



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 1-18-25 SHEMOT**

### ***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...***

Shalom all,

As usual - to catch up on our weekly Torah Notes + which is attached and online at our website [www.etz-chayim.org](http://www.etz-chayim.org).

### **PRISON MINISTRY NEWS:**

**256 BOOKS AND ASSOCIATED MATERIALS WERE SHIPPED OUT IN NOVEMBER-DECEMBER TO INMATES SEEKING A CLOSER RELATIONSHIP WITH YESHUA... OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS EXPANDING THIS OUTREACH, AND WE PRAY LIVES ARE BEING CHANGED FOR HIS GLORY. SOME GROUPS HAVE TAKEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO BECOME AFFILIATED WITH TOLMM TO HELP WITH OVERSIGHT AND GUIDANCE – REQUIRING MORE WORK... BUT MORE BLESSINGS!**

**WANT TO DONATE TOWARDS THIS OUTREACH – GO TO [WWW.ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG](http://WWW.ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG) AND USE THE PAYPAL LINK.**

**WE ARE PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE WE HAVE **10** PRISON GROUPS AFFILIATING WITH TOLMM.**

### **HOME GROUP NEWS.**

TOLMM now offers affiliate status to Home Groups. Why this offer? Small groups no longer have to be alone [this never should be the case]. Experienced discipleship is available for servant leaders, and elders. Zoom meetings can be arranged for questions, and general discussion. Email us at: [tolmm@etz-chayim.org](mailto:tolmm@etz-chayim.org) or [philip@etz-chayim.org](mailto:philip@etz-chayim.org)

### **Home Groups joined:**

**Arizona – Elder Shawn Warren.**

**El Paso Texas – Rabbi Gabriel Levi Martinez. Phone: 915-407-1776.**

Beit Ha Midrash is a Home Study Group in Las Cruces. They meet on Friday evenings. Contact them at [frietze96@gmail.com](mailto:frietze96@gmail.com). Group leaders are Ruben and Yvonne Gonzales and Jean Fietze-Gomez.

JSI-Judaic Studies Institute was founded by Rabbi Hammond and Rabbi Silver and is now called JSI Yeshiva, and you can check it out at [www.jsiyeshiva.com](http://www.jsiyeshiva.com). We have classes of all shapes and sizes from short term to long term with Certificates of Completion and up to all degrees for a ministry college established in Louisiana. Rabbi Michelle Johns is the Chief Administrative Officer, a Professor with JSI as is Rabbi Mordecai Silver who is President of JSI Yeshiva.

Ba-Peretz Messianic Ministries as an Affiliate from Illinois. If you live near Wheaton, ILL drop us a line and we will refer you to the contact person for the Home Group.

We have a new Home Group in Nevada: The Group name is ‘Yeshua’s Chesed Messianic Congregation’. We meet in Sun Valley (Reno Metro) on Shabbos morning. They can contact Elder Djan Fermaint at 775-462-5539.

Don’t forget... Rabbi Silver is available to answer any questions on his weekly Parashah teachings... plus more.

If you need prayer – send an email. Not only have we witnessed prayers answered, but new relationships have been formed in Yeshua... praise His Holy Name.

#### **FOR THOSE INTERESTED.**

Rabbi Philip Hammond has several ministry outreaches:

- Shabbat service 11am [AEST] 5:00pm Friday USA Mountain Time.
- Men’s group
- Weekly Bible Study.

Contact Rabbi Hammond at [Philip@etz-chayim.org](mailto:Philip@etz-chayim.org) for more information. Check out Rabbi Hammond’s ministry outreach at <https://www.etz-chayim.org/australia-affiliate/>.

