



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 1-4-25 VAYIGASH**

### ***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 a 501 C-3 non-profit. 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.

Rabbi Gabriel Martinez has a home group in El Paso. If interested let me know and I will send him the information. Gabriel is a Rabbi affiliated with TOLMM as is his Home Group, Ohr Ha'Brit Messianic Torah Assembly.

There is a Home Group in Las Cruces. For more information email [tolmm@etz-chayim.org](mailto:tolmm@etz-chayim.org).

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

Deborah's Messianic Ministries is located in Chicago, IL. Rabbini Deborah Ph.D., passed away in September. DMM is now under the leadership of Kelly and Rich Perez. When we have more information, we will let you know. Rich is now the Senior Elder in this group. They have several ministry outreaches. They are affiliated with TOLMM.

**#MessianicReads is a ministry of many things. Check out the website at [MessianicReads.com](http://MessianicReads.com). The contact person is Rabbi/Professor Michelle Johns. They are located in Shreveport, LA.**

**Chesed Ministry “#MessianicReads” is an independently owned book and poetry ministry committed to educating and edifying the body of Messiah Yeshua through publishing books and poetic works that contain wisdom, knowledge, and encouragement given by the Ruach HaKodesh. These writings serve as aids to the Messianic Community, Christians who are curious about the Jewish component of their Christian faith, and those who are curious about Messianic Judaism. The goal of this ministry is to promote Messianic literature and a safe place for those who wish to discuss it. They are affiliated with TOLMM.**

**YCMC: Yeshua’s Chesed Messianic Congregation**

**We meet in Sun Valley (Reno Metro) Nevada, on Shabbos morning.**

**They can contact Elder Djan Fermaint at 775-462-5539, 6460 Eskimo Drive, Sun Valley, NV 89433. They are affiliated with TOLMM.**

**The Judaic Studies Institute is a post-secondary Messianic Yeshiva that is authorized to issue all college level degrees for ministerial purposes. The mission of this institution is to restore the original belief system followed by Yeshua and his talmidim (disciples) by providing a Torah-based, academically sound, and spiritually vibrant education for those seeking a new or in-depth understanding of YHWH and His ways. Web address: [www.jsiyeshiva.com](http://www.jsiyeshiva.com). Email address: [jsiyeshiva@gmail.com](mailto:jsiyeshiva@gmail.com). Rabbi Silver is the President of a newly resurrected JSI. Rabbi Michelle Johns is the Chief Administrative Officer and the Academic Lead Instructor.**

**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 RABBI SILVER 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/)

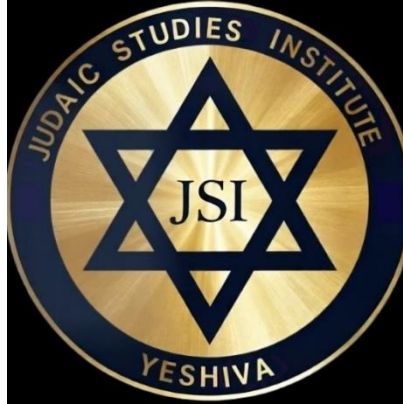
**RABBI MORDECAI HAS A NEW BOOK AVAILABLE. IT IS A SPANISH TRANSLATION OF THE TORAH IS VALID: THE COVENANT OF ISRAEL. IT’S AVAILABLE ON AMAZON.**

FOR RABBI HAMMOND’S BOOK, **HIS PERFECT GRACE**, 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.

RABBI PHILIP HAMMOND HAS VIDEO TEACHINGS ON YOU TUBE AT [HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/@EMUNAHCENTER-CY9TQ](https://www.youtube.com/@EMUNAHCENTER-CY9TQ)

**WE HAVE 10 PRISON AFFILIATES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND OVER 2,000 INMATES ON OUR MAILING LIST. ONE OF OUR PRISON GROUPS HAS 32 MEMBERS.**



THE JUDAIC STUDIES INSTITUTE IS A POST-SECONDARY MESSIANIC YESHIVA THAT IS AUTHORIZED TO ISSUE ALL COLLEGE LEVEL DEGREES FOR MINISTERIAL PURPOSES. THE MISSION OF THIS INSTITUTION IS TO RESTORE THE ORIGINAL BELIEF SYSTEM FOLLOWED BY YESHUA AND HIS TALMIDIM (DISCIPLES) BY PROVIDING A TORAH-BASED, ACADEMICALLY SOUND, AND SPIRITUALLY VIBRANT EDUCATION FOR THOSE SEEKING A NEW OR IN-DEPTH UNDERSTANDING OF YHVH AND HIS WAYS. CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE AT [WWW.JSIYESHIVA.COM](http://WWW.JSIYESHIVA.COM). OUR EMAIL ADDRESS IS [JSIYESHIVA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:JSIYESHIVA@GMAIL.COM).

