



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 1-11-25 VAYECHI**

### ***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. Rabbin 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. 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 YHVH 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.**

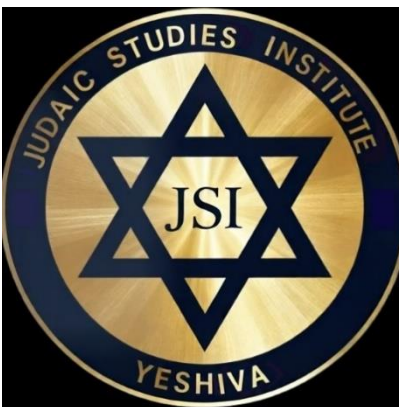
FOR RABBI HAMMOND’S BOOK, **HIS PERFECT GRACE**, GO TO AMAZON.COM AS WELL.

CHECK OUT RABBI MICHELLE JOHNS BOOKS ON AMAZON.

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 1-11-25**

*Vayechi – and he lived*

*Genesis 47:28-50:26*

*1 Kings 2:1-12*

*1 Peter 1:1-9*

We are going on a journey today. A messianic journey down a road paved with the Messianic promises of God Himself.

### **Genesis 48:16**

*May the angel who redeems me from all evil bless the lads.*

H1350 ga'al {gaw-al'} redeem 50, redeemer 18, kinsman 13, revenger 7, avenger 6, ransom 2, at all 2, deliver 1, kinsfolks 1, kinsman's part 1, purchase 1, stain 1, wise 1; 104 x 1) to redeem, act as kinsman-redeemer, avenge, revenge, ransom, do the part of a kinsman 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to act as kinsman, do the part of next of kin, act as kinsman-redeemer 1a1a) by marrying brother's widow to beget a child for him, to redeem from slavery, to redeem land, to exact vengeance 1a2) to redeem (by payment) 1a3) to redeem (with God as subject) 1a3a) individuals from death 1a3b) Israel from Egyptian bondage 1a3c) Israel from exile 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to redeem oneself 1b2) to be redeemed

We continue traveling on this road and lo and behold we encounter Judah-son of Jacob – the Inheritance of Israel. Through whom the Promised One of God would come.

### **Genesis 49:8-10**

*Judah – you, your brothers shall acknowledge; your hand will be at your enemies' nape; your father's sons will prostrate themselves to you. A lion cub is Judah; from the prey, my son, you elevated yourself. He crouches, lies down like a lion, and like an awesome lion, who dares rouse him? **The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a scholar from among his descendants until Shiloh arrives and his will be an assemblage of nations.***

H2710 chaqaq {khaw-kak'} ꝥ a primitive root; TWOT - 728; v ꝥ AV - lawgiver 6, governor 2, decree 2, to grave 2, portray 2, law 1, printed 1, set 1, note 1, appoint; 19 ꝥ 1) to cut out, decree, inscribe, set, engrave, portray, govern 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to cut in 1a2) to cut in or on, cut upon, engrave, inscribe 1a3) to trace, mark out 1a4) to engrave, inscribe (of a law) 1b) (Poel) 1b1) to inscribe, enact, decree 1b2) one who decrees, lawgiver (participle) 1c) (Pual) something decreed, the law (participle) 1d) (Hophal) to be inscribed

Scholar means lawgiver. So, until the Messiah comes—Shiloh, the promise of the scepter—the authority to teach the Torah will not depart from the descendants of Judah—the Jewish people until the Messiah comes and brings all the nations together.

We stop for a moment and listen to the prophecy given to Dan—a son of Jacob—another promise of Israel.

### **Genesis 49:16-18**

*Dan will avenge his people; **the tribes of Israel will be united as one.** Dan will be a serpent on the highway, a viper by the path, that bites a horse's heels so its rider falls backward. **For Your Salvation do I long, O Lord!***

Now on we travel and come to Joseph. Son of Jacob, a treasure of Israel. The salvation of his people. The man of God in a land of Godlessness.

### **Genesis 50:20-21**

***Although you intended me harm, God intended it for good: in order to accomplish—it is as clear as this day—that a vast people be kept alive. So now, fear not—I will sustain you and your young ones. Thus, he comforted them and spoke to their heart.***

And now we follow this road to David. Listen as he blesses his son, Solomon and remember back down the road to Jacob as he blessed his sons.