ALL OF RABBI MORDECAI'S BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE ON AMAZON BY SEARCHING - **BOOKS BY RAV MORDECAI SILVER. THERE ARE 19 BOOKS.** RABBI HAMMOND HAS A BOOK ON AMAZON-SEARCH ON HIS NAME-**RABBI PHILIP HAMMOND OR EMUNAH CENTER.** **RABBI JOHNS HAS SEVERAL BOOKS ON AMAZON.**

Under His Wings,  
*Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph.D. and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D.*

## ***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.

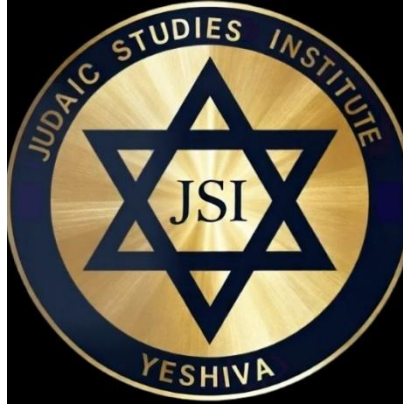
CHECK OUT RABBI MICHELLE JOHNS BOOKS ON AMAZON.

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 1-18-25**

**Sh'mot - Names**

**Exodus 1:1-6:1**

**Isaiah 27:6-28:13; 29:22-23**

**Jeremiah 1:1-2:3**

**Matthew 8:19**

**Revelation 14:12**

**Exodus 3:6**

***And He said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to gaze toward God.***

**Exodus 3:10-11**

***And now, go and I shall dispatch you to Pharaoh and you shall take My people the Children of Israel out of Egypt." Moses replied to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and that I should take the Children of Israel out of Egypt?"***

**Exodus 3:14-15**

***The Lord answered Moses; "I Shall Be As I Shall Be." And He said, "So shall you say to the Children of Israel, 'I Shall Be has sent me to you.'" God said further to Moses, "So shall you say to the Children of Israel, 'The Lord the God of your forefathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob has dispatched me to you. This is My Name forever, and this is My remembrance from generation to generation.'***

The Hebrew word for I Shall Be is *Hayah*.

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Two parts to the word. Ha and Yah. Ha meaning the and Yah meaning God. Simply put, God told Moses that His Name is God. That's it, that's all you need to know. That's all you need to tell them.

Now after the Lord told Moses what to say to the Children of Israel who He was Moses came back with this reply:

**Exodus 4:1**

***Moses responded and said, "But they will not believe me and they will not heed my voice, for they will say, 'The Lord did not appear to you.'"***

**Exodus 4:10**

***Moses replied to the Lord, "Please, my Lord, I am not a man of words, not since yesterday, nor since the day before yesterday, nor since You first spoke to Your servant, for I am heavy of mouth and heavy of speech."***

This brings to mind Peter before he experienced the presence of God personally in his life. Do you remember what happened?

**Matthew 26:69-72**

***Kefa was sitting outside in the courtyard when a servant girl came up to him, "You were with Y'shua from the Galil," she said. But he denied it in front of everyone— "I don't know what you're talking about!" He went out onto the porch, and another girl saw him and said to the people there, "This man was with Y'shua of Natzeret." Again he denied it, swearing, "I don't know the man!"***

**Exodus 4:11-12**

***Then the Lord said to him, "Who makes a mouth for man, or who makes one dumb or deaf, or sighted or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? So now, go! I shall be with your mouth and teach you what you should say."***

And we see the same situation in the Book of Jeremiah.

**Jeremiah 1:4-5**

***The word of the Lord came to me, saying,***

***"Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you left the womb, I sanctified you; I established you as a prophet unto the nations."***

But did Jeremiah say?

**Jeremiah 1:6**



***But I said, "Alas, my Lord God, see, I do not know how to speak, for I am just a youth!"***

And God replied:

**Jeremiah 1:7-9**

***Then the Lord said to me, "Do not say, 'I am just a youth'; rather, wherever I shall send you, you shall go, and whatever I shall command you, you shall speak. Do not fear them, for I am with you to rescue you—the word of the Lord." The Lord extended His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, "Behold! I have placed My words in your mouth.***

**Matthew 28:19-20**

***Therefore, go and make people from all nations into talmidim...***

***And teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember! I will be with you always...***

**Matthew 8:19**

***A Torah-teacher approached and said to him, "Rabbi, I will follow you wherever you go."***

**Revelation 14:12**

***This is when perseverance is needed on the part of God's people, those who observe His commands and exercise Y'shua's faithfulness.***

I am going to close with this thought which is in the following story.

