



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 7-8-23 PINCHAS**

### ***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 SILVER'S 3 YEARS OF VIDEO TEACHINGS ON THE TORAH PORTIONS AND FESTIVALS ON YOUTUBE.

WE HAVE 7 PRISON AFFILIATES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

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



Rabbi Mordecai Silver [tolmm@etz-chayim.org](mailto:tolmm@etz-chayim.org)

## **MESSAGE FOR 7-8-23 PINCHAS**

*Pinchas - Phineas (dark-skinned)*

*Numbers-Bamidbar 25:10-29:40*

*1 Kings 18:46-19:21*

*Yochanan 2:13-22, 13:1, 1Cor. 5:6-8*

In the Sidra or Parashah Pinchas (Numbers-Bamidbar 27), five sisters whose father has died come before Moses and plead for the right to inherit: God tells Moses that their plea is just. At a time when it was not obvious that women ought to be equal before the law, Moses, with God's guidance, sees them as real persons.

The Eternal One also sets His festivals and the offerings that are to be given on these days. The list of Appointed Times that are important to Him is as follows: There were to be two daily offerings every day. There was the Sabbath offering of two lambs, the same as the daily offerings. The New Moon-Rosh Chodesh, Pesach (Passover), Unleavened Bread-Matzo, First Fruits, Shavuot, Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot and Shemini Atzeret. These were the Days of the Lord, and they are emphasized throughout Scripture as Holy Times of convocation or assembly.

Then, in contemplation of a change of leadership, Moses says: Let the Eternal One, Source of the breath of all flesh, appoint someone over the community (27:15).

If the Eternal is the "Source of the breath of all flesh," we are kin to "all flesh." We need to see this always.

#### **Numbers-Bamidbar 27:15-18**

***15: Moses spoke to YAHVEH, saying, 16: "May YAHVEH, God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint a man over the assembly, 17: who will go out before them and come in before them, who shall take them out and bring them in; and let the assembly of the YAHVEH not be like sheep that have no shepherd." 18: YAHVEH said to Moses, "Take to yourself Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom there is spirit, and lean your hand upon him..."***

The interesting comment on the part of Moses is that he desires that God appoint a leader over the people so that they will not be like sheep without a shepherd, who would have a tendency to stray. This is exactly in line with What the Messiah Y'shua saw as He likened the people to sheep without a shepherd.

#### **1 Kings-Malachim 19:11-12**

***11: [The word of God] then said, "Go out [of the cave] and stand on the mountain before YAHVEH," And behold, YAHVEH was passing, and a great, powerful wind, smashing mountains and breaking rocks, went before YAHVEH. "YAHVEH is not in the wind!" [Elijah was told]. After the wind came an earthquake. "YAHVEH is not in the earthquake." 12: After the earthquake came a fire. "YAHVEH is not in the fire." After the fire came a still, thin sound.***

This sentence translates and the Word of Yahveh. Interesting that the Hebrew scribes translate this as The Word of God then said. What we clearly see here are the three parts of God. The Word of God who is Y'shua, the Father, YAHVEH Himself and the *kol*, the voice of God, embodied in the Ruach, the Spirit of God.

The Hebrew commentary says about this still, thin sound that God was teaching Elijah that He does not administer indiscriminate, harsh justice to sinners. Rather, with silent restraint and patience, He awaits their repentance. The word that is translated as sound also is translated as voice-*kol*.

Did you know that pet rocks were the rage about 20 years ago? And why not? You could take your pet rock anywhere and not have to worry about it disturbing anyone or making a mess. There weren't any expenses involved once you'd purchased your pet rock-no food, no kitty litter, no license, just you and your pet rock. And even better than a virtual pet, you could forget about your pet rock for weeks or even months and it would still be there for you when you decided to renew the relationship.

There was only one drawback with pet rocks. They never responded to their owners' outpouring of love and attention. Pet rocks simply had hearts of stone!

Perhaps, though, in the Pet Rock Era, we were the ones with hearts of stone. Perhaps the pet rocks, and any rocks for that matter did respond but we just didn't hear them!