### **1 Kings 2:3-4**

*Safeguard the charge of the Lord, your God, to walk in His ways, to observe His decrees, commandments, ordinances, and testimonies, as written in the Torah of Moses, so that you will succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn. So that the Lord will uphold His word that He spoke regarding me, saying, ‘If your children will safeguard their way, to walk before Me sincerely, with all their heart and with all their soul,’ saying, ‘no man of yours will ever be cut off from upon the throne of Israel.’*

This is a continuation of the blessing of Judah. Because we know that through the line of Judah that the Messiah would come. We know that through the line of David the Messiah would come. But here we see the blessing of Judah re-enforced by David. Torah would continue. The ways of the Lord were to be passed on down so that those who followed the Torah of God would live.

And from David to Solomon the road winds on, ever onward, and we come to the end of this part of our journey. We have followed where the road has taken us and at journey’s end, we read the words written in 1 Peter 1:1-9:

*From Kefa, an emissary of Y’shua the Messiah—To: God’s chosen people, living in the Diaspora—in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bythinia—Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and set apart by the Spirit for obeying Y’shua the Messiah and for sprinkling with his blood: Grace and shalom be yours in full measure. Praised be God, Father of our Lord Y’shua the Messiah, who, in keeping with his great mercy, has caused us, through the resurrection of Y’shua the Messiah from the dead, to be born again to a living hope, to **an inheritance that cannot decay, spoil or fade, kept safe for you in heaven.** Meanwhile, through trusting, you are being protected by God’s power for a deliverance ready to be revealed at the Last Time. **Rejoice in this, even though***



***for a little while you may have to experience grief in various trials. Even gold is tested for genuineness by fire. The purpose of these trials is so that your trust's genuineness, which is far more valuable than perishable gold, will be judged worthy of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Y'shua the Messiah. Without having seen him, you love him. Without seeing him now, but trusting in him, you continue to be full of joy that is glorious beyond words. And you are receiving what your trust is aiming at, namely, your deliverance.***

We are like all those who have gone before us. We have placed our trust in the One who has gone before us. And I am not just referring to David or Judah or even Jacob.

*Listen to this parable and think about how it fits in with the journey I have taken you on today.* A king who was celebrating a joyous occasion decreed that all requests from subjects would be granted. Some requested honor, and other riches. All requests were honored. One subject asked only to have the opportunity to have an audience with the king three times daily. The king was so moved and flattered by the request that he granted it, as well as that the treasures should be opened, and this subject should be allowed to help himself to its contents. If we can learn to have the same attitude toward God as this subject did toward being with his king. That is, just to value the opportunity to have an audience with The King. If this is our attitude in prayer, then we may hope that God will treasure our prayers and meditations and our faith, then He will open his treasures and grant us our requests for our good.

***We have received the inheritance of Judah. We have received the promise of Joseph. We await the blessing of Dan. Our trust and our faith have brought us to this part of the journey. Redemption—Deliverance—through Y'shua—the Road of Salvation!***

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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 Vayechi: Summary**

*On his deathbed, Jacob blesses his sons and asks them to bury him in Canaan.*

#### ***Genesis 47:28 - 50:26***

Jacob and all his sons and their families are now settled in Egypt with Joseph, who is the second-most powerful man in the Pharaoh's kingdom.

Jacob lived in Egypt for 17 years and he was 147 years old. Jacob (also called Israel) said to Joseph, "If I have found favor in your eyes, then swear to me that you will not bury me in Egypt, but with my fathers in Canaan."

Joseph agreed, then later received word that his father was dying. Joseph took his two sons, Menashe and Ephraim, to see Jacob. Jacob sat up in bed, saying, "God, the All-Sufficing, appeared to me in the land of Canaan and blessed me. God said to me, 'Behold, I will make you fruitful and will multiply you, and I will let you become a community of nations and will give this land to your seed after you as an everlasting possession.'"

Then Jacob added, "Now, bring your sons to me so that I may bless them. Your two sons, born before I came to Egypt, shall belong to me just like Reuben and Simeon. But the children whom you beget after them shall remain yours."

Jacob could not see, so Joseph brought his sons close enough so his father could embrace them. Jacob said to Joseph, "I had not thought it possible that I would see your face, and now God has let me see even your seed."