### **Hide and Seek**

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Lubavitch, who was orphaned from his mother at the age of three, was raised by his grandfather, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi.

One day, little Menachem Mendel was sitting on his grandfather's lap. The child was pulling on the Rabbi's beard and calling: Zeideh! Zeideh! ('Grandfather! Grandfather!'). "But this isn't the zeideh," protested Rabbi Schneur Zalman, "this is zeideh's beard!"

So, the child grabbed his grandfather's head: "This is the zeideh," he tried. "Oh no" said Rabbi Schneur Zalman "this is the zeideh's head. Where is zeideh?"

And so it went. The child pointed in turn to his zeideh's eyes, hands, body. "But where is zeideh?" Rabbi Schneur Zalman kept insisting.

Suddenly, the child was off his grandfather's lap and behind the door. From his hiding place, little Mendel cried out: ZEI--DEH!! "What is it?" called the Rabbi, turning towards the child. "Aha," exclaimed the grandson, "there is the zeideh! "

Do we do as that little boy did and seek out God wanting to serve Him or do we do as so many others have done throughout the Bible and seek to hide from God, pretending that we do not hear Him. Or do we argue with God, knowing full well that He is right, telling Him that we are not the right one for the job.

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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 Shemot: Summary**

### ***A new Pharaoh rises***

***Exodus 1:1 - 6:1***

#### **A New Pharaoh Rises**

The sons of Israel in Egypt were fruitful in births, and the people grew strong. Now a new Pharaoh rose up over Egypt who knew nothing of Joseph. This Pharaoh was worried that the Israelite nation was too mighty. First, he levied a tax on them, then he decided to make them slaves.

Next, Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah, to kill all the Hebrew baby boys. But the midwives feared God and told Pharaoh that the Hebrew woman gave birth before they could arrive. God dealt well with the midwives and the Hebrews continued to multiply. The Pharaoh then commanded the people to throw every Hebrew baby boy into the river.

#### **Moses is Born**

Now, a Hebrew couple from the house of Levi had a son and kept him hidden for three months. When the mother could hide him no longer, she wove a basket, laid the child in it and placed it among the reeds by the banks of the river. Her sister placed herself at a distance to see what would happen to him.

When the Pharaoh's daughter came down to the river to bathe, she saw the basket with the crying child. She took pity on him so that when the baby's sister asked, "Shall I call a Hebrew woman to nurse the baby for you?" she said yes. The sister then fetched her mother. When the child had grown sufficiently, the mother brought him to the Pharaoh's daughter. She named him Moses because "I drew him from the water."

#### **Moses Strikes an Egyptian**

When Moses was an adult, he could see the burdens of his Hebrew brethren. One day, he saw an Egyptian man beating a Hebrew man. Moses turned this way and that and when he saw that no one was there, he struck down the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

The next day Moses came upon two Hebrew men fighting. Moses said to the one in the wrong. "Why are you striking down your neighbor?" The man replied, "Who has made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?"

"So the matter is known," Moses said in fear.

Pharaoh heard too and sought to kill Moses. Moses thus fled to the land of Midian. There he watered the sheep for the daughters of the priest of Midian and later married the priest's daughter, Tzipporah. She bore a son whom he called Gershom, for "I was a stranger in a foreign land."

In Egypt Pharaoh died, but the sons of Israel remained slaves. God heard the Hebrew slaves' cry of distress and remembered the covenant God had made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

## **The Burning Bush**

Meanwhile Moses was tending sheep for his father-in-law, Yithro, near the mountain of God at Horeb. An angel of God appeared to him in the heart of a fire from the midst of a thorn bush. He saw and lo! the thorn bush was on fire but was not consumed. Moses looked at this great sight and went to see why the thorn bush did not burn up.

God called to Moses from the middle of the bush, "Moses, Moses."

"Here I am!" Moses said.

"Do not step here!" said God. "Take off your shoes for the place you are standing on is ground with a holy destiny. I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob."

And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look toward God.

