



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 12-31-22 VAYIGASH**

### ***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 12-31-22 VAYIGASH**

*Message originally shared 12/20/96*  
**VAYIGASH - AND HE DREW NEAR**  
Genesis 44:18-47:27  
Ezekiel 37:15-28  
Luke 6:12-16

This week's message involves a lot of Scripture references, so I will be jumping around but in the end you will see where we are heading and you will probably see where we are heading much sooner.

We read in Genesis - Bereisheet Chapter 44 verse 16 the following: *And Yehudah - Judah said, "What do we say to my master? What do we speak? Or how do we clear ourselves? Elohim has found out the crookedness of your servants. See, we are my master's slaves, both we and he also with whom the cup was found."*

There is a lot happening here in this one verse of Scripture. Judah was finally acknowledging publically what I believe he and the rest of his brothers had been carrying around inside of them for a long time. Their guilt over what they had done to Joseph. Remember, at this point in time they still were not aware that it was Joseph before whom they stood accused. But Judah felt that everything that was happening to them was Elohim's judgement on their sins. And you know what? They were right. But remember what we talked about last week? What man means for evil Elohim can turn it into something for good. But in this confession before Joseph was to come the admission that Judah did not want to return back home to face his father after promising him that nothing

would happen to Benjamin. Judah was willing to spend the rest of his life in slavery rather than go home and see his father hurt again.

Can't you just see in your mind's eye the pain and anguish that Judah was going through. The weight of his sins was bearing down on him, and he could no longer live with them. He was willing to face the judgement of Elohim than the judgment of his father Jacob. But more important, he finally was willing to accept the responsibility for his actions. And at the same time, he had spoken also for his brothers in acknowledging that they were a part of this and that they too would serve in slavery rather than go back and face their father. Can you imagine the weight of their guilt, that they all were of one accord in willing to remain in Egypt as slaves.

But there is one more important thing happening here. They were coming together as one to do what was right after all the years of guilt over what they had done to Joseph. They knew that their father favored Benjamin over them, and it would have been very easy to leave him there and go back home. But finally, they took responsibility for their actions and stood together as one. They would stay with Benjamin and serve as slaves.

Do you know what we see here? We see the family of Jacob finally coming before Elohim, accepting their punishment for their past sins, and more importantly coming together as one to form the body that Elohim would use to build the nation of Israel on. They were finally the foundation that Elohim needed to build upon. And this in its own way is prophetic about another place and time: *"And in those days it came to be that He went out to the mountain to pray and was spending the night in prayer to Elohim. And when it became day, He called near His taught ones and chose from them twelve, whom He also named emissaries: **Shim'on whom He also named Kepha, and his brother Andi, Ya'aqob and Yohanan, Philip and Bartholomi, Mattithyahu and T'oma, Ya'aqob the son of Alphai and Shim'on, the one called the Ardent One, Yehudah the son of Ya'aqob and Yehudah from Qerioth who also became the betrayer.**" Meir - Luke 6:12-16*

What do we see here? Y'shua was breaking out some of His followers and forming His core group - the twelve Shaliach's - emissaries - apostles. It was to be upon at least eleven of them that He would begin the building of the foundation for the future. Much in the same way that Elohim was going to build on the twelve sons of Jacob.

It has often been said that with Jacob the era of the Patriarchs ended, and with his sons the beginning of the people of Israel that was to come. For we know that they were not yet a nation. That was not to be until they came out of the desert after their time of preparation. Their 40 years similar to our Messiah Y'shua's testing for 40 days in the wilderness prior to His going forward on His mission. There are many things happening throughout Scripture, we need to be always alert to this and learn.

**In Genesis 45:7 we hear the words of Joseph:**  
***"And Elohim sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance."***

A prophetic statement if ever I heard one. And Elohim sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance. That statement was not only for then, but it is for now! Y'shua has gone before us to preserve us. The remnant is not just the Jews, but also for the Gentile, because not all the Gentiles will be saved, there will be a remnant, just as there will be a remnant of the Jews. Joseph was a man who dreamed dreams and knew their meaning. I choose to believe that he was speaking not just of the present but also of the future. He saw, as others have seen, Elohim's plan of a great deliverance. A deliverance of not just the nation of Israel, but of all who come to faith in Y'shua.