All of God's creation animate and inanimate, will one day no longer be mute. They will reveal all that they heard and saw.

At first glance this might seem a bit far-fetched especially in regard to the inanimate part of His creation. However, one need not look any further than forensic science to realize how credible the above scenario truly is.

At the scene of a crime, detectives may dust for fingerprints. Even the cleanest fingers leave traces. The fingerprints are there but we don't see them. At least not until the environment is changed which allows the fingerprints to be revealed.

### **John-Yochanan 2:13-22**

**13: It was almost time for the festival of Pesach in Y'hudah, so Y'shua went up to Yerushalayim. 14: In the Temple grounds He found those who were selling cattle, sheep and pigeons, and others who were sitting at tables exchanging money. 15: He made a whip from cords and drove them all out of the Temple grounds, the sheep and cattle as well. He knocked over the moneychangers' tables, scattering their coins; 16: and to the pigeon-sellers He said, "Get these things out of here! How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!" 17: (His talmidim later recalled that the Tanakh says, "Zeal for your house will devour me [Psalm 69:10(9)]. 18: So, the Judeans confronted Him by asking Him, "What miraculous sign can you show us to prove you have the right to do all this?" 19: Y'shua answered them, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up again." 20: The Judeans said, "It took 46 years to build this Temple, and you're going to raise it in three days?" 21: But the "temple" He had spoken of was His body. 22: Therefore, when He was raised from the dead, His talmidim**

***remembered that He had said this, and they trusted in the Tanakh and in what Y'shua had said.***

This was not just a matter of His cleansing the House of His Father. It was an example of His devotion not only to His Father but also to those who would come to place their faith in Him.

We find this confirmed in the following Scripture.

**John-Yochanan 13:1**

***1: It was just before the festival of Pesach, and Y'shua knew that the time had come for Him to pass from this world to the Father. Having loved His own people in the world, He loved them to the end.***

And once again this desire to cleanse us so that we could be made one with the Father is shown in this passage of Scripture.

**1 Corinthians 5:6-8**

***6: Your boasting is not good. Don't you know the saying, "It takes only a little chametz to leaven a whole batch of dough?" 7: Get rid of the old chametz, so that you can be a new batch of dough, because in reality you are unleavened. For our Pesach lamb, the Messiah, has been sacrificed. 8: So, let us celebrate the Seder not with leftover chametz, the chametz of wickedness and evil, but with the matzah of purity and truth.***

The festivals that YAHVEH commands us to keep forever are just that, to be kept forever. They have not been replaced. They have not been changed. They are perpetual, even in some of their fulfillment, because they teach us about Him. They teach us about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. They are a constant reminder of Him. That is why Scripture tells us that the festivals will be kept even in the Messianic Age. We need the constant reminder of who He is. His festivals tell us of His love for us, His creation, all of His creation. His word teaches us about His anger with us when we turn away from Him. It shows us His justice, when we do not listen to Him. But most important of all, we are shown His righteousness, His mercy, and His grace towards us. YAHVEH desires to lead us. He knows that without a shepherd we will wander. He gave us His Torah, first through Moses, to show us His ways. Then He gave His Torah to us in Y'shua, so

that we could see His Word come alive, not just written on stone. Y'shua is the living Torah who shows us the way to the Father.

We need to learn to follow His ways. Our actions - good or otherwise - leave spiritual prints, so to speak. Though we can't see them, they are there. Today, a fingerprint on an object "talk" when dusted with a special powder. One day soon, the prints left on rocks, beams and walls will talk as the Godly energy within everything is revealed. The Shepherd desires that you follow Him so that you will not lose your way. The day is coming soon when He will return to gather His sheep, not for the slaughter but for the festival. May it take place immediately.

***From the Midrash: God says: make yourself like Me. When I created the world, I strove not to hurt a single one of My creatures, and I did not make known to any human being the name of the tree of which Adam ate [in the Garden of Eden, so that even the tree should not be put to shame].***

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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 Pinchas: Summary** **Numbers 25:10-30:1**

*God gives Pinchas a covenant of peace; God explains the apportionment of the Land of Israel; the daughters of Tzelophehad petition to inherit their father's portion; Moses appoints Joshua his successor.*

God said to Moses, "The priest Pinchas turned My anger away from the sons of Israel by bringing My rights to bear in their midst. Therefore, I shall give to him My covenants of Peace and everlasting priesthood."