OUR CLASSES ARE SELF-PACED, AND MOST ARE AVAILABLE THROUGH SELF-STUDY. ALL HEBREW CLASSES ARE TAUGHT LIVE VIA ZOOM. THERE ARE OTHER LIVE CLASSES, BUT THEY ARE DEPENDENT ON STUDENT ENROLLMENT. WE TRY TO OFFER TWO TO FOUR LIVE CLASSES PER SEMESTER. THEY LAST FOUR TO EIGHT WEEKS.

WE ARE A NON-TRADITIONAL INSTITUTION AND DO NOT REQUIRE A STANDARD NUMBER OF CLASSES PER SEMESTER. STUDENTS ARE ALLOWED TO PAY PER CLASS. MOST CLASSES REQUIRE A 10–12-PAGE PAPER, BUT THERE ARE SOME THAT REQUIRE QUIZZES, AND WEEKLY HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS. MOST CLASSES HAVE AN ASSIGNED BOOK THAT IS ACCOMPANIED BY AUDIO TEACHINGS. CLASSES GENERALLY TAKE A MONTH BUT CAN TAKE LONGER DEPENDING ON THE STUDENT.

JSI YESHIVA DOES ACCEPT CREDITS FROM OTHER UNIVERSITIES, COLLEGES, AND YESHIVA'S. WHEN YOU SUBMIT YOUR APPLICATION PLEASE SUBMIT UNOFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS.

PASS ALONG THE INFORMATION. CHECK OUT THE WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION AND CLASSES.

IN HIM,  
*RABBI MORDECAI SILVER, PH.D. AND RABBI MICHELLE JOHNS,  
PH.D.*

# **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 1-4-25**

***VaYigash – and he drew near  
Genesis 44:18-47:27  
Ezekiel 37:15-28***

### **Genesis-Beresheit 45:4-7**

*Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me, if you please,” and they came close. And he said, “I am Joseph your brother—it is me, whom you sold into Egypt. And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to be a provider that God sent me ahead of you. For this has been two of the hunger years in the midst of the land, and there are yet five years in which there shall be neither plowing nor harvest. Thus God has sent me ahead of you to insure your survival in the land **and to sustain you for a momentous deliverance.***

***\*\*Talk about how this is a prophecy and preparation for things to come...***

In 1939, the Nazi Gestapo shut down Rabbi Moshe Schneider's yeshiva in Frankfurt Germany. With tremendous effort and support from the English community, he was able to relocate the school to England. Survival during that period in time was both a tremendous spiritual and physical challenge but two boys in the Yeshiva helped meet that challenge. They both were named Moshe. One Moshe would rise in the early hours of the morning and pick up leftover bread from a generous bakery. Carrying the bags of bread and leftover rolls while walking through the bitter cold was not easy, but Moshe never missed his duties. In fact, he often took the place of other boys who were supposed to do the chores.

The other Moshe also woke up early. He led a special learning session before dawn. He encouraged his friends to make the extra effort – which they religiously did.

After years of uninterrupted efforts, one day the boys got public recognition. Rabbi Schneider blessed them in front of the entire school. "Moshe who gets the bread is not only getting today's bread. One day, he will help distribute bread for thousands of people. And the Moshe who is concerned with spirituality of others will continue to do so in years to come," announced the Rosh Yeshiva. "Their actions today are only seeds of the future."

His words proved true. Moshe, the bread-getter, became Moshe (Paul) Reichman, one of our generation's most benevolent philanthropists. Moshe, the young teacher, became Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch, Rav in Johannesburg, South Africa and Har Nof, Israel, an author of prestigious books on Jewish Law, and a teacher of thousands.

