



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 5-20-23 BAMIDBAR**

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

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.

WE HAVE 6 PRISON AFFILIATES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

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



Rabbi Mordecai Silver <mailto:tolmm@etz-chayim.org>

## **MESSAGE FOR 5-20-23 BAMIDBAR**

Message from 6/6/97

B'midbar – In Wilderness (Sinai)

Numbers 1:1-4:20

Hosea 2:1-22

Romans 9:22-33

Numbers 3:40-41, 45

***40: And Adonai said to Mosheh, "Register all the first-born males of the children of Yisrael from a month old and above and take the number of their names. 41: And you shall take the Levites for Me – I am Adonai – instead of all the first-born among the children of Yisrael, and the livestock of the Levites instead of all the first-born among the livestock of the children of Yisrael.***

***45: Take the Levites instead of all the first-born among the children of Yisrael, and the livestock of the Levites instead of their livestock. And the Levites shall be Mine, I am Adonai.***

The Book of Numbers begins just that way - with many numbers. It counts the Israelites who were in the desert and assigns unique divisions for each of the tribes. Every tribe has its own flag and position among the great camp of Israel. They are strategically placed around the Mishkan - Tabernacle and grouped accordingly. This division is somewhat troubling. Why isn't there a concept of a great melting pot under one flag? Moreover, the singling out of the tribe of Levi raises more questions. "Bring the tribe of Levi close and have them stand before Ahron and they shall serve him (Leviticus 3:6). The Torah relates the specific tasks of the descendants of Levi and also warns the stranger, the ordinary Israelite, against attempting to join in those tasks. Why is there further division in the ranks of Israel? Why can't the Israelite, from the other tribes, do the task of the Kohen - Priest, and the Kohen the task of the Levi, and the Levi the task of the Israelite?

**Hosea 2:1-2, 7, 19-20**

***1: Say to your brothers, O my people, and to your sisters, O compassionate one.  
2: Strive with your mother, strive, for she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband!  
Let her put away her whorings from her face, and her adulteries from between her breasts.***

***7: And she shall pursue her lovers but not overtake them and shall seek them but not find them. Then she shall say, 'Let me go and return to my first husband, for then it was better for me than now.'***

***19-20: 19: And I shall take you as a bride unto Me forever and take you as a bride unto Me in righteousness, and in right-ruling, and kindness and compassion. 20: And I shall take you as a bride unto Me in trustworthiness, and you shall know Adonai.***

The great Arturo Toscanini was conducting Beethoven's Symphony #3 back in the late 1930s with the NBC Symphony orchestra. The outdoor concert was held at City University's Lewisson Stadium and was well attended. The famed trumpeter, Harry Glanz, was going to play the offstage trumpet, an integral part of the production of this piece.

People had flocked to hear the great trumpeter under the baton of the even more accomplished Toscanini. Glanz positioned himself in a corner about 50 feet behind the stage ready to blast his notes upon cue. As the recital led up to that moment Toscanini held his baton high, waiting to hear the sharp blasts of

Glanz's horn. They never came. All he saw was a burly security guard wrestling with the hapless musician on the grass behind the stage.

The guard was pointing to the stage. "You fool!" he was shouting, "what do you think you're doing blowing that horn back here? Don't you see there's a concert going on up there?"

Not everybody who wants to can be up on the stage. In the concert of the Almighty, every player has his designated position that makes the symphony much more beautiful. I have a friend who travels the United States and stops for minyanim – prayer groups all across the country. "Often," he exclaims, "when they ask, 'Is there a Kohen in the house?' I have the urge to go up there and pretend that I am a Kohen. I always wanted to know what it's like being called up first!"

Fortunately, he, like most of us, understands that every person who is a part of the Kingdom of God, whether man or woman has a unique role to play. Sometimes roles are played from the inside, sometimes from the outside, nevertheless, the offstage trumpeters are just as vital as the onstage ones. And if we rush the stage to perform out of sync, we can ruin the beautiful harmony of a carefully orchestrated concert.