After the death of the idolatrous Israelites, God told Moses to take a count of the entire community of the sons of Israel from 20 years old and upward, according to their father's houses. Each of the families was counted and numbered as God commanded.

After the people were counted, God told Moses, "The land shall be apportioned as an inheritance according to the number of names. To the numerous, you shall give a large inheritance, and to the few, a small inheritance. By lot this land shall be divided, and it shall be received as a possession according to the names of the tribes of the fathers."

Now during this counting and apportionment of land, the five daughters of Zelophehad, came near and placed themselves before Moses and Eleazar the priest and the entire community in the entrance of the Tent of Appointed Meeting. They said, "Our father died in the wilderness. He was not among the company that banded together against God. He was not among Korah's allies, but he died because of his own sin, and he had no sons. Why should the name of our father disappear from the midst of his family, just because he did not have a son? Please give us a possession too."

Moses brought their legitimate claim before God. And God responded, “The daughters of Zelophehad speak justly. Certainly, you shall give them, according to the legal right of males, a hereditary possession, and you shall cause their father’s inheritance to pass to them. And to the sons of Israel, you shall say: if a man dies and he has no son, you shall cause his inheritance to pass to his daughter. If he has no daughter, you shall give his inheritance to his brothers. If he has no brothers, you shall give his inheritance to his kin that is closest to him from among his family. This shall remain for Israel as a legal norm.”

God then said to Moses, “Go to the Mountain of Transitions and look at the land that I have given to the sons of Israel. And when you have seen it, you too shall be gathered to your people as your brother Aaron was gathered. For you acted against My words in the wilderness of Tzin.”

Moses responded, “Let God appoint a man over the community who will lead them so that the community of God should not be like sheep who have no shepherd.”

God said to Moses, “Take Joshua, son of Nun, a man to whom there is spirit, lean your hand upon him and present him to Eleazar the priest and to the entire community, and charge him before their eyes. You will thus place some of your prestige upon him so that the entire community and the sons of Israel will obey him.” Moses did with Joshua as God commanded.

God spoke to Moses and commanded him to have the sons of Israel bring offerings to God in each season of appointed meeting. Fire offerings, homage offerings and ascent offerings are noted for each of the festivals, including Passover, the Sabbath, the New Moon, the Festival of Weeks, and the Day of Atonement. Each offering, whether of animal sacrifice, flour, incense, libations, or human rest, is made to express compliance to God. Moses explained these exact offerings to the Children of Israel according to everything that God had commanded Moses.

Parshat Pinchas Discussion Questions:

- 1) The daughters of Zelophehad are given rights to their deceased father’s land. Describe how important this ruling is for women then and now.**
- 2) Moses, knowing it was his time to die, asked God to appoint a leader for the Israelites. Is there one leader of the Jewish people today? If so, who? If not, why? Would it be helpful to have one leader for the entire Jewish people today?**
- 3) Why do you think God chose Joshua, son of Nun, to follow in Moses’ footsteps as leader of the Israelites? Name some qualities of leadership and loyalty Joshua has shown thus far in the Torah. Which of these qualities do you share with Joshua?**
- 4) Name some Jewish leaders in your community. How did they become leaders? How do you think they are doing as leaders of your Jewish community?**

## **Haftarah for Pinchas 1 Kings 18:46-19:21**

***The prophet Elijah is so zealous for God, he loses his job.***

The haftarah for Parashat Pinchas features the last, and perhaps most famous, biblical story about Elijah the prophet. Living during the reign of the evil Israelite King Ahab and his even-worse queen, Jezebel, Elijah gained a reputation for working miracles and crusading against idolatry. The haftarah begins just after Elijah has slaughtered 450 worshipers of Ba'al.

Jezebel gets word of the massacre Elijah perpetrated, and she is furious. She vows that on the very next day Elijah's fate will be the same as those he killed. Frightened, Elijah runs for his life. He stops under a bush in the wilderness, feeling defeated. "Enough! Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers," he mutters in despair (19:4).

