



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 1-7-23 VAYECHI**

### ***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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

Michael and Gayle Michelucci are forming a new Home Group in Idaho.

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.

CHECK OUT RABBI MORDECAI SILVERS 3 YEARS OF VIDEO TEACHINGS ON THE TORAH PORTIONS AND FESTIVALS ON YOUTUBE.

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



## **MESSAGE FOR 1-3-23 VAYECHI**

*Message originally shared 1/10/98*

*VaY'chi – and he lived*

*Genesis 47:28-50:26*

*1 Kings 2:1-12*

*1 Peter 1:1-9*

**We are going on a journey today. A messianic journey down a road paved with the Messianic promises of God Himself.**

### **Genesis 48:16**

*May the angel **who redeems me** from all evil bless the lads.*

H1350 ga'al {gaw-al'} redeem 50, redeemer 18, kinsman 13, revenger 7, avenger 6, ransom 2, at all 2, deliver 1, kinsfolks 1, kinsman's part 1, purchase 1, stain 1, wise 1; 104 א 1) to redeem, act as kinsman-redeemer, avenge, revenge, ransom, do the part of a kinsman 1a) (Qal 1a1) to act as kinsman, do the part of next of kin, act as kinsman-redeemer 1a1a) by marrying brother's widow to beget a child for him, to redeem from slavery, to redeem land, to exact vengeance 1a2) to redeem (by payment) 1a3) to redeem (with God as subject) 1a3a)

individuals from death 1a3b) Israel from Egyptian bondage 1a3c) Israel from exile 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to redeem oneself 1b2) to be redeemed

We continue traveling on this road and lo and behold we encounter Judah-son of Jacob – the Inheritance of Israel. Through whom the Promised One of God would come.

### **Genesis 49:8-10**

*Judah – you, your brothers shall acknowledge; your hand will be at your enemies' nape; your father's sons will prostrate themselves to you. A lion cub is Judah; from the prey, my son, you elevated yourself. He crouches, lies down like a lion, and like an awesome lion, who dares rouse him? **The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a scholar from among his descendants until Shiloh arrives and his will be an assemblage of nations.***

H2710 chaqaq {khaw-kak'} Ꝁ a primitive root; TWOT - 728; v Ꝁ AV - lawgiver 6, governor 2, decree 2, to grave 2, portray 2, law 1, printed 1, set 1, note 1, appoint; 19 Ꝁ 1) to cut out, decree, inscribe, set, engrave, portray, govern 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to cut in 1a2) to cut in or on, cut upon, engrave, inscribe 1a3) to trace, mark out 1a4) to engrave, inscribe (of a law) 1b) (Poel) 1b1) to inscribe, enact, decree 1b2) one who decrees, lawgiver (participle) 1c) (Pual) something decreed, the law (participle) 1d) (Hophal) to be inscribed

Scholar means lawgiver. So, until the Messiah comes—Shiloh, the promise of the scepter—the authority to teach the Torah will not depart from the descendants of Judah—the Jewish people until the Messiah comes and brings all the nations together.

We stop for a moment and listen to the prophecy given to Dan—a son of Jacob—another promise of Israel.

### **Genesis 49:16-18**

*Dan will avenge his people; **the tribes of Israel will be united as one.** Dan will be a serpent on the highway, a viper by the path, that bites a horse's heels, so its rider falls backward. **For Your Salvation do I long, O Lord!***

Now on we travel and come to Joseph. Son of Jacob, a treasure of Israel. The salvation of his people. The man of God in a land of Godlessness.

### **Genesis 50:20-21**

***Although you intended me harm, God intended it for good: in order to accomplish—it is as clear as this day—that a vast people be kept alive. So now, fear not—I will sustain you and your young ones. Thus, he comforted them and spoke to their heart.***

And now we follow this road to David. Listen as he blesses his son, Solomon and remember back down the road to Jacob as he blessed his sons.

### **1 Kings 2:3-4**

*Safeguard the charge of the Lord, your God, to walk in His ways, to observe His decrees, commandments, ordinances, and testimonies, as written in the Torah of Moses, so that you will succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn. So that the Lord will uphold His word that He spoke regarding me, saying, ‘If your children will safeguard their way, to walk before Me sincerely, with all their heart and with all their soul,’ saying, ‘no man of yours will ever be cut off from upon the throne of Israel.’*

This is a continuation of the blessing of Judah. Because we know that through the line of Judah that the Messiah would come. We know that through the line of David the Messiah would come. But here we see the blessing of Judah re-enforced by David. Torah would continue. The ways of the Lord were to be passed on down so that those who followed the Torah of God would live.

