature of world history for centuries. But only in the late 19th century did a new specific word emerge to describe it.

What prompted the coining of the neologism “anti-Semitism” was the perception of an altered relationship between Jews and the peoples among whom they lived that could not accurately be described as mere “Judeophobia” or “Jew-hatred.” The felt need for a new word affected not just self-identified anti-Semites. It was recognized by Jews and non-Jews throughout Europe and wherever Europeans settled in the world.

Anti-Semitism, as a concept and a movement, was a response to the so-called Jewish Question, which was itself precipitated by the remarkable economic, cultural and political ascent of the Jews during the 19th century and their entry into mainstream European life. For some of the peoples among whom they lived, this rapid accumulation of power was ominously threatening. Accustomed to seeing Jews as small-time chiselers, heretics, peddlers, and parasites, they were now confronted by Jewish political leaders, cultural luminaries, bankers, captains of industry, army officers, professors, and bosses. No longer powerless outsiders, Jews were seen as wielders of surreptitiously acquired power.

Seeing only the dramatic success stories, this view ignored the thousands of still impoverished Jews dwelling in Eastern Europe and in the slums of central and western European cities. Nevertheless, it was the fear of what Jews would do with their wildly exaggerated power that animated efforts to disempower them before it

was too late — first in Germany, and then in many other countries. Conservative Christians, disaffected democrats, former liberals, nationalists, cultural critics, thwarted academics, and visionary social reformers took action against the Jewish enemy in a variety of ways. Some, though certainly not all, were convinced that a mass movement organized on the basis of Jew-hatred was the best way to proceed — assuming, probably correctly, that the great majority of their countrymen harbored some degree of resentment, suspicion, or disdain for Jews.

The term anti-Semitism emerged to describe these efforts. In Germany, Wilhelm Marr, if not the coiner of the word, then certainly one of its major early popularizers, thought of himself as a modern man, a student of history and science. Anti-Semitism allowed him to distinguish the party he launched in late 1879 — the Antisemites' League — from the religious bigotry of medieval Jew-hatred. Like many (but not all) who shared his goals, Marr defined the Jewish Question as one of race, not religious deviance. In the past, persecution had been episodic; outbursts of terrible violence alternated with long periods of quiet relations between Jews and their neighbors. In Marr's view, such lackadaisical Jew-hatred had allowed Jews to grow stronger and, in fact, launch plans for conquest of the non-Jewish world. Mere religious prejudice had failed to halt their rise. The Jews had become too powerful, too entrenched in society, to be beaten back by the occasional pogrom.

Anti-Semitism rejected these errors of the past. What was needed was disciplined and systematic struggle, nothing less than the institutionalization of anti-Semitism in political parties, grassroots organizations, lobbying agencies, newspapers, learned journals, and a variety of voluntary associations. Action would be buttressed by modern mass media and new technologies, by unceasing agitation. Anti-Semites had to be prepared for the long struggle which was to continue for as long as it took to solve the Jewish Question. Whether Marr's contemporaries wished to admit it or not, the modern world was engaged in a race war, a war that could not have a peaceful end.

While many agreed with Marr's goals and methods, the term anti-Semitism itself was never wholly embraced. Some found it too evasive, others too pseudo-scientific. The German philosopher Eugen Dühring (1833-1921) objected to its avoidance of naming the enemy directly. It was also seen as too imprecise. Not all Semites were deemed inimical. For example, when Nazis sought Arab allies before and during World War II, they found it advisable to disavow use of the term in propaganda directed at the Middle East, reassuring potential allies that Arabs were a noble race. Even today, Arabs — Semites themselves — object to being associated with the Jewish Question. Others, quite hostile toward Jews, claim that because they are Semites, they cannot be accused of anti-Semitism.

Another source of controversy that adheres to the term, even today, is its correct orthography. Should it be anti-Semitism or antisemitism?

The issue is with the word Semitism. The word emerges from the study of languages and may have once been a reasonably neutral description of the peoples and cultures of the Middle East, essentially just a means of distinguishing language groups. But those who favor antisemitism over anti-Semitism note that the term Semitentum, usually attributed to the German Enlightenment thinker A. L. Schlozer (1735-1809), was polemical from birth, invented to establish a polarity between superior white Christian cultures and those of the inferior Orient. By the time the word was appropriated by critics of the Jews, however, it had lost even a semblance of neutrality. Semitism came to signify a bundle of uniformly negative traits.

Placing “anti” and a hyphen in front of a word typically results in its opposite. But anti-Semitism is essentially a synonym of Semitism. As a result, it’s now commonplace in academic circles to drop the hyphen. The noted Holocaust historian Deborah Lipstadt has championed the change, saying the use of the hyphen “completely distorts the meaning of the word.” The Anti-Defamation League and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance have dropped the hyphen. However, the change is far from universal. The Associated Press, the standard bearer of journalistic style, continues to use the hyphen, as do many major news outlets, including The New York Times and the Wall Street Journal. The Merriam-Webster dictionary and the U.S. State Department also continue to use a hyphen.

Editor’s Note: Like many academics, the author of this piece prefers to render the term “antisemitism” without a hyphen. At the time of publication, the AP Style Guide continues to call for the hyphenated version, which My Jewish Learning has elected to follow.

Prayer Points



How to Acquire the Right Mental State for Prayer

The pursuit of proper kavanah, the Hebrew term for directed attention, has long concerned Jewish thinkers.

One of the perennial dilemmas that confronts Jewish prayer is the challenge of achieving concentrated attention within a fixed liturgy. Jewish thinkers have long wrestled with this challenge and devised strategies, both conceptual and practical, to reconcile this binary of practice and spirit.

The problem has been resolved primarily in the domain of kavanah, the Hebrew term for a desired focus or directed attention. This heightened state of mental concentration ranges from a basic practice of mindfulness—simply attending to the words that one utters in prayer—to elaborate schemes of connecting spiritual realms, and even ascending through them.

In perhaps the first prescriptive statement in Jewish literature regarding kavanah in prayer, the Mishnah (Berachot 5:1) states:

[One] should not stand up to pray unless he is in a reverent frame of mind. The original pious ones used to wait a while and then pray, in order to direct their hearts towards the Omnipresent. [While one is reciting Shemoneh Esrei,] even if the king greets him, he should not respond to him, and even if a snake is coiled around his heel, he should not cease.

The Jerusalem Talmud relates a series of colorful methods used by different rabbis to prepare their minds for prayer. Rabbi Hiyya meditated on the Persian political hierarchy to help him concentrate. Rabbi Samuel counted birds. And Rabbi Bun bar Hiyya counted rows of bricks. These latter approaches are strikingly similar to the simple act of counting one's breaths as a means to calm the mind, a method used in mindfulness meditation as practiced today. In the Babylonian Talmud, we read about diverse kinds of legal matters that one should contemplate in order to put oneself in a reverent frame of mind for prayer.

By the medieval period, Jewish thinkers were beginning to offer more detailed prescriptions for how to attain proper *kavanah*. Moses Maimonides (1135–1204), the most famous medieval philosopher, wrote that any prayer that lacks proper concentration does not constitute prayer. But how to achieve that concentration?

In his legal code, the *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides recommends clearing one's thoughts, and sitting for a time before beginning prayer. But in his philosophical work, the *Guide of the Perplexed*, Maimonides proposes an even more rigorous program for mystical contemplation during the recital of the *Shema* and the beginning of the daily *Amidah* prayer:

The first thing that you should cause your soul to hold fast onto is that while reciting the *Shema* you should empty your mind of everything and pray thus. You should not content yourself with being intent while reciting the first verse of *Shema* and saying the first blessing [of the *Amidah*]. When this has been carried out correctly and has been practiced consistently for years, cause your soul, whenever you read or listen to the Torah or listening to it, to be constantly directed—the whole of you and your thought—toward reflection on what you are listening to or reading... (*Guide of the Perplexed* 3:51).

In this remarkable passage, Maimonides reveals the depth of commitment required to develop the ideal form of *kavanah*. This is not for the faint of heart. Maimonides prescribes a practice that tilts decidedly toward non-verbal contemplation as the highest form of worship. In this treatment, inner religious awareness, self-effacement, and a pervasive focus upon divinity constitute the aim, rather than observance with a patina of spirituality.

In Maimonides' wake—and partially in response to his unmatched influence — came the flourishing of a new and distinctive form of Jewish mysticism, known as Kabbalah. Jewish mysticism was not a new phenomenon, but the kabbalistic literature of the 12th century and onward provided novel forms of Jewish spirituality.

The kabbalists described divinity as comprising ten aspects or rungs called *sefirot*. Since the Torah is conceived as a revelation of God's own being, every word or phrase, even its unwritten vowels and cantillation notes, signifies one of the *sefirot*. This approach makes space for the interpretation of a verse from the Torah as a complex string of *sefirot*.

Kabbalistic thinking extended the esoteric significance of the words of the Torah to the liturgy. Each word or prayer unit symbolizes a specific *sefirah*. *Kavanah* is the technique for uniting aspects of one's heart, mind and soul with these higher cosmic meanings of the prayer text.

In one passage, the *Zohar*, the central work of Jewish mysticism, explains that through the mental act of concentration one causes one's entire being to be constituted as a human tabernacle, prepared to receive divine overflow. Another passage explains that the 248 words of the *Shema* not only correspond to the 248 limbs of the human body

(as per rabbinic teaching), but with the proper intent, reciting them joins together the 248 limbs of the divine body. Further, one is instructed to avoid any interruption between the blessings for the Shema and the recital of the whispered Amidah prayer in order to conjoin the masculine and feminine potencies of divinity.