Elijah falls asleep but is awakened by an angel urging him to eat cake and drink water which had just miraculously appeared at his side. Elijah eats, but again he falls asleep. The angel is persistent and wakes Elijah a second time, telling him to eat and drink because there is a long journey ahead of him.

### **Elijah in the Wilderness**

With the strength he gained from that meal, Elijah walks for 40 days in the wilderness, to the mountain of God at Horeb. He finds a cave there and spends the night.

While asleep in the cave, God appears to Elijah and asks him a powerful, existential question: "Why are you here, Elijah?" (19:9)

Elijah responds with a monologue defending his zealotry: "I am moved by zeal for the Lord, for the Israelites have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and put Your prophets to the sword. I alone am left, and they are out to take my life" (19:10).

Instead of replying directly to Elijah's claim, God takes Elijah out of the cave and shows him some miracles. First God sends a mighty wind, splitting mountains and rocks—but, the text tells us, God was not in the wind. Then God creates a forceful earthquake. Again, the text specifies that God was not in the earthquake. Then God sets a powerful fire—but, once again, we learn that the fire did not contain God's presence. Finally, God brings about a still, small voice.

"Why are you here, Elijah?" (19:13)—God poses this question a second time. But Elijah is unchanged even after experiencing the wind, earthquake, fire, and small voice. He responds to God's question with precisely the same self-important words he used before: "I am moved by zeal for the Lord, for the Israelites have forsaken...I alone am left..." (19:14).

In Elijah's unchanged response, we can see the tragedy of his life. The still, small voice had been God's attempt to teach Elijah that zealotry and grand miracles are not always the best way to serve God's purpose. But Elijah is a man who only knows to act with fire and brimstone; he could not learn the lesson.

In the final verses of the haftarah, God has Elijah appoint a new king in Aram, a new king in Israel, and a new prophet in Israel—Elisha. By appointing Elisha, Elijah effectively surrenders his position as prophet. At the end of the haftarah, when Elisha asks to kiss his parents goodbye

before following Elijah, we are left hopeful that perhaps Elisha will embody a more human, balanced kind of leadership for Israel.

#### Connection to Parashat Pinchas



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

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

#### **Common sense has disappeared!**

Watching the media coverage of various events, listening to various conversations, reading various articles and observing various teachings, I cannot help but wonder where COMMON SENSE has gone. The World is without common sense. One area that has replaced common sense is what we call “Political correctness”. I would term it “Political madness”. Like many, I have been watching with fascination the growth of Islam and terrorism within our “Western world” boundaries. There is no doubt that an increase of the Moslem population within the Western World has caused an increase in change. Go into your library and pick up a newspaper that is 20 years old or older and see how many headlines there are attached to the world of Islam and Moslems. You will struggle to find one. Pick up any newspaper that is 5 years old or less and view the number of articles and headlines attributed to Islam or Moslems and you will find many. Common sense would tell you there has been a change, and when you read the articles, common sense would tell you there is a problem. Yet it is deemed politically incorrect to discuss this issue. No problem here! Nothing to see here! People who want to discuss and address the issues and challenges that have arrived on our door step, regardless of why, are shut down quickly by the

“political correct”. Have a look at who is carrying out 99% of terrorist attacks and you will see they are those who follow the faith of Islam. Yet our so-called brightest and best deny this fact. Nothing to see here! No problem here! An example of this madness is that of a woman who represents a left wing refugee body was sexually assaulted by Arabs but instead of telling the truth she preferred to say they were most likely German. This was because the subject of rape involving Moslems was too political. Nothing to see here! No problem here! The handling of the New Years Eve assault cases in Germany were a disgrace. Nothing to see here! No problem here! Countless places of worship of other faiths have been destroyed by Moslems, and worshippers murdered. Nothing to see here! No problem here! Then we have this red herring called “lone wolf” attacks. An individual or a small number of individuals murder and maim a number of civilians, and they are labelled as lone wolves, with no real attachment to Islam. Yet these same individuals are dedicated followers of fundamental Islam. They are in fact soldiers of Islam and are proud to be known as such. In “normal” wars we have those who are called snipers. These are individual soldiers who are sent to kill the enemy in a surprise attack. Are these labelled as “lone wolf” attacks? No because they belong to an army. This is no different to the so called “lone wolf” attacks carried out by individual Islamists who are part of the Islamic army. Yet our leaders and political correct media refuse to address the situation and call it for what it is. Nothing to see here! No problem here! Surely if it walks like a duck, looks like a duck, flies like a duck, sounds like a duck, behaves like a duck, then common sense would tell you it is a duck. Yet this no longer applies to our modern world of political correctness, confusion and denial. In countries like France and Germany they have lost the battle. Common sense in dealing with Islam has completely gone, and I am afraid Australia could head down the same path. The French President tells the people “radical Islam” has nothing to do with Islam, and the people will have to get used to violence and attacks. It is reported that in France there are more than 570 what the Government calls “sensitive urban zones”. People with common sense call them “No go zones”. Nothing to see here! No problem here!

I read somewhere that 25% of Frances teenagers are Moslem and with this comes an increase of those wanting to install sharia law. Common sense would tell me that change is coming, yet we are told: Nothing to see here! No problem here!

Folks our world is changing and changing rapidly. Like it or not we will have to face those changes, and despite all the denials the Islamic issue will and does

need addressing. Common sense would tell us it needs addressing immediately, but common sense is no longer valued. Fundamental Islam is in the same league as a bully. It picks on weak targets and hates being challenged. It survives through fear and attack. Common sense tells us we should put a stop to bullies and put in practices to keep them away from our neighbourhoods, but instead of doing this we placate them, because after all there is nothing to see here! No problem here!

Hang on there must be something to see, there must be a problem. Why else would I be called a bigot and a hate monger? Why else would I be accused of having countless phobias? Common sense tells me that there is a problem after all, but then I remember common sense is no longer relevant so in actual fact the problem does not exist. So glad I have all that worked out, feeling much better now.

Rabbi Philip [Yochanan] Hammond. PhD.

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## ***Insights into Judaism***



### **Introduction to the Jewish Rules of Purity and Impurity**

***The rabbinic laws tumah and taharah are complex — let us orient you.***

The Hebrew Bible and Talmud both deal extensively with states of impurity and purity — *tumah* and *taharah* — that can affect both objects and people. Although sometimes translated as “unclean” and “clean” this is not about dirt, and often it has no moral valance.

Rather, the terms connote a sense of ritual fitness or unfitness for various purposes. In this article, we offer an orientation to the complex rabbinic system of tumah and taharah.

There are six distinct aspects to tumah and taharah. First is the source of tumah. Second, the severity of tumah. Third, its modes of transmission. Fourth, the susceptibility of a person or item to becoming *tamei* (impure). Fifth, a person or item's sensitivity to tumah. Sixth, purification rituals that can reverse impurity.

The rules are complex and the exceptions more so. Seder Toharot, the sixth and final order of the Talmud, generally concerns itself with these issues. Below is a brief introduction to these topics.

### Sources of Tumah

The Torah describes a number of sources of tumah which can be broken down into two basic categories. The first, are external sources of tumah, such as humans (*tumat meit*) and certain animals (*n'veila*) and rodents (*sheretz*) that have died. These items are by their very nature *tamei* and coming in contact with them will make a person *tamei*. The second category are situations where the person internally, due to a change in his own body, becomes *tamei* (i.e., the tumah flows from the person himself). Examples of this include, a *zav* (a man with abnormal discharge), *zavah* (a woman with abnormal discharge or a *niddah* — a menstruant), *yoledet* (one who has recently given birth) and a *metzora*. These persons have the power to transmit tumah as well.

### Severity of Tumah

Not each source of tumah is created equal. A corpse is the highest level of tumah and is called an *avi avot hatumah* (the “father of the father of impurity” — the ultimate source of tumah). Its severity is most notable in the way it transmits tumah and its purification ritual (i.e., sprinkling of the *mei chatat* — spring water mixed with ashes of the Red Heifer). Most other sources of tumah are called *avot hatumah* (“father of impurity”). Their severity can be seen by the fact that certain fluids that emanate from their bodies (e.g., saliva) are *avot hatumah* as well.