And from David to Solomon the road winds on, ever onward, and we come to the end of this part of our journey. We have followed where the road has taken us and at journey’s end, we read the words written in 1 Peter 1:1-9:

*From Kefa, an emissary of Y’shua the Messiah—To: God’s chosen people, living in the Diaspora—in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bythinia—Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and set apart by the Spirit for obeying Y’shua the Messiah and for sprinkling with his blood: Grace and shalom be yours in full measure. Praised be God, Father of our Lord Y’shua the Messiah, who, in keeping with his great mercy, has caused us, through the resurrection of Y’shua the*

*Messiah from the dead, to be born again to a living hope, to an inheritance that cannot decay, spoil or fade, kept safe for you in heaven. Meanwhile, through trusting, you are being protected by God's power for a deliverance ready to be revealed at the Last Time. Rejoice in this, even though for a little while you may have to experience grief in various trials. Even gold is tested for genuineness by fire. The purpose of these trials is so that your trust's genuineness, which is far more valuable than perishable gold, will be judged worthy of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Y'shua the Messiah. Without having seen him, you love him. Without seeing him now, but trusting in him, you continue to be full of joy that is glorious beyond words. And you are receiving what your trust is aiming at, namely, your deliverance.*

We are like all those who have gone before us. We have placed our trust in the One who has gone before us. And I am not just referring to David or Judah or even Jacob.

*Listen to this parable and think about how it fits in with the journey I have taken you on today. A king who was celebrating a joyous occasion decreed that all requests from subjects would be granted. Some requested honor, and other riches. All requests were honored. One subject asked only to have the opportunity to have an audience with the king three times daily. The king was so moved and flattered by the request that he granted it, as well as that the treasures should be opened, and this subject should be allowed to help himself to its contents. If we can learn to have the same attitude toward God as this subject did toward being with his king. That is, just to value the opportunity to have an audience with The King. If this is our attitude in prayer, then we may hope that God will treasure our prayers and meditations and our faith, then He will open his treasures and grant us our requests for our good.*

***We have received the inheritance of Judah. We have received the promise of Joseph. We await the blessing of Dan. Our trust and our faith have brought us to this part of the journey. Redemption—Deliverance—through Y'shua—the Road of Salvation!***

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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 Vayechi: Summary Gen. 47:28-50:26**

***On his deathbed, Jacob blesses his sons and asks them to bury him in Canaan.***

Jacob and all his sons and their families are now settled in Egypt with Joseph, who is the second-most powerful man in the Pharaoh's kingdom.



Jacob lived in Egypt for 17 years and he was 147 years old. Jacob (also called Israel) said to Joseph, "If I have found favor in your eyes, then swear to me that you will not bury me in Egypt, but with my fathers in Canaan."

Joseph agreed, then later received word that his father was dying. Joseph took his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim, to see Jacob. Jacob sat up in bed, saying, "God, the All-Sufficing, appeared to me in the land of Canaan and blessed me. God said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and will multiply you, and I will let you become a community of nations and will give this land to your seed after you as an everlasting possession.'"

Then Jacob added, "Now, bring your sons to me so that I may bless them. Your two sons, born before I came to Egypt, shall belong to me just like Reuben and Simeon. But the children whom you beget after them shall remain yours."

Jacob could not see, so Joseph brought his sons close enough so his father could embrace them. Jacob said to Joseph, "I had not thought it possible that I would see your face, and now God has let me see even your seed."

Joseph had his sons kneel before Jacob. Ephraim was to Jacob's left and Manashe to Jacob's right. Jacob then stretched out his right hand and placed it upon Ephraim's head—though he was the younger—and his left hand was upon Manashe's head. He guided his hands deliberately, for Manashe was the first-born.

He said, "The God before Whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, conducted themselves, the God Who has been my Shepherd for my existence until this day, the angel who has delivered me from all evil, bless the lads so that my name and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, may be called in them and that they may multiply like fish in the midst of the earth."

#### Jacob Gives Advice to His Sons

When Joseph saw that his father placed his right hand upon Ephraim's head, he moved it to Manashe's. He said, "No father. This is the first-born, place your right hand upon his head."

Jacob refused. "I know it, my son. He, too, will become a tribe. He, too, will be great but his younger brother will be greater than he and his seed will complete the nations." He blessed them on that day saying, "May God make you as Ephraim and Manashe." He put Ephraim before Manashe.

Later, Jacob gathered his sons. "I wish to tell you what will befall you in the aftermath of days. Listen: Reuben, you are my first-born, my strength and the first of my acquisitions, privileged in rank and power. But instability like water in you does not permit you this privilege, for you have mounted your father's couch and profaned it.

