



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 4-29-23 ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM

Ministry News

IF YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE ON THE LIST TO PRAY FOR YOU CAN SEND THEM TO US AT TOLMM@ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG OR BY TEXT MESSAGE TO 575 644-7706 AND I WILL SEND THEM BY EMAIL ONLY.

Remember that you can support the work of Tree of Life Messianic Ministries with a donation made via PayPal or by check to PO Box 467, Organ, NM 88052. Your donation helps our continued outreach to inmates and the time it takes to put this Newsletter together.

Donate



Tree of Life Messianic Ministries is an approved Giving Charity by PayPal. To donate go to etz-chayim.org and click on the PayPal Link.

Tree of Life Messianic Ministries primarily focuses on its Prison Ministry and helping form groups in the prisons. TOLMM also seeks to help Home Groups and offers a covering for Home Groups and the combined experience of leadership

from Rabbi Philip Hammond and Rabbi Mordecai Silver. Group leaders can receive recognition as Elders under TOLMM, which will help in an advisory role. Your support is needed for the Prison Ministry due to continuing rising costs. We now have an Affiliate in Australia.

HOME GROUPS, CONGREGATIONS AND PEOPLE SEEKING FELLOWSHIP..

Shawn Warren lives in Arizona. If you know of someone who is looking for a group in that area, please let me know and I will send the information to Shawn. 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.

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.

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

Rabbi Phillip Hammond has a Zoom Bible Study and a Erev Shabbat and Shabbat Service on Zoom Friday evening and Saturday morning at 11:00am. Rabbi Hammond is in Australia and the time difference would be 5:00pm Friday Mountain Time. Rabbi Hammond is looking into starting a men's group focused in the United States. You can contact Rabbi Hammond at Philip@etz-chayim.org. Rabbi Hammond is now affiliated with Rabbi Mordecai Silver and his ministry, Tree of Life Messianic Ministries. Check out Rabbi Hammond at <https://www.etz-chayim.org/australia-affiliate/>.

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 4-29-23 ACHAREI MOT-KEDOSHIM

Message originally shared 5/9/98

Acharei Mot - After the Death K'Doshim - Holy Ones

Lev. 16:1-18:30 19:1-20:27

Amos 9:7-15 Ezekiel 22:1-19 Ezekiel 20:2-20

1 Cor. 6:9-20 Matthew 5:43-48

Leviticus 17:10-12

10: Any man of the House of Israel and of the proselyte who dwells among them who will consume any blood--I shall concentrate My attention upon the soul consuming the blood, and I will cut it off from its people. 11: For the soul of the flesh is in the blood and I have assigned it for you upon the Altar to provide atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that atones for the soul. 12: Therefore, I have said to the Children of Israel: "Any person among you may not consume blood; and the proselyte who dwells among you may not consume blood."

Leviticus 18:1-5

1: The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 2: Speak to the Children of Israel and say to them: I am the Lord, your God. 3: Do not perform the practice of the land of Egypt in which you dwelled; and do not perform the practice of the land of Canaan to which I bring you, and do not follow their traditions. 4: Carry out My

laws and safeguard My decrees to follow them; I am the Lord, your God. 5: You shall observe My decrees and My laws, which man shall carry out and by which he shall live--I am the Lord.

Leviticus 18:24-28

24: Do not become contaminated through any of these; for through all of these the nations that I expel before you became contaminated. 25: The land became contaminated, and I recalled its iniquity upon it; and the land disgorged its inhabitants. 26: But you shall safeguard My decrees and My judgements, and not commit any of these abominations--the native or the proselyte who lives among you. 27: For the inhabitants of the land who are before you committed all these abominations, and the land became contaminated. 28: Let not the land disgorge you for having contaminated it, as it disgorged the nation that was before you.

Leviticus 20:22-24

22: You shall observe all My decrees and all My ordinances and perform them; then the Land to which I bring you to dwell will not disgorge you. 23: Do not follow the traditions of the nation that I expel from before you, for they did all of these, and I was disgusted with them. 24: So, I said to you: You shall inherit their land, and I will give it to you to inherit it, a land flowing with milk and honey-- I am the Lord, your God, Who has separated you from the peoples.

Leviticus 20:26

You shall be holy for Me, for I the Lord am holy; and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine.

Ezekiel 22:3-4; 14-16

3: Thus said the Lord HaShem/Elohim: O city that sheds blood in her midst, hastening her time of judgement, that fashioned idols within herself for contamination:

4: Through the blood that you shed have you become guilty, and through your idols that you fashioned you have become contaminated; thus, you brought your judgement days near and reached the limit of your years. Therefore, I have made you a shame to the nations, and a disgrace for all the lands.