Importantly, as tumah is transmitted from one person or item to another, it typically steps down a level of severity. Therefore, if an *av hatumah* touches a person or item, the person will become a *rishon* (first derivative). A *rishon* will create a *sheini* (second derivative). A *sheini* will create a *shlishi* (third derivative). A *shlishi* will create a *revi'i* (fourth derivative).

There are, however, certain exceptions to the step down in severity paradigm. First, in certain instances the transmitted level of tumah remains the same, i.e., an *av hatumah* will make the recipient an *av hatumah* as well (for example, the cushion on which a *zav* sits — which likely absorbs some of the flux — will likewise be an *av hatumah* capable of transmitting tumah). Second, certain *avot* have the power, so long as they remain in direct contact with a person, to turn that person temporarily into an *av hatumah* as well. Finally, the sages decreed those liquids, even when touched by a *sheini* (someone with second degree impurity), will always become a *rishon*, with the capabilities of even making vessels impure.

## Modes of Transmission

The most typical mode of transmission is via touch. If an *av hatumah* touches a person, that person will become a *rishon* (first derivative). If that person then touches an apple, the apple will become a *sheini* (second derivative). Similarly, if a person wearing a glove touches a *sheretz* (which is an *av hatumah*) the glove will be a *rishon* and the person will remain pure.

In addition to direct touch, a corpse's tumah spreads via *tumat ohel* — literally, “tent impurity,” impurity that is contracted by sharing the same space — in one of three ways (i) by being under the same roof as the corpse, (ii) the corpse hovering over a person or (iii) a person hovering over the corpse. In the case of being under the same roof, everything in the house will become *tamei*. The one main exception are earthenware pots (*klei cheres*). These cannot become *tamei* via touch on the outside; rather only by their interior space being exposed to tumah (therefore, if a pot remains lidded and sealed in a house that has a corpse in it, both the vessel and its contents will remain *tahor*).

A *zav*, *zavah*, *yoledet* and *metzora* can also transmit tumah via leaning on an item, carrying (even without touching) an item or being carried by an item or person. These laws are very complex and can be found in the final chapter of Tractate *Zavim*.

## Susceptibility to Becoming Tamei

There are differences in susceptibility between a person, their utensils, and their food. People and most non-food items are susceptible to tumah at any time. No preconditions exist. A vessel, however, will only become susceptible to tumah when it is close to its finished state (i.e., a piece of wood which has not yet been shaped into a bowl is not susceptible to tumah).

Food's susceptibility to tumah is far more complex. The rabbis learned that prior to becoming susceptible to tumah, food must have become consciously wet (i.e., washed with water or other liquid). In the language of the Mishnah, *huchshar l'kabel tumah*. Therefore, if after picking an apple off the tree you guard it from ever becoming wet, that apple is not capable of becoming *tamei*.

## Sensitivity to Tumah

Sensitivity to tumah is influenced by both the type of item and its intended purpose. At its most basic level, tumah will not extend beyond a *rishon* (first derivative) and in rare occasions a *sheini* (second derivative). So, for instance, a person and *keilim* (utensils), can only become *tamei* from an *avi avot* or an *av hatumah* so that they will become, at worst, a *rishon*. There is no *sheini l'tumah* for a person. (A utensil can under certain circumstances become a *sheini* if touched by a liquid *rishon*.)

Foods are more sensitive to tumah and can become a *sheini*. Liquids, being even more sensitive, per the sages, will always remain a *rishon*.



The above rules are for *hullin*, non-consecrated food. However, the sages identified a number of levels of sanctified foods and liquids that, given their levels of holiness, are more sensitive to *tumah* — and hence, more susceptible as well. These levels are as follows:

- *Ma'aser Sheini* (the second tithe). It was brought to Jerusalem and was to be eaten in a state of *taharah*.
- *Terumah*: The portion of the crop given to the priests. It could only be eaten by the priest and his family. It's holiness level made it susceptible of becoming a *shlishi* (third derivative).
- *Kodshim*: sacrificial meat and bread. It's holiness level made it susceptible of becoming a *revi'i* (fourth derivative).
- *Mei Chatat*: at its core, the heightened level of holiness and its sensitivity to *tumah* gave the waters of the red heifer purification ritual no limit to level of *tumah* to which it was susceptible. In other words, so long as there was somewhere in the chain some very low level of *tumah*, it gets passed along as if it were a severe *tumah* — despoiling the *mei chatat*.

The corollary to this sensitivity to *tumah* is the requirement that a person likewise take more focused and, at times, stringent, measures when purifying himself prior to consuming and/or handling each successive level of consecrated food. What works to ensure purity for *terumah* may not work for *kodshim*. As you move up each level in purity, it demands more scrutiny in the chain in purity.

### Purification Rituals

Once impure, a person and/or most items will remain in that state until they undergo a purification ritual. These diverse rituals will depend on the source and level of *tumah* trying to be cleansed. The most typical form of purification ritual is submerging oneself or the item in a *mikveh*. This works for most situations. For some forms of *tumah*, rather than a *mikveh*, the source of water must be a flowing spring of water. Finally, cleansing *tumat meit* — impurity via contact with a corpse — requires, in addition to submersion in a *mikveh*, the sprinkling the *mei chatat* on the person or item.

Notably, earthenware vessels cannot be cleansed of *tumah* except by shattering the vessel. In addition, food cannot be cleansed in any instance.

# PRAYER & SPIRITUALITY



## Tzedakah 101

***Tzedakah is not just about charitable contributions, but about justice and righteousness.***

To Jews today, the term *tzedakah* connotes giving charitable contributions, but the term originates in another realm. In the Bible, *tzedakah* means “righteous behavior” and is often paired with “justice.” In Jewish thought and tradition, material support for those in need is not a matter of “charity”—a term that implies generosity beyond what may be expected—but a requirement. As in most areas of life, here too Jewish tradition makes practical demands and specifies expectations.

### Tzedakah Themes and Theology

Biblical prophets castigated the Israelites for neglecting and even exploiting the poor, insisting that God has particular concern for those in need. The rabbis of classical Judaism praised *tzedakah*, calling it, for example, “equal in value to all the other *mitzvot* [commandments] combined.” They also praised those who practice it, saying that they attain the level of holiness of someone who brought sacrifices in the ancient Temple. The Rosh Hashanah liturgy lists *tzedakah* alongside repentance and prayer as a human act capable of averting a negative divine decree.

### History and Development of Tzedakah

Although the term *tzedakah* is applied to giving to individuals in need only in post-biblical Judaism, the Bible is replete with admonitions to show concern for the poor. Biblical laws like those calling on farmers to leave aside some of their crops during harvest for the landless become in rabbinic Judaism the basis for an extensive social welfare system built on individual initiative and shared responsibility. Communities of sufficient size created voluntary societies to care for the ill, provide for newlywed couples, house travelers, bury the dead, and offer interest-free loans to the needy. This tradition of grassroots organizing to assist those in need is even now a distinguishing feature of Jewish communities.

## Tzedakah Requirements

Traditional Jewish law regulates the collection and disbursement of *tzedakah* in an attempt to assure fairness in both functions. Few mathematical formulas are offered, but Judaism provides guidance on how much to give, how to minimize embarrassment to the recipient, and how to set priorities among competing demands for assistance. The so-called “ladder of tzedakah” expounded by the medieval thinker Maimonides, one of the best-known Jewish sources on this subject, emphasizes the importance of anonymous, generous giving, and on helping those in need become self-sufficient.

## Contemporary Issues in Tzedakah

The social and economic realities of modernity have raised new questions and challenges for Jews who want to act upon the traditional Jewish obligation to assist the poor. To what extent does the modern welfare state obviate the necessity for individual initiative in tzedakah? What balance should be struck by contemporary Jews who want to partake fully in the life of the wider community, between assisting needy Jews and addressing Jewish needs, and providing for all those in need? To what extent must Jews today return to the biblical origins of tzedakah in a wider concern for fairness and justice, shaping a Jewish imperative to address the root causes of poverty and social injustice?