"Shimeon and Levi are brothers, but instruments of violence are the means of acquiring gain. My will must not enter their council. A curse therefore upon their anger, for it is too cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel."

“Judah, you are the one; to you will your brothers do homage. Judah is like a lion. The scepter will not depart from Judah nor the law inscribing stylus from between his feet, until his sprout, seemingly the last and weakest, will come. Then it will be to him, the one of manly strength, that the nations, dulled with age, will fall.”

“Zebulun will dwell at a bay of seas. He will become a harbor for ships.”

“Yissakhar, a nimble beast of burden, rests between the rows of household vessels. He has given to pay the tribute of the tiller of the soil.”

“Dan will champion the right of his people as only one of the tribes of Israel can. Dan will become a serpent on the highway, which bits the charger’s heel so that the rider falls backward.”

“Gad, many a troop will drive into him like a wedge, but he will drive like a wedge into their heel. Through Asher his food will become rich and he will yield royal delights.”

“Naphtali, a gazelle-like messenger, delivers eloquent speeches.”

“Joseph was a noble, outstanding son. When they heaped bitter abuse upon him, he remained serene, already blessed from God. You will remain with the All-Sufficing Who will continue to bless you.”

“Benjamin will tear the wolf to pieces. He will eat a portion in the morning, but in the evening, he will divide it as spoil.”

### **Jacob and Joseph Pass Away**

These are the 12 tribes of Israel. After he blessed them, Jacob commanded them to bury him in the Cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Leah were buried. Jacob dies and is gathered to his peoples.

Joseph commanded his servants and physicians to embalm his father. It took 40 days for embalming. The Egyptians wept for 70 days. Then, with Pharaoh’s permission, Joseph went with all his servants and elders to bury his father. When they came to Bramble Barn beyond the Jordan, they held a very great and impressive lamentation with a seven-day mourning period. The sons then buried Jacob as he requested.

With Jacob buried, the brothers worried that Joseph might hold a grudge against them and punish them for the evil done before. So, they said to Joseph, “Our father said to please forgive the crimes of your brothers.”

The brothers then bowed low, saying, “Here we are your slaves.”

But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid. For am I in the place of God. Even if you meant to do evil, God meant it for good, in order to bring about what is at present, in order to keep a numerous nation alive. And now, do not be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” He comforted them and spoke to their hearts.

So, Joseph lived in Egypt with his brothers and saw the third generation of Ephraim and Menashe. Joseph said to his brothers, "I am dying. And God will surely remember you again one day and bring you up from this land to the land which God swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Then Joseph made the brothers swear, "If God will remember you again one day, then you shall bring my bones up from this place." Joseph died at one hundred and ten years old and they embalmed him. Then he was placed in a coffin in Egypt in accordance with his wish.

### Parashat Vayechi Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Jews still bless their sons on the Sabbath saying, "May God make you as Ephraim and Menashe?" What is so special about them? How does it relate to the sons blessed today? How do Jews bless their daughters today?
2. On his deathbed Jacob gathers his sons and tells each of them what is to become of them in the days to come. What do you think will become of you in the days to come? What do you think will become of your loved ones? Why is this your vision?
3. After Jacob dies, the brothers fear Joseph's punishment for their previous sins. Joseph instead comforts his brothers and speaks to their hearts. How do you comfort someone and speak to their heart? How are you best comforted by someone else?

## Haftarah for Vayechi 1 Kings 2:1-12

### *David's parting words to his son Solomon.*

Parashat Vayechi describes the preparations Jacob makes for his death. He methodically bids farewell to his children and grandchildren and directs them to bury him in Canaan.

### Last Words of Advice

Finally, Jacobs delivers a poetic statement (in some cases, a blessing) for each of his 12 sons. Having gotten in the definitive last word, we are told:

When Jacob finished his instructions to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and, taking his last breath, he was gathered to his people." (Genesis 49:33)

The Haftarah for Vayechi features another father — King David — on his deathbed. Like the patriarch Jacob, David had many sons. However, David's last words are directed only to one of his sons: Solomon. With the backdrop of a contested kingship — more than one of David's sons seeks to rule after his death — David's selection of Solomon as recipient of his farewell speech is significant.

King David encourages Solomon not to despair: "Be strong and show yourself a man" (2:2). The recipe for success as king, David tells his son, is to follow God's ways. David promises that if Solomon is true to the Torah, "your line on the throne of Israel shall never end" (2:4).