14: Will your heart endure, will your hands be strong, in the days when I shall deal with you? I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I shall carry it out. 15: I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you among the lands; and I will eliminate your contamination from you. 16: You will be caused to tremble before the eyes of the nations; then you will know that I am the Lord."

1 Corinthians 6:9; 11

Don't you know that unrighteous people will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't delude yourselves--

Some of you used to do these things. But you have cleansed yourselves, you have been set apart for God, you have come to be counted righteous through the power of the Lord Y'shua the Messiah and the Spirit of our God.

How would you describe a holy person?

Some people think a holy person lives far away from the city. There, in peace and quiet, he can concentrate on making himself a better person. He might dress differently from most people, or fast, or eat a very simple diet. He might not take part in what goes on outside of his house and would spend his time thinking and praying.

But this is not how the Torah teaches us to be holy. Quite the opposite! The Torah tells us to be holy and connects that commandment with other commandments that concern food, clothing, marriage, business, farming and more. When we prepare food the way the Lord instructs us, we become holy. When we sew our clothes the way the Lord commands us to - we become holy. When we conduct our business and farm the way the Lord wants us to - we become holy.

We do not have to remove ourselves from everyday life or live far away from people to be holy. We should be involved with everyday things, but in the way that the Lord wants.

The Lord tells us to "be holy, for I am holy." He put His holiness into everything that exists - into clothes, food, and business. If we do these things in the Torah

way, then we reveal the holiness which the Lord has placed in them. That is what makes us holy.

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 Achrei Mot: Summary Leviticus 16:1-18:30

God instructs Moses regarding the procedures for the Day of Atonement; sexual prohibitions are then listed.

The Lord spoke to Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron who died when they drew too close to the presence of the Lord. God said, "Tell your brother Aaron that he is not to come at will into the Shrine behind the curtain, in front of the cover that is upon the ark. Instead, Aaron shall only enter the holy Shrine when he is clean and dressed in his sacred garments. He shall take animal offerings to make atonement for himself and his household. He shall purge the Shrine of the uncleanness and transgression of the Israelites, whatever their sins; and he shall do the same for the Tent of Meeting and make it holy.

"Then Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of a live goat and confess over it all the iniquities and transgressions of the Israelites, whatever their sins, putting them on the head of the goat. Then the goat shall be sent off to the wilderness through a designated man. Thus the goat shall carry on him all their iniquities to an inaccessible region; and the goat shall be set free in the wilderness."

Then God said: "This shall be to you a law for all time: In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, you shall practice self-denial; and you shall do no manner of work, neither the citizen nor the alien who resides among you. On this day, atonement shall be made for you to clean you of all your sins; you shall be clean before the Lord. It shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for you and you shall practice self-denial; it is a law for all time.

"The priest who has been anointed and ordained to serve as priest shall wear sacred garments and make atonement for all the people in the congregation. This shall be to you a law for all time; to make atonement for the Israelites for all their sins once a year." And Moses did as the Lord had commanded him.

The Lord then told Moses to tell Aaron and his sons and all the Israelite people that no blood is to be eaten by any Israelite or any stranger who resides among you in any manner, for the life of the flesh is in the blood.

"I the Lord am your God. You shall not copy the practices of the land of Egypt where you dwelt, or of the land of Canaan to which I am taking you; nor shall you follow their customs. My norms alone shall you observe and faithfully follow My laws. I the Lord am your God."

The laws of incest are specific. Children shall not uncover the nakedness of their parents, nor their siblings or cousins or aunts or uncles or grandparents. Parents shall not uncover the nakedness of their children, nor their children's children. Nakedness of in-laws and relatives shall not be uncovered.

"Do not come near a woman during her period of uncleanness to uncover her nakedness. Do not have carnal relations with your neighbor's wife and defile yourself with her. Do not profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.

“Do not lie with a male as one lies with a woman; it is an abomination. Do not have carnal relations with any beast. Do not defile yourselves in any of those ways, for these are the very reasons that I am casting out the people who were in the land before you. But you must keep My laws and My norms, and you must not do any of those abhorrent things, neither the citizen nor the stranger who resides among you; lest you defile yourselves through them: I the Lord am your God.”

Parashat Achrei Mot Discussion Questions

- 1) The annual day of atonement commanded by God in this portion is now known as Yom Kippur. How do you atone for your sins on Yom Kippur?**
- 2) Why do you think God set aside one special day for all the Jewish people to atone for their sins?**
- 3) If you sin, do you have to wait for Yom Kippur to make atonement to God? Why or why not?**
- 4) What are some of the ways one can atone for sins at any time of the year?**

Haftarah for Tazria 2 Kings 4:42-5:19

The prescription for holy psoriasis.