In the hands of 16th-century kabbalists, and elaborated by many more subsequently, the approaches to kavanah became increasingly technically complex. At the same time, the popularization of kabbalistic attention to kavanah led to the appearance of various formulas to be recited before the recitation of particular prayers. Many of these were variations of the following: “For the sake of the unification of the blessed Holy One and His *Shechinah*, in fear and in love, in love and in fear, through unification of the name *yod he* with *vav he* [the letters of the tetragrammaton, YHWH] in the name of all of Israel.”

With the rise of the Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe in the 18th century, with its emphases on joy and communion with the divine, the desire for simpler metaphors and symbols led to the marginalizing of more technical kavanot. Yet, with the advent of cheaper printing, the simple kabbalistic kavanah quoted above became widespread, particularly in Hasidic prayerbooks. Indeed, this popularizing movement made kavanah—whether as rudimentary formulas or as emotive expression—the preeminent focus of religious life.

A letter from Israel Baal Shem Tov, traditionally thought of as the founder of Hasidic Judaism, instructed his brother-in-law to sustain a particular technique of intention during prayer and Torah study. He explained that “in every single letter there are worlds and souls and divinity. These ascend and bond and unite with each other. Then, the letters bond and unite with each other, becoming a word, and they unite in true unity with divinity. Include your soul with them in each and every aspect.”

One of the most basic Hasidic teachings is that the entire material world, and even more so the letters of Torah and of prayer, pulsate with divine energy and godly luminosity. Through envisioning the spirituality within each letter of one’s prayer, every Hasid could unite with holiness and participate in bringing unity to the fractured reality they experienced. Ecstasy was within reach!

The story of kavanah’s trajectory continues to our day. The 1960s witnessed a proliferation of Eastern and New-Age spirituality, in tandem with a popularization of the study of kabbalah. To the extent that these efforts are invested in sincere spiritual searching, they often involve the use of kavanot in prayer and contemplation. Of late, there has been great creativity in developing new kavanot adapted for new forms of prayer and spiritual practice. At the same time, a small but significant number of Jews who are trying to deepen their literacy have also turned to traditional formulas, infused with a new spirit. Indeed, kavanah may today be the subject of the greatest amount of spiritual attention in the English-speaking Jewish world.

Hebrew - עֵבְרִי

Word (s) of the Week

וִיתֵּפֵּלֵל

Vih-Yee-Tih-Fah-Lehl

And Pray

A Laugh a Day-Keeps the....? 🤔

When everything's coming your way, you're in the
wrong lane, going the wrong way. 😄

This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup



Crockpot Beef Barley Mushroom Soup Recipe

This gently seasoned beef and barley mushroom soup is a cold weather classic. The simple ingredients come together to form a comforting, glistening and nutritious dish that will fill your home with aromas like what you remember from grandma's kitchen.

A bit about texture: Barley absorbs liquid. It's just a fact of barley soup life that you'll need to add hot liquid (slowly) to achieve the right texture when serving. This soup is rich enough that using a few tablespoons of water will not affect the flavor.

Note: Do not open slow cooker while it's simmering. When a lid is cracked it loses 20-25 minutes of valuable cooking time. Try and resist!



Ingredients

$\frac{2}{3}$ cup barley

2 Tbsp canola oil

1 lb. beef stew or flanken (cubed or in chunks), rinsed and patted dry
2 medium onions, chopped
8 oz. portobello mushrooms, quartered
4 oz. shitake mushrooms, sliced
4 cloves garlic, chopped
6 carrots, washed or scraped and chopped
4 celery stalks, washed and chopped
2 bay leaves
6 Tbsp fresh dill chopped (reserve 1-2 Tb. for garnish)
2 Tbsp tomato paste
3 cartons beef broth (32 oz. each)
salt and freshly ground pepper to taste (better to salt after cooking as some broths are salty)

Directions

Soak barley in cold water 2-3 hours or overnight. Rinse and drain. Place in slow cooker insert.

Heat oil in large saute or cast iron pan. DO NOT use non-stick surface.

Brown chunks of beef 6-8 minutes on each side, allowing space between each piece.

Place in slow cooker insert.

In the same pan (do not wipe it out) brown onions until golden, 12-15 minutes.

Add all mushrooms, stir and cook over medium heat for another 5-10 minutes.

Add garlic and sauté 5 minutes.

Place all of the above into slow cooker insert.

Add chopped carrots, celery, bay leaves, dill, tomato paste and broth. Season with salt and ground pepper.

Stir to combine well and set slow cooker to LOW and cook for 8 hours.

Remove bay leaves and ladle soup into bowls. Garnish with reserved chopped dill.

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