**\*\*Once again prophecy for what is to come...**

#### **Ezekiel-Yehezkehl 37:19**

*Thus said the Lord God: Behold, I am taking the wood of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his comrades, and I am placing them and him together with the wood of Judah; **and I will make them into one piece of wood, and they will become one in My hand.***

#### **Ezekiel-Yehezkehl 37:21-22**

*'Thus said the Lord God: Behold, I am taking the Children of Israel from among the nations to which they have gone; I will gather them from all around and I will bring them to their soil; **I will make them into one nation in the land, upon the mountains of Israel, and one king will be a king for them all; they will no longer be two nations, and they will no longer be divided into two kingdoms, ever again.***

#### **Ezekiel 37:24-28**

***My servant David will be king over them, and there will be one shepherd for all of them; they will follow My ordinances and keep My decrees and fulfill them. They will dwell on the land that I gave to My servant Jacob, within which your fathers dwelled; they and their children and their children's children will dwell upon it forever; and My servant David will be a leader for them forever. I will seal a covenant of peace with them; it will be an eternal covenant with them; and I will emplace them and increase them, and I will place My sanctuary among them forever. My dwelling place will be among them; I will be a God to them and they will be a people to Me. Then the nations will know that I am Lord Who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary will be among them forever.***

**\*Fulfillment...**

#### **Revelation 21:22**

***I saw no Temple in the city, for Adonai, God of heaven armies, is its Temple, as is the Lamb.***

**\*The task for all of us...**

#### **Matthew-Mattiyahu 28:19-20**

*Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim, immersing them into the reality of the Father, the Son and the Ruach HaKodesh, And teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.*

#### **Luke 24:47**

*And in His Name repentance leading to forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed to people from all nations, starting with Yerushalayim.*

*\*The following statement was made by an Orthodox Chassidic Rabbi -- Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi*

*People think that teshuvah (repentance) is only for sinners. But even the perfectly righteous individual must do teshuvah.*

**Romans 3:22-23**

*And it is a righteousness that comes from God, through the faithfulness of Y'shua the Messiah, to all who continue trusting. For it makes no difference whether one is a Jew or a Gentile, **since all have sinned** and come short of earning God's praise.*

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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 Chavahn 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 Believers in Yeshua. We have been Believers 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 Vayigash: Summary

***Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams and is appointed Egypt's anti-famine plan, which brings him into contact with his brothers again.***

### ***Genesis-Bereisheet 44:18-47:27***

Because a silver goblet has been found in his younger brother Benjamin's bag, Joseph demands that Benjamin remain a slave in Egypt while the brothers return to their father. Parashat Vayigash begins with Judah's plea to Joseph:

Oh my lord, have you a father or another brother? My father had two children by his adored wife Rachel. But his firstborn son was torn to pieces, and he warned us that if an accident befalls Benjamin, "you will bring me to my grave in misery."

"And now," Judah continued, "if I come home and the youngest lad is not with us, and the soul of the one is bound up with the soul of the other, then it shall come to pass that he shall die in sorrow. Please take me as your slave instead of Benjamin."

#### **Revealing His Identity**

Joseph could no longer control himself. He released all his servants so that he could be alone with his brothers. "I am Joseph," he said crying so loudly the whole palace could hear. "Is my father still well?"

But the brothers could not answer him because they were dumbfounded in Joseph's presence.

"Now," Joseph said, "do not be troubled about selling me into this place, for God sent me here in order to preserve life. So it was not you who sent me here. It was God. Hurry, go to my father and tell him the news and bring him here. I will provide for all of you." Joseph then fell on Benjamin and wept. He kissed his brothers and wept in their embrace. His brothers, too, wept with him.

Pharaoh was pleased to hear the news of Joseph's brothers. He urged Joseph to bring his father and all the brothers' families to Egypt. He offered them the best wagons to help them move and the choicest of lands when they arrived.

The brothers reached their father's home. They told him that Joseph was still alive and that he had royal status. Jacob's heart stood still because he did not believe them. But when they told him what Joseph

had said and when he saw the wagons, the spirit of Jacob revived and he said, "It is too much. Joseph, my son is still alive. I will go there. I want to see him before I die."

Then Jacob went to Beer Sheba and made an offering to the God of his father [Isaac](#). And God spoke to Jacob in visions in the night, saying, "Jacob! Jacob!"

"I am here," Jacob said.

"I am the God, the God of your father. Do not fear to go down to Egypt, for I will make you a great nation there. I will go with you and bring you back up again and Joseph will place his hand upon your eyes."