In the Torah, Parashat Tazria describes the biblical affliction known as *tzaraat*, normally translated as leprosy. (Though the skin disease in the Bible is afflicted by God as a punishment for certain transgressions and differs from what is considered leprosy today.) In the haftarah for Tazria, the appearance of this same kind of leprosy leads to a life-changing experience for a general in the Aramean army.

As the haftarah begins, a man brings the prophet Elisha 20 loaves of bread. The prophet orders that the loaves be given to the people of the land, many of whom are suffering from poverty. Elisha’s servant protests, insisting that it will not be enough for the crowd, but Elisha promises a miracle: “The Eternal has said that they will eat and have some left over” (4:43). His prediction comes true, and there is enough to feed everyone.

The narrative jumps to the story of Naaman, a revered commander in the Aramean army. He was highly valued as a warrior and thought to be favored by God. However, strangely, he also has leprosy, which implies that there was a limit to this favor.

One day, his wife’s slave, who was originally from Israel, suggests that Naaman go to Samaria to be healed by a prophet there. Naaman asks permission from the Aramean king, who writes a letter to the king of Israel explaining that he is sending Naaman to be healed of his leprosy.

When the king of Israel receives the letter, he thinks it is merely provocation to incite war, and tears his clothes in a gesture of mourning. Soon, he is visited by Elisha, who asks why he's mourning. The king explains, and Elisha replies with confidence in his own healing powers: "Let this man (Naaman) come to me, and he will learn that there is a prophet in Israel!" (5:8)

When Naaman comes, however, Elisha's treatment is unexpected. The prophet tells Naaman to immerse himself seven times in the Jordan River. This angers Naaman, who expects that Elisha "would come out and stand here and call out in the name of the Eternal his God and wave his hand at the spot and cure the disease" (5:10). Naaman rants about how the Jordan is no better than the rivers back in Aramea, which apparently had failed to heal his leprosy.

Naaman's followers aren't as quick to dismiss Elisha. "Sir," they say, "had the prophet asked you to do something elaborate, surely you would have done it. Why not do it, then, when he only asks you to wash and be clean?" (5:13)

So Naaman consents to follow Elisha's advice. He goes down to the Jordan, strips, and dips—and his flesh becomes clear like the flesh of a small child. He and his entourage return to Elisha, where Naaman admits: "Now I know that the God of Israel is the only God in the whole world" (5:15). He offers a gift, which Elisha declines, saying that God is not interested in gifts.

Naaman declares faithfulness to the God of Israel, with one caveat: "When my master goes to the temple of [the god] Rimmon," Naaman says, "and he leans on my arm so that I must bow down...I hope God will forgive me this one thing" (5:18). In reply, Elisha tells him: "Go in peace" (5:19).

Haftarah for Achrei Mot

Jerusalem is a bloody mess.

The Ashkenazi custom is to read Ezekiel 22:1-19. The Sephardic custom is to read Ezekiel 22:1-16.

The haftarah for *Parashat Achrei Mot* is mostly a list of offenses committed by people in what Ezekiel calls the "city of bloodshed" (22:1), or Jerusalem. The list of crimes is so heinous that the word "blood" appears seven times.

The people of Jerusalem are guilty of killing innocent people. They have oppressed the downtrodden: strangers, orphans, and widows. Children have humiliated their own parents. Sexual impropriety is rampant—the people have engaged in adultery and incest and have slept with menstruating women (*niddot*). Worst of all, God concludes, "You have forgotten Me" (22:12).

God will not let these deeds go unpunished, Ezekiel promises. He reports on God's plans: "I will disperse you through the lands; I will consume the uncleanness out of you. You shall be dishonored in the sight of nations, and you shall know that I am the Lord" (22:15-16).

Ashkenazic congregations read three verses at the end of the haftarah which end with God's words: "I will gather you into Jerusalem" (22:19). Presumably, these verses are included so the haftarah ends on a positive note. However, in the verses that follow (not included in the haftarah), it becomes evident that God's plans for gathering the people into Jerusalem are in order to punish them: "I will gather you and I will blow upon you the fire of My fury and you shall be melted in it" (22:21). This harsh continuation of the prophecy seems to have not bothered those who selected which verses would conclude the haftarah.

Connection to Parashat Achrei Mot

In Achrei Mot, we read about forbidden sexual relations and learn that Israelite men are not allowed to have sex with various family members, with menstruating women, or with women who are married to other men.

In the haftarah for Ahare Mot, we discover that the people of Jerusalem fall prey to precisely these prohibitions: "They have uncovered their fathers' nakedness, they have ravished women during their impurity. They have committed abhorrent acts with other men's wives; in their depravity they have defiled their own daughters-in-law, they have ravished their own sisters" (22:10-11). The regulations for holy living described in the parashah are precisely inverted in its haftarah.

Parashat Kedoshim: Summary

Leviticus 19:1-20:27

God tells Moses to give the people a series of ethical and ritual laws instructing them in how to be holy.

The Lord has just told Moses to tell the Israelites about the law commanding an annual Day of Atonement and sexual prohibitions. The Lord told Moses, Speak to the whole Israelite community and say to them:

You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy. You shall each revere your mother and your father and keep My Sabbaths. Do not turn to idols or make molten gods for yourselves. I, the Lord, am your God.

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick your vineyard bare. You shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God.

You shall not steal, and you shall not deal deceitfully or falsely with one another. You shall not swear falsely by My name, profaning the name of your God. I am the Lord.

You shall not coerce your neighbor. You shall not commit robbery.

You shall not insult the deaf or place a stumbling block before the blind. You shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

You shall not render an unfair decision: do not favor the poor or show deference to the rich: judge your neighbor fairly.

You shall not hate your kinsman in your heart. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against your kinfolk. Love your neighbor's welfare as if it were your own. I am the Lord.

You shall observe My laws. You shall not let your cattle mate with a different kind of animal; you shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed; you shall not put on cloth from a mixture of two kinds of material.

When you enter the land and plant any tree for food, you shall regard its fruit as forbidden for three years, but in the fourth year all its fruit shall be set aside for jubilation before the Lord. Then in the fifth year you may use its fruit—that its yield to you may be increased: I, the Lord, am your God.

You shall not eat anything with its blood. You shall not practice divination or soothsaying. You shall not make gashes in your flesh for the dead or incise any marks on yourselves: I am the Lord.

You shall keep My Sabbath and honor My sanctuary. I am the Lord.

Do not turn to ghosts and do not inquire of familiar spirits to be defiled by them: I, the Lord, am your God.

You shall rise before the aged and show deference to the old: you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God.

You shall not falsify measures of length, weight, or capacity. You shall have an honest balance, honest weights. You shall faithfully observe all My laws and all My norms. I am the Lord.

No man shall offer his children to the idol *Molech* for that shall profane My holy name. Nor shall you commit adultery or incest or mate with beasts.

You shall sanctify yourselves and be holy. You shall faithfully observe My laws. I, the Lord, make you holy.

You shall not follow the practices of the nations that I am driving out of the promised land. For it is because they did all these things that I abhorred them and said to you, “You shall possess their land, for I will give it to you to possess, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

I, the Lord, am your God who has set you apart from other people. So shall you set apart the clean from the unclean. You shall be holy to Me, for I the Lord am holy, and I have set you apart from other peoples to be mine.

Parashat Kedoshin Discussion Questions

1) What does it mean to love your neighbor’s welfare as if it were your own? Give one example of how you show love to your neighbor.

2) The laws in this portion stress honesty and fairness. Why is being honest and fair important? Do you think you are an honest and fair person? Do your neighbors, friends, and co-workers think so? Do you believe that God thinks you are an honest and fair person?

3) God’s laws require taking care of the poor and the stranger and being respectful to the deaf and the blind. Give one example of how you take care of the poor or stranger. Give one example of how you show respect to the deaf and blind.

4) Why does God care how humans on earth treat each other? Do you care?

Haftarah for Kedoshim

On chosenness and holiness.

The Ashkenazi custom is to read [Amos 9:7-15](#). The Sephardic custom is to read [Ezekiel 20:2-20](#).

The Israelites Are No Better Than Other Nations

The haftarah selection from Amos opens with a judgment speech against sinful nations. The prophet warns that wicked kingdoms will be wiped off the face of the earth—and that includes the nation of Israel, which God does not think is any better than the Ethiopians, Philistines, or the Arameans.

But God promises not to completely erase the nation He brought out of Egypt. In punishing His own people, God will save a small remnant of the once numerous groups. This speech is designed to remind the people of Israel that merely being a member of the Chosen People does not guarantee salvation—a life of good deeds is required as well.

Though Amos is scolding the people in this prophecy, he ends with a vision of redemption, describing a time “when the mountains shall drip wine and all the hills shall wave [with grain]” (9:13). Only then will God restore the people to their land, “nevermore to be uprooted” (9:15).

Connection to the Torah Portion

The haftarah from Amos emphasizes themes of universal divine judgment that are implied in Parashat Kedoshim, where we read about God choosing and sanctifying the Israelites. God says, “I have set you apart from other peoples to be Mine (Leviticus 20:26). The haftarah reminds Israel that even though they are chosen, they are not given license to sin, and their punishment for sinning will be no less than the punishment meted out to other nations.

God Calls Israel to Account for its Sins

The haftarah selection from Ezekiel begins with God commanding Ezekiel to arraign the people of Israel for their sins. In the remainder of the text, God speaks through Ezekiel as a prosecutor, reminding the nation of their humble beginnings as slaves in Egypt, and of God’s promise to bring them into a land flowing with milk and honey, “the fairest of all lands” (20:6).

While the Israelites were still in Egypt God told them to cast away all of the detestable things that they were drawn to and abandon the disgusting ways of the Egyptians. But the people refused and adhered to their sinful ways. God was ready to pour out His wrath on the people but did not want to do so in the presence of the other nations because He was concerned that doing so would cause his name to be profaned.

Then God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, gave them laws, a legal system, and Shabbat. Again, God demanded that they abandon their sinful behavior, but the people ignored the laws and desecrated Shabbat. And again, God considered punishing them with His wrath. But, God explains, “I acted for the sake of My name, that it might not be profaned in the sight of the nations before whose eyes I had led them out.” (20:14) Though God resisted the urge to destroy His own people, He decided not to let the generation of Israelites who had left Egypt enter the land He had promised them.

Through Ezekiel, God reminds the people that He warned every generation not to follow in the ways of their fathers, but the Children of Israel continued to sin.

To most readers, the story of the Israelites’ Exodus and time in the wilderness is a familiar one, but Ezekiel’s version is notable because it ignores the role of Moses entirely. In the time that Ezekiel was giving his prophecy, Moses’ leadership was no longer the point to drive home. Ezekiel’s goal was simply to castigate the people for sinning.

Connection to the Portion

In Parashat Kedoshim, God emphasizes that He gave the people, “My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live” (Lev. 18:5). This same sentiment is repeated verbatim by Ezekiel, “I gave them My laws and taught them My rules, by the pursuit of which a man shall

live” (20:11). This phrase implies that following the laws given by God is the source of vitality, a hard-hitting point in any era.

An additional connection between the parashah and haftarah is found in the way that Moses and Ezekiel present the messages they have been given by God. In Parashat Kedoshim, Moses transmits many laws from God to the people, always emphasizing that the tenets he teaches come directly from God, and that the people can be sanctified by following in God’s way. Similarly, in the haftarah, though Ezekiel is the vessel through which God is transmitting His message, Ezekiel is careful to always emphasize the centrality of God’s law.

On the Occasion of a Double Portion

When Aharei Mot and Kedoshim are read together as a double parashah, most congregations read the haftarah selection from Amos.



From the Desk of Rabbi Philip Hammond

FAMILY MATTERS PART 2

BABIES AND SMALL CHILDREN ARE DELICATE... BUT PARENTS MORE SO!

Why the above heading? Allow me to explain.

Babies and small children can be excused for behaving badly... they have no understanding of the consequences of their actions. They won't be feeling guilty about keeping mum or dad up all night. They won't feel guilty about throwing food all over the floor. Parents on the other hand do not have the luxury of not understanding consequences.

All parents make mistakes... we are human. Even the very "best" make mistakes... yet making mistakes is very different in choosing to behave badly.

Anyone see a problem with what has been written so far? Can you guess what needs defining?

"Behaving badly" ... will be viewed so differently by various peoples and cultures. What one-person views as bad, another will surely view as good.

Politics is the perfect example. One side sees communism as the best and another sees it as the worst... simple example.

The Children of Israel must view good and bad behavior through the prism of Torah and the example of Yeshua HaMoshiach.

The “Ten Words/Commandments” give us the foundation.

Opinions of man... when opposed to Torah, need to be discarded.

Current example causing confusion amongst the young... Gender doesn't matter... according to the “leftist” elite.

If you are a boy but feel like a girl today, then a girl you are. What foolishness... these fools are still using gender terms to push their cause. On one hand they are doing away with gender [even wanting to leave it off birth certificates] yet on the other they have to use gender terms to support their foolish causes... go figure.

There are many reasons behind this push to nullify gender. Two that concern me are:

- The deliberate attempt to try and destroy the vital importance of God's design in making Male and Female.
- The deliberate attempt to destroy the family structure... according to biblical Torah... God's design.

Now before you go off pointing the finger at the “world/Egypt”, those of us who profess to believe in the Holy One of Israel need to look in our own closets.

Never mind what Egypt is doing... what are we [the children of Israel] doing?

ARE WE GUILTY OF BRINGING EGYPT INTO THE CAMP???

Allow me to make a statement: “Bad behavior never stems from embracing biblical Torah”. Once again this doesn't mean those of us who profess to embrace biblical Torah don't behave badly... we do... but it doesn't come from biblical Torah, it comes from disobedience of biblical Torah or a misunderstanding of biblical Torah.

So back to our subject of “behaving badly”.

Allow me to make another illustration. We are going to use percentage as the illustration.

We are viewing our behavior in terms of percentage and this percentage is at 100%. It can never be over or under... we only have room for 100%.

Viewing one person's percentage, we see that bad behavior takes up 80%... thus leaving 20% for good behavior. What behavior is a child going to witness most in this person's behavior and character?

Viewing another person's behavior, we see that good behavior takes up 95%... thus leaving 5% for bad behavior. What behavior is a child going to witness most in this person's behavior and character?

We should aim for 100% good behavior from parents... only faith in Yeshua and faithfulness to Torah, can one even contemplate, reaching this level.

Friends we are up against powers and principalities that are far smarter than we are... make no mistake about this. These "powers" want to destroy the Children of Israel... breaking down the family structure will help achieve this goal.

Parents are supposed to be the leaders of their household... this cannot be achieved outside of God's pattern as found in Torah.

Parents are in a vulnerable position... attacks will come. Protection can only be found under the wings of our Moshiach – Yeshua. We must put on the full armor of YHVH... there is no other way.

¹⁰ Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. ¹² For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. ¹³ Therefore, take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having your loins girded about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. ¹⁶ Above all, take the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. ¹⁷ And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word

of God, ¹⁸praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints. Ephesians 6:10-18 [KJ21]

Until we meet again... good parenting.

Insights into Judaism



What is the Star of David?

This common symbol for Judaism and Israel is newer than one might think.

The six-pointed Star of David is a common symbol for both Judaism and Israel. Known in Hebrew as a *Magen David* (shield of David), geometrically it is two triangles superimposed on each other, forming the shape of a hexagram.

Though today the symbol popularly communicates Jewishness, its associations with Judaism are newer than one might think. Some historians trace it to Jewish communities in the Middle Ages, but these claims are neither fully substantiated nor widely accepted.

What we do know is that in the 17th century, the Jewish quarter of Vienna was marked with a hexagram, to distinguish it from the rest of the city. Around this time, the star also became part of synagogue architecture both in Europe and in the Middle East and North Africa.

After the Dreyfus Affair in the 19th century, the star was adopted by the Zionist movement at its 1897 Congress, and this gave the symbol more international prominence. In the 20th century, the star became even more evocative of Judaism when it was used by the Nazis

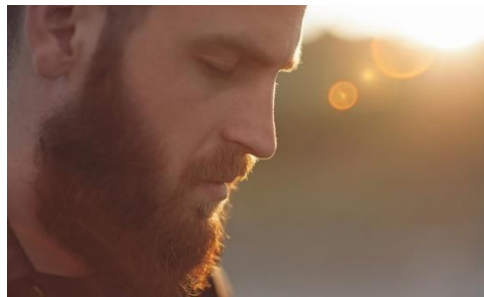
to mark Jews for persecution. And after the Holocaust, the same star became part of the flag of the nascent State of Israel.

What exactly does it symbolize? Many explanations have been suggested, but none is universally accepted. According to the Zohar, a medieval book of Jewish mysticism, the six points of the star represent the six male *sefirot* (attributes of God), in union with the seventh *sefirah* of the female (the center of the shape).

A more modern, existentialist commentary on the Star of David was advanced by the philosopher Franz Rosenzweig in the *Star of Redemption*, which he wrote on postcards during World War I. Rosenzweig described two interlocking triangles — the corners of one representing creation, revelation, and redemption; the corners of the other representing Man, the World and God.

Today, the Star of David is incorporated into Jewish jewelry design, and it is also commonly found on Judaica objects — from *Kiddush* cups, to *mezuzahs* and *kippot* (and in some Jewish communities, it is engraved on coffins). In Israel, the equivalent of the Red Cross is call Magen David Adom — the “red Star of David.”

PRAYER & SPIRITUALITY



How the Jewish People Invented Hope

Judaism is a sustained struggle against the world that is in the name of the world that could be — but is not yet.

One of the most formative moments in the history of Judaism came in the encounter between Moses and God in the burning bush. Moses asks God what name he should use when people ask him who He is. God replies enigmatically, in a phrase that occurs nowhere else in Tanach: *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh*.

Non-Jewish translations read this to mean, “I am what (or who, or that) I am.” Some render it, “I am: that is who I am,” or “I am the One who is.” These are deeply significant mistranslations. The phrase means, literally, “I will be what I will be,” or more fundamentally, God’s name belongs to the future tense. His call is to that which is not yet. If we fail to understand this, we will miss the very thing that makes Judaism unique.

Consider the structure of biblical narrative. In literature there are many kinds of narrative, but they all have one thing in common, what Frank Kermode called “the sense of an ending.” They reach closure. Some end with “they all lived happily ever after.” We call these fairy tales. Others end in death and defeat. We call them tragedies. There are other types, but they all have a beginning and an end. That’s what makes them stories.

Now consider Genesis. The Jewish story begins with God’s call to Abraham to leave his land, his birthplace and his father’s house to travel “to the land that I will show you.” Seven times God promises Abraham the land, yet he has to haggle with the Hittites to buy one small plot in which to bury Sarah. Jacob and his family are forced into exile in Egypt. Genesis ends with the promise unfulfilled.

Then Exodus begins. God calls Moses to lead the Israelites back to freedom and the promised land. Now, we feel, the story is about to reach closure. But it doesn’t come. Instead, a journey that should have taken days lasts 40 years. In the final scene of Deuteronomy, we see Moses, still on the far side of the Jordan, granted only a distant vision of the land. Again, the natural ending is deferred.

Tanach as a whole ends, in [II Chronicles 36](#), with the Israelites in exile again, this time in Babylonia, and Cyrus giving them permission to return. We are almost back where we began, in the same region from which Abraham and his family first set out.

I know of no other stories that have the same form, namely a beginning but no end. We would not think of them as stories at all, were it not that we know the ending. It has been there since the beginning: God’s three promises to Abraham, of children, a land, and an influence on humanity such that “through you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” So, there is an ending, but it is always beyond the visible horizon. The Jewish story ends, as Moses’ life ended, with a glimpse of the land not yet reached, a future not yet realized.

The same is true of Jewish belief. Judaism is the only civilization whose golden age is in the future: the messianic age, the age of peace when “nation will not lift up sword against nation” and “the Lord shall be one and His name One.” This ultimately was the dividing line between Judaism and Christianity. To be a Jew is to reply to the question “Has the messiah come?” with the words “Not yet.” In the fine phrase of Harold Fisch, the Jewish narrative is “the unappealed memory of a future still to be fulfilled.” Why? What does this tell us about Judaism?

At the heart of Judaism is a belief so fundamental to Western civilization that we take it for granted, yet it is anything but self-evident. It has been challenged many times, rarely more so

than today. It is the belief in human freedom. We are what we choose to be. Society is what we choose to make it. The future is open. There is nothing inevitable in the affairs of humankind.

The ancients believed that human destiny lay in the stars, or blind fate, what the Greeks called *ananke*. Spinoza argued that our lives are governed by natural necessity. Marx claimed that history was determined by economic interests. Freud held that human behavior was shaped by unconscious drives. Neo-Darwinians argue that we are governed by genetic codes hardwired into our brains. Freedom, in all these theories, is an illusion.

This view is challenged in the opening chapters of the Bible. For the first time, God is seen as beyond nature, creating nature by a free, un-coerced act of will. By creating human beings in His image, He bestowed something of that freedom on us. Alone among created life forms, we too are capable of being creative. Biblical narrative is the ongoing drama of human freedom.

The first four narratives are tragic. First Adam and Eve, then Cain, abuse their freedom. That is then repeated on a global scale by the generation of the flood and the builders of Babel. People use their freedom to transgress boundaries or deprive others of their freedom. So, a new beginning becomes necessary.

Abraham is told to leave all the things that constrain freedom – our land, birthplace and father's house – and begin a new kind of life in covenant with God. Genesis is about that covenant as it affects individuals and families. The rest of Tanach is about the covenant as it applies to the life of a nation. The Jewish story, still unfinished, is about the journey from multiple forms of slavery to what Levinas called "difficult freedom." Torah is the template of responsible freedom, our constitution of liberty.

Freedom, implies Genesis, is intimately related to language. God creates the world with words, and His first gift to humanity is the gift of speech. We know that other life forms – primates, dolphins, even bees – have rudimentary forms of language. But there is one form unique to human beings. The Torah signals this by making it the first word God speaks: *Yehi*, "Let there be."

Human beings are the only life form capable of using the future tense. Only beings who can imagine the world other than it is, are capable of freedom. And if we are free, the future is open, dependent on us. We can know the beginning of our story but not the end. That is why, as He is about to take the Israelites from slavery to freedom, God tells Moses that His name is "I will be what I will be." Judaism, the religion of freedom, is faith in the future tense.