## Unfinished Business

In the rest of his farewell speech, David asks Solomon to take care of some of his unfinished business. Joab son of Zeruiah had been David's general for many years, but sided with David's son Absalom in his rebellion against David. Still angry with Joab for his betrayal and for killing two innocent commanders in Israel (Abner and Amasa — 2 Samuel 3:27), David instructs Solomon: "See that his white hair does not go down to Sheol in peace" (1 Kings 2:6).

David also asks Solomon to repay good with good. When David was fleeing Absalom, Barzillai the Gileadite, then an old man, provided David with food. Now David asks Solomon to return the favor: "Deal graciously with the sons of Barzillai...let them be among those that eat at your table."

David's final request shows that he remained pained by the trauma of Absalom's rebellion until his last living moment. Shimei son of Gera had cursed David while he was fleeing Absalom (. Again, David instructs Solomon to bring about justice: "Do not let him go unpunished...send his gray hair down to Sheol in blood" (1 Kings 2:9).

In the final verses of the haftarah, David dies after 40 years of ruling over Israel. Then, we are told, "Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established" (1 Kings 2:12).



## **From the Desk of Rabbi Philip Hammond**

### **WORDS OF WISDOM CHAPTER 17**

Is it unreasonable to state that everyone has faith in something or someone? If this is the case, then surely it is wise to have faith in those which results in the prosperity and health of individuals and communities?

Having a high level of faith is not difficult yet having a high level of faithfulness can be very challenging. If you asked most “religious people” if they had faith in “God” they would answer in the positive. If you studied their level of faithfulness, you would find most fall well short in that area.

Unfortunately, we Children of Israel are no different and struggle to have a consistent high level of faithfulness to HaShem. We are guaranteed that if we are faithful to HaShem then we will indeed experience an increase in prosperity, resulting in healthy lives and living.

*28 Now if thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to do and keep all his commandments, which I command thee this day, the Lord thy God will make thee higher than all the nations that are on the earth. <sup>2</sup> And all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee: yet so if thou hear his precepts, <sup>3</sup> Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed in the field. <sup>4</sup> Blessed shall be the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the droves of thy herds, and the folds of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy barns and blessed thy stores.*

*<sup>6</sup> Blessed shalt thou be coming in and going out. <sup>7</sup> The Lord shall cause thy enemies, that rise up against thee, to fall down before*

*thy face: one way shall they come out against thee, and seven ways shall they flee before thee. <sup>8</sup> The Lord will send forth a blessing upon thy storehouses, and upon all the works of thy hands: and will bless thee in the land that thou shalt receive. <sup>9</sup> The Lord will raise thee up to be a holy people to himself, as he swore to thee: if thou keep the commandments of the Lord thy God and walk in his ways. <sup>10</sup> And all the people of the earth shall see that the name of the Lord is invocated upon thee, and they shall fear thee. <sup>11</sup> The Lord will make thee abound with all goods, with the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy cattle, with the fruit of thy land, which the Lord swore to thy fathers that he would give thee. <sup>12</sup> The Lord will open his excellent treasure, the heaven, that it may give rain in due season: and he will bless all the works of thy hands. And thou shalt lend to many nations, and shalt not borrow of anyone. <sup>13</sup> And the Lord shall make thee the head and not the tail: and thou shalt be always above, and not beneath: yet so if thou wilt hear the commandments of the Lord thy God which I command thee this day, and keep and do them, <sup>14</sup> And turn not away from them neither to the right hand, nor to the left, nor follow strange gods, nor worship them. Deuteronomy 28:1-14 [DRA]*

I encourage you to read through these promises “slowly”, and fully absorb what is outlined. Would it not be sensible to follow the instructions and guidance [Torah] of HaShem when you consider the promises given? Ignoring these instructions and associated promises would be understandable if the One making them was a charlatan, liar or didn’t have the resources to fulfil them. However, HaShem is NOT such a One. He and He alone not only can but will fulfil His promises. HaShem is not One to lie.

*<sup>19</sup> God is not a man, that he should lie, nor as the son of man, that he should be changed. Hath he said then, and will he not do? hath he spoken, and will he not fulfill? Numbers 23:19 [DRA]*

*“In the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago,” Titus 1:2 [NASB]*

*<sup>16</sup> For men swear by one greater than themselves: and an oath for confirmation is the end of all their controversy.<sup>17</sup> Wherein God, meaning more abundantly to shew to the heirs of the promise the*

*immutability of his counsel, interposed an oath:<sup>18</sup> That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have the strongest comfort, who have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us. Hebrews 6:16-18 [DRA]*

Our Father in heaven waits for us to come back to Him through Yeshua HaMoshiach, establishing our faithfulness via embracing and employing His Torah in our lives. He wants us to receive His blessings that bring biblical shalom into our lives and He can only do this if we are faithful in our call to be obedient to Him.