Then Jacob's sons carried their father in the Pharaoh's wagons Joseph went to greet his father in Goshen, flinging himself upon his father's neck to weep.

"Now, I can die since I have seen you are alive," said Jacob.

"Let's go tell Pharaoh that you are here," says Joseph. "Since every shepherd is an abomination in Egypt, if Pharaoh asks your occupation, tell him that you have been breeders of herds all your life and ask to dwell in the land of Goshen."

Joseph then spoke to Pharaoh and suggested that his family dwell in Goshen. The brothers, too, spoke of the famine in Canaan and requested permission to live in Goshen.

## Living in Goshen

Pharaoh agreed. "Let them dwell in the choicest of lands of Goshen, and if you know that there are capable men among them, appoint them chief clerks over the herds I have."

Then Joseph presented his father to Pharaoh. Jacob blessed Pharaoh. Then Pharaoh asked, "How old are you?"

"One hundred and thirty years old," answered Jacob. "The days have been few and unhappy, and they have not been as long as my fathers in the days of their wanderings." Then Jacob blessed Pharaoh and settled in the land of Rameses in Goshen as the Pharaoh had commanded.

Now the famines in the lands of Egypt and Canaan were so bad that Joseph had all the people's money because they had used it to buy grain. All of Egypt came to Joseph, saying, "Give us bread, lest we die."

"Bring me your herds to trade," Joseph replied. And they did.

But the famine was too great, and they came back to Joseph with neither money nor livestock. They said, "There is nothing left to give you except our bodies and our land. Why should we and our land perish before your very eyes? Purchase us and we and our land shall be slaves to Pharaoh. You can give us seed so the land shall not become desolate."

So, Joseph purchased all the farmland and Joseph gave the people grain and made a law that one-fifth of their land production went to Pharaoh. Only the land of the priests did not become Pharaoh's property.

So, Jacob settled in the land of Egypt, in the land of Goshen. They acquired property there and became fruitful and multiplied exceedingly.

## Parashat Vayigash Discussion Questions

1. What did Joseph mean when he told his brothers not to be troubled by selling him, because it was God who brought him to Egypt? Has God ever brought you to a certain place, a certain time, a certain person? When? How?
2. How do you know that God created a situation and that it was not another person or your own actions?
3. When Judah is describing his father's potential anguish over the loss of Benjamin, he describes "the soul of one bound up with the soul of the other." What does that mean? Is there anyone to whom your soul is bound?

## Haftarah for Vayigash

***Ezekiel promises: The divided kingdoms of Judah and Israel will one day be united.***

At the climax of Parashat Vayigash, Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers who had sold him into slavery 17 years earlier. Through kisses and tears, the children of Israel become one family again.

In keeping with the theme of reunion, the Haftarah for Vayigash looks to a time in the future when the kingdoms of Judah and Israel will no longer be separated: "I will make them a single nation in the land...Never again shall they be divided into two nations" (37:22).

### The Lost Tribes

The division of Israel into two kingdoms—a northern kingdom associated with the tribe of Ephraim, and a southern kingdom associated with Judah—took place in approximately 922 BCE, due to unresolved power struggles that followed [King Solomon's](#) death.

The northern kingdom was destroyed and sent into exile by the Assyrians in 722 BCE; the southern kingdom was exiled to [Babylon](#) in 586 BCE. [Ezekiel's](#) prophecy was delivered sometime in the sixth century BCE, while in exile in Babylon.

### Two Sticks Become One

As is common for this prophet, Ezekiel receives instructions from God to perform an action that serves as a metaphor for God's message. In this case, God tells Ezekiel to take two sticks and mark one of them "Judah and the Israelites associated with him" and one "Ephraim and the Israelites associated with him" (37:16). Then Ezekiel is told to bring the sticks together, so that they become one stick.

When people ask Ezekiel for the meaning of this action, God tells him to offer a message of promise and comfort: God will collect the people of Israel from among the nations and bring them to their own land.

There, God will unite the kingdom, never to be divided again. The Israelites will no longer defile themselves with sin because God will save and cleanse them.

At the time of this redemption, Ezekiel promises that a descendant of King David will rule all of Israel. The people will follow God's ways, and God will bless them: "I will make a covenant of friendship with them—it shall be an everlasting covenant with them—I will establish them and multiply them, I will place My sanctuary among them forever" (37:26).