**עֲבָרִי - Hebrew**

**Word (s) of the Week**

אֲנִי-אֵל שַׁדַּי

Ah-nee El Sha-dai

**I am God Almighty**



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

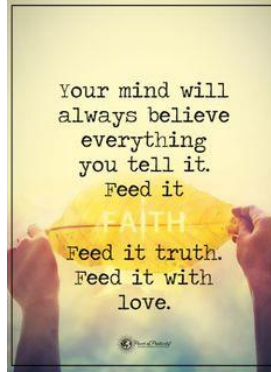
An Israeli man named Itzik was returning home from a fishing trip at the Sea of Galilee. He was flying down the highway, going way too fast. He felt secure amongst a pack of cars, all traveling at the same speed. However, it wasn't long before he saw flashing lights in his review mirror and pulled over.

The officer handed him the citation, received his signature, and was about to walk away when Itzik stopped him. "Officer, I know I was speeding," he started, "but I don't think it's fair. There were plenty of other cars around me going just as fast, so why did I get the ticket?"

The officer tilted his head and gestured at the fishing gear stowed on the passenger seat. "I see you like fishing," he said.

"Ummm, yes I do... so?" Itzik replied, confused.

**The officer grinned as he turned to leave. "Ever catch ALL the fish?"**



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

# **This No-Bake Chocolate Tahini Pie Is a Breeze to Make**

***This easy dessert can also be made vegan!***

No-bake pies are perfect for these hot summer days when we crave a sweet treat but are loath to turn on the oven. Whether you pick up a pre-made Oreo crust to make things even easier or make your own, the sweet Oreo base is the perfect home for a light, nutty tahini mousse filling. I like to take things one step further with a smooth chocolate ganache topping and a sprinkle of toasted sesame\_seeds for garnish.

To assemble this pie, all you need to do is process Oreos until they're a fine crumb, blend them with melted butter, and press into a pie pan. After the crust has time to set in the fridge, you'll whip up a light and airy tahini mousse made with Cool Whip and cream cheese. (You can also make your own whipped cream if you prefer. You'll need three cups of whipped cream.) While the pie is cooling in the fridge, make a simple ganache by adding simmering heavy cream to chocolate chips, and smooth it over the top before letting the pie chill one more time, this time for at least an hour, before serving.

To make this totally\_vegan, use a non-dairy whipped topping and non-dairy cream cheese substitute in the filling, and non-dairy butter substitute in the crust and ganache.

## **Ingredients**

- 24 Oreos (About 2 cups oreo crumbs)
- 4 Tbsp unsalted butter, melted

### For the filling:

- 1 cup tahini, well-blended
- 1 8 oz package cream cheese, at room temperature
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1 8 oz package whipped topping (Cool Whip is perfect for this)

### For the topping:

- 1 cup bittersweet chocolate chips
- ½ cup heavy cream (can also use coconut cream)
- 1 Tbsp toasted sesame seeds (optional garnish)

## Directions

1. In a food processor, process the Oreos until they are fine crumbs. Combine with the melted butter and stir with a fork. Press crumbs in an even layer into a pie pan and refrigerate for at least 30 minutes. (You may also bake the crust if you prefer. To do so, preheat the oven to 350 degrees, prepare the crust the same way, and bake for 10 minutes. Allow to cool completely before filling.)
2. Combine tahini, cream cheese, and powdered sugar in a stand mixer or in a bowl with a handheld mixer. Mix until smooth. Fold in whipped topping until the mixture is smooth and homogenous.
3. Pour the filling into the cooled pie crust, and chill while you prepare the ganache topping.
4. Place chocolate chips in a bowl. In a heavy bottom sauce pot, heat ½ cup heavy cream until simmering. Pour heavy cream over chocolate chips and allow to sit for five minutes. Whisk until smooth, and then carefully pour over the tahini filling, smoothing the top.
5. Sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds around the edges, if using, and chill for at least an hour before serving.

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