God continued, "I have seen the affliction of My people in Egypt and have heard their cries as slaves. Now I have come down to rescue them from the hand of Egypt and bring them to a good and spacious land, a land that can flow with milk and honey. Now, therefore go, I will send you to Pharaoh and to bring My people, the sons of Israel, out of Egypt."

"Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the sons of Israel out of Egypt?" asked Moses.

"I will be with you. If you will bring the people out from Egypt, you will become the servants of God upon this mountain."

"But" Moses said, "when I tell this to the sons of Israel, they will ask me 'What is God's name?'"

"I shall be that which I wish to be," replied God. "So say to them, 'God, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has sent me to you.' This is My Name for the distant future, and this is My memorial for every generation. Go and gather the elders of Israel and tell them. They will hearken to your voice. Then go to Pharaoh and say, 'God, the God of the Hebrews has met with us and now please let us go on a three day's journey into the wilderness to offer up a sacrifice to God, our God.'"

## **God Gives Moses The Signs**

"Now," God continued, "I know that Pharaoh will not let you go, not even by the threat of a mighty hand. Then I will stretch out My hand and strike down Egypt with all My miracles. After that, he will send you away and you shall leave with gold and silver and clothing."

"But what if they do not believe that God appeared to me."

"What is that in your hand?" God said.

"A staff."

"Throw it on the ground."

Moses threw his staff on the ground, and it turned into a serpent and Moses fled from it.

"Put out your hand," God said, "and grasp it by its tail." Moses did and it turned back into a staff.

God then had Moses put his hand to his chest. When Moses took out his hand, it turned leprous. When he put it back into his chest, it turned to flesh again.

"If they do not believe the first sign," said God, "they will believe the second sign. But if they still do not believe, you shall take the waters of the river and pour it on dry land. The water will then turn into blood."

"O Lord, I am not a man who is good at speaking."

"Who has made man's mouth or who makes one mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Is it not I, God? And now, go! I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say."

"Oh Lord," said Moses. "Please send this message through someone else."

Then the anger of God was kindled against Moses. God said, "Aaron, your brother, will gladly speak for you. Behold! He is coming to meet you. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what you shall do. And you shall take into your hand this staff with which you are to perform the signs."

So, Moses took his wife and his sons and returned to Egypt.

## Let My People Go

God said to Moses, "You shall perform convincing wonders before Pharaoh, but I shall harden his heart and he will not let the people go until you will say to Pharaoh: This is what God has said, 'Israel is My son, My first-born. I have told you, let My son go so that he may serve Me, but you have refused to let him go. I will therefore kill your own son, your own first-born.'"

God told Aaron to meet Moses. Moses told Aaron what God said. Moses and Aaron then gathered the elders of the sons of Israel. Aaron uttered the words that God had spoken to Moses and the signs were performed. The people bowed their heads in trust.

Afterwards, Moses and Aaron went to Pharaoh saying, "God, the God of Israel says: 'Let My people go so that they may celebrate a festival for Me in the wilderness.'"

"Who is God that I should let Israel go?" said Pharaoh. "I do not know God and I will not let Israel go." That same day Pharaoh commanded that the slaves were to no longer to be given straw to prepare bricks. "Instead," said Pharaoh, "the slaves are to go and gather themselves their own straw. But the quota of bricks they are to make remains the same. Because they are lazy, they cry for this holiday to worship their God."

The Hebrew slaves went to Moses and Aaron and said, "May God look down upon you and judge, because you have brought us into foul odor in the eyes of Pharaoh!"

Moses returned to God and said, "My Lord! For what purpose have you made this misfortune for the people? Why did You send me to do this? Ever since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, Pharaoh has abused the people even more and You have not rescued Your people even from this?"

And God said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh; for by a strong hand will he let them go. Indeed, by a strong hand will he drive them out of his land!"

## Parashat Shemot Discussion Questions

- 1. God heard the cry of the Hebrew slaves. Do you feel God hears your cries of distress? How can you tell if God is listening? How can you tell if God cares?**
- 2. Do you think God could make a burning bush not consume from the fire? Why or why not?**
- 3. God tells Moses what actions to take and how Pharaoh will respond. God foresees exactly what will happen. Do you believe that God foresees what will happen to people? What do you think God foresees for you?**
- 4. Moses wants proof to show the elders of Israel that God spoke to him. What proof would you give that God speaks to you?**
- 5. Do you believe that God makes people mute or deaf or seeing or blind? Why or why not?**

# Haftarah for Shemot

## *Promises of hope, threats of destruction*

### **Isaiah 27:6-28:13, 29:22-23**

Samaria, the capitol of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was destroyed by the Assyrians in 721 BCE. In the Haftarah read by Ashkenazi Jews this week, Isaiah gives a prophecy concerning Israel, explaining why it fell to its enemies, but also giving hope for a future of redemption.

Though Isaiah's primary concern is to bring a message of doom for Israel, he begins noting that eventually, "Israel shall sprout and blossom, and the face of the world shall be covered with fruit" (Isaiah 27:6).

Immediately following this statement of forthcoming redemption, Isaiah launches into a tirade against the Israelites and their worship of the Syrian goddess Asherah. He chastises the leaders and priests of Israel, calling them drunk, implying that their judgment is poor. Isaiah is outright disgusted by the behavior of Israelites, saying, "Yea, all tables are covered with vomit and filth, so that no space is left" (Isaiah 28:8).

But the people are not receptive to the words of the prophet, and Isaiah promises that as long as they refuse to repent, "they shall fall backward, and be injured and snared and captured" (Isaiah 28:13).

Though much of what Isaiah has to say is pessimistic and angry, the rabbis chose to end the haftarah with two lines from a later chapter (Isaiah 29:22-23). These lines emphasize the redemption that will come to the people from God, just as it came for Abraham and his descendants

## **Connection to *Parashat Shemot***

In Parashat Sh'mot the people of Israel are enslaved by the Egyptians, suffering greatly at the hands of others. Finally, Moses arrives and begins to move the people toward redemption.

Similarly, in Isaiah, the people in the Kingdom of Israel suffered greatly, though in this case it is suffering that has been brought on by their own lack of faith in God, and by the corruption and greed of their leaders. Isaiah brings them a message of hope and redemption.

## **Jeremiah As Moses**

In Sephardic congregations the Haftarah is taken from the beginning of the Book of Jeremiah. When God first begins speaking to Jeremiah and charges him with a mission, Jeremiah is reticent to receive the word of God. Just like Moses, Jeremiah tells God that he will not be a good messenger. He is just a boy, he protests.

But God will not take no for an answer and immediately gives Jeremiah two metaphorical visions of an almond branch and steaming pot. These visions are meant to motivate Jeremiah to embrace his mission and to inspire him to go to Jerusalem where he will remind the people not to dishonor God, and not to eat of the first fruits that are set aside for God.

Jeremiah's leadership and the way he is anointed as a leader are parallel to Moses' initial encounter with God and ascension to leader of the Israelites.



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

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

**DECISIONS**



## DECISIONS...

- WHICH TOKEN WILL YOU CHOOSE? THIS IS THE QUESTION WE ARE ADDRESSING TODAY...



- AS THE WATERS OF LIFE BECOME MORE MUDDIED – DECISIONS BECOME HARDER TO MAKE...

## DECISIONS

- AND IF IT SEEM EVIL UNTO YOU TO SERVE YHVH, CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY WHOM YE WILL SERVE; WHETHER THE GODS WHICH YOUR FATHERS SERVED THAT WERE ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE FLOOD, OR THE GODS OF THE AMORITES, IN WHOSE LAND YE DWELL: BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE YHVH. JOSHUA 24:15
- THIS PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE IS VERY RELEVANT NO MATTER WHAT CHOICES ARE PRESENTED TO YOU ...
- AND GOD SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHTS IN THE FIRMAMENT OF THE HEAVEN TO DIVIDE THE DAY FROM THE NIGHT; AND LET THEM BE FOR SIGNS, AND FOR SEASONS, AND FOR DAYS, AND YEARS: GENESIS 1:14
- AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, IF THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE THEE, NEITHER HEARKEN TO THE VOICE OF THE FIRST SIGN, THAT THEY WILL BELIEVE THE VOICE OF THE LATTER SIGN. <sup>9</sup> AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS, IF THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE ALSO THESE TWO SIGNS, NEITHER HEARKEN UNTO THY VOICE, THAT THOU SHALT TAKE OF THE WATER OF THE RIVER, AND POUR IT UPON THE DRY LAND: AND THE WATER WHICH THOU TAKEST OUT OF THE RIVER SHALL BECOME BLOOD UPON THE DRY LAND. EXODUS 4:8-9
- SIGN/OTH תֹּיֵא = EVIDENCE, MARK, ENSIGN, FLAG, TOKEN ...
- AND I WILL PUT A DIVISION BETWEEN MY PEOPLE AND THY PEOPLE: TOMORROW SHALL THIS SIGN BE. EXODUS 8:23
- DIVISION/P'DUTH תִּפְּוֹ = REDEMPTION, REDEEM, DELIVERANCE, PRESERVE ... @ ISAIAH 50:2...

## DECISIONS...

- SO FAR, WE HAVE SEEN THAT A SIGN FROM YHVH HAS SIGNIFICANT MEANING/S FOR HIS PEOPLE...
- WE SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DIVISION, [ **DELIVERANCE, REDEMPTION AND PRESERVATION**] AND THE WORD **SIGN**. SO LET'S TAKE A CLOSER LOOK BETWEEN THESE TWO CONNECTIONS, AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR US TODAY AND BEYOND...



- A WELL KNOWN SIGN...

## DECISIONS...

- THE SIGNS WE SHOULD BE SEEKING ARE THOSE THAT TELL US WE ARE INDIVIDUAL CHILDREN OF BIBLICAL ISRAEL, SAFE IN THE HAND OF OUR FATHER.
- SO LET'S TAKE THIS ONE STEP FURTHER. IN TRYING TO MAKE A POINT - IMAGINE OUR CREATOR IS LOOKING DOWN UPON US SEARCHING FOR SIGNS, THAT TELL HIM WE ARE HIS PECULIAR PEOPLE ...
- WHAT DO YOU BELIEVE HE WOULD BE LOOKING FOR? I SUGGEST A FEW STAND OUTS...
- **THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME: <sup>4</sup> THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE, OR ANY LIKENESS OF ANY THING THAT IS IN HEAVEN ABOVE, OR THAT IS IN THE EARTH BENEATH, OR THAT IS IN THE WATER UNDER THE EARTH: <sup>5</sup> THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN THYSELF TO THEM, NOR SERVE THEM: FOR I YHVH THY GOD AM A JEALOUS GOD, VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION OF THEM THAT HATE ME; <sup>6</sup> AND SHEWING MERCY UNTO THOUSANDS OF THEM THAT LOVE ME, AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS: <sup>7</sup> THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF YHVH THY GOD IN VAIN; FOR YHVH WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTY THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN. <sup>8</sup> REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY, TO KEEP IT HOLY. <sup>9</sup> SIX DAYS SHALT THOU LABOUR, AND DO ALL THY WORK: <sup>10</sup> BUT THE SEVENTH DAY IS THE SABBATH OF YHVH THY GOD: IN IT THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK, THOU, NOR THY SON, NOR THY DAUGHTER, THY MANSERVANT, NOR THY MAIDSERVANT, NOR THY CATTLE, NOR THY STRANGER THAT IS WITHIN THY GATES: <sup>11</sup> FOR IN SIX DAYS YHVH MADE HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IN THEM IS, AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY: WHEREFORE YHVH BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY, AND HALLOWED IT ...**

## DECISIONS

- <sup>12</sup> HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER: THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG UPON THE EARTH AND WHICH YHVH THY GOD GIVETH THEE.
- <sup>13</sup> THOU SHALT NOT KILL.
- <sup>14</sup> THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.
- <sup>15</sup> THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.
- <sup>16</sup> THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS AGAINST THY NEIGHBOUR.
- <sup>17</sup> THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOUR'S HOUSE, THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE, NOR HIS MANSERVANT, NOR HIS MAIDSERVANT, NOR HIS OX, NOR HIS ASS, NOR ANY THING THAT IS THY NEIGHBOUR'S. EXODUS 20:1-17
- QUESTION – IF THESE WERE SIGNS TO DETERMINE YOUR FAITHFULNESS HOW ARE YOU GOING?
- THE 10 WORDS OR COMMANDMENTS ARE THE VERY FOUNDATION FOR THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL TO LIVE BY. YET WE FIND PEOPLE WANTING TO MOVE BEYOND THESE FOUNDATIONS AND BEGIN LOOKING FOR SIGNS TO SCRATCH ITCHING EARS...
- FOR THE SEASON WILL COME WHEN THEY WILL NOT ENDURE SOUND DOCTRINE; BUT AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS SHALL THEY HEAP TO THEMSELVES TEACHERS, WHO TICKLE THEIR EARS; <sup>4</sup> AND THEY SHALL TURN AWAY THEIR EARS FROM THE TRUTH, AND SHALL BE TURNED UNTO FICTION. 2 TIMOTHY 4:3-4

## DECISIONS

- IF WE ARE LED AWAY THROUGH STORIES OF FICTION, FALSE CLAIMS, AND UNBIBLICAL DOCTRINE – WE WILL NOT BEAR WITNESS TO THE SIGNS OUR FATHER IS LOOKING FOR ...
- I FIND YESHUA'S DISCUSSION WITH SOME CHARACTERS INTRIGUING:
- A WICKED AND ADULTEROUS GENERATION SEEKETH AFTER A SIGN; AND THERE SHALL NO SIGN BE GIVEN UNTO IT, BUT THE SIGN OF THE PROPHET JONAS. AND HE LEFT THEM, AND DEPARTED. MATTHEW 16:4
- WICKED/PONEROS = EVIL, HURTFUL, MALICIOUS, MISCHIEVOUS ...
- SIGN/SEMION = TOKEN, MARK, EVIDENCE ... THE GREEK EQUIVALENT TO OTH
- SO WE SEE THERE ARE WICKED SIGNS THAT ARE NOT PLEASING TO YESHUA - YHVH ...
- WICKED & ADULTERESS ARE TEAMED UP HERE – MEANING A PEOPLE WHO SEEK SIGNS OUTSIDE OF THOSE GIVEN BY YHVH, AND YESHUA – SIGNS THAT TICKLE ITCHING EARS. YOU WOULD THINK THE SIGN OF JONAH – MESSIAH RESURRECTED WOULD HAVE BEEN A REASONABLE SIGN – BUT THEY WANTED SIGNS ACCORDING TO THEIR ADULTERESS WAYS ...
- WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL, THAT WE DON'T NOT ONLY ASK FOR SUCH WICKED SIGNS, BUT THAT WE DON'T FOLLOW SIGNS SOME CLAIM TO BE FROM YHVH, BUT ARE NOT.
- BUT IN VAIN THEY DO WORSHIP ME, TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN. MATTHEW 15:9

## DECISIONS...

- IS IT POSSIBLE THAT MANY CHILDREN OF ISRAEL ARE SEEKING SIGNS THAT ARE NOT OF THE FATHER? THERE IS A SIGN BETWEEN YHVH AND HIS PEOPLE – WHAT COULD THAT POSSIBLY BE?...
- MOREOVER ALSO I GAVE THEM MY SABBATHS; TO BE A SIGN BETWEEN ME AND THEM, THAT THEY MIGHT KNOW THAT I AM YHVH THAT SANCTIFY THEM. EZEKIEL 20:12
- SO WOULD OUR FATHER BE LOOKING TO SEE IF WE KEEP HIS INSTRUCTIONS – ESPECIALLY HIS SABBATHS...
- WOULD IT BE PROBABLE THAT ONE OF THE SIGNS OUR FATHER WOULD BE LOOKING FOR FROM US, ACTUALLY BE US LOOKING FOR SIