



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 5-6-23 EMOR

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. 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 Torah 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 5-6-23 EMOR

**Message for 2/14/98
Yitro Jethro (Abundance)
Exodus 18:1-20:23
Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6
Hebrews 3:12-14**

Exodus 19:1-6

In the third month from the Exodus of the Children of Israel from Egypt, on this day, they arrived at the Wilderness of Sinai. They journeyed from Rephidim and arrived at the Wilderness of Sinai and encamped in the Wilderness; and Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain. Moses ascended to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain, saying, "So shall you say to the House of Jacob and relate to the Children of Israel. 'You have seen what I did to Egypt, and that I have borne you on the wings of eagles and brought you to Me. And now, if you hearken well to Me and observe My covenant, you shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples, for Mine is the entire world. You shall be to me a kingdom of ministers and a holy nation.' These are the words that you shall speak to the Children of Israel."

Exodus 20:1-14

God spoke all these statements, saying: I am the Lord, your God, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. You shall not recognize the gods of others in My presence. You shall not make yourself a carved image nor any likeness of that which is in the heavens above or on the earth below or in the water beneath the earth. You shall not prostrate yourself to them nor worship them, for I am the Lord, your God – a jealous God, Who visits the sin of fathers upon children to the third and fourth generations, for My enemies. But Who shows kindness for thousands of generations to those who love Me and observe My commandments? You shall not take the Name of the Lord, your God, in vain, for the Lord will not absolve anyone who takes His Name in vain. Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it. Six days shall you work and accomplish all your work. But the seventh day is Sabbath to the Lord, your God; you shall not do any work – you, your son, your daughter, your slave, your maidservant, your animal, and your convert within your gates – For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it. Honor your father and your mother, so that your days will be lengthened upon the land that the Lord, your God, gives you. You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness against your fellow. You shall not covet your fellow's house, You shall not covet your fellow's wife, his manservant, his maidservant, his ox, his donkey, nor anything that belongs to your fellow.

First Commandment: Belief in God. This is the positive commandment to believe in the existence of the Lord as the only God.

Second Commandment: Prohibition of idolatry. This commandment comprises four negative injunctions: 1: It is forbidden to believe in idols; 2: it is forbidden to make or possess them; 3: it is forbidden to worship them through any of the four forms of Divine service (prostration, slaughter, offering upon an altar, libations of wine or other liquids upon an altar); and 4: it is forbidden to worship an idol by a means that is unique to it.

Children are punished only if they adopt and carry on the sinful legacy of their parents, or if it was in their power to protest, but they acquiesced to the lifestyle that was shown them.

Third Commandment: Prohibition of vain oaths. Just as it is forbidden to show contempt for God by making an idol, so it is forbidden to disgrace His Name by using it for no valid purpose.

Fourth Commandment: The Sabbath. This day serves as a constant reminder that God is the Creator, Who created for six days and rested on the seventh. Sabbath observance bears testimony to this concept.

The commandment of the Sabbath includes not only deed, but also attitude, for when the Sabbath arrives; one should feel that all his work is finished, even though his desk or workbench is still piled high. Six days shall you work and accomplish all your work means that no matter what is still left to be done, one should feel as much at ease as if everything was finished.

Fifth Commandment: Honoring parents. The Ten Commandments are inscribed on two tablets, five on each. The first tablet contains laws regarding Man's relationship with God while the second refers to relationships among people. This casts a revealing light on the significance God attaches to the honor He wants us to show parents. When people honor their parents, God regards it as if they honor Him.

Sixth Commandment: Prohibition against murder: Note that the first commandment of the second tablet corresponds to the first of the other one, faith in God. Someone with true belief in God as the Creator and Sustainer of human life will not commit murder.

Seventh Commandment: Prohibition against adultery. This term refers only to cohabitation with a married woman, which is a capital offense. It is parallel to the second commandment, which forbids idolatry, for someone who betrays the marital relationship can be expected to betray God.

Eighth Commandment: Prohibition against kidnapping. In this prohibition, "stealing" refers to kidnapping. A kidnapper forces his victim to work for him and then sells him into slavery is liable to the death penalty. The commandment against ordinary theft is found in Leviticus 19:11. Stealing is compared to the third commandment because one who steals may well seek to cover his tracks by swearing falsely.

Ninth Commandment: Prohibition against bearing false witness. In addition to its literal meaning, this passage prohibits gossip and slander.

Tenth Commandment: Prohibition against coveting. This last commandment is one that only a Divine Lawgiver could have decreed. A mortal ruler can legislate against murder and theft, but only God can demand that people sanctify their thoughts and attitudes to the point where they purge themselves of such natural tendencies as jealousy and covetousness.

Isaiah 6:9-10

He said, "go and say to this people, 'Surely you hear, but you do not comprehend; and surely you see, but you fail to know.' This people are fattening its heart, hardening its ears, and sealing its eyes, lest it see with its eyes, hear with its ears and understand with its heart, so that it will repent and be healed."

"Wasting time" is not a phrase traditionally found in the Jewish lexicon. One might even go so far as to say that time is not ours to waste. For the Jewish concept of time is that it is a precious gift given to us by God. As the saying goes, "The past is history, the future is a mystery. Today is a gift. That's why it's called 'present.'"

Not using the gift of time in a manner deemed appropriate by the Gift-giver is, in essence, saying that the gift is not valued. Time not used, or not used properly, is lost; and lost time can never be regained.

When a person realizes the nature of the work before him - to conduct his entire life in accordance with God's will - he understands that one day, one lifetime, is indeed short.

And because life is so short, we must make use of every moment: the moments of our days and of our nights; the moments of our youth and of our maturity; the moments when we have the vigor to "burn the candle at both ends" and the moments when the candle is flickering and fading.

A thoughtful incident about time and the last moments of a candle's light is told concerning Rabbi Yisrael Salanter. One evening, Rabbi Salanter passed the house of a shoemaker, and saw him working by the light of a candle that was almost dying out.

"Why do you work so late?" Rabbi Salanter asked. "The candle will soon go out, and you won't be able to do anymore."

"It does not matter that the candle will soon go out," the shoemaker replied. "While the candle burns, I can still make repairs."

Rabbi Salanter was deeply impacted and concluded, "A person works for material sustenance all the while that the candle is burning. So, too, should he work for the needs of his soul and repair as much as he possibly can as long as the lamp of God, which is the soul of person, is still burning."

Hebrews 3:12-14

Watch out, brothers, so that there will not be in any of you an evil heart lacking trust, which could lead you to apostatize from the living God! Instead, keep exhorting each other every day, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you will become hardened by the deceit of sin. For we have become sharers in the Messiah, provided, however, that we hold firmly to the conviction we began with, right through until the goal is reached.

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 stepped 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 Emor: Summary Lev: 21:1-24:23

God gives Moses a series of laws specific to the priests; God then instructs Moses to tell the people about the festivals in addition to laws of blasphemy and murder.

God gives Moses the laws specific to Aaron and all the priests. Priests are to stay pure and holy. They are not to have contact with the dead, nor profane the Name of God, nor marry a harlot nor even marry a divorced person. When the daughter of a priest degrades herself through harlotry, it is her father whom she degrades, and she must be burned in fire.

The High Priest must abide by additional rules. He must not let his hair on his head grow wild. He must not tear his garments in mourning, nor have contact with the dead. He must not go out of the Sanctuary. He must marry a virgin from among his people. If he becomes blemished, he must not approach the altar to bring an offering to God.

And God says to Moses: Instruct Aaron that if his offspring has a defect, he is not to come near the Holy Shrine to bring a food offering to God. Indeed, any man with a defect is not to come near the Holy Shrine to bring a food offering to God, whether the man is blind or lame or mutilated or too long-limbed or has a broken leg or broken arm or a scab. Aaron's offspring who have a defect may eat from the food offerings, but they may not enter behind the holy curtain, nor approach the slaughter site, for this would profane God's holy shrines.

God says to Moses: Say to all the people: Do not make a priestly offering during any state of uncleanness, nor make sacrifices with animals that are blemished. Do not eat of the holy offerings unless you are in a state of cleanliness. Do not profane My holy Name but let Me be sanctified. I, God, make you holy.

These are My appointed times for meeting. Six days shall work be done and on the seventh day you must stop performing any work and proclaim it a Sabbath of rest. It is a Sabbath to God in all your dwelling places.

In the first month, on the fourteenth of the month, is a Passover to God. On the fifteenth of that month is the Festival of Unleavened Bread and for seven days you shall eat only unleavened bread. On the first day, you shall proclaim it holy and do no work. The seventh day shall also be holy, and you shall do no work.

When you come to the promised land that I give you and you reap the harvest, you shall bring an *omer*, a portion of your first reaping to the priest, who will offer it to God. After seven complete Sabbaths from the time of these offerings, counting fifty days, you shall bring a new offering to God. You shall bring bread, leavened and unleavened, and make offerings with unblemished animals as an expression of compliance to God. You shall leave the gleaning of your harvest for the poor man and the stranger.

Yom Kippur & Sukkot

In the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, there shall be a Day of Atonement. You shall starve your vital energies. You must not do any creating work, nor any activity on that day. Indeed, if any person does not afflict himself on that day, he is to be cut-off from his kinspeople. This holy Sabbath, this Day of Atonement, is an everlasting statute for your descendants, in all your dwelling places.

On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the Festival of Huts. Seven days shall be dedicated to God. On the first day and the eighth day, you must not do any work. You shall take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of the tree of beauty, leaves of palm branches and myrtle branches and willows of the brook, and rejoice before God. You shall live in booths seven days in order that future generations may know that I made the Israelite people live in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt.

In the Tent of Meeting outside the curtain of the Pact, Aaron shall set up a light to burn regularly, night and day, for all generations. Every Sabbath Day, Aaron shall have bread and incense and make an offering to the Lord.

If any person disrespects the Name of God and is a blasphemer, the person shall be taken outside the camp and the whole community shall stone that blasphemer. If a man murders any human being, he shall be put to death. One who strikes the life of an animal is to pay for it, life in place of life. If anyone does harm to a fellow, as he has done so shall it be done to him, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. The injury he inflicted shall be inflicted on him. You shall have one standard for stranger and citizen alike: for I the Lord am your God.

Haftarah for Parashat Emor Eze: 44:15-31

Regulations for the Zadokite priests.

In the haftarah for Parashat Emor Ezekiel prophesies about the rules for the priests that will serve in the Third Temple, to be built at an unspecified, apocalyptic future date. He specifies that the priests must wear specific garments and are commanded to keep their hair cut neatly. They cannot drink wine while they are performing their priestly duties, and they are prohibited from marrying women who are divorced or widowed (unless the widow was originally married to a priest).

The priests Ezekiel describes are charged with teaching the people of Israel about what is sacred and what is profane, what is pure and what is impure. They act as judges for the people, ruling according to the Torah. They are prohibited from going near a corpse unless it is the body of a person in their immediate families.

Finally, God stipulates that the priests should not be given a portion of the land in Israel. God is their portion, and they partake of the sacrifices, and benefit from some of the tithes.

Connection to the Portion

In Parashat Emor, Moses explains the rules of priesthood as dictated to him by God. In the haftarah, Ezekiel functions as a messenger between God and the people, also giving the laws for the priests. These parallel narratives emphasize the idea of continuity from the time of the Torah to the later prophets.



From the Desk of Rabbi Philip Hammond

FAMILY MATTERS

SELF EXAMINATION – NOT SELF FLAGELLATION.

Most people I know want to be great parents... we are learning this takes hard work. Good parenting requires us to undergo self-examination. This is not a time to concentrate on a “woe is me” and self-flagellation session, but an honest assessment of our role as parents.

The question then becomes, how do we assess our “fruit” as parent?

The answer... we evaluate our progress through the behavior of our children!

The behavior of our children tells us much. It is like reading our own story book, exposing what is written inside. Make no mistake... the behavior of young children reflects the pages of a parent’s story book.

Folks embrace the “assessment” process... it will change the ugly spots inside your story book. During this process parents should view this as an opportunity to repent, change and grow. Be encouraged that you have a chance to reflect and change. Be encouraged that you can help your children avoid making the same mistakes. Your rewards will be great.

Parents become “Winston Churchills” and never ever give up on your self-examination. All the hard work and dedication will be returned tenfold... joy truly unspeakable.

There are no silver bullets guaranteeing success, but good practices do help. Yelling and barking orders rarely bring good results.

Example is the best teacher! Want your children to read the bible, then you parents had better make sure you read the bible and are seen reading the bible. Want your children to be kind and forgiving, then you parents had better show kindness and forgiveness.

Remember a parent can only give their children what they themselves possess. Doomed to failure is the parent who tries to force children to behave in a manner they themselves lack.

Let me ask a question... offering a small challenge.

When a parent sees flaws and failings in their children, what are they witnessing and how will they re-act?

Well, they have two choices.

- They can view these characteristics as their own reflections and bring about change, helping child and parent.
- They can view the child as a rebellious individual that needs a good “flogging”, doing little good for either parent or child.

Parents and would be parents, we encourage you to examine your own story books. If a child were to pick it up... what would they witness inside? Will they see love, protection, understanding, guidance, and a safe home? We hope so.

“Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a word appropriately spoken”. Proverbs 25:11 [CJB]

Until we meet again... good parenting.

Insights into Judaism



Who Was Shabbetai Zevi?

The kabbalistic false messiah gained a mass following in the 17th century — until he converted to Islam.

While faith in the coming of the messiah is a linchpin of Judaism, Jews have traditionally taken a patient, quietistic approach to their messianic beliefs. Since the devastation wreaked by false messiah Bar Kochba and his rebellion against the Romans, and the centuries of persecution caused by another messianic movement — Christianity — Jews have been understandably suspicious about anyone's claim to be God's anointed.

The rabbis of the Talmud went so far as to introduce specific prohibitions against messianic agitation, instituting the "three oaths" which prohibited any attempt to "force the end" by bringing the messiah before his allotted time (Babylonian Talmud, [Ketubot 111a](#)). Yet in the mid-17th century, belief in the false messiah Shabbetai Zevi (often spelled Tzvi) spread like wildfire throughout the Jewish world, sweeping up entire communities and creating a crisis of faith unprecedented in Jewish history.

Shabbetai Zevi was said to be born on the 9th of Av in 1626, to a wealthy family of merchants in Smyrna (now Izmir, Turkey). He received a thorough Talmudic education and, still in his teens, was ordained as a *hakham* — a member of the rabbinic elite. However, Shabbetai Zevi was interested less in Talmud than in Jewish mysticism. Starting in his late teens he studied *kabbalah*, attracting a group of followers whom he initiated into the secrets of the mystical tradition.

Shabbetai Zevi battled with what might now be diagnosed as severe bipolar disorder. He understood his condition in religious terms, experiencing his manic phases as moments of "illumination" and his times of depression as periods of "fall," when God's face was hidden from him. While at times of depression he became a semi-recluse, when "illuminated" he felt compelled to contravene Jewish law, perform bizarre rituals (*ma'asim zari* or strange acts), and publicly pronounce the proscribed name of God.

In 1648, Shabbetai Zevi declared himself to be the messiah but did not make much of an impression on the Smyrna community which had become accustomed to his eccentricities. Nonetheless, the rabbis banished him from his hometown, and he spent much of the 1650s traveling through Greece and Turkey. He was eventually expelled from the Jewish communities in Salonika and Constantinople (now Istanbul) for violating the commandments and performing blasphemous acts. In the 1660s he arrived in Egypt via Israel. During this period, he led a quiet life, displaying no messianic pretensions. The turning point in his messianic career came in 1665 as the result of a meeting with his self-appointed prophet, Nathan of Gaza.

Nathan the Prophet and Zevi the Messiah

Nathan was a man of great intellectual stature, a kabbalist and an ascetic, who Shabbetai Zevi approached for a mystical remedy to his spiritual malaise. Nathan tried to convince Shabbetai of his messianic identity — having had this secret revealed to him in a vision — and during Shavuot 1665, publicly announced the appearance of the messiah. During his next period of “illumination,” Shabbetai Zevi consented to these claims and initiated his own messianic career. Most rabbis opposed him but, aside from issuing writs of excommunication and banishing him from Jerusalem, took no action against him.

Nathan, however, initiated a mass movement of repentance, fasting and ascetic acts to prepare the way for the coming redemption. In September 1665, he announced that a fundamental cosmic shift had taken place and that within the year, without war, Shabbetai Zevi would take the Turkish sultan’s crown and make the sultan his servant. After that Zevi would bring back the lost tribes of Israel and marry Rebecca, the daughter of a resurrected Moses. The sultan would then rebel, and the ensuing war would usher in the tumultuous birth pangs of the messiah.

In the same month, Shabbetai Tzvi traveled to Aleppo and Smyrna amidst an atmosphere of religious agitation; several sightings of Elijah were reported. Rabbis and communal leaders were swept up in the excitement. When Shabbetai Tzvi reverted to a state of ecstasy and began performing *ma’asim zarim*, the rabbis tried to stop him, but it was too late. With his followers, he stormed the synagogue of his opponents, called up family members and friends — including women — to the reading of the Torah, and had them pronounce the divine name in their blessings. Comparing his rabbinical opponents to unclean animals, he declared himself the anointed one of God.

Embracing the “Messiah”

Messianic fervor began to spread throughout the communities of the Diaspora. Repentance, extreme asceticism, scourging, and fasting alternated with periods of ecstatic joy. Messianic prayers written by Nathan of Gaza were published. While some Jews began to make travel plans for their imminent departure to the Land of Israel, others refused, believing that they would miraculously be transported there on clouds.

What made the Jewish world so receptive to the false messianism of Shabbetai Zevi? In 1648-49, Cossack bands led by Bogdan Chmielnicki massacred 300,000 Jews in Ukraine amid

unprecedented acts of cruelty. Many communities that escaped were then devastated in the Russian-Swedish war of 1655. In this context, the Jewish people's historical dream of redemption from the bondage of exile took on a new degree of urgency and desperation. In these communities, Shabbetai Tzvi found a receptive audience.

But Shabbateanism influenced communities all over the Jewish world, many of whom were unaffected by Chmielnicki and had no significant history of persecution. Here, the movement's popularity must be understood in its theological context. The 16th century had seen the development of a popular new religious movement, emanating from the town of Safed in northern Israel: Lurianic Kabbalah. The new doctrine held that the creation of the world had sent the presence of God into exile, shattering the divine light into countless sparks, and concealing them within the shells of mundane reality. By uncovering and raising up these sparks through mystical prayer and ritual, the redemption — not only of the Jewish people but of the cosmos and of God himself — could be achieved. Whereas previously Kabbalah had been speculative and esoteric, it was now a popular movement, shot through with messianic tension. The appearance of a messiah who, by contravening Jewish law, could descend into the depths of sin to redeem the last of the sparks, invigorated the Jewish people with the sense that the end of the exile was at hand.

If Shabbetai Zevi's initial reception was conditioned by these religious factors, once inaugurated, the movement took on a momentum of its own. Around the Jewish world, a divide emerged between believers and their opponents. In many communities the anti-Shabbatean minority, including many rabbis, were careful not to antagonize their congregations for fear of terror and reprisals. Thus, any effective opposition was neutralized.

Zevi's Conversion to Islam

In 1666 Shabbetai Tzvi was arrested in Constantinople. After a period of imprisonment — during which he held court as messiah, replaced the fast of the 9th of Av (Tisha B'Av) with a festival celebrating his birthday and began to sign his letters "I am the Lord your God Shabbetai Tzvi" — he was denounced for fomenting sedition and brought before the sultan. Now in a depressive state, he denied ever having made messianic claims. Offered the choice of apostasy or death, he chose to convert to Islam. Shabbetai Tzvi became Aziz Mehmed Effendi, and, with a royal pension, lived until 1676, outwardly a Muslim but secretly participating in Jewish ritual. His letters reveal that at the time of his death, he still believed in his messianic mission.

While Shabbetai Zevi's conversion created a crisis of faith for most of his followers, the movement lived on, sustained by esoteric kabbalistic explanations for the apostasy and by its adherents' psychological need to prevent their deep-seated religious world view from falling apart. The movement survived into the early 18th century, when the Shabbateans divided into two camps: moderates who combined their secret messianic faith with adherence to Jewish law and radicals who set about covertly spreading the heretical doctrine that the "nullification of the Torah was its true fulfillment." This radical wing of the Shabbatean movement achieved a short-lived revival under Jacob Frank, a Polish Jew who, in 1756, was heralded as the reincarnation of Shabbetai Zevi.

Shabbetai Zevi's Long-Term Impact

Shabbateanism subsequently died out as a significant feature of Jewish life, but its long-term impact was far-reaching. Its most immediate influence was in the formulation of a new version of Jewish mysticism — the Hasidic movement, born in late 18th-century Poland. The quietistic, inwardly spiritual tone of early Hasidism was a conscious reaction against the messianic excesses of the Shabbeteans, while the Hasidic Jews' unconditional faith in their *rebbe* or *tzaddik* had as its precedent the dynamic between Shabbetai Zevi and his followers. In the late 20th century, the resurgence of messianic fervor among some Chabad-Lubavitch Hasidic Jews lent credence to this relationship. Historian Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson took this idea one step further, arguing that the whirlwind of popularity and enthusiasm generated by a secular Zionist like Theodor Herzl at the end of the 19th century cannot be understood without reference to the Shabbatean movement.

Gershom Scholem, the seminal historian of Jewish mysticism, makes an even bolder claim. He argues that the split between outward orthodoxy and secret heresy, which characterized Shabbetai Zevi's followers, destroyed the unity of their Jewish identity from within. This, combined with the trauma caused by the false messiah's apostasy, was one of the decisive factors that explain the disintegration of traditional Judaism and the onset of modern Jewish history.

PRAYER & SPIRITUALITY



The Shema: How Listening Leads to Oneness

Judaism's foundational prayer calls on us not merely to listen, but to remember that there is one force of connection uniting us all.

Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad

Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

These words, commonly known as the Shema, are traditionally recited by Jews as we begin and conclude each day. Bookending not just our days but our lives, the Shema is also commonly the first prayer we are taught as children and is the final prayer we utter on our deathbed as we pass from this world. The Shema is the mantra of Judaism, its message foundational to what it means to live as a Jew of faith in this world.

The Shema begins with an imperative: Listen! Just that word alone is a powerful call. Listening is not an easy thing to do. More than the simple act of hearing, true listening requires us to open ourselves up to another's experience so that heart touches heart and we are changed. It is — in philosopher Martin Buber's framework — what allows us to develop an I-thou, rather than an I-it, relationship. Buber describes listening as "something we do with our full selves by sensing and feeling what another is trying to convey so that together we can remove the barrier between us."

In Judaism, the act of listening is the key to unlocking bounty and blessing. In Deuteronomy, as the Israelites wind down their wandering in the wilderness and prepare to enter the land of Israel, Moses instructs them emphatically using this same word — shema. "If you listen, truly listen," Moses says, all will be good. If not, curses will follow.

On this verse, the Hasidic commentator the Sefat Emet references a line from the Midrash: "Happy is the one whose listenings are to Me." Adding his own commentary, he writes: "'Listenings' means that one should always be prepared to receive and listen closely to the words of God. The voice of God's word is in everything, since all were created by God's utterance."

Each of us, no matter how seemingly different we are from one another, are created by God. The Shema calls on us not merely to listen, but to remember that despite our differences, there is one force of connection and transformation in the universe that animates and unites us all. “The Lord, our God, the Lord is One,” the Shema continues.

The force that we call Adonai, others call by other names. Each of us has our own particular path, but ultimately, they lead to the same place. Beginning with listening and ending with oneness, the Shema invites us to deepen our capacity to listen — to ourselves, to the Divine, and to those around us, to develop an I-thou relationship with the rest of humanity. Its daily recitation reminds us to build bridges rather than barriers so that we may touch upon — even if only for brief moments at a time — that place in which we all are one.

עִבְרִי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ יְהוָה | אֶחָד:

She-mah Yis-rah-el YHVH Eh-lo-hay-nu YHVH eh-chad

Hear, Isra'el! *ADONAI* our God, *ADONAI* is one.



A Taste of Jewish Humor

Yeshiva University decided to field a crew team. Unfortunately, they lost race after race. They practiced for hours every day, but never managed to come in any better than dead last.

The Rosh Yeshiva finally decided to send Yankel to spy on the Harvard team. So, Yankel shlepped off to Cambridge and hid in the bullrushes off the Charles River, from where he carefully watched the Harvard team as they practiced.

Yankel finally returned to Yeshiva. "I have figured out their secret," he announced.

"They have eight guys rowing and only one guy shouting."



This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup

Molly Yeh's Chocolate Sea Salt Rugelach Recipe

A round-the-clock treat for the whole family.

There's nothing like homemade rugelach. This recipe enriches the dough with cream cheese for a pie-like flake, perfect for housing swirls of gooey chocolate. Top with sprinkles for a pop of color or turbinado sugar for crunch and a rich molasses hit.

Ingredients

- 2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting
- 1/4 cup granulated sugar
- 1/2 tsp kosher salt
- 1 cup unsalted butter, cubed and cold
- 8 ounces cream cheese, straight from the fridge
- 2 large egg yolks plus 1 large whole egg
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- optional: 1/2 tsp almond extract
- 1 1/2 cups chocolate chips or chopped chocolate (I prefer milk but any type will do!)
- flaky salt, for sprinkling
- sprinkles, sanding sugar, or turbinado sugar, for sprinkling

Directions

1. Combine the flour, granulated sugar, and salt in a stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Add the cubed butter, distributing it over the top of the dry ingredients, then dollop in the cream cheese (1-inch dollops should do it, but it doesn't need to be perfect). Turn the mixer on low speed and mix until the mixture is mostly mealy and there are still some larger clumps of butter and cream cheese intact. With the mixer still running, add the egg yolks, vanilla, and almond extract (if using). Continue mixing until the dough comes together.
2. Divide the dough in half and shape into two discs. Wrap each tightly in plastic wrap and refrigerate for at least one hour or up to two days.

3. Melt the chocolate in a double boiler, stirring constantly, or in a microwaveable bowl in 30-second increments, stirring after each. Set aside to cool briefly while you roll out the dough.
4. Beat the remaining whole egg with a splash of water for an egg wash.
5. Roll out a dough disc on a lightly floured surface, dusting with flour as needed to prevent it from sticking, until it is a wide rectangle, 18-by-9-inches. Use an offset spatula to spread half of the chocolate over the dough in a thin, even layer, leaving a 1-inch border along the long edge that's farthest from you. (Try to work kind of quickly so the chocolate doesn't harden.)
6. Brush the border with a thin layer of egg wash. Starting on the long end closest to you, roll the dough into a long, tight log, then place it seam-side down on a cutting board or baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough and chocolate. Refrigerate for at least one hour or up to two days (depending on fridge space, you might want to cut the log in half so you're dealing with four shorter logs instead of two really long ones; wrap in plastic if refrigerating for longer than one hour).
7. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F and line two baking sheets with parchment paper.
8. Brush the logs with a thin layer of egg wash, then sprinkle with a few pinches of flaky salt and a ton of sprinkles or sanding sugar. Cut into 1 1/2-inch slices and transfer to the baking sheets, spacing them 1 inch apart. Bake until golden brown on top, about 24 minutes. (You might notice that the cookies seem to sweat and leak out some fat while in the oven; this is completely normal.)
9. Let cool on the baking sheets for five minutes, then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely, or enjoy them warm! Fully cooled cookies can be stored in an airtight container at room temperature for several days.

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



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