Western civilization is the product of two cultures: ancient Greece and ancient Israel. The Greeks believed in fate: the future is determined by the past. Jews believed in freedom: there is no "evil decree" that cannot be averted. The Greeks gave the world the concept of tragedy. Jews gave it the idea of hope. The whole of Judaism – though it would take a book to show it – is a set of laws and narratives designed to create in people, families, communities and a nation, habits that defeat despair. Judaism is the voice of hope in the conversation of mankind.

It is no accident that so many Jews are economists fighting poverty, or doctors fighting disease, or lawyers fighting injustice, in all cases refusing to see these things as inevitable. It is no accident that after the Holocaust Jews did not call it Al Naqba, nursing resentment and revenge, but instead turned to the future, building a nation whose national anthem is Hatikvah, “the hope.” It is no accident that Judaism has been opposed by every empire that sought to deny people the freedom to be equal-but-different. It is no accident that Israel is still today the only free society in the Middle East.

Judaism is a religion of details, but we miss the point if we do not sometimes step back and see the larger picture. To be a Jew is to be an agent of hope in a world serially threatened by despair. Every ritual, every mitzvah, every syllable of the Jewish story, every element of Jewish law, is a protest against escapism, resignation or the blind acceptance of fate. Judaism is a sustained struggle, the greatest ever known, against the world that is, in the name of the world that could be, should be, but is not yet. There is no more challenging vocation. Throughout history, when human beings have sought hope, they have found it in the Jewish story. Judaism is the religion, and Israel the home, of hope.

עִבְרִי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

מִשְׁגָּב

Mees-gahv

Refuge or Stronghold



A Taste of Jewish Humor

The Hospital Visit

An old man is struck by a car and brought to the hospital. A nurse enters his room and says, “Sir, are you comfortable?” The old man replies, “I make a nice living.”



This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup

How to Make Black and White Cookies

Look to the cookie and make it in your own kitchen.

The black and white cookie is an iconic, delicious symbol of New York and beloved by Jews. Can you remember the last Kiddush, bat mitzvah or bris when there weren't black and white cookies served?!

To be frank, I was seriously intimidated to make these cookies. It seemed daunting. It seem unreachable. But it was much easier than I thought. You see, the name black and white cookies is a bit misleading. The batter for these cookies is closer to a thick cake batter, and they bake up quite fast.

What is essential is to allow the cookies to cool completely before icing. I recommend using Hershey's Special Dark cocoa powder for a delicious, chocolatey flavor. I also recommend two tools: an icing spreader/edge scraper for creating a very straight edge in the middle (though you can also use parchment paper) and a small offset spatula for spreading the icing.

Ingredients

- 1 1/4 cups unbleached all-purpose flour
- 1/2 tsp baking soda
- pinch baking powder
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/3 cup buttermilk
- 1/2 tsp vanilla
- 1/3 cup (5 1/3 Tbsp) unsalted butter, softened
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg
- 2 tsp grated lemon zest

For the frosting:

- 2 cups confectioners' sugar
- 1 Tbsp light corn syrup
- 1/4 tsp vanilla
- 2-3 Tbsp milk
- 1/4 cup unsweetened Dutch-process cocoa powder

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Line two baking sheets with parchment paper or silicone baking mats.
2. Whisk together flour, baking soda, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Stir together buttermilk, vanilla and lemon zest in a small bowl.
3. Beat together butter and sugar in a large bowl with an electric mixer or a stand mixer fitted with whisk attachment until pale and fluffy, about 3 minutes. Add egg and mix again until well combined.
4. Alternate adding flour and buttermilk mixture on a low speed until batter is well combined and smooth.

5. Using a cookie scoop, place batter about 2 inches apart on cookie sheet. Dipping your pointer finger in water, smooth the edges of each cookie. (This step is optional but will ensure a slightly more even shape).
6. Bake 15-17 minutes, until tops are puffed and golden.
7. Remove cookies from sheet and place on cooling rack to cool for at least 1 hour before icing.
8. To make icing: whisk together confectioners' sugar, corn syrup, vanilla, and 2 Tbsp milk in a small bowl until smooth. Transfer half of icing to another bowl and stir in cocoa, adding more milk, 1 tsp at a time, until consistency is the same as white icing.
9. Turn cookies upside down. Place icing scraper tool (or parchment paper) over half of each cookie and spread the uncovered halves with white frosting using a small offset spatula. Allow to set 10-15 minutes. When icing has set, frost the other side of the cookies with chocolate icing. Yes, you should start with the white icing.
10. Allow to set another 10-15 minutes until serving.
11. Store in an airtight container for 2-3 days.

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~NOTES~