Centuries after Ephraim and Judah were divided, Ezekiel continues to dream of a future time when all the children of Israel will live together in harmony.

And the dream lives on. Even after the rule of Babylon ended, it was almost exclusively descendants of Judah who took up the Persian King Cyrus' offer to return to the land of Israel and rebuild the temple. The other tribes of Israel remained lost in exile, likely assimilated among the nations where they were dispersed.

Yet to this day, the repatriation of the lost tribes of Israel remains a component of the dream for ultimate redemption.



***From the Desk of  
Rabbi Philip Hammond. Ph.D.***

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

[Clever and Wise](#)

## Clever or Wise – this is the question...

- Making assumptions can be dangerous – yet perhaps one could be forgiven for ASSUMING people would seek wisdom...
- It would appear such an assumption is wrong. People seek to be clever not wise!
- Make no mistake there is a big difference between wisdom and being clever. Wisdom comes from YHVH - cleverness comes from a variety of other sources.
- Some may reject the following statement, “all wisdom comes from YHVH”. This in no way negates the fact that people can be very clever in and of themselves, but this human cleverness is far removed from the wisdom of The Almighty.
- We witness just how clever people have become. Never have there been more educational institutions in the world. Technology has never been more advanced than what it is at present. Communication is at a level never imagined 100 yrs ago. We have become so clever we have deceived ourselves in believing that not only do we no longer need YHVH, but He is just a figment of imagination at best.
- Our communities are bereft of the wisdom of YHVH, instead relying on the cleverness of humans. People have deceived themselves into believing that we no longer require the wisdom of YHVH, in fact most see this wisdom as foolishness and reject any association with it.

## Clever or Wise...

- This has had and is having a devastating impact on our lives. Make no mistake, deception is toxic, and leads to deadly sicknesses. This belief that YHVH has nothing to offer us is destroying us and there is testimony of this truth on a daily basis.
- Sadly, this deadly sickness has infected the Houses of God or those who claim to be Houses of God. Many have a world view that mirrors the unbeliever instead of our Saviour Yeshua.
- Kind of reminds of something Paul wrote many years ago –Read: [Romans 1:16-32](#)
- Written thousands of years ago, yet so appropriate to what we witness this very hour. The above is the result of people being **clever** not **wise**.
- Nothing has changed since the serpent came to Chava/Eve with his clever persuasions. The scene described in Genesis is the perfect picture of what happens when people become clever.
- [Genesis 3:1-6](#)
- Could we say, up until this point Adam and Eve had the wisdom of YHVH – None the less, it was when they decided to become “clever” that death entered their lives. This is such an important lesson for us to learn.
- Enter Free choice...

## Clever or Wise...

- In making choices [which we all do] either turns out for the good or bad. Biblical choices end in blessings or curses! If we choose to follow the instructions of HaShem then that choice will be blessed. On the other hand if we choose to reject the instructions of HaShem then that choice will end in a curse.
- **28 “And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. <sup>2</sup> And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God. Deuteronomy 28:1-2 [ESV]**
- **<sup>15</sup> “But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. Deuteronomy 28:15 [ESV]...**

## Clever or Wise...

- I encourage you to take the time to view the list of blessings and curses...
- Not sure about you, but I believe the wise would choose the blessings. Great News: You can choose! You can choose to employ the wisdom of YHVH and follow His instructions for your lives, thus receiving future blessings. On the other hand you can choose to be clever and employ your own “smarts” reject the Torah and receive the curses. The choice is really yours to make.
- Most peoples are choosing to be clever over wise. Certainly our so-called leaders are choosing to be clever over wise, thus causing havoc, confusion, and a multitude of curses for people everywhere.
- Tragically many so -called bible leaders, and teachers continue to stray away from the precious instructions of YHVH, choosing to be clever over wise. This too can only end in current, and future biblical curses.