**In Genesis 46:31-34 we read the following: “And Yoseph said to his brothers and to his father’s household, “I am going up to inform Pharaoh, and say to him, ‘My brothers and those of my father’s house, who were in the land of Kena’an, have come to me. And the men are shepherds, that they have been men of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds, and all that they have.’ And it shall be, when Pharaoh calls you and says, ‘What is your occupation?’ that you shall say, ‘Your servants have been men of livestock from our youth even till now, both we and also our fathers,’ so that you dwell in the land of Goshen for every shepherd is an abomination to the Mitsrites.”**

Why was it so important to Joseph to make sure that his brothers and their families stayed apart from the Egyptians? Because he knew Elohim's plan and the promise that had been passed down to his father. In order that the children of Jacob would become a nation, they needed to be separate from the people of Egypt. Because if they intermarried, they would be lost as a people who had been called out by Elohim. They would never return to the land set aside for them by Elohim. And if they did not do that, Y'shua could not come through the line of Judah, because the real possibility of there being no line of Judah or of any of the tribes was real. Assimilation into the peoples around them would occur. But by keeping them separate and apart, they would grow into a people that Elohim would form into a nation who would bring forth the Messiah.

What lesson do we see here for us? We are called to be separate from those around us if we are truly the sons of the Most High. We are called not to citizens of this world but if we believe in the Messiah Y'shua, then we are sons of Elohim. Our path lies not here in this life, but it lies in the life to come. The promise of our Father who is in heaven.

**In Genesis 47:27 we see the promises of Elohim begin to come to fulfillment. *And Yisra'el dwelt in the land of Mitsrayim, in the land of Goshen. And they had possessions there and bore fruit and increased exceedingly.***

Remember that Goshen was the best piece of land for the flocks of the Hebrew people. It was here that the Jewish people could be kept separate and yet flourish. Goshen could be compared to the land of Canaan. It was a land full of life similar to the land of promise. Elohim brought the Hebrew people to Goshen in order to save them from extinction and yet also to increase them in number. It was a taste of what was to come. The promises

yet to be fulfilled in the land of Canaan. And yet the land of Canaan was a taste for us also. A taste of what was to come in the Kingdom of Elohim, when He lives among us.

Scripture is not just stories or lessons or teachings. They are all these and more. They are the Word of Elohim. They are His promises to His people. The prophetic Word of Elohim. The final promise of a Elohim to His people.

**In Ezekiel 37:19 we read of that promise:**

***“Say to them, ‘Thus said the Master Adonai, “See, I am taking the stick of Yoseph, which is in the hand of Ephrayim, and the tribes of Yisra’el, his companions. And I shall give them unto him, with the stick of Yehudah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in My hand.””***

That is the promise. The sons of Ephraim, the son of Joseph, who had the blood of Egyptians in them, Gentile blood joining with the tribes of Israel, Jewish blood uniting together in the hands of the one from the line of Judah - the Messiah Y’shua. We all become one tribe - the tribe of Elohim. The Body of Messiah. Neither Jew nor Gentile, but one living in the house of Elohim.

---

**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 Vayigash: Summary**

***Genesis 44:18 - 47:27***

Because a silver goblet has been found in his younger brother Benjamin's bag, Joseph demands that Benjamin remain a slave in Egypt while the brothers return to their father. Parashat Vayigash begins with Judah's plea to Joseph:

Oh, my lord, have you a father or another brother? My father had two children by his adored wife Rachel. But his firstborn son was torn to pieces, and he warned us that if an accident befalls Benjamin, "you will bring me to my grave in misery." "And now," Judah continued, "if I come home and the youngest lad is not with us, and the soul of the one is bound up with the soul of the other, then it shall come to pass that he shall die in sorrow. Please take me as your slave instead of Benjamin."

#### **Revealing His Identity**

Joseph could no longer control himself. He released all his servants so that he could be alone with his brothers. "I am Joseph," he said crying so loudly the whole palace could hear. "Is my father still well?"

But the brothers could not answer him because they were dumbfounded in Joseph's presence.

"Now," Joseph said, "do not be troubled about selling me into this place, for God sent me here in order to preserve life. So, it was not you who sent me here. It was God. Hurry, go to my father and tell him the news and bring him here. I will provide for all of you." Joseph then fell on Benjamin and wept. He kissed his brothers and wept in their embrace. His brothers, too, wept with him.

Pharaoh was pleased to hear the news of Joseph's brothers. He urged Joseph to bring his father and all the brothers' families to Egypt. He offered them the best wagons to help them move and the choicest of lands when they arrived.