How can we achieve a higher level of faithfulness? This is a fair question to ask! Has HaShem left us to find our own way forward? Never let it be said that this is the case. Yes, He has left us with decisions to make, but He certainly has a clear path outlined forward for those who choose to embrace faithfulness to Him. Not only has HaShem given us His written Torah, but He has provided us with One who lived and died a perfect Torah life for us to follow – This One being Yeshua HaMoshiach.

In a moment of private prayer this morning, I was praying for help with a situation. This led me to consider the prayer Yeshua spoke before His death on the stake. We all know the prayer; “....not my will, but Yours be done”. The depth of the statement, “Not my will, but Yours be done”, is one we should revisit over and over again. Whenever we Children of Israel break the Torah, we have chosen to do our own will. Please understand that our life depends on obeying the Torah. Now before some start throwing stones accusing me of negating the saving blood of our Moshiach Yeshua, I am talking about total obedience to HaShem which entails believing in Moshiach Yeshua and keeping Torah. As the Master Himself said, *“If you love Me, keep My commandments”*. Does it not follow that we should keep the Torah if we claim Yeshua as the biblical Moshiach? This keeps us clean from all filth and importantly establishes our faithfulness to HaShem, the Holy One of Israel, blessed be His name.

*2 My children, I am writing you these things so that you won't sin. But if anyone does sin, we have Yeshua the Messiah, the Tzaddik, who pleads our cause with the Father. <sup>2</sup> Also, he is the kapparah for our sins — and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world. <sup>3</sup> The way we can be sure we know him is if we are obeying his commands. <sup>4</sup> Anyone who says, “I know him,”*

*but isn't obeying his commands is a liar — the truth is not in him.*  
<sup>5</sup> *But if someone keeps doing what he says, then truly love for God has been brought to its goal in him. This is how we are sure that we are united with him.* <sup>6</sup> *A person who claims to be continuing in union with him ought to conduct his life the way he did.* 1John 2:1-6 [CJB]

The Torah tells us to make our decisions and defenses thereof, using just weights and measures. If one does this regards the question, “should we Children of Israel embrace and follow Torah”, then we can only come to the same answer Yeshua Himself gave us – that is yes, we should. Following Torah builds our faithfulness and provides the Children of Israel with biblical shalom. Allow me to repeat this once again. Torah is the “golden” path to faithfulness, all other paths are but dust and vapour, created by false gods and human hands.

We began this chapter quoting those words that outlined the blessings associated with faithfulness to Torah, thus faithfulness to HaShem and Yeshua. It would be remiss of me not to include those words associated with doing one's own will instead of the will of HaShem.

<sup>15</sup> *But if thou wilt not hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to keep and to do all his commandments and ceremonies, which I command thee this day, all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee.* <sup>16</sup> *Cursed shalt thou be in the city, cursed in the field.* <sup>17</sup> *Cursed shall be thy barn and cursed thy stores.* <sup>18</sup> *Cursed shall be the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy ground, the herds of thy oxen, and the flocks of thy sheep.* <sup>19</sup> *Cursed shalt thou be coming in and cursed going out.* <sup>20</sup> *The Lord shall send upon thee famine and hunger, and a rebuke upon all the works which thou shalt do: until he consume and destroy thee quickly, for thy most wicked inventions, by which thou hast forsaken me.* <sup>21</sup> *May the Lord set the pestilence upon thee, until he consume thee out of the land, which thou shalt go in to possess.* <sup>22</sup> *May the Lord afflict thee with miserable want, with the fever and with cold, with burning and with heat, and with corrupted air and with blasting, and pursue thee till thou perish.* <sup>23</sup> *Be the heaven, that is over thee, of brass: and the ground thou treadest on, of iron.* <sup>24</sup> *The Lord give thee dust for rain upon thy land, and let ashes come down from heaven upon thee, till thou be consumed.* <sup>25</sup> *The*



