



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 3-25-23 VAYIKRA**

### ***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. TO SEE MORDECAI’S BOOKS GO TO: [HTTPS://WWW.ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG/SHOP-OUR-STORE/PRINT-AND-KINDLE-BOOKS/](https://www.etz-chayim.org/shop-our-store/print-and-kindle-books/)

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 3-25-23 VAYIKRA**

*Message originally shared 3/28/98*

*Vayikra – And He Called*

*Leviticus 1:1-6:7*

*Isaiah 43:21-44:23*

*Hebrews 10:1-18*

### **Leviticus-Vayikra 1:2**

*"Adam ki yakriv mikem - If any person of you will offer a korban (offering; sacrifice)."*

The common translation of the word Korban is usually sacrifice. This translation does not capture the essence of the Hebrew word, which should be offering. The root of Korban is Karav, meaning 'coming near', because an offering is the means to bring us closer to Elohim.

### **Leviticus 2:11-13**

*Any meal offering that you offer to the Elohim shall not be prepared leavened, for you shall not cause to go up in smoke from any leavening or fruit-honey as a fire*

*offering to the Elohim. You shall offer them as a first fruit offering to the Elohim, but they may not go up upon the altar for a satisfying aroma. You shall salt your every meal offering with salt; you may not discontinue the salt of your Elohim's covenant from upon your meal offering -- on your every offering shall you offer salt.*

#### **Isaiah 44:3-6**

*Just as I pour out water upon the thirsty [land] and flowing water upon the dry ground, so shall I pour out My spirit upon your offspring and My blessing upon your progeny, And they will flourish among the grass like willows by streams of water. This one will say: 'I am the Elohim's,' and the other one will call [himself] by the name of Jacob; this one will sign his allegiance to the Elohim and adopt the name of Israel. Thus said the Elohim, King of Israel, and its Redeemer, the Elohim, Master of Legions: I am the first and I am the last, and aside from Me there is no Elohim.*

#### **Revelation 1:8**

***I am the A and the Z says Adonai, Elohim of heaven's armies, the One who is, who was and who is coming.***

#### **Revelation 1:17-18**

***When I saw him, I fell down at His feet like a dead man. He placed His right hand upon me and said, "Don't be afraid! I am the First and the Last, The Living One. I was dead but look! --I am alive forever and ever!***

#### **Hebrews 10:1-18**

***For the Torah has in it a shadow of the good things to come, but not the actual manifestation of the originals. Therefore, it can never, by means of the same sacrifices repeated endlessly year after year, bring to the goal those who approach the Holy Place to offer them. Otherwise, wouldn't the offering of those sacrifices have ceased? For if the people performing the service had been cleansed once and for all, they would no longer have sins on their conscience. No, it is quite the contrary--in these sacrifices is a reminder of sins, year after year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Therefore, on coming into the world, he says, "It has not been your will to have an animal sacrifice and a meal offering; rather, you have prepared for me a body. No, you have not been pleased with burnt offerings and sin offerings. Then I said, 'Look! In***

*the scroll of the book, it is written about me. I have come to do your will.'" In saying first, "You neither willed nor were pleased with animal sacrifices, meal offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings," things which are offered in accordance with the Torah. And then, "Look, I have come to do your will;" he takes away the first system in order to set up the second. It is in connection with this will that we have been separated for Elohim and made holy, once and for all, through the offering of Y'shua the Messiah's body. Now every cohen stands every day doing his service, offering over and over the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this one, after he had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, sat down at the right hand of Elohim, From then on to wait until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering, he has brought to the goal for all time those who are being set apart for Elohim and made holy. And the Ruach HaKodesh too bears witness to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant which I will make with them after those days,' says Adonai: 'I will put my Torah on their hearts, and write it on their minds,'" He then adds, "And their sins and their wickednesses I will remember no more.'" Now where there is forgiveness for these, an offering for sins is no longer needed.*

Let me share with you these thoughts written by the rabbis of old:

The letter aleph in the first word of Leviticus-Vayikra is written smaller than the normal size of all letters in the Torah. This small aleph indicates the extraordinary humility of Moses, of whom the Torah says, "The man Moses was very humble, more so than any other person on the face of the earth." Though Moses was blessed with superior qualities and was the greatest prophet of Israel ever, he regarded himself inferior to everyone. He viewed his superior qualities as a special endowment or gift from Elohim, and not as some special achievement on his part. In his mind, therefore, he was convinced that if someone else had been blessed with the same abilities, the other would have achieved more than he did himself. By virtue of this humility, Moses merited the highest levels of achievement, that he was chosen to redeem Israel from Egypt, he received the Torah for Israel, and so forth. This concept of humility and setting aside of self is at the very root of the concept of sacrifices, the central theme of our parshah. **Thus, it is written, "Adam ki yakriv mikem - If any person of you will offer a korban (offering; sacrifice)." (Vayikra 1:2)**

The word mikem (of you) qualifies adam (person), thus should follow right after it. Why is it placed later, after "ki yakriv - will offer"? It is said that this order signifies the meaning of sacrifices, of serving Elohim: The term korban (sacrifice) is derived from the word karov (to approach, to come near).

Our verse thus informs us: If any person desires to draw close to Godliness, then you must make an offering **mikem** - of yourself. A true sacrifice is not the offering of something external to the person, but of the person himself. It means setting aside of self.

On the one hand, everyone must be aware of his unique talents and abilities. We must know that we are genetically endowed with special qualities. Thus, when it comes to matters of Torah and mitzvot, we should not think "who am I and what am I to be involved with matters of holiness and spirituality?"

On the contrary, in that moment we must realize that we are fully qualified to deal with the most sublime tasks, and that, indeed, is our function and mission in life.

On the other hand, one must never forget that our special qualities and talents to achieve the highest levels are no more than a Divine gift and endowment.

Like Moses we must think that if another had been granted his abilities, the other one might be yet greater and achieve more. This consciousness will thus set aside any possibility of arrogance and presumptuousness and preserve a proper sense of humility.

By virtue of this setting aside of self-one can offer sacrifices in the true spirit, ... with love, in accordance with His Will.

**Isaiah 44:21-23**

***Remember these things, Jacob and Israel, for you are My servant: I fashioned you to be My servant; Israel, do not forget Me!***

***I will have wiped away your willful sins like a thick mist and your transgressions like a cloud; return to me, for I will have redeemed you!***

*Sing glad song, O heavens, for the Elohim has done [wonders]; shout for joy, O foundations of the earth; break out with glad song, O mountains, O forest and all its trees; for the Elohim has redeemed Jacob, and He will glorify Himself through Israel.*

*I see in this last verse a coming together of all True Believers. We are one in the Elohim!*

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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 Vayikra: Summary Leviticus 1:1-5:26**

***God commands Moses regarding various types of offerings: under what circumstances they should be offered and what they should consist of.***

Moses has conducted a ceremony to anoint the Tent of Appointed Meeting and the Priests who will officiate in it. A cloud now covers the Tent of Appointed Meeting, and the Presence of the Lord fills the Tabernacle.

God calls to Moses, “Explain to the sons of Israel the ways of bringing offerings to God. There will be offerings of animals and grains and fruit. Animals for sacrifice shall be male and without blemish. These animals shall be killed and washed and burned so each shall smoke on the altar in the Tent of Appointed Meeting. This will be for an ascent offering, an offering made by fire in expression of compliance to God and to make atonement before God.

“For the grain, make the offering with fine wheat flour and oil and incense. Put it straight on the altar. Anything leavened shall be made into a fire offering. You shall season every offering of grain with salt.

“For the offerings of cattle and small livestock, all the fat belongs to God. It shall be an everlasting statute for your descendants in all your dwelling places not to eat any fat, nor any blood.

### **Inadvertent Sins**

“If a person inadvertently sins, then sin offerings are to be made. If the entire council of Israel sins inadvertently and something is hidden from the community, guilt will be incurred. If the sin becomes known in the community, then the community shall bring an offering for sin. A bull is to be brought by the elders of the community and made into an offering to clear the community of sin.

“If a prince commits a sin, then he has incurred guilt. He shall take a buck from the goat species and sacrifice its blood upon the altar of ascent offering, then burn its fat in a fire offering for peace. This is an offering to clear him of sin.

“If any person from among the people sins by doing something God commands shall not be done, then guilt will be incurred. A she-goat, without blemish will be taken for this sin offering. Then the priest will make the fat go up in smoke as an expression of compliance to God. The priest will effect atonement for him for his sin and he will be forgiven.

“A person incurs guilt when he is a witness but does not testify. A person incurs guilt when he touches an unclean animal or unclean human. Even when the touching goes unnoticed, guilt is incurred when the sin is discovered. A person incurs guilt when he swears in an oath to deny or to grant something but does neither.

“If a person incurs guilt, he shall acknowledge to himself that he has sinned, and he shall bring to God an offering for his guilt. The offerings of small livestock, a female sheep or goat, shall clear him of his sin. If the person’s means are not sufficient enough for sheep, then two turtle-doves or two young pigeons can be offered to God. One is an offering to clear sin and one is an ascent offering.

“If the person’s means are not even sufficient for these animals or birds, then an *ephah* (measurement) of fine flower is to be the offering to clear sin. He shall put no oil upon it, nor incense. He shall take it to a priest, who will take a handful, a memorial portion, and smoke it on the altar as a fire offering to God. The priest will effect atonement for his sins and he will be forgiven. And it shall belong to the priest like the homage offering.

### Breach of Trust

“If a person commits a breach of trust and thoughtlessly trespasses against any of the holy things of God, he shall bring an expression of his guilt to God. One ram, without blemish, shall be given. This ram shall be of value equal to the money offering given in the Sanctuary. And he shall make restitution and shall add to it one-fifth and give it to the priest. The priest shall then effect atonement for him.

“A person who sins for acting negligently incurs guilt. He shall bring a ram to the priest to effect atonement for him for his act of negligence and he will be forgiven. It is a guilt offering. He is surely guilty before God.

“A person sins and commits a breach of trust against God by making a denial to his neighbor with regard to something entrusted to him or a loan or an object taken by robbery. A person also sins when he withholds something from his neighbor or if he has found a lost article and denies it or has sworn to a lie. If the person knows of the sin and breach of trust against God, then guilt is incurred.

“The person shall restore what was stolen or withheld, or what was entrusted to him for safekeeping, or the lost article which he has found, or anything else about which he lied. The

person shall pay for it in capital, equivalent to its value, and shall add one-fifth of the value of it to atone. On the day the person acknowledges his guilt, the person shall pay for it to the one to whom it is rightfully due. But as for his guilt offering, he shall bring it to God. He shall bring an unblemished ram as a guilt offering and give it to the priest who shall effect atonement for him before God.

“Then the person will be forgiven regarding any one of the things done to incur guilt.”

### Parashat Vayikra Discussion Questions

**1) Why is God so specific in what kind of offerings can be given to God for different purposes? What difference does it make what kind of offering or how it is made, as long as it is an offering?**

**2) What is guilt? What do you do with your guilt? Why do we need to seek forgiveness for our sins and for the guilt incurred?**

**3) How can an offering to God on an altar in the holy Sanctuary clear one of sin or guilt? Why does a Priest need to “effect the atonement?” Do we still need a Priest to “effect the atonement?” Why or why not?**

**4) Is it necessary to seek forgiveness from God and from another human? Can you do one and not the other? Why or why not?**

**5) Describe how it feels to be forgiven by God. Describe how it feels to be forgiven by another human. How is the feeling of forgiveness the same or different?**

## Haftarah for Vayikra Isaiah 43:21-44:23

### *Idols are not the answer.*

In Parashat Vayikra we read about forms of public sacrifice that one can use to sustain or renew a relationship with God. Both ideas are explored in the Haftarah, taken from the Book of Isaiah, as well.

Isaiah delivered his prophecy to Judeans who had been exiled from the Land of Israel and were living in Babylon. After 538 BCE, Cyrus the Mede allowed the exiles to return to their homeland, but many remained in Babylon. Several chapters from the Book of Isaiah are focused on trying to convince these people to trust God’s power and go back to Zion.

In Isaiah’s prophecy God speaks to the people in Babylon, alternately rebuking them for abandoning their worship and reminding them that if they repent, they will be forgiven. The people are chastised for never bringing God any sacrifices, neither sin offerings, nor burnt offerings nor meal offerings.

Then, God goes on to compare God's own supremacy to the impotence of idols. In an extended diatribe focused specifically on wooden idols, God wonders how the Judeans can use the same wood they use to make fire, bake bread, and roast meat to carve idols. He is shocked at the ignorance of people who might make an idol from the same substance they would also happily burn. Idols are fraud God says, and only God, the creator of all flesh, can redeem the people, and wipe away their transgressions (44:20).

The haftarah closes with an impassioned plea for the people to return to God, both literally to the land of Israel, and figuratively, in their hearts and actions. When the people return there will be much rejoicing. "Shout for joy, O mountains, O forests with all your trees! For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, Has glorified Himself through Israel" (44:23).



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

### **WORDS OF WISDOM CHAPTER 28**

When contemplating the successes and failures we go through, I found myself considering the word "maintenance". If something is in excellent condition and you need to keep it that way, then it is vital you carry out the necessary functions, so it stays in excellent condition.

As a nation and a people of HaShem we [the people of Israel] have failed to maintain our position before the Holy One of Israel. We have neglected to carry out the necessary functions to keep us at the highest level of communication with HaSHem – The Almighty. When one takes the time to talk and communicate with various peoples who claim to follow, love and believe in HaShem, it quickly becomes evident how complacent many of us are. We expect to stay in "excellent condition" without carrying out the

necessary maintenance programs. If you are blessed enough by The Almighty to have a vehicle to drive, then you will understand the importance of maintenance. Neglect to maintain your vehicle and you will have problems that could have been prevented. If you fail to replace your brakes, they will wear out and you could well be headed for a disaster. Fail to change the engine oil and you will have engine failure. We all know the importance of maintenance. This principle is no different in our relationship with HaShem. We must put into practice those ordained Torah foundations **that keep us in an excellent position before The Almighty.**

***57 The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, 58 that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. 59 Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, 60 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. 61 Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God, walking in his statutes and keeping his commandments, as at this day.” 1Kings 57-61 [ESV]***

It is very difficult to pass on something that one does not possess. We the Children of Israel are to be a light to the goyim. If our relationship with HaShem is below excellence, then our light will be dull and it will struggle to blot out the darkness of the “world”. It is our actions not our words that shine and provide that much needed light. We must continue to maintain our lamps if we are to have them shine bright. Yeshua the Master commanded us to shine bright because just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, we are to reflect the light of the Son.

***14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Matthew 5:14-16 [ESV]***

***47 For that is what ADONAI has ordered us to do: 'I have set you as a light for the Goyim, to be for deliverance to the ends of the earth.'*** Acts 13:47 [CJB]

We know that the light we are to reflect is none other than the Light of HaShem through Yeshua HaMoshiach.

***1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. 6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light. 9 The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*** John 1:1-9 [ESV]

***12 Yeshua spoke to them again: "I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light which gives life."*** John 8:12 [CJB]

Just as a vehicle that has not been maintained correctly is a danger to those travelling in it, so too are we a danger to ourselves and the goyim if we have not maintained our relationship with HaShem.

There is only one Light that exposes darkness and that is the Light of The Almighty. At the risk of repeating the obvious, we the Children of Israel are to be the vessels that carry and reflect that Light. It is that which we call the Torah that guides us along the path of HaShem's Light. We cannot walk this path or even find it without constant communication with our Father in heaven. Even after we locate the path and walk there on, there are tracks off into the unknown that entice us to be led in a different direction. These very tracks are littered with broken promises and destruction, but they are presented in a way that have us neglect the very "things" we should be maintaining. Instead of spending time in intimate prayer we are glued to our "smart" phones or articles that are the very antithesis of what HaShem would have us engage in. We run to gurus for our maintenance of soul, who offer nothing of Torah, or the foundations taught by HaShem or HaMoshiach Yeshua. We become tainted and polluted by sin that dims the

Light of The Almighty. It is a sad situation when we Children of Israel can offer the goyim nothing more than what they can find in their own man-made systems and false gods.

There is a great need of a serious overhaul of our health and wellbeing. We are overindulging in that which may taste good to our corrupt tastebuds but underneath is causing us to breakdown and malfunction.

We have failed to carry out the correct maintenance programs needed to keep us in the condition expected of the Children of Israel. We have neglected to keep our oil clean and our vessels full of that oil. Not only have we allowed pollutants to sully our oil, but we have let it run low and, in some cases, out, so that we find our lamps extinguished.

Shemen/oil שֶׁמֶן is such an important ingredient in the bible and I encourage you to study when and how this word is used. The root meaning is **to nourish**. This holds great significance when considering those tasks, we must undertake to keep ourselves in good health before The Almighty. We have a tendency to believe we can fix any maintenance issues when we choose too, or at the very least when it becomes absolutely necessary. Only problem is that such a position is one of foolishness and pride. Yeshua had some very wise and appropriate words to a group of people regards this subject.

***“Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish. <sup>3</sup> Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, <sup>4</sup> but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. <sup>5</sup> But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. <sup>6</sup> “And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’ <sup>7</sup> Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup> And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> But the wise answered, saying, ‘No, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup> “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’***

***<sup>12</sup> But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’<sup>13</sup> “Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming. Matthew 25:1-13 [NKJV]***

Before we can help and prepare anyone for an emergency, we ourselves must be prepared and have all our “equipment” in working order. Before we can bring people out of darkness, we must have our lamps full of anointing oil and our wicks trimmed and well maintained, able to show the bright Light of Yeshua HaMoshiach and Torah.

We Children of The Almighty are to be His “mechanics” for mankind, repairing the damaged and broken hearted with the tools at our disposal as supplied to us by our Father in heaven. We have a wonderful responsibility before us, and we can only complete the task if we keep ourselves in Godly order. Maintenance is the key, and we would do well to absorb this message.

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

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



### **Overview: Women in Traditional Jewish Sources**

#### ***What the Bible, Talmud and other classic texts say about women and their roles.***

The diversity of the Bible's depictions of women begins in its opening chapters. In Genesis, the creation of humanity is described in two different narratives. In the first, man and woman are created together from the dust of the earth. In the second, Adam is created first, and Eve is a secondary creation, molded from Adam's rib in order to provide him with companionship.

In biblical law, women were subordinate to either father or husband. Though, as a general rule, women did not have property rights, a woman with no brothers could inherit her father's land—a rule established after the daughters of Zelophehad successfully petitioned Moses (Numbers 27).

Attitudes toward women changed over the biblical period. According to Carol Meyers, women and their traditional roles were valued less once the monarchy was established, religious life was shifted to the Temple cult, and Israelite society was no longer centered on agriculture and the home.

Nonetheless, the Bible depicts many strong female characters. The prophet Deborah was the foremost religious leader of her time, and figures such as Hannah, Ruth, and Esther play pivotal roles in the biblical narrative.

Rabbinic literature contains more explicit opinions about women. It is said that women are greedy, lazy, and jealous, but also more compassionate and more naturally intelligent than men. Women are associated with witchcraft, and said to be foolish and dishonest, but a man without a wife is said to be without joy and blessing. The ancient rabbis taught that a woman's body and voice were indecent, but also that a man should respect his wife more than himself.

In rabbinic law, women have fewer religious responsibilities than men. As a general rule, they are exempt from positive time-bound commandments, such as fixed prayer at particular times of the day. According to scholar Judith Hauptman, this ruling also reflects female subordination. If a woman were compelled to fulfill time-bound commandments, this, “would lessen her husband’s dominance over her because she would have to cease temporarily from serving him, and instead serve God.”

Attitudes toward women in the Middle Ages built on rabbinic models, but also reflected the general cultural milieu of individual Jewish communities. In sources originating in Muslim lands, we often find more restrictive attitudes toward women. According to Maimonides, “There is nothing more beautiful for a wife than sitting in the corner of her house.” In addition, Maimonides allowed a husband to beat his wife if she consistently refused to fulfill wifely duties such as washing his hands and feet.

An example of the discrepancy between attitudes in Muslim and Christian lands can be seen in the response of Maimonides’ critic Abraham ben David of Posquieres, a French authority, who noted that he had, “never heard that it is permitted to raise a rod against a woman.”

In the medieval mystics’ theology of *sefirot*, some of God’s ten attributes are female. The *sefirah* known as *Malkhut* or *Shekhinah* is the primary female manifestation of God, and to a certain extent the existence of such a manifestation made femaleness praiseworthy. Still, the female attributes of God were considered secondary, subservient, and passive, receiving power from the primary male attributes.

As for “real” women, the mystics generally believed that their primary purpose was the facilitation of men’s religious life. Thus a fascinating passage in the *Zohar*, the most important medieval mystical work, relates that the halls of the afterlife are presided over by women who gave birth to or aided great men.

In the past 30 years, scores of *teshuvot*, or responsa (written rabbinic answers to specific legal questions) have been written about women’s issues. The liberal denominations have addressed women’s leadership of public prayer and the entrance of women into the rabbinate and cantorate, while Orthodox responsa have covered issues such as women’s prayer groups and women’s recitation of the mourner’s *kaddish*. Many of these Orthodox responsa address not only the legality of such innovations, but also the social ramifications of change. One of the concerns reflected is that innovating tradition—even when it is permissible under Jewish law—could position the community on a “slippery slope,” leading to practices which do conflict with Jewish law.

# ***PRAYER & SPIRITUALITY***



## **Spiritual Lessons of the Desert**

***The open spaces of the wilderness can help us access inspiration.***

While the first significant word in Numbers (1:1), “*Bamidbar*” (in the desert), bestows upon the biblical book its Hebrew name, this is not the first time that reference is made to the desert in the Five Books of Moses. Already in Genesis, the desert is depicted as a place of exile, devoid of significant human habitation, attracting those consigned to its bleak landscape to live an outlaw and even criminal existence (Genesis 16:7; 21:14; 21:20-21).

However, in Exodus, the same desert environment that was earlier so clearly associated with desolation and violence takes on an additional, supremely positive spiritual context.

### **Why the Desert?**

The Midrash (Numbers Rabbah 1:7) asserts that aside from the logistical benefit of finding a location devoid of people and the idolatrous practices so synonymous with Egyptian society, the desert also contributed to an insight regarding the ubiquitous availability of Torah:

The Rabbis taught: The Torah was given by means of/within the context of three things—fire, rain and desert...From where do we know that the desert played a role? As it says (Numbers 1:1): ‘And God spoke to Moses in the Sinai Desert.’

And why was the Torah given by means of/within the context of these three things? Just as these three things can be obtained for free by anyone in the world, so too the words of Torah are free, as it is said (Isaiah 55:1): ‘All who are thirsty should go to obtain water, and anyone who has no money should go and break bread and eat and break bread and eat without money and without a price for wine and milk.’

Another interpretation: Why (was the Torah given) in the desert? Anyone who does not make himself ownerless, like the desert, cannot acquire the Torah.”

The first interpretation in this Midrash appears to be decidedly economic. Just as the desert is accessible to all who wish to enter and dwell therein, so too, no one is permitted to monopolize Torah knowledge or charge for its dissemination.

The alternate explanation is intensely psychological in nature. Making oneself *hefker* (ownerless) does not speak as much to the idea of an individual being owned by another, but rather the manner in which one views himself.

An individual who is “full of him/herself” will have difficulty accepting and following the directives of virtually any outside authority figure; consequently at least some degree of *hitbatlut* (self-abnegation) is expected of the truly spiritual individual. Being out in the desert powerfully contributes to an individual’s sensibility that his or her existence is relatively insignificant when compared to the grandiose scale of Creation.

### Love & Fear

This would appear to be precisely what Maimonides was thinking when he offered a practical means by which one can achieve both the love and fear of God (Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot, Yesodei Hatorah 2:2):

And what is the way to love Him (God) and fear Him? When a person reflects upon His Actions and His great and wondrous creations and he sees within them His wisdom that is beyond comprehension, immediately he loves and praises and extols and is consumed with an overwhelming passion to know the Great God...

But when he thinks further about these very things themselves, immediately he trembles, stumbles backwards and is terrified, and he realizes that he is a tiny, lowly, insignificant creature standing with a puny inferior intellect before the perfect intellect...

### Humility in the Desert

The figurative symbolism of receiving the Torah in the desert appears to parallel a number of other rabbinic themes stressing humility and self-abnegation as a prerequisite for an individual to properly understand and carry out the Commandments of God. Moses, the intermediary between God and the people when the Torah is first given, is described as (Numbers 12:3) “*Anav me’od mikol ha-adam asher al penai ha-adama*”—the most extremely humble individual on the face of the earth.

Not only does God’s revelation to Moses take place in the desert, but God chooses to speak to this prophet from the midst of a burning bramble bush, interpreted by R. Eliezer (Exodus Rabbah 2:5): “Just as the bush is the most lowly of shrubbery in the world, so too were the Jews lowly and subjugated to Egypt.” The symbol of the burning bush thereby equates Moses, the Jews, and the bush as sharing the quality of lowliness.

Even Mount Sinai, upon which God descended and Moses ascended in order to receive the Ten Commandments and the entire corpus of Jewish law, is categorized as the lowest of mountains (Sota 5a).

Historically, the desert has been a place that has attracted visionaries and groups of individuals who felt that the materialism and corruption of urban societies prevented them from communing with God and developing their spiritual capacities.

The Torah suggests that God orchestrated the Jews' going into the desert because the atmosphere created in such desolate and lonely surroundings would be extremely conducive for the entire nation to abandon the example of their previous malevolent flesh-and-blood masters. Instead, the belittling impact of the desert would inspire them to focus upon serving humbly and selflessly the Creator of the Universe.

Following in the footsteps of those redeemed from the bondage of Egypt, we must attempt to reconnect with the open spaces of the wilderness and seek in their natural fashioning a source of awakening to the Mastery of God, to access the free inspiration of the Divine therein, and to become a little more "ownerless"—in order that we can internalize lessons and truths that were previously beyond us.

***Suggested Action Items:***

- 1. Reconnect with any desert or other grandiose natural setting that is accessible to you. Keep in mind the lessons mentioned here about one's minute place in the grand creation***
- 2. Take steps to help preserve a natural setting near you. You can contribute your time or money to clean-up projects of nearby mountains, lakes, or forests, or you can remind yourself and others to hike responsibly, by not damaging the valuable habitat you visit.***

**עֵבְרִי - Hebrew**

**Word (s) of the Week**

מֵדְבָר

**Meed-bar  
Wilderness**



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

### The Census

The census taker comes to the Goldman house.

“Does Louis Goldman live here?” he asks.

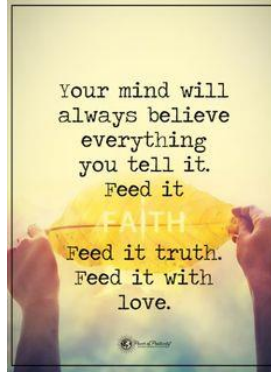
“No,” replies Goldman.

“Well, then, what is your name?”

“Louis Goldman.”

“Wait a minute—didn’t you just tell me that Goldman doesn’t live here?”

“Aha,” says Goldman. “You call this living?”



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

### **Slow Cooker Chicken Tortilla Soup**

It's my favorite kind of slow cooker recipe in that it requires no pre-cooking or sautéing or browning.

#### **Ingredients**

- 3 whole chicken breasts
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 1 tsp. cumin
- salt and pepper, to taste
- 1 whole medium onion, chopped
- 1 whole red bell pepper, seeded and chopped
- 1 whole seeded yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 1 can (28 ounce) whole or diced tomatoes, with juice
- 1 can Rotel
- 3 c. low sodium chicken broth (more if you like the soup more liquidy)
- 4 oz. weight tomato paste
- 1 whole chipotle pepper in Adobo (may add 2 to 3 if you'd like)

- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 lime, juiced
- Fixins: sour cream, avocado, cilantro leaves, grated cheese

## Directions

1. Place the chicken in the slow cooker. Sprinkle on the chili powder, cumin, and salt and pepper. Add the onion, bell pepper, tomatoes, chicken broth, tomato paste, chipotle, and black beans. Stir, place the lid on the slow cooker, and cook on high for 5 hours or high (or 8 hours on low.) Stir in the lime juice.
2. Using 2 forks, break up the chicken into chunks (or you may shred it finer). Taste and add more salt if the soup needs it.
3. Serve it piping hot in a bowl with avocado, sour cream, grated cheese, and cilantro leaves on top!

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*Philip Hammond  
Phone: 0416087400 or  
61 + 416087400  
Philip@etz-chayim.org*



# SPACE FOR NOTES