The brothers reached their father's home. They told him that Joseph was still alive and that he had royal status. Jacob's heart stood still because he did not believe them. But when they told him what Joseph had said and when he saw the wagons, the spirit of Jacob revived and he said, "It is too much. Joseph, my son is still alive. I will go there. I want to see him before I die."

Then Jacob went to Beer Sheba and made an offering to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Jacob in visions in the night, saying, "Jacob! Jacob!"

"I am here," Jacob said.

"I am the God, the God of your father. Do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go with you and bring you back up again and Joseph will place his hand upon your eyes."

Then Jacob's sons carried their father in the Pharaoh's wagons Joseph went to greet his father in Goshen, flinging himself upon his father's neck to weep.

"Now, I can die since I have seen you are alive," said Jacob.

"Let's go tell Pharaoh that you are here," says Joseph. "Since every shepherd is an abomination in Egypt, if Pharaoh asks your occupation, tell him that you have been breeders of herds all your life and ask to dwell in the land of Goshen."

Joseph then spoke to Pharaoh and suggested that his family dwell in Goshen. The brothers, too, spoke of the famine in Canaan and requested permission to live in Goshen.

### **Living in Goshen**

Pharaoh agreed. "Let them dwell in the choicest of lands of Goshen, and if you know that there are capable men among them, appoint them chief clerks over the herds I have."

Then Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh. Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh asked, "How old are you?"

"One hundred and thirty years old," answered Jacob. "The days have been few and unhappy, and they have not been as long as my fathers in the days of their wanderings." Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and settled in the land of Rameses in Goshen as the Pharaoh had commanded.

Now the famines in the lands of Egypt and Canaan were so bad that Joseph had all the people's money because they had used it to buy grain. All of Egypt came to Joseph, saying, "Give us bread, lest we die."

"Bring me your herds to trade," Joseph replied. And they did.

But the famine was too great, and they came back to Joseph with neither money nor livestock. They said, “There is nothing left to give you except our bodies and our land. Why should we and our land perish before your very eyes? Purchase us and we and our land shall be slaves to Pharaoh. You can give us seed so the land shall not become desolate.”

So, Joseph purchased all the farmland and Joseph gave the people grain and made a law that one-fifth of their land production went to Pharaoh. Only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh’s property.

So, Jacob settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. They acquired property there and became fruitful and multiplied exceedingly.

### **Parashat Vayigash Discussion Questions**

1. What did Joseph mean when he told his brothers not to be troubled by selling him, because it was God who brought him to Egypt? Has God ever brought you to a certain place, a certain time, a certain person? When? How?
2. How do you know that God created a situation and that it was not another person or your own actions?
3. When Judah is describing his father’s potential anguish over the loss of Benjamin, he describes “the soul of one bound up with the soul of the other.” What does that mean? Is there anyone to whom your soul is bound?

## **Haftarah for Vayigash Ezekiel 37:15-28**

***Ezekiel promises: The divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel will one day be united.***

At the climax of Parashat Vayigash, Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers who had sold him into slavery 17 years earlier. Through kisses and tears, the children of Israel become one family again.

In keeping with the theme of reunion, the Haftarah for Vayigash looks to a time in the future when the kingdoms of Judah and Israel will no longer be separated: “I will make them a single nation in the land...Never again shall they be divided into two nations” (37:22).

### **The Lost Tribes**

The division of Israel into two kingdoms—a northern kingdom associated with the tribe of Ephraim, and a southern kingdom associated with Judah—took place in approximately 922 BCE, due to unresolved power struggles that followed King Solomon’s death.

The northern kingdom was destroyed and sent into exile by the Assyrians in 722 BCE; the southern kingdom was exiled to Babylon in 586 BCE. Ezekiel’s prophecy was delivered sometime in the sixth century BCE, while in exile in Babylon.

## **Two Sticks Become One**

As is common for this prophet, Ezekiel receives instructions from God to perform an action that serves as a metaphor for God's message. In this case, God tells Ezekiel to take two sticks and mark one of them "Judah and the Israelites associated with him" and one "Ephraim and the Israelites associated with him" (37:16). Then Ezekiel is told to bring the sticks together, so that they become one stick.

When people ask Ezekiel for the meaning of this action, God tells him to offer a message of promise and comfort: God will collect the people of Israel from among the nations and bring them to their own land. There, God will unite the kingdom, never to be divided again. The Israelites will no longer defile themselves with sin because God will save and cleanse them.