*Lord make thee to fall down before thy enemies, one way mayst thou go out against them, and flee seven ways, and be scattered throughout all the kingdoms of the earth. <sup>26</sup> And be thy carcass meat for all the Fowls of the air, and the beasts of the earth, and be there none to drive them away. <sup>27</sup> The Lord strike thee with the ulcer of Egypt, and the part of thy body, by which the dung is cast out, with the scab and with the itch: so that thou canst not be healed. <sup>28</sup> The Lord strike thee with madness and blindness and fury of mind. <sup>29</sup> And mayst thou grope at midday as the blind is wont to grope in the dark, and not make straight thy ways. And mayst thou at all times suffer wrong, and be oppressed with violence, and mayst thou have no one to deliver thee. <sup>30</sup> Mayst thou take a wife, and another sleep with her. Mayst thou build a house, and not dwell therein. Mayest thou plant a vineyard and not gather the vintage thereof. <sup>31</sup> May thy ox be slain before thee, and thou not eat thereof. May thy ass be taken away in thy sight, and not restored to thee. May thy sheep be given to thy enemies and may there be none to help thee. <sup>32</sup> May thy sons and thy daughters be given to another people, thy eyes looking on, and languishing at the sight of them all the day, and may there be no strength in thy hand. <sup>33</sup> May a people which thou knowest not, eat the fruits of thy land, and all thy labours: and mayst thou always suffer oppression, and be crushed at all times. <sup>34</sup> And be astonished at the terror of those things which thy eyes shall see: <sup>35</sup> May the Lord strike thee with a very sore ulcer in the knees and in the legs and be thou incurable from the sole of the foot to the top of the head. <sup>36</sup> The Lord shall bring thee, and thy king, whom thou shalt have appointed over thee, into a nation which thou and thy fathers know not: and there thou shalt serve strange gods, wood and stone. <sup>37</sup> And thou shalt be lost, as a proverb and a byword to all people, among whom the Lord shall bring thee in. <sup>38</sup> Thou shalt cast much seed into the ground and gather little: because the locusts shall consume all. <sup>39</sup> Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and dig it, and shalt not drink the wine, nor gather anything thereof: because it shall be wasted with worms. <sup>40</sup> Thou shalt have olive trees in all thy borders, and shalt not be anointed with the oil: for the olives shall fall off and perish. <sup>41</sup> Thou shalt beget sons and daughters, and shalt not enjoy them: because they shall be led into captivity. <sup>42</sup> The blast shall consume all the trees and the fruits of thy ground.*

*<sup>43</sup> The stranger that liveth with thee in the land, shall rise up over thee, and shall be higher: and thou shalt go down, and be lower. <sup>44</sup> He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him. He shall be as the head, and thou shalt be the tail. <sup>45</sup> And all these curses shall come upon thee, and shall pursue and overtake thee, till thou perish: because thou heardst not the voice of the Lord thy God, and didst not keep his commandments and ceremonies which he commanded thee. Deuteronomy 28:15-45 [DRA]*

Please do not dismiss these promised curses as “Old Testament” only verses and applicable only to those Jews who do not believe in Yeshua as HaMoshiach. If you believe this to be the case, then this same reasoning applies to the blessings. Remember HaShem is the same yesterday, today and forever and He says what He means and means what He says.

Baruch HaShem, that we can rely on His promises!

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

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## ***This, that and the other ...***



### **Sholem Aleichem**

***One of the most beloved writers of Yiddish literature, his work inspired the hit musical "Fiddler on the Roof."***

Sholem Aleichem, the most beloved classical Yiddish writer, was born Sholem Rabinovitz in 1859 in Pereyaslav, Ukraine. His father — a merchant — was interested in the Russian Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment), and the young Sholem was exposed to modern modes of thinking in addition to traditional Judaism. Sholem attended the *heder* (Jewish school) in Voronkov, the town his family moved to when he was young, and in his teenage years he graduated with distinction from a Russian gymnasium.

Like his contemporaries Mendele Mokher-Sefarim and I.L. Peretz, Sholem Aleichem originally wrote in Hebrew, and he contributed to a number of Hebrew weeklies. Literature was the purview of *maskilim* (proponents of the Jewish Enlightenment), and for the maskilim, Hebrew was the appropriate language of Jewish high culture. It was the traditional language of Jewish scholarship, and it was considered more sophisticated than Yiddish — the language of the people. Indeed, when the 24-year old Sholem Rabinovitch published his first Yiddish story, “Tsvey Shteyner” (“Two Stones”), he used the pseudonym Sholem Aleichem to disguise himself from his father, who Sholem supposed would be disturbed by his choice of language.

#### **Meaningful Pseudonym**

But Sholem Aleichem found his voice in Yiddish. His writing, though far from unsophisticated, was about the masses and for the masses. “Sholem Aleichem” was more than just a pen name. Sholem Aleichem was Sholem Rabinovitch’s tragic-comic persona, a character who mediated the tales of the people to the people. The name itself is significant. “Sholem Aleichem” is a Hebrew greeting, meaning literally “Peace be upon you,” but a more appropriate translation might be: “What’s up?” Sholem Aleichem’s work was a dialogue with the people written in a verbal and cultural language that would have maximum resonance.

This literary attitude manifested itself in the structure of Sholem Aleichem’s work as well. Though Sholem Aleichem wrote novels and plays, he is perhaps best remembered for his fictional confessions, letters and monologues, written in the voice of the simple religious Jew.

As Harvard Yiddish scholar Ruth Wisse has written, “Just as Samuel Richardson and Daniel Defoe used ‘discovered’ diaries and letters, pseudobiography... to win the trust of new English readers by insisting their books delivered other people’s words, so too did Sholem Aleichem often present himself as the intermediary between his characters and his readers to attest to the actuality of his creations.”

One such character was Menakhem-Mendl, whose “letters” Sholem Aleichem first published in 1892. Menakhem-Mendl is a *schlimazel* (habitually unlucky person) who travels through Russia with his wife, Sheyne Sheyndel, trying to make his fortune with failed scheme after failed scheme.

### The Tevye Stories



Topol as Tevye in the 1971 film adaptation of “Fiddler on the Roof.”

A similar theme is evident in the earliest tale about Sholem Aleichem’s most famous protagonist: Tevye the Dairyman, the basis for the show and film *Fiddler on the Roof*. The first Tevye story, “Tevye Strikes it Rich,” was a monologue, published in 1894. In it, Tevye tells us how he earned enough money to set up a dairy. On his way home from a day working in the fields, he came across a woman and her daughter who are lost. After getting over the fear that they are demons, he escorts them home and is rewarded for his heroism. But his luck doesn’t last long.

In the second Tevye story, “The Bubble Bursts,” published in 1899, the bubble bursts. Tevye is brought into a doomed money-making scheme by none other than Menakhem-Mendl, who is a relative of Tevye’s (by marriage twice removed).

Of course, all of this is ample material for comedy. But aside from his farcical plots, Sholem Aleichem also employed stylistic humor. In a classically rabbinic manner, Tevye lives his life intertextually, sprinkling his speeches with biblical verses. Oftentimes, Tevye mangles these verses, and though some believe Sholem Aleichem created Tevye this way to present him as an ignorant Jew, it’s more likely that the humor is not in Tevye’s naivete, but in our not knowing when he is purposefully misquoting and when he isn’t.

Because of the humorous elements in his writing, Sholem Aleichem is often thought of as a comic writer, but there is an undeniable darkness to his work. The great critic Irving Howe wrote:

As I read story after story, I find that as the Yiddish proverb has it, 'a Jew's joy is not without fright,' even that great Jew who has in his stories brought us more joy than anyone else... a clock strikes 13, a hapless young man drags a corpse from place to place, a tailor is driven mad by the treachery of his perceptions, the order of *shtetl* life is undone even on Yom Kippur, Jewish children torment their teacher unto sickness. And on and on.

### Vast Popularity

Sholem Aleichem connected with a vast chunk of world Jewry. He reached an unprecedented level of fame in his lifetime. Jews from all around the world and of all religious backgrounds read his work. He lived in many places as well. In 1906, Sholem Aleichem left Kiev after the pogroms there and went to live in Lemberg. Then he left for New York, where he hoped to make a living writing and staging plays. But New York was a financial failure for him, and he returned to Europe and was forced to do reading tours to support himself. Sholem Aleichem soon fell ill with tuberculosis, which would plague him for the last eight years of his life.

And yet these physical and financial difficulties were wholly incommensurate with his popularity. Sholem Aleichem's 50th birthday in 1909 was celebrated all around the world, and when he returned to New York in 1914, he was welcomed with a party at Carnegie Hall. As Howe put it, "Every Jew who could read Yiddish, whether he was orthodox or secular, conservative or radical, loved Sholem Aleichem, for he heard in his stories the charm and melody of a common *shprakh*, the language that bound all together."

Sholem Aleichem was a prolific writer. He wrote six novels between 1884 and 1890 alone. He wrote romantic novels and political ones. (He was affiliated with the burgeoning Zionist movement, and in 1898, published part of a Zionist novel named *Moshiekhs Tsaytn, The Times of the Messiah*). In 1894, the same year the first Tevye monologue appeared, Sholem Aleichem published his first full-length play, *Yaknehoz*. Later plays included a stage version of his romantic novel *Stempenyu*, produced during his disappointing residence in New York, and *Di Goldgreber (The Gold Diggers)*, which he wrote in Berlin after leaving New York.

Sholem Aleichem was not just a writer of Yiddish fiction. He was also one of its most devoted advocates. In the late 1880s, Sholem Aleichem founded (and funded) *Di Yidishe Folksbibliotek*, an annual journal that published the works of most of the important writers of the period, including Mendele Mokher Seforim and I.L. Peretz. He brought prominence to Yiddish writing that would have been unfathomable to his literary ancestors.

Sholem Aleichem died in New York on May 13, 1916. For many years, his readership continued to grow, particularly through the Hebrew translations composed by his son-in-law, Y.D. Berkowitz. Sholem Aleichem, named after a ubiquitous Jewish greeting, had become — and perhaps still is — the ubiquitous name of Jewish literature.

# Prayer Points



## Tzitzit, the Fringes on the Prayer Shawl

### *Fringes for four-cornered garments.*

**Tzitzit** (tseet-tseet or TSIT-sis) are the strings, or fringes, tied to each of the four corners of a tallit, or prayer shawl. They are widely considered a reminder, not unlike a string around one's finger, to think of God at all times.

Tzitzit fulfill the following commandment in Numbers 37, in the Torah portion called Parshat Shlah:

Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. That shall be your fringe; look at it and recall all the commandments of the LORD and observe them, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. Thus, you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God.

The commandment to wear tzitzit is repeated in the V'ahavta section of the Shema prayer.

While traditional Jewish law says one must have these tzitzit on every four-cornered garment one wears, today most clothing doesn't have corners. Instead, the tzitzit are on the prayer shawl and on a special small tallit, called a tallit katan, that some traditional Jews wear under their clothes. Some let the tzitzit from their tallit katan hang out, while others tuck them in.



Image of a tallit katan via Wikimedia Commons

The tzitzit are attached to the corners and knotted according to a specific pattern

**Hebrew - עֲבֵרִי**  
**Word (s) of the Week**

עֲצִיט

*Tsi-sith*

**Meaning:** *a tassel, fringes*

***A Taste of Jewish Humor***

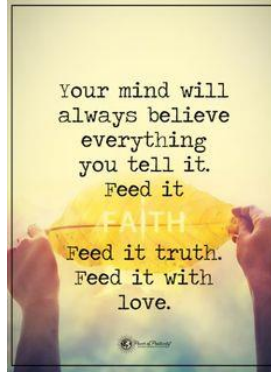
Two men of Chelm went out for a walk, when suddenly it began to rain.

“Quick,” said one. “Open your umbrella.”

“It won’t help,” said his friend. “My umbrella is full of holes.”

“Then why did you bring it?” “I didn’t think it would rain!”





## ***This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup***

### **Shabbat Chicken with Dried Fruit Recipe**

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I have served this chicken on Rosh Hashanah for years, and it's a go-to for a quick and easy Shabbat recipe. The chicken gets caramelized from the glossy and delicious sauce. It's best when marinated overnight, so be sure to plan ahead and start it early.

#### **Ingredients**

1/2 cup orange juice

1 cup dried apricots, prunes, or a combination of any dried fruit

12 cloves garlic, minced

1/2-inch piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped (about 1 1/2 Tbsp)

2 Tbsp dried oregano

1 Tbsp dried thyme

1/3 cup red wine vinegar

3 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

1 1/2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice

2 bay leaves

2 (3- to 4-pound) chickens, cut into 8 pieces

1 1/2 tsp kosher salt



1/2 tsp ground black pepper

1/2 cup packed light brown sugar

1/2 cup white wine

### Directions

In a small bowl, pour orange juice over dried fruit and let soak to plump the fruit, about 10 minutes. In a separate small bowl, whisk together garlic, ginger, oregano, thyme, vinegar, olive oil, lemon juice, and bay leaves.

Place chickens in two roasting pans. Pour marinade equally over each chicken and massage into chicken. Add orange juice and fruit mixture equally to each roasting pan.

Cover pans and marinate in the refrigerator for 4 hours or overnight.

Preheat oven to 375°F. Sprinkle chicken with salt and pepper, and then drizzle equally with brown sugar and white wine. Bake until chicken is nicely browned on top and registers 165°F in the thickest part of the thigh, about 1 hour and 15 minutes.

Serve with pan juices and dried fruit.

Notes:

This dish is perfect as-is for Passover.

The chicken tastes best when marinated a minimum of 4 hours and preferably overnight.

Can be prepared 2 days ahead of time. Store, covered, in the refrigerator or freeze up to 3 months. Defrost in the refrigerator. Rewarm, covered, in a warming drawer or 300°F oven.

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*Philip Hammond  
 Phone: 0416087400 or  
 61 + 416087400  
[Philip@etz-chayim.org](mailto:Philip@etz-chayim.org)*