Joseph had his sons kneel before Jacob. Ephraim was to Jacob's left and Manashe to Jacob's right. Jacob then stretched out his right hand and placed it upon Ephraim's head—though he was the younger—and his left hand was upon Menashe's head. He guided his hands deliberately, for Menashe was the first-born.

He said, "The God before Whom my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, conducted themselves, the God Who has been my Shepherd for my existence until this day, the angel who has delivered me from all evil, bless the lads so that my name and the name of my fathers, Abraham and Isaac, may be called in them and that they may multiply like fish in the midst of the earth."

#### Jacob Gives Advice to His Sons

When Joseph saw that his father placed his right hand upon Ephraim's head, he moved it to Menashe's. He said, "No father. This is the first-born, place your right hand upon his head."

Jacob refused. "I know it, my son. He, too, will become a tribe. He, too, will be great but his younger brother will be greater than he and his seed will complete the nations." He blessed them on that day saying, "May God make you as Ephraim and Menashe." He put Ephraim before Menashe.

Later, Jacob gathered his sons. "I wish to tell you what will befall you in the aftermath of days. Listen: Reuben, you are my first-born, my strength and the first of my acquisitions, privileged in rank and power. But instability like water in you does not permit you this privilege, for you have mounted your father's couch and profaned it.

"Shimeon and Levi are brothers, but instruments of violence are the means of acquiring gain. My will must not enter their council. A curse therefore upon their anger, for it is too cruel. I will divide them in Jacob and scatter them in Israel."

“Judah, you are the one; to you will your brothers do homage. Judah is like a lion. The scepter will not depart from Judah nor the law inscribing stylus from between his feet, until his sprout, seemingly the last and weakest, will come. Then it will be to him, the one of manly strength, that the nations, dulled with age, will fall.”

“Zebulun will dwell at a bay of seas. He will become a harbor for ships.”

“Yissakhar, a nimble beast of burden, rests between the rows of household vessels. He has given to pay the tribute of the tiller of the soil.”

“Dan will champion the right of his people as only one of the tribes of Israel can. Dan will become a serpent on the highway, which bits the charger’s heel so that the rider falls backward.”

“Gad, many a troop will drive into him like a wedge, but he will drive like a wedge into their heel. Through Asher his food will become rich and he will yield royal delights.”

“Naphtali, a gazelle-like messenger, delivers eloquent speeches.”

“Joseph was a noble, outstanding son. When they heaped bitter abuse upon him, he remained serene, already blessed from God. You will remain with the All-Sufficing Who will continue to bless you.”

“Benjamin will tear the wolf to pieces. He will eat a portion in the morning, but in the evening he will divide it as spoil.”

#### Jacob and Joseph Pass Away

These are the 12 tribes of Israel. After he blessed them, Jacob commanded them to bury him in the Cave of Machpelah in the land of Canaan where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, and Leah were buried. Jacob dies and is gathered to his peoples.

Joseph commanded his servants and physicians to embalm his father. It took 40 days for embalming. The Egyptians wept for 70 days. Then, with Pharaoh’s permission, Joseph went with all his servants and elders to bury his father. When they came to Bramble Barn beyond the Jordan, they held a very great and impressive lamentation with a seven-day mourning period. The sons then buried Jacob as he requested.

With Jacob buried, the brothers worried that Joseph might hold a grudge against them and punish them for the evil done before. So they said to Joseph, “Our father said to please forgive the crimes of your brothers.”

The brothers then bowed low, saying, “Here we are your slaves.”

But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid. For am I in the place of God. Even if you meant to do evil, God meant it for good, in order to bring about what is at present, in order to keep a numerous nation alive. And now, do not be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” He comforted them and spoke to their hearts.

So Joseph lived in Egypt with his brothers and saw the third generation of Ephraim and Menashe. Joseph said to his brothers, “I am dying. And God will surely remember you again one day and bring you up from this land to the land which God swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

Then Joseph made the brothers swear, “If God will remember you again one day, then you shall bring my bones up from this place.” Joseph died at one hundred and ten years old and they embalmed him. Then he was placed in a coffin in Egypt in accordance with his wish.

### ***Parashat Vayechi Discussion Questions***

***1. Why do you think Jews still bless their sons on the Sabbath saying, “May God make you as Ephraim and Menashe?” What is so special about them? How does it relate to the sons blessed today? How do Jews bless their daughters today?***

***2. On his deathbed Jacob gathers his sons and tells each of them what is to become of them in the days to come. What do you think will become of you in the days to come? What do you think will become of your loved ones? Why is this your vision?***

***3. After Jacob dies, the brothers fear Joseph’s punishment for their previous sins. Joseph instead comforts his brothers and speaks to their hearts. How do you comfort someone and speak to their heart? How are you best comforted by someone else?***

## **Haftarah for Vayechi**

***David's parting words to his son Solomon***

***1 Kings 2: 1-12***

Parashat Vayechi describes the preparations Jacob makes for his death. He methodically bids farewell to his children and grandchildren and directs them to bury him in Canaan.

### **Last Words of Advice**

Finally, Jacobs delivers a poetic statement (in some cases, a blessing) for each of his 12 sons. Having gotten in the definitive last word, we are told:

When Jacob finished his instructions to his sons, he drew his feet into the bed and, taking his last breath, he was gathered to his people.” (Genesis 49:33)

The Haftarah for Vayechi features another father — King David — on his deathbed. Like the patriarch Jacob, David had many sons. However, David’s last words are directed only to one of

his sons: Solomon. With the backdrop of a contested kingship — more than one of David's sons seeks to rule after his death — David's selection of Solomon as recipient of his farewell speech is significant.

King David encourages Solomon not to despair: "Be strong and show yourself a man" (2:2). The recipe for success as king, David tells his son, is to follow God's ways. David promises that if Solomon is true to the Torah, "your line on the throne of Israel shall never end" (2:4).

### **Unfinished Business**

In the rest of his farewell speech, David asks Solomon to take care of some of his unfinished business. Joab son of Zeruiah had been David's general for many years but sided with David's son Absalom in his rebellion against David. Still angry with Joab for his betrayal and for killing two innocent commanders in Israel (Abner and Amasa — 2 Samuel 3:27), David instructs Solomon: "See that his white hair does not go down to Sheol in peace" (1 Kings 2:6).

David also asks Solomon to repay good with good. When David was fleeing Absalom, Barzillai the Gileadite, then an old man, provided David with food. Now David asks Solomon to return the favor: "Deal graciously with the sons of Barzillai...let them be among those that eat at your table."

David's final request shows that he remained pained by the trauma of Absalom's rebellion until his last living moment. Shimei son of Gera had cursed David while he was fleeing Absalom (. Again, David instructs Solomon to bring about justice: "Do not let him go unpunished...send his gray hair down to Sheol in blood" (1 Kings 2:9).

In the final verses of the haftarah, David dies after 40 years of ruling over Israel. Then, we are told, "Solomon sat upon the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established" (1 Kings 2:12).



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

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

### Contamination – not good

#### Contamination – not good.

- When contamination takes place, it usually spoils the product. If it doesn't spoil it completely it certainly changes from the original...
- Today we are going look at a contamination found in the bible... one that is deadly if not treated.
- 6 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. <sup>3</sup> And one cried to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole earth is full of His glory!" <sup>4</sup> And the posts of the door were shaken by the voice of him who cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> So I said: "Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I *am* a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The LORD of hosts." <sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal *which* he had taken with the tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> And he touched my mouth *with it*, and said: "Behold, this has touched your lips; Your iniquity is taken away, And your sin purged." Isaiah 6:1-7

## Contamination – not good.

- We have a number of interesting players in this short passage of scripture:
- King Uzziah – who died = end of a period of time.
- YHVH – The Elohim of Israel.
- Seraphim – Giving glory to YHVH
- Isaiah – A man of unclean lips.
- THE KING – YAHWEH Tz’ba-ah
- In reading these passages I ask: Is there a link for us today or is it just history??? Well I found a link between all the above and us.
- It all began with Uzziah and his death:

## Contamination – not good.

- <sup>14</sup> Then Uzziah prepared for them, for the entire army, shields, spears, helmets, body armor, bows, and slings to cast stones. <sup>15</sup> And he made devices in Jerusalem, invented by skillful men, to be on the towers and the corners, to shoot arrows and large stones. So his fame spread far and wide, for he was marvelously helped till he became strong. 2 Chronicles 26:14-15.
- Then we pick up the account in the next verse:
- <sup>16</sup> But when he was strong his heart was lifted up, to his destruction, for he transgressed against the LORD his God by entering the temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. <sup>17</sup> So Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him were eighty priests of the LORD—valiant men. <sup>18</sup> And they withstood King Uzziah, and said to him, “ It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who are consecrated to burn incense. Get out of the sanctuary, for you have trespassed! You shall have no honor from the LORD God.” 2 Chronicles 26:16-18
- We have the response to a haughty heart:
- <sup>19</sup> Then Uzziah became furious; and he had a censer in his hand to burn incense. And while he was angry with the priests, leprosy broke out on his forehead, before the priests in the house of the LORD, beside the incense altar. <sup>20</sup> And Azariah the chief priest and all the priests looked at him, and there, on his forehead, he was leprous; so they thrust him out of that place. Indeed he also hurried to get out, because the LORD had struck him. 2 Chronicles 26:19-20



## Contamination – not good.

- <sup>21</sup> King Uzziah was a leper until the day of his death. He dwelt in an isolated house, because he was a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD. Then Jotham his son was over the king's house, judging the people of the land.<sup>22</sup> Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, from first to last, the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz wrote. 2 Chronicles 26:21-22
- This King of Judah died in a state of:
- **tzaraath** **צָרַעַת** [our bibles translate it as leprosy] however this is not a good translation. This disease according to the Jewish sages [R Hirsh does an excellent job in explaining this] is a manifestation of a spiritual malaise, a punishment designed to show the one afflicted that they must mend their ways.
- As with King Uzziah, pride often prevents one from mending their ways and they may well die in a state of **tzaraath**.
- Such a person is in a state of:
- **Tamei/Contamination** **טָמֵא** Losing purity, defiling, loosing freedom.

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## Contamination – not good.

- Whenever we refuse to follow the instructions of Yahweh, we are in danger of being infected with **Tzaraath**. Our lives become contaminated with so much baggage, it weighs us down to a point we cannot stand up.
- In our passage Isaiah has a vision of Adonai [the Hebrew here is adonai – not yhvh] and the heavenly court, and the Seraphim worshipping with the words – **Qadosh, Qadosh, Qadosh**.
- I read this as all taking place after the death of Uzziah – The King of Israel who was in a state of **tzaraath** contaminated by pride. What a contrast, as we witness the Seraphim worshipping their Master. Here was a chance for a new start – with a message being delivered by YHVH 's chosen prophet.
- Yet Isaiah having lived amongst such rebellion and sin, well understood the position of man, including him, before The Holy One of Israel, and he immediately thought he was:
  - **Undone/Damah** דָּמָה Cease, cut off, destroy
- Some versions have words such as – doomed, I shall die, ruined to name a few.
- Isaiah knew that if he came before YHVH in an unclean state he was indeed doomed.

## Contamination – not good.

- Isaiah was declared clean after he was touched by that which came from the Altar.
- How are we cleansed?
- We also must be touched by **that** which comes from the Altar – **Yeshua HaMashich**. Then we, as Isaiah, are in a fit condition to go forward and do the work of our heavenly Father.
- This is a likely reason that Isaiah was touched on the lips. He was no longer to speak his own words, as his King had done so and thereby had become **tzaraath**, but was commanded to speak the instructions and words of YHVH. Has anything changed?
- Is not YHVH still worthy of the words Qadosh, Qadosh, Qadosh?
- Are not YHVH's instructions still applicable? Once cleansed by the blood of the lamb, should not our hearts seek the Set Apart instructions of YHVH ... should not our lips speak such?

## Contamination – not good.

- Sadly we find ourselves following our own Uzziah 's. Yes there was a chance for a new beginning but it didn 't happen. In fact Isaiah asked the question – “How long ...”
- Did the answer shake Isaiah? I don 't know, but it is worth taking note of the answer, because it should shake us. Unfortunately we are a people hard of hearing, stiff necked and blinded by pride.
- There seems to be a need for us to be almost destroyed before we come to our senses. Consider the following scripture :
- <sup>7</sup> Hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy about you, saying: <sup>8</sup> ‘These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with *their* lips, But their heart is far from Me. <sup>9</sup> And in vain they worship Me, teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men. ’” Matthew 15:7-9
- We must remove the **Tzaraath** from our lives, we cannot afford to be contaminated it will rob us of our shalom, and moving forward in our biblical growth.

## Contamination – not good.

- Baruch YHVH – there is a way to rid us of contamination, if we are willing to undergo the process.
- Yet we need to understand the contaminations that cause **Tzaraath** in our lives ... then employ the tools to remove these from our lives. Of course not only do we need to know the right tools for the job, but how to use them. The right tools in the wrong hands can be rather dangerous.
- So, in an effort to help people rid the **Tzaraath** from their lives, we are going to undergo a journey of tool selection, and application. This series will be ongoing for many weeks, if not months.
- The title is: [How to be content ... tools for the job.](#)
- So let us look forward to allowing our Father to cleanse us from **Tzaraath** ... because:
- There is no God ...

## **Hebraic Life**



### **Do Jews Believe in Satan?**

*In Jewish texts, the devil is sometimes an adversary and sometimes an embodiment of evil.*

Satan occupies a prominent place in Christianity, which generally regards him as a rebellious angel and the source of evil who will meet his ultimate demise in battle at the End of Days. Jewish sources on the whole don't dwell as much on the satanic, but the concept is nonetheless explored in numerous texts.

Satan appears in the Bible, was discussed by the rabbis of the Talmud and is explored in detail in Jewish mysticism, or Kabbalah. In Hebrew, the term Satan is usually translated as "opponent" or "adversary," and he is often understood to represent the sinful impulse (in Hebrew, *yetzer hara*) or, more generally, the forces that prevents human beings from submitting to divine will. He is also sometimes regarded as a heavenly prosecutor or accuser, a view given expression in the Book of Job, where Satan encourages God to test his servant.

Kabbalistic sources expand the view of Satan considerably, offering a rich and detailed portrayal of the demonic realm and the forces of evil in the world, which are to be warded off in some cases with various forms of magic, from amulets to exorcisms.

#### **Satan in the Bible**

The Bible contains multiple references to Satan. The word appears just twice in the Torah, both times in the story of Balaam, the seer who is asked by the Moabite king Balak to curse the Jews. When Balaam goes with Balak's emissaries, God places an angel in his path "l'satan lo" — as an adversary for him. The term appears in multiple other instances in the Prophets, often in a similar context — referring not to a specific figure as the Satan, but rather as a descriptor for individuals who act as a satan, i.e. as adversaries.

Only twice in the Hebrew Bible does Satan appear as a specific figure, as HaSatan — the Satan. One is a brief reference in the Book of Zecharia, where the high priest is described as standing before a divine angel while Satan stands at his right to accuse him. The other is in the Book of

Job, where Satan has a central role in the story as an angel in the divine court. According to the biblical narrative, Satan — here too commonly translated as the Adversary — seems to urge God to create hardship for his righteous servant Job, arguing that Job is faithful only on account of his wealth and good fortune. Take those away, Satan claims, and Job will blaspheme. God permits Satan to take away Job's wealth, kill his family and afflict him physically, none of which induces Job to rebel against God.

The Book of Job is sometimes cited to support the claim that the Jewish view of Satan as an agent of God is different from the Christian view, which sees Satan as an autonomous force opposed to God. In the story, Satan inflicts suffering on a human being and seeks to induce him to sin — but only with God's permission.

## **Satan in the Talmud**

Satan makes many appearances in the Talmud. A lengthy passage in the tractate Sanhedrin accords Satan a central role in the biblical story of the binding of Isaac. According to Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi, it was Satan that caused the Jewish people to despair of Moses returning from Mount Sinai by showing them an image of the prophet on his deathbed. A passage in the tractate Megillah says that Satan dancing at the party of the Persian King Ahasuerus is what led to the killing of Queen Vashti in the Purim story.

In Tractate Bava Batra, Reish Lakish says that Satan, the yetzer hara and the Angel of Death are all one. Maimonides, the medieval Jewish philosopher, endorses this position in his *Guide for the Perplexed*. The word Satan, Maimonides writes, derives from the Hebrew root for "turn away." Like the evil inclination, Satan's function is to divert human beings from the path of truth and righteousness. Maimonides seems not to believe Satan actually exists, but rather that he is a symbol of the inclination to sin. The entire Book of Job, he writes, is fictional, intended merely to elucidate certain truths about divine providence. And even if it is true, Maimonides continues, certainly the portion in which God and Satan speak with each other is merely a parable.

## **Satan in Kabbalah and Hasidism**

The Jewish mystical tradition has much to say about Satan. Indeed, kabbalistic texts offer a rich description not merely of Satan, but of an entire realm of evil populated by demons and spirits that exists in parallel to the realm of the holy. Satan is known in Kabbalah as Sama'el (rendered in some sources as the Great Demon), and the demonic realm generally as the Sitra Achra — literally "the other side." The consort of Sama'el (who is mentioned in pre-kabbalistic Jewish literature as well) is Lilith, a mythic figure in Jewish tradition more commonly known as the rebellious first wife of Adam.

The kabbalistic sources portray the demonic as a separate and oppositional realm in conflict with God. Kabbalah even offers explanations of the origins of the demonic realm, the most common of which is that this realm emerges when the attribute of God associated with femininity and judgment, is dissociated from the attribute of God associated with grace and

masculinity and becomes unconstrained. Evil, in this reading, results from an excess of judgment.

Many of these ideas would later find expression in Jewish folk beliefs and in the works of the Hasidic masters. Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Poloniye, one of the chief disciples of Hasidism's founder, the Baal Shem Tov, wrote in his *Toldos Yaakov Yosef* that God would eventually slaughter the angel of death during the messianic age — a belief that clearly echoes the Christian view of a final showdown between God and Satan at the End of Days. Hasidic folk tales are replete with descriptions of demonic forces, among them a famous story in which the Baal Shem Tov defends a group of children from a werewolf. Even today some Hasidic Jews will seek out protections from such forces in the form of amulets or incantations. Some Jewish communities, particularly in the Sephardic world, also prize amulets as protection from evil spirits and maintain a number of customs and rituals aimed at keeping those spirits at bay. Jewish sources dating back to biblical times including formulas for exorcisms to free the possessed of an evil spirit, known as a *dybbuk*.

## **Jewish vs. Christian Conceptions of Satan**

On the whole, Satan occupies a far more prominent place in Christian theology than in traditional rabbinic sources. The Book of Revelation, in the New Testament, references an “ancient serpent” — commonly understood as the snake that tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden — “who is the Devil and Satan.” It describes a red dragon with seven heads and 10 horns that stands opposite a pregnant woman about to give birth in order to devour the child — that is, Jesus. Revelation further describes a war in heaven in which Satan is hurled to earth, where he proceeds to lead the world astray. (In the New Testament's Book of Luke, Jesus says he saw Satan “fall like lightning from heaven.”) According to Christian prophecy, Satan will be bound by a chain for 1,000 years after the return of Jesus.

Some of these Christian ideas are echoed in Jewish tradition, but some also point to fundamental differences — most notably perhaps the idea that, in the Hebrew Bible at least, Satan is ultimately subordinate to God, carrying out his purpose on earth. Or that he isn't real at all, but is merely a metaphor for sinful impulses.

The kabbalistic and Hasidic literature complicate this view, offering a closer parallel to Christian eschatology. Both the kabbalistic/Hasidic and Christian traditions describe the forces of the holy and the demonic as locked in a struggle that will culminate in God's eventual victory. According to some scholars, this is born of the considerable cross-pollination between Christian and Jewish thinking in the so-called “golden age” of Jewish culture in Spain during the Middle Ages, from whence many of the early kabbalistic texts, including the *Zohar*, emerged.

## עִבְרִי - Hebrew

### Word (s) of the Week

God / הַשֵּׁם

Pronounced: ha-SHEM

Because God's name is thought to have enormous power and should not be used lightly, Jews do not pronounce it and instead use many other names for God, including *Adonai* (my master) and *Hashem*, meaning simply "the name."



### A Taste of Jewish Humor

#### A Picture's Worth A Thousand Words

Dave and Wendy Sharfman were on their first trip to Israel and stopped into Udi's Excellent Falafel House for lunch. The Sharfmans were reading the menu over the counter and then noticed a sign to the side that stated "Picture Menu Available".

Dave thought that this was interesting, so he asked Udi what it was.

"It's for customers, maybe who have eye problems, and they can't read the menu.

"So how would your customers know this picture menu was available if they can't read?" Dave asked.

"Well," responded Udi, "It says so on the sign, doesn't it?"

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