## Clever or Wise...

- Something that is often overlooked is the fact it is YHVH who is in total control of the curses as well as the blessings. People often blame the devil when things go astray, but it is usually due to the choices we make.
- Remember we occupy a fallen world, a world that is not our home, a world that must end in it's current state – Baruch HaSHem...
- This current world cannot be a paradise for God's people. It is in the hands of the clever people. Notice they seek, and search for ways to live forever... yet in their cleverness they show no wisdom in turning to the only One who can deliver eternal life...
- You may be the most clever person in the world, but unless you put away your cleverness and take up the wisdom of YHVH, it will all end in naught.
- "Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, and clever in their own sight" Isaiah 5:21 [NASB]
- "For it is written, 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the cleverness of the clever I will set aside.'" 1Corinthians 1:19 [NASB]

## Clever or Wise...

- We must be wise in our choices if we are to improve our lives. We cannot have any reliance on our cleverness as this is mostly shrouded in deceit, resulting in a toxic cocktail of misery.
- Would it not be wonderful for us to truthfully utter the following words?
- "For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Yeshua HaMoshiach, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty". 2Peter 1:16 [NASB]
- If we choose to be wise in the choices we make – we can look forward to:
  - <sup>13</sup> Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, "Who are these dressed in white robes, and where have they come from?" I said to him, "Sir, you know."<sup>14</sup> Then he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white<sup>bl</sup> in the blood of the Lamb."<sup>15</sup> For this reason, they are before the throne of God, and they serve Him day and night in His Temple. The One seated on the throne will shelter them.<sup>16</sup> They shall never again go hungry, nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat.<sup>17</sup> For the Lamb in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them and guide them to springs of living water, and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes."

Revelation 7:13-17

## Clever or Wise...

- Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea. <sup>2</sup> Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God *is* with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them *and be* their God. <sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." <sup>5</sup> Then He who sat on the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." And He said to me, "Write, for these words are true and faithful."
- Truly there is no God...



# Hebraic Life



## The History of Yiddish

*Yiddish originated in Germany, but was eventually spoken by Jews all over Europe.*

In its 1,000-plus-year history, the Yiddish language has been called many things, including the tender name *mameloshen* (mother tongue), the adversarial moniker *zhargon* (jargon) and the more matter-of-fact Judeo-German.

### What is Yiddish?

Literally speaking, Yiddish means “Jewish.” Linguistically, it refers to the language spoken by [Ashkenazi](#) Jews — Jews from Central and Eastern Europe, and their descendants. Though its basic vocabulary and grammar are derived from medieval West German, Yiddish integrates many languages including German, Hebrew, Aramaic and various Slavic and Romance languages.

### The Origin of Yiddish

It is impossible to pin down exactly where or when Yiddish emerged, but the most widely-accepted theory is that the language came into formation in the 10th century, when Jews from France and Italy began to migrate to the German Rhine Valley. There, they combined the languages they brought with them, together with their new neighbors’ Germanic, producing the earliest form of Yiddish. As Jews continued to migrate eastward —a result of the Crusades and the Black Plague—Yiddish spread across Central and Eastern Europe and began to include more elements from Slavic languages.

### Early Yiddish

In Ashkenazi societies, Hebrew was the language of the Bible and prayer, Aramaic was the language of learning and Yiddish was the language of everyday life. Scholars refer to this as the internal trilingualism of Ashkenaz. Though they vary in sound and use, all three languages are written in the same alphabet.

The first record of a printed Yiddish sentence is a blessing found in the Worms Mahzor (*Vórmser mákhzer*) from 1272. Beginning in the 14th century Yiddish was commonly used for epic poems such as the *Shmuel-bukh*, which reworks the biblical story of the prophet Samuel into a European knightly romance.

## Early Modern Yiddish

Yiddish publishing became widespread in the 1540s, nearly a century after the invention of the printing press. To ensure the broadest possible readership, books were published in a generic, accessible Yiddish, without the characteristics of any particular Yiddish dialect. In the 1590s, the *Tsene-rene* (also called *Tzenah Urenah*) was published for the first time (eventually, more than 200 editions were printed). The book, which retells the weekly Torah portions woven together with homiletic and moralistic material, became known as “the women’s Bible,” because it was read in particular by women on the Sabbath and holidays.

By the 18th century, German-speaking Jews were quickly acculturating. In Western Europe, leaders of the Haskalah (the Jewish Enlightenment) campaigned heavily for the use of German over Yiddish, which they referred to as “barbaric jargon.” At the same time, Yiddish was flourishing in Eastern Europe, where compact settlement helped the number of speakers reach the millions by the 19th century.

The rise of the Hasidic movement also did much to further Yiddish along — in both numbers of speakers and spiritual prestige. Two of the key early works of Hasidism were written in both Yiddish and Hebrew: *Shivkhey ha-Besht* (Praises of the Besht), which were stories about the Ba’al Shem Tov, and *Sipurey Mayses* (Telling of the Tales), a collection of stories from the Ba’al Shem Tov’s great-grandson Nahman of Breslov.