At the time of this redemption, Ezekiel promises that a descendant of King David will rule all of Israel. The people will follow God's ways, and God will bless them: "I will make a covenant of friendship with them—it shall be an everlasting covenant with them—I will establish them and multiply them, I will place My sanctuary among them forever" (37:26).

Centuries after Ephraim and Judah were divided, Ezekiel continues to dream of a future time when all the children of Israel will live together in harmony.

And the dream lives on. Even after the rule of Babylon ended, it was almost exclusively descendants of Judah who took up the Persian King Cyrus' offer to return to the land of Israel and rebuild the temple. The other tribes of Israel remained lost in exile, likely assimilated among the nations where they were dispersed.

Yet to this day, the repatriation of the lost tribes of Israel remains a component of the dream for ultimate redemption.



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

### **WORDS OF WISDOM CHAPTER 16**

May it be stated, that if we Children of Israel want wisdom, then we no choice but to walk in the guidance of HaShem's Right Hand. We do have the choice of rejecting wisdom, but if we truly want the Wisdom that gives life and abundance thereof, we must turn our ears to the voice of HaShem.

*9:1 Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars: 9:2 She hath killed her beasts; she hath mingled her wine; she hath also furnished her table.*

*9:3 She hath sent forth her maidens: she crieth upon the highest places of the city, 9:4 Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither: as for him that wanteth understanding, she saith to him, 9:5 Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.*

*9:6 Forsake the foolish, and live; and go in the way of understanding.*

*9:7 He that reproveth a scorner getteth to himself shame: and he that rebuketh a wicked man getteth himself a blot.*

*9:8 Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee: rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee.*

*9:9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man, and he will increase in learning.*

*9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

*9:11 For by me thy days shall be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased. Proverbs 9:1-11 [JPS]*

HaShem is beseeching us to seek this Wisdom, so as His Set Apart people we can eventually be the people He has called and chosen us to be. Unfortunately, we have yet to arrive at our destination. Could this be that we are no longer in awe of HaShem and thus fail to walk in His guiding footprints? Is it because we no longer fear or revere the Holy One of Israel that we prefer to live our lives according to our own foolish wisdom? Is it because we are ignorant of His laws and precepts that we walk our own paths of wisdom? It is probably a mix of all, but this does not change the fact that we are currently engaging in the wisdom of the world over and above the wisdom of HaShem and HaMoshiach Yeshua.

The Apostle Paul was faced with this issue many times and had to address it in various congregations. He constantly tried to bring the people of the assemblies back to the guiding hand of HaShem, through application of Torah.

*2 I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those in Laodicea, as well as for those who have still not seen me face to face. <sup>2</sup> My purpose is that their hearts, joined together in love, may be encouraged. May they have all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, leading to a true knowledge of the mystery of God—that is, Messiah. <sup>3</sup> In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. <sup>4</sup> I am telling you this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive-sounding arguments. <sup>5</sup> For even though I am absent in body, yet I am with you in spirit—rejoicing to see your good order and the steadfastness of your trust in Messiah.*

*<sup>6</sup> Therefore as you received Messiah Yeshua as Lord, so continue to walk in Him— <sup>7</sup> rooted and built up in Him and established in your faith just as you were taught, overflowing with thankfulness.*

*<sup>8</sup> See that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men and the basic principles of the world rather than Messiah. Colossians 2:1-8 [TLV]*

Paul states in plain language, with conviction, that it is in Moshiach Yeshua that we find the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Please notice the

word **“hidden”** as it is vital that we understand the importance of bringing it to our attention. All the translations that I looked up had the word hidden or hid in them, so we should take note. Paul could have easily written, “In Him are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” and left out the word “hidden”. Is it possible Paul used this word in an attempt to encourage us to dig into the Word of HaShem just as we would if looking for a treasure? There was a battle taking place here between the wisdom practiced by those of the world, and the wisdom that comes through HaMoshiach Yeshua. Allow me to interject at this point with some words spoken by the Master Himself.

*“Yeshua said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in Me will never be thirsty” John 6:35 [TLV].*

When reading this I am transported to the words we quoted earlier in Proverbs, *“Come, eat of my bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled.”* There is a biblical pattern and link between the use of bread, wine, Torah, Yeshua, wisdom, knowledge, and a healthy productive life. I encourage readers to find these patterns and links.

We should note with confidence that HaShem has a written guarantee, that if we follow His guidelines for living, then we will indeed have the wisdom and knowledge needed to have healthy productive lives. We should also note with confidence that HaShem has a written guarantee that if we fail to employ His guidelines for our lives, then we can expect to have fractured, confused, unhealthy lives infected by the pseudo wisdom of mankind.

Returning for a moment to Paul’s letter to the Colossians we find that he is “pleading” with the people to know HaMoshiach Yeshua in all His fullness. He makes this point as a way of protecting the people from falling for the “wisdom and knowledge” of those who oppose HaShem and His complete Torah. Unless you have a good understanding of Torah and embrace the beauty thereof, you will never fully know HaMoshiach Yeshua. Unless you have a good understanding of Torah, hence Yeshua, then you will indeed fall for the empty, seductive philosophies of human “wisdom” that have their foundation in the elemental powers of the world and NOT according to the wisdom and knowledge of HaMoshiach Yeshua. We finish on the following statement of Paul.

*“<sup>31</sup> Do we then nullify the Torah through faithfulness? May it never be! On the contrary, we uphold the Torah.” Romans 3:31 [TLV]*

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

---

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



### **What Is the Temple Mount?**

***Holy to both Jews and Muslims, this area in Jerusalem's Old City has been a focal point of inter-religious tension for decades.***

The Temple Mount refers to the elevated plaza above the Western Wall in Jerusalem that was the site of both of Judaism's ancient temples. The site is also the third holiest in Islam (after Mecca and Medina) and has been a focal point of inter-religious tension for decades. At present, the site is under Israeli sovereignty but is administered by the Muslim Waqf (religious trust). Jews and other non-Muslims are permitted to visit, but Jewish prayer is forbidden there — a provision long contested by a small number of Israeli Jews who oppose Muslim control over the site. Violence has flared at the site on numerous occasions, and Israeli forces sometimes restrict access to Muslims at times of elevated tensions.

#### **Why is the Temple Mount holy to Jews?**

The Temple Mount, known in Hebrew as *Har Habayit*, is traditionally said to be the site where Abraham demonstrated his devotion to God by taking his son Isaac to be sacrificed. The mount is also the site of both ancient Jewish temples. The first, built by King Solomon, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. The second was built in the sixth century BCE and stood for nearly 600 years before it was destroyed and the Jewish people exiled in 70 CE by the Roman Empire. Jews continue to mourn the

destruction on the fast day of Tisha B'Av. According to Jewish tradition, a third temple will be built on the site during the messianic age.

### **Why is the Temple Mount holy to Muslims?**

The Temple Mount is known to Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) and, according to Islamic tradition, is the site of Muhammad's ascent to heaven in the seventh century. Today, the mount is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site in Islam, and the gold-topped Dome of the Rock, one of the most recognized symbols of Jerusalem.

### **Are Jews permitted to visit the mount?**

Yes. However, traditional Jewish law has been understood to bar entry to the site. Jewish tradition regards entry to the Holy of Holies, the innermost sanctum of the temple where God's presence dwells, as strictly forbidden, and as a result Jews traditionally did not enter the Temple Mount at all for fear of treading on sacred ground. (The exact location of the Holy of Holies is not known.) The Western Wall, the last standing retaining wall of the Temple Mount, is the closest to the mount that Jews are traditionally permitted to pray. However, Jews do visit the Temple Mount regularly.

### **Who controls the Temple Mount?**

Since Israeli forces regained control of the Old City of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War of 1967, Israel has extended its sovereignty over the site, though most of the world regards Israeli authority in all of eastern Jerusalem to be illegitimate. Day-to-day authority over the site rests with the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf. A waqf is a charitable trust recognized by Islamic law. Jordan, which had controlled eastern Jerusalem and the Islamic holy sites prior to 1967, continued to exercise a special guardianship over the mount, an arrangement later codified in the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace treaty, under which Israel "respects the present special role of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan in Muslim Holy shrines in Jerusalem." Overall security for the site, including entry to visitors and worshippers, rests with Israeli security forces.

### **What is Israel's policy on access to the mount?**

The Temple Mount may be accessed by anyone, but entry to the Dome of the Rock is restricted to Muslims. Though there are multiple gates to access the site, non-Muslims must enter through the Mughrabi Gate, located near the Western Wall plaza. Israeli security controls the entry points. At moments of elevated tensions, Israel has occasionally closed the site to visitors, including Muslim worshippers.

### **Why is the site a flashpoint for violence?**

The religious sensitivities surrounding the Temple Mount have repeatedly made the site a flashpoint for violence and unrest. Palestinians have long suspected that Israel intends to alter the status quo established for the site following the 1967 war, and some Palestinian leaders have even claimed that the Jewish temple never stood there. In 2015, rumors that Israel was preparing to impose a change at the site was said to be a contributing factor to the so-called "stabbing intifada," during which a number of knife attacks were perpetrated against Israeli civilians in Jerusalem and elsewhere in the



country. In September 2015, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said on Palestinian television that Israelis would not be permitted to “defile” the Al Aqsa Mosque with their “filthy feet.” Israel has emphatically denied that it wants to change current arrangements at the site; however several Israeli leaders have made symbolic shows of asserting Israeli sovereignty there and there have been plots by Jewish fringe groups to blow up the Dome of the Rock. In September 2000, then opposition leader Ariel Sharon undertook a visit to the site under heavy guard, sparking riots that would eventually blossom into the Second Intifada. Tensions are frequently elevated during Yom Yerushalayim (Jerusalem Day) on which Jews celebrate the 1967 recapture of the Western Wall and during the Muslim holiday of Ramadan.

### **Why are some Israeli Jews pushing for greater access to the site?**

Efforts to secure Jewish prayer rights at the Temple Mount have gained traction in recent years, despite the mainstream rabbinic opinion that Jews should not set foot there. A number of rabbis have issued contrary rulings, saying that visitation and prayer should be permitted, and by some estimates the number of Jewish visitors has vastly increased. Among the most prominent activists is Yehuda Glick, an American-born rabbi and current member of the Israeli Knesset. Glick is a leading figure in efforts to secure Jewish prayer rights on the mount, framing his campaign in the language of civil rights. In 2014, he survived an assassination attempt by a suspected member of Islamic Jihad.



## Hebrew and Prayer

***Praying in Hebrew, even in when the language is unfamiliar, can have an emotional impact.***

The language of Jewish prayer is Hebrew. Certainly, it is permissible to pray in any language. The Sages of the Mishnah indicated how important they thought it was that we understand what we say:

“These may be said in any language . . . the recitation of the *Shema*, the Prayer [the *Amidah*], and the Blessing After Meals” (Sotah 7:1).

If that is so, what need is there for the non-Hebrew speaker to pray in Hebrew? Franz Rosenzweig remarked that “the uncomprehended Hebrew gives him more than the finest translation.... Jewish prayer means praying in Hebrew.” There is an emotional element that reciting prayer in Hebrew can add even to those who do not comprehend every word. There is a feeling of identification with an ancient tradition and with other Jews wherever they may be which enhances the experience of prayer.

There is nothing magical in Hebrew, but there is something culturally meaningful that is lost when traditional prayers are said in other languages. Even if one does not understand the words, a glance at the translation will enable one to bring some level of meaning to the recitation, which is then supplemented by the emotional impact of the Hebrew text. Furthermore, by learning about the texts themselves, you can apprehend the sense of the texts, if not of every word.

Obviously, the more one knows the text in its original language, the better. The real meaning of the text lies in its original language. The terms that are used, the multiple meanings and echoes within them, can seldom be fully conveyed in translation.

### **Language is Culture, and Translations are Inexact**

Languages are also reflections of specific cultures. When God is called “*go’el*” and the English renders it “redeemer,” we have entered into another thought-world with

connotations not to be found in the Hebrew. For Christianity—and English is a Christian language—redemption means saving someone doomed to perdition because of sin. For Judaism, it means rescuing Israel from the enslavement of foreigners.

When we thank God for “*torah u-mitzvot*,” we are not speaking of “law and commandments.” “Law” is a set of legal norms. Torah is God’s instruction, either in a specific book or in all of Jewish tradition as it has developed. “Commandments” has the harsh sound of orders given by a commander. *Mitzvot* are both actions we are expected to perform and actions of a positive nature which stem from religious convictions.

All of this is on the most basic level of semantics. If it is true, as has been said, that reading a work in translation is like kissing through a veil, what shall we say about trying to pray through translation? Beyond the basic level, there is the level of emotion that only the Hebrew can properly achieve.

### **Even a Limited Amount of Learning Can be Valuable**

What are we to do, therefore, when so many Jews do not understand the language? It is fatuous to say, “Learn it!” as desirable as that would be. But we can say, “Learn the vocabulary of prayer.” It is possible to study enough about the prayers so that even if you do not understand every word, the main words and phrases will be familiar to you.

Glance at the translations as you pray to remind yourself of the meaning, but do not depend on them. For if all translations are interpretations, translations of prayers are even more likely to be explanations and to contain the theology and philosophy of the translator. If you have read about the prayers, you will know enough to assign whatever meaning you feel appropriate at the time you are saying them.

**עִבְרִי - Hebrew**

**Word (s) of the Week**

תְּפִלָּה

**Teh-fee-lah**

**Prayer**

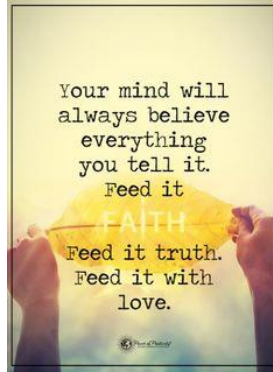
## ***A Taste of Jewish Humor***

**An elderly woman climbs three flights of stairs, open an ornately carved door, and walks into an exotically furnished reception room that smells of expensive incense.**

**A gong sounds and a beautiful Asian woman appears from behind a beaded curtain and asks softly, “Do you wish to meet His Omnipotence, the Wise, the All-Knowing, the All-Seeing Guru, the Honorable Maharishi Fatah-Naru?”**

**“yeah,” says the woman. “tell Sheldon his mother is here.”**





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

## **Spinach and Kashkaval Cheese Bourekas Recipe**

*A flaky, flavorsome treat.*



Bourekas are a Turkish treat coming from the word borek, which means pie. In Turkey they are formed into circles, while in Israel they are more often formed into small, hand-held pies akin to empanadas.

**Kashkaval is a hard Balkan cheese made from sheep or cow's milk, and sometimes a mix of both. It is very popular in Israel.**

## **Ingredients**

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 Tbsp kosher salt
- 1 cup olive oil, divided
- $\frac{2}{3}$  cup water + 2 Tbsp
- 2 eggs
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup sesame seeds
- 2 cups shredded kashkaval or sharp cheddar cheese
- 4 loose cups of fresh chopped spinach or kale

## **Directions**

1. **Make Ahead:** Mix the flour, salt, and water with 2 Tbsp oil and knead for around 7 minutes or until dough has come together and is stretchy. Cover dough ball with plastic wrap and allow to rest at room temperature for around 1 hour. While dough is resting, mix spinach with cheese.

---

2. After 1 hour, break the dough into 4 separate dough balls. Drizzle 2 Tbsp oil on the tops of the balls, cover with plastic wrap, and allow to rest for 10 more minutes.
3. On a clean tabletop, drizzle oil on surface and gently wipe around to create a non-stick surface. Roll out 1 dough ball to the size of a pizza. Using gentle hands, stretch dough outwards until dough is twice the width and paper thin. Work slowly and take your time, so the dough does not tear.
4. When fully stretched, sprinkle spinach-cheese mixture in one, thin layer on the outside ring of dough. Drizzle 2 more Tbsp oil on the center of circle and spread all over the surface of dough. Roll dough over filling and continue to roll inward until there is no space between sides. Using a butter knife, cut down the center of the ring to create a giant rope. Coil the rope in the center of a large, oiled sauté pan. Repeat with the rest of the dough balls and wrap the completed dough "ropes" around the center so the pan has giant spiral borekas.
5. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F. Crack eggs into a bowl and beat with two Tbsp water. Brush the top of borekas with egg wash and sprinkle with sesame seeds. Bake for 30- 40 minutes or until top is golden brown. Allow to cool for 30 minutes before slicing and serving.

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.**

Ministry Outreaches  
\*Prison Outreach  
\*Weekly Newsletter + more-subscribe (free)  
\*Become an Affiliate  
\*Bible Studies and Home groups  
\*Erev Shabbat and Shabbat Zoom group

Contact us for more info -  
[tolmm@etz-chayim.org](mailto:tolmm@etz-chayim.org)

*Tree of Life Messianic Ministries  
Australia Affiliate*

Shabbat Service  
Saturday 11am  
[AEST]  
Zoom

Bible Study  
Wednesday  
7:00pm [AEST]

Men's Group  
Sun: 7:30pm

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