We as His children have certain mitzvos - commandments that the Kohen cannot perform. He may visit the dying and assist in the burial of any deceased. It is the other parts of the family who give the tithes and support the poor. The Kohen and Levi inherit no land from which they could perform many commandments. So, God has a place set for all of us.

But there is more to this.

### **Romans 9:22-33**

**<sup>22</sup> What if God, desiring to show his wrath and to make known his power, has endured with much patience the objects of wrath that are made for destruction; <sup>23</sup> and what if he has done so in order to make known the riches of his glory for the objects of mercy, which he has prepared beforehand for glory-- <sup>24</sup> including us whom he has called, not from the Jews only but also from the Gentiles? <sup>25</sup> As indeed he says in Hosea, "Those who were not my people I will call 'my people,' and her who was not beloved I will call 'beloved.'" <sup>26</sup> "And in the very place where it was said to them, 'You are not my people,' there they shall be called children of the living God." <sup>27</sup> And Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, "Though the number of the children of Israel were like the sand of the sea, only a remnant of them will be saved; <sup>28</sup> for the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively." <sup>29</sup> And as Isaiah predicted, "If the Lord of hosts had not left**

survivors to us, we would have fared like Sodom and been made like Gomorrah." <sup>30</sup> What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; <sup>31</sup> but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. <sup>32</sup> Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, <sup>33</sup> as it is written, "See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." (NRS)

In closing:

But we all have a place in God's Kingdom. We are all one family. We may be different, but we are the same. But your trumpeting may resound as loud as your brother's may. If you play it in the right position.

Are you stumbling over the foundation stone? Or are you standing on it, supported, joined to all the others built on that foundation -Y'shua.

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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 Bamidbar: Summary Num: 1:1-4:20**

***Moses conducts a census of the Israelites; God describes the unique duties of the Kohath family of priests.***

God told Moses to, “Take a total count of the entire community of the sons of Israel according to their families, according to their father’s house, counting the names of all males twenty years old and upward.”

But the Levites were not allowed to number themselves among them. For you shall appoint the Levites over the Dwelling Place of the Testimony. They shall carry the Dwelling Place of the Tent of Appointed Meeting and minister to it and camp around it. All the other sons of Israel shall camp with their own tribe, according to their divisions, at some distance around the Tent of Appointed Meeting.

Each of the descendants of Aaron (Moses’ brother) were anointed as priests, but Nadab and Abihu died when they brought a strange fire before God. Since they had no sons, only Eleazar and Ithamar remained to minister as priests.

God spoke to Moses saying, “I shall take these Levites from amidst the sons of Israel in place of every first-born, for all that is firstborn is Mine. On the day I struck down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified for Myself all that is first-born in Israel from man to beast. They shall remain Mine.” The sons of Levi are then counted and named from one month old and upward.

Moses and Aaron and his sons are to camp in front and east of the Dwelling Place and keep charge of it. Any outsider who comes near is liable to the death penalty.

God spoke to Moses and Aaron saying, “Have the Kohathites among the Levites perform tasks for the Tent of Meeting that concern the most sacred objects. At the breaking of camp Aaron



and his sons shall take down the screening curtain and cover the Ark of the Pact. They shall cover all that is within the ark with special cloths, including the sacred objects, so that they do not come in contact with these sacred objects and die. Then the Kohathites shall come and lift these sacred objects.”

Eleazer, son of Aaron the priest, shall be responsible for the lighting oil, the aromatic incense, the regular meal offering and the anointing oil, the whole Tabernacle and everything consecrated in it or its vessels.

The Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying “Do not let the group of Kohathite clans be cut off from the Levites. Let Aaron and his sons go in and assign each of them to his duties so that the Kohathites shall live and not die when they approach the most sacred objects.”

### Parashat Bamidbar Discussion Questions

- 1. There is a precise counting of all the tribes of Israel. Why do you think only men over the age of twenty were counted for all the tribes except the Levites, while even one-month-old Levite males were later counted? What about the women—didn’t they count to God?**
- 2. Do you consider yourself a member of a certain tribe of Israel? If so, which one and why?**
- 3. The text suggests that if someone besides a Kohathite comes in contact with a sacred object in the Tent of Appointed Meeting that person will die. What are some of the sacred objects in today’s sanctuaries? Do you feel that strict rules regarding sacred objects are still necessary? Do you feel that death should still be a consequence for not obeying the rules regarding sacred objects?**

## Haftarah for Bamidbar Hosea 2:1-22

***Though betrayed by Israel's unfaithfulness, God will reconcile with the people like a husband who cannot stop loving his wife.***

The haftarah for *Parashat Bamidbar*, from the Book of Hosea, is a prophecy of redemption. In the opening verses, God promises that the people of Israel will one day be as multitudinous as the sands of the sea. They will be recognized as being children of the living God, and Judah and Israel will assemble together, unified under one leader.

### A Wayward Wife

Hosea explains why Israel is in need of redemption by telling the story of Israel’s sin and punishment. He does this using a parable of a husband, a wife, and the wife’s lovers—representing God, the people of Israel, and idols, respectively.

In Hosea’s story, the husband is faithful, but his wife constantly plays the harlot. Believing that her lovers are responsible for her rich, comfortable life, she says: “I will go after my lovers, who supply my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink” (2:7).

The abandoned husband is devastated and angered. Does his wife not realize that he is the one who provides her with grain, wine, oil, silver, and gold? He promises to block her path so that she will not be able to find her lovers. When she finally decides to return to her first husband, he will punish her: “Now will I uncover her shame in the very sight of her lovers...I will lay waste her vines and her fig trees, which she thinks are a fee she received from her lovers...Thus will I punish her” (2:12-15).

Though betrayed, the husband will be unable to remain angry forever. After punishing his wife, he will again turn to her in love: “I will speak coaxingly to her and lead her to the wilderness and speak to her tenderly” (2:16).

At the end of the haftarah, Hosea speaks more explicitly about how this story represents God and Israel. He explains that God will make a covenant with the people, banishing violence and war from the land to allow the people to live in safety. Hosea returns to the vocabulary of marriage in the haftarah’s closing lines: “I will betroth you forever. I will betroth you with righteousness and justice and with goodness and mercy. I will betroth you with faithfulness. Then shall you be devoted to the Lord” (2: 21-22).

## The Wilderness

The Hebrew name for the Book of Numbers is Bamidbar, which means “in the wilderness.” This is an apt title for the book that chronicles the Israelites’ time in the wilderness: the episode with the quail after the Israelites complain about manna, the story of the spies who scouted out the land of Israel, Korah’s rebellion. These stories, and others in the book, repeatedly describe a cycle of disbelief in God, sin, and punishment, that characterized the 40 years the Israelites spent in the wilderness.

But, in the Book of Hosea, it seems that God’s memory of the wilderness is not so negative. Indeed, God is hopeful that this location will be conducive to his reconciliation with his unfaithful wife, the people of Israel: “There (in the wilderness) shall she respond in the days of her youth, when she came out of the land of Egypt” (2:17). God thinks of the period the Israelites spent in the wilderness, after leaving Egypt, as one of the highlights of His relationship with Israel, so much so that he considers the wilderness a good destination for a “second honeymoon.”

Yet earlier in the very same haftarah, wilderness imagery appears in a not-so-positive context. In describing how the betrayed husband will punish his wife, Hosea promises: “I will strip her naked and leave her as on the day she was born. I will make her like a wilderness, render her like desert land, and let her die of thirst” (2:5).

So, which is a better portrayal of the Israelites’ experience in the wilderness? Desolate, barren, frightening as suggested in the first part of the haftarah? Or romantic, loving closeness with God—as suggested in the second part of the haftarah? As we begin to read the fourth book of the Torah, diving into the stories of the Israelites in the wilderness, the haftarah encourages us to ask these questions.



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

### **LIFE IS WHAT IT IS ??**

#### **“Trust has gone into historical oblivion”?**

In Australia we are in full election mode. The political battles are beginning, and the usual propaganda will be forced upon the nation, with the challenge of sorting “truth” from fiction and lies. The competition within politics is fierce and it is a win at all costs attitude. This attitude brings pressures and causes people to engage in unhealthy practices where trust and integrity are ignored in pursuit of the prize. Our politicians think nothing of promising the people “things” they know full well they can never deliver. This is mainly because the people prefer a lie over truth, and they trust the false over and above the true.

We are told things like abortion, same sex relationships, “recreational” drugs, debt, adultery/affairs, idolatry, self-indulgence, theft, humanism, pantheism, and the like, should not only be embraced but are in fact healthy for a society. There is something very scary about a society that no longer finds murder, abuse of women and children, lying, cheating, adultery, drug addiction an abnormal behaviour. A society that embraces behaviour that causes death and destruction is a society that is heading for death and destruction. Let me ask some simple, some would say foolish questions, regarding these issues that are promoted as adding value to humanity and mankind.

Take thieving for instance: Either all can thief, or no one can thief. Which choice is best for a community? Take lying and cheating. Either all can lie and cheat without recourse or no one is allowed to lie and cheat. Which choice is best for a community? Take adultery. Either all can and must engage in adultery or no one is allowed to engage in adultery. Which choice is better for a community? Take abortion. Abortions must be undertaken for all pregnancies, or no abortions undertaken. Which choice sustains the community? Take homosexuality: All have to engage in solely homosexual relationships, or all have to engage in solely heterosexual relationships. Which choice will see the community survive? Take murder, rape, and abuse of women and children. Is the community better off turning a blind eye to such or stamping it out completely?

Whilst these questions may well be simplistic, the answers surely tell us what and what does not contribute to a healthy, thriving society.

None of the above, [readily tolerated and accepted into our Western societies], contribute to a healthier society. Yet we find our politicians, leaders and education facilities embracing many of these destructive practices, promoting them with vigour. This is all done under the umbrella of “tolerance” and the need for a move away from conservative values [Read believers in the Bible] along with the insistence that this so-called new tolerant society will be the salvation of mankind. Opposition to these ideologies are not tolerated and are quickly shut down. This blocks our young people from hearing a conservative voice of reason.

If one questions the wisdom of these elitists then one is quickly derided as being old fashioned, intolerant, unworthy of a voice, racist, bigot, phobic, uneducated, and completely out of touch. If you dare to believe and trust in God, especially the God of Israel, then you are completely dismissed and hounded into submission if at all possible.

Western Societies are now rewarding the wicked over the righteous. We have lost what is commonly referred to as “the plot”.

Folks we get what we deserve. In our Western Societies it is the people who choose their “King” and as such come under their rule. Our Kings no longer look to God for direction, resulting in vast change. This change is advancing at a rapid rate, and I for one believe it is not for the betterment of our children or children’s children. I am not speaking of the physical changes that have brought great

improvements, but of our general values. Instead of living by: “In God we trust”, we now live by “We no longer trust or believe in God”. Friends we are witnessing before our very eyes the destruction of our societies because we have removed the values and teachings of God from all aspects of our societies. Change is coming but it will not be a pleasant one for man or beast.

Rabbi Philip [Yochanan] Hammond. PhD.

Rabbi Hammond can be contacted at – [Philip@etz-chayim.org](mailto:Philip@etz-chayim.org)

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## ***Insights into Judaism***



### **9 Things You Didn't Know About Shabbat**

***Surprising facts about the weekly Jewish day of rest.***

Shabbat, the weekly Jewish day of rest, is so important to Jewish life and the rhythms of Jewish time that the phrase *shomer Shabbat* — literally, “keeper of Shabbat” — is often used as shorthand for an observant Jew. The basics of Shabbat are pretty straightforward — essentially, refraining from constructive labor and taking a much-deserved weekly respite — but some other facets of the weekly Jewish sabbath are less so. Here’s a few things about Shabbat you might not have known.

#### **Angels come to our houses**

According to the Jewish mystics, angels accompany worshippers home from the synagogue after Friday night prayers. This tradition is the reason for the singing of Shalom Aleichem, which welcomes angels into the home, prior to the Friday night Shabbat meal. Along with the angels, Shabbat is often compared to a bride or a queen. In medieval times, in fact, the mystics would go out into the fields on Friday night to greet the arrival of the Shabbat queen.

## **You don't have to use wine for Kiddush**

Shabbat, like major Jewish holidays, features the recitation of Kiddush, a blessing recited at the start of the Friday night meal — most commonly over wine (or grape juice). And while wine is clearly the preferred beverage, if there's nonavailable, you don't have to forego the whole ritual. Friday night kiddush can be recited over challah or liquor too.

## **Some families light more than two candles**

As a rule, two candles are lit prior to Shabbat beginning on Friday night. These are understood to symbolize the twin biblical commands to remember (*zachor*) and keep (*shamor*) the Sabbath day, though there are other explanations too. But it's possible to light more, and many families do. Some have the custom of adding an additional candle for each child born into the family. In larger families, that can be a lot of candles.

## **Shabbat has its own elevators**

Well, kinda. In facilities frequented by observant Jews (and in some Israeli high-rises), one can often find a Shabbat elevator. These lifts stop automatically on every floor to enable observant Jews who eschew the use of electronics on Shabbat to go up and down without having to actively push any buttons. Shabbat elevators are but one example of the many technological innovations aimed at making the Shabbat experience easier and more pleasant for those who live in the modern world but cannot flip switches, including Shabbat lamps, Shabbat toothbrushes, and powered Shabbat carts.

## **The reason for that white string around some Jewish neighborhoods? Shabbat.**

If you've ever spotted a group of Jews staring intently up at a telephone pole on Friday afternoon, they're most likely checking the *eruv*. An eruv is a symbolic boundary — typically composed of walls, fences, electrical poles and wires (or some combination thereof) — erected in certain Jewish neighborhoods that permit carrying in public on Shabbat, normally a proscribed activity. In places where a public eruv exists, it's common to check it every week to make sure it hasn't been damaged — hence the Friday telephone pole watchers. These boundaries are generally invisible unless you know what to look for, but have been a source of controversy nonetheless.

## **Shabbat laws are responsible for a classic Jewish dish**

Walk into a Shabbat-observant home on a Friday afternoon and you're likely to find a fragrant stew of meat, beans and potatoes bubbling on the stove or crock-pot. This is the venerable cholent, a classic Ashkenazi dish that slow-cooks overnight so hot food is available on Shabbat afternoon, when cooking is prohibited. (Sephardim also have a version known as dafina or hamin.) But cholent is no longer the sole province of the Orthodox. It's now available at trendy eateries in Israel and New York.

## **We get an extra soul on Shabbat**

Yes, really. According to the Talmud (Beitzah 16), God bequeaths us an additional soul — a *neshama yeteirah* in Hebrew — on Friday evening and takes it back on Saturday night. The idea is meant to convey that Shabbat is not just about physical rest and renewal, but spiritual elevation as well. Our capacity for connecting spiritually is enhanced on Shabbat through this additional soul.

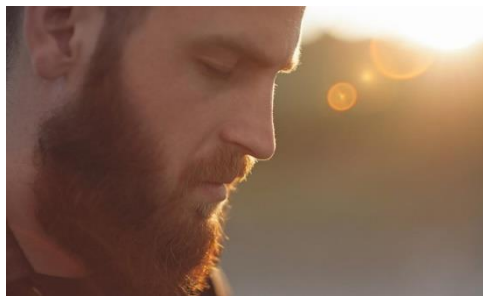
### **Shabbat is a foretaste of the World to Come**

According to the Talmud, the experience of Shabbat is *may'ain olam habah* — a little taste of the World to Come, the rabbinic term for the hereafter. Shabbat is a way to experience in some small way what living in a world of perfect peace is like. This may also be why the Midrash states that the messiah will come immediately if all of the Jewish people were to observe one Shabbat perfectly. (The Talmud says it has to be two Shabbats.)

### **Shabbat is kind of a big deal**

Shabbat is considered more important than virtually every other Jewish observance. On Shabbat, seven sections (or *aliyot*) are read from the Torah. Even Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, only gets six. Other Jewish holidays get even fewer. Shabbat is also the only Jewish observance mentioned in the Ten Commandments. It's understood in the Talmud to be the day on which God was revealed to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai. And it may also be the secret of Jewish survival. As the Hebrew essayist Ahad Ha'am famously wrote: "More than the Jewish people have kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept the Jews."

## ***PRAYER & SPIRITUALITY***



### **Ata Chonen: A Prayer for Wisdom**

***If we lack powers of wisdom and discernment, no other request of God really matters.***

Prayer offers us a daily opportunity to embrace God with words while seeking — through the language of petition and supplication — a way to articulate our most profound needs. It is not in the asking, but in the searching and wrestling that we gain clarity.

This kind of penetrating lucidity is not a regular and anticipated outcome of prayer. It comes in that rare moment — and almost always when we do not set out to achieve it — that we are gifted with an intellectual or emotional breakthrough.

The Amidah is the spinal cord of the Jewish prayer experience; all prayer that precedes it is preparation to ask God to meet our needs with a combination of humility and spiritual audacity. In the very first of our requests, we ask for the wisdom to be God-like in the day ahead.

In the blessing known as *Ata Chonen* we recite: “You grace humans with wisdom and teach humanity perception. Bestow upon us Your knowledge, insight and understanding. Blessed are you the grantor of wisdom.”

If we lack wisdom, then no other request really matters. In this prayer, we ask that God offer us a sliver of divine insight that we may gain the clarity we need to make a day’s worth of decisions and good judgments. We firm up our minds to be able to problem-solve and manage life’s complexities. We know that intelligence involves the exquisite and often contradictory balance of curiosity, instinct, patience, caution and risk.

We can never assume wisdom. What may be sensible in one situation is foolish in another. Thus, we pray for knowledge and introduce every other blessing that follows in the Amidah with this request. In fact, on Saturday night we acknowledge the onset of the new week following Shabbat with a special prayer tucked into *Ata Chonen*, precisely because we need this insight not only for the day ahead but for the week ahead. *Havdalah*, or separation (also the name for the ritual performed at the close of Shabbat), requires the perception to categorize and compartmentalize, to know the difference between the holy and the profane.

Should the idea of apportioning wisdom seem strange, we remind ourselves that this notion appears in the Hebrew Bible on numerous occasions. In the construction of the Tabernacle, God tells Moses to appoint Bezalel: “I have endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability and knowledge...” ([Exodus 31:3](#)). This is also extended to the craftsmen Bezalel employs: “...and I have also granted wisdom to all who are wise that they may make everything that I have commanded...” ([Exodus 31: 6](#)). This gift is far above skill and talent. The Hebrew uses the expression *hakham lev*, literally “heart-knowledge,” to describe the spirit imbued in each artisan.

Apportioning wisdom is not only from God to humans. In [Numbers 11](#), when Moses struggled mightily with a difficult flock, God apportioned 70 elders with the spirit of Moses’ wisdom: “...I will draw upon the spirit that is in you and put it on them” ([Numbers 11:17](#)). Moses needed



many others who were like him to be allies in the work of community. Nothing requires more wisdom than managing people well.

We open our litany of requests with the desire to know, to perceive, to understand, and to think because these capacities make us distinctly human. Yet our rational minds are in a constant tug-of-war with our irrational desires. We pray that wisdom wins the day.

**עֲבָרִי - Hebrew**

**Word (s) of the Week**

בְּרוּךְ יְהוָה

Bah-ruch Yeh-ho-vah

Bless Yehovah



***A Taste of Jewish Humor***

**RABBI MONDAY MORNING IN SHUL: "Will everyone please turn on their tablet, PC, iPad, smart phone, and Kindles to Art Scroll page 232. And please switch on your Bluetooth to download the sermon."**

**P-a-u-s-e.....**

"Now, let us daven. Open your Apps, BBM, Twitter and Facebook, and chat with God"

S-i-l-e-n-c-e .....



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

## Chocolate Pistachio Krembos Recipe

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What in the name of Elijah is a krembo, you may be asking. This chocolate-dipped marshmallow cookie magic is seen as a winter alternative to ice cream in Israel. I took mine up a notch with homemade pistachio cookies and marshmallow filling.

### Ingredients

For pistachio cookie base:

1½ cups (213 g) all-purpose flour

½ cup (57 g) powdered sugar

½ tsp kosher salt

1½ sticks or ¾ cup (140 g) chilled unsalted butter, cut into chunks

½ cup (150 g) unsalted, shelled pistachios, plus more chopped for garnish

1 egg

½ tsp vanilla extract

For marshmallow filling:

6 egg whites

1½ cups (300 g) granulated sugar

½ tsp cream of tartar

1½ tsp vanilla extract

For chocolate shell:

1 package (12 ounce/340 g) semisweet chocolate chips

3 Tbsp coconut oil, butter, or canola oil (I like coconut oil best, but use what you have)

## Directions

To make cookies, place flour, powdered sugar, and salt in a food processor and pulse until combined.

Then add butter, pistachios, egg, and vanilla. Pulse until pistachios are very fine and dough comes together.

Form a log about 2 inches (5 cm) in diameter on wax paper, using the wax paper to help you mold it. Wrap in plastic wrap and refrigerate until firm, about 2 hours. If you are in a rush, freeze for 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 350°F/180°C.

Cut log into ¼-inch (6 mm) slices and bake on a parchment paper-lined baking sheet, 1 inch (2.5 cm) apart, until lightly golden, about 15 minutes. Cool.

While cookies are baking, make your filling. Make sure the bowl and whisk are very clean and dry. Make a double boiler with a pot or heatproof bowl set over a pot of simmering water (not touching the water) and place egg whites, sugar, and cream of tartar in the top pot over simmering water over medium heat. Whisk for 5 minutes, or until sugar has dissolved. Do not let it boil. Mixture should be frothy, warm, and not gritty. If you have a candy thermometer, it should be about 140°F/60°C.

Remove from heat, transfer to a large heat-resistant bowl (or use the bowl it's already in) and beat with a stand or hand mixer with whisk attachment until thick, shiny, and stiff peaks form, 10 minutes or more. Then beat in vanilla.

To make krembos, put filling in a pastry bag with a wide tip or a plastic bag with wide tip. Pipe onto cookies in a swirl, about 2 inches (5 cm) high, and freeze for at least 1 hour.

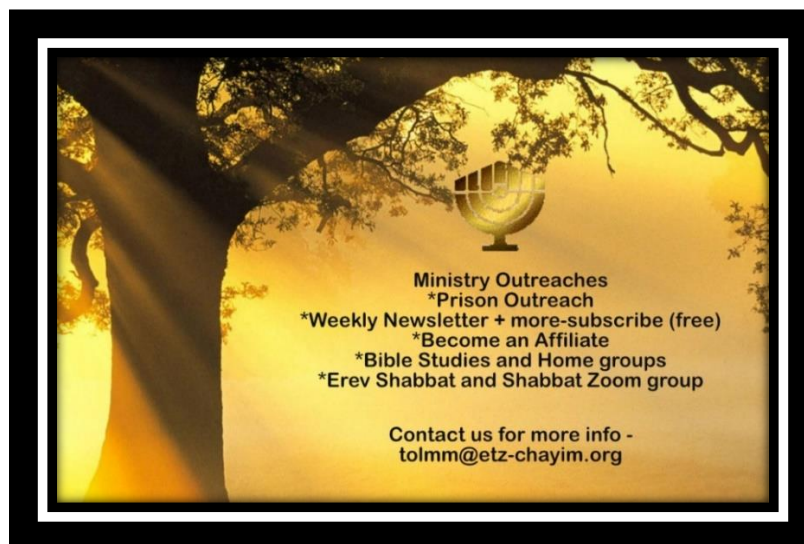
Meanwhile, to make chocolate coating, melt chocolate and oil over medium heat in a double boiler until chocolate is melted and shiny.

Then dip chilled krembos in the chocolate (or just get messy and pour it on top) and sprinkle with extra pistachios. The chocolate should harden right away; refrigerate if not eating right away.

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