## Modern Yiddish

The late 19th century saw the birth of modern Yiddish literature. The “grandfather” of this new literary movement was Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh, known by his pen name Mendele Mokher Seforim (Mendele the Bookseller). I. L. Peretz, a Polish writer, poet, essayist, and dramatist became known as the “father” and humorist Sholem Aleichem, born in Ukraine, the “grandson.” The realism, irreverence, satire and moralism found in the works of these three writers heavily influenced the development of Yiddish literature.

## Yiddish in the 20th Century

In 1908, the first international conference on Yiddish language (the Czernowitz conference) declared Yiddish to be “a national language of the Jewish people.” The purpose of the conference was to discuss all the issues facing the language at that time, including the need to establish Yiddish schools, to fund Yiddish cultural institutions and to establish standard Yiddish spelling. However, these agenda items received little attention, with much of the debate being focused on whether Yiddish should be considered *the* national language or *a* national language of the Jewish people. In 1925, YIVO, the Yiddish Scientific Institute, was founded in Vilna. It became the premiere institution for Yiddish scholarship and has been based in New York since 1940.

In the early days of the Soviet Union (1922 until the mid-1930s), the communist government supported Yiddish schools, theater, research and literature — as long as these were strictly cultural expressions without Jewish religious content. The extraordinary support given to Yiddish, and the respect initially shown to Yiddish writers, led many around the world to see the Soviet project as the true hope for the future of the language. However, the government soon began to censor Yiddish works, and eventually closed down most Yiddish institutions. During the purges of 1937, many Yiddish writers and leaders were arrested and executed at the increasingly paranoid orders of Joseph Stalin, who viewed Yiddish as

anti-Soviet. In 1952, the remaining great Yiddish writers in the Soviet Union were brutally murdered in what is known today as the Night of the Murdered Poets (though not all of those executed were writers).

In pre-state Israel (1918-1948), and later in Israel, Yiddish was marginalized and, in some instances, outlawed. Until 1951, it was illegal for local theater groups to stage productions in Yiddish. Hebrew was the national language of the Jews in their land and was considered the only legitimate medium of Jewish expression.

## **Post-Holocaust Yiddish**

On the eve of World War II, there were roughly 13 million Yiddish speakers in the world.

The Holocaust destroyed most of this population. In America after the war, immigrant parents were often hesitant to speak Yiddish with their children. Though there were a few networks of Yiddish schools in the post-war period, after-school programs and camps could not compete with the intense pressures of Americanization. Yiddish began to take on a lowbrow image, and its use was associated with failure to climb up the American socioeconomic ladder of success.

But the last half century brought many positive developments for Yiddish. It has been seriously studied as an academic discipline, and Yiddish literature has been recognized as great world literature, exemplified by Isaac Bashevis Singer receiving the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1978.

The 1970s saw the beginning of a Yiddish and Eastern European cultural revival, particularly in music. Thanks to the work of highly-talented artists, at the forefront of which are groups like The Klezmatics, klezmer music is now a ubiquitous presence in American Jewish culture.

## ***Personalities of the Bible***

### **The Prophet Jeremiah and His Times**

***Jeremiah is commonly seen as a prophet of gloom, but at times he delivered words of comfort that are second to none in their eloquence.***

**In the 26th chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, we read:**

It was the LORD who sent me to prophesy against this House and this city all the words you heard. Therefore, mend your ways and your acts, and heed the LORD your God, that the LORD may renounce the punishment He has decreed for you. As for me, I am in your hands: do to me what seems good and right to you. But know that if you put me to death, you and this city and its inhabitants will be guilty of shedding the blood of an innocent man. For in truth the LORD has sent me to you, to speak all these words to you. Jeremiah 26: 12-15

The prophet Jeremiah lived at an agonizing time in the history of ancient Israel. Since its inception, tiny Israel always seemed to be caught between the superpowers of the north and the south. The overrun of the country by the Assyrians in 721 BCE had erased the ten tribes of northern Israel from history — a

national calamity still very much on the minds of Jeremiah and his compatriots when, in 605 BCE, Babylonia, another empire from the north, arose and vanquished its rival to the south, Egypt, in the epic battle of Carchemish.

For some time already, Jeremiah had been warning against making alliances with Egypt and he saw the Babylonian invasion not only as inevitable, but as the express will of God. Jeremiah predicts that servitude to Babylon will last 70 years — a message of doom that, unsurprisingly, does not go over well with the political establishment.

According to the biblical account, the priests and prophets rise up against Jeremiah, and when the palace officials arrive on the scene they demand the death penalty for Jeremiah. But Jeremiah persists in his agitation, railing against what today we would call both domestic policy (inequality and injustice) and foreign policy (unholy alliances).

Eventually he is forced into hiding and later arrested and imprisoned. During this time, the prophet dictates his pronouncements so that his disciple Baruch can read them from a scroll even if he is silenced. But he also takes another dramatic step to ensure that the other half of his message—that God will not forsake Israel forever—will not be ignored: He buys a piece of land in his home village of Anathoth.

At the time, Anathoth was likely already under enemy control. Buying land there, in the words of one prominent commentator, “must have seemed like sheer madness.” At a time when Jeremiah himself was preaching that the Babylonians would capture Jerusalem, destroy the country and exile its population, buying land in territory under Babylonian control makes no sense.

Yet Jeremiah goes through the procedure of securing and preserving the deed and ensuring that the public knows about it. He grasps that he has been given a way to dramatize that the exile of his people will not last forever—that God’s turn away is not a sign of forsaken love for all time.

Unwavering hope is as much a part of Jeremiah’s message as rebuke. To Jeremiah and the classical prophets, no one could be shielded from the harsh reality of God’s judgment, but neither would anyone be denied the consolation of God’s ultimate love — nor the hope that comes from that knowledge.

At one point, Jeremiah uses the unique expression “hope of Israel” to refer to God. As he did when he purchased his ancestral land, Jeremiah repeatedly speaks about the coming restoration of Israel’s fortunes. In fact, one of his best-known declarations is repeated at Jewish weddings to this day: “Again there shall be heard in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of groom and bride ... for I will restore the fortunes of the land as of old—said the Lord.” (Jer. 31:10-11)

Jeremiah dies in obscurity in Egypt, but his ideas endured. The prophetic message of hope Jeremiah instills is echoed to a degree by almost all the later prophets.

Ezekiel’s famous vision of the dry bones, in which a valley full of bones come back to life, is a classic prophetic statement of hope, symbolizing the restoration of the people and the land of Israel. Amos declares that the Jews who return to their land will be never be uprooted again. Hosea affirms: “In that day ... I will banish bow, sword, and war from the land.” Micah perhaps put it most memorably when he says, “And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not take up sword against nation; they shall never again know war.”

These words of comfort and hope from the age of classical prophecy took deep hold in the Jewish psyche. To this day, we use the term jeremiad to mean a cautionary or angry harangue. And indeed, sometimes when he preached, Jeremiah was angry. But at other times he delivered words of comfort and hope that are second to none among the prophets in their eloquence.

The LORD revealed Himself to me of old. Eternal love I conceived for you then; Therefore, I continue My grace to you. I will build you firmly again, O Maiden Israel! Again, you shall take up your timbrels And go forth to the rhythm of the dancers. Again, you shall plant vineyards On the hills of Samaria; Men shall plant and live to enjoy them. Jeremiah 31: 3-5

An ancient midrashic text stipulates that there are three types of prophets: those who insist on the honor due the father (God), those who insist on the honor due the son (the people), and those who insist on both. Jeremiah is cited as a prophet of the latter kind, his prophetic moment a statement of faith in God and in the future of his people.

## **עִבְרִי - Hebrew**

### **Word (s) of the Week**

Tradition / מִסּוֹרֶת  
Pronounced: mah-SOE-ret

The word *masoret* comes from a Hebrew root that means to transmit. In Europe and South America, Conservative Judaism is known as *masorti*, or traditional Judaism.



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

### **A Perfect Ten**

Shulem and Pessy Schechter were parents in a typical Chassidic family with many children. They had ten kids, thank God, six boys and four girls. One night, Shaindy, their oldest, was chatting with her mother about how their parenting style had changed from the first child to the last. Pessy answered that she had mellowed a lot over the years:

**"When your oldest sister coughed or sneezed, I called the ambulance. When your youngest brother swallowed a nickel, I just told him it was coming out of his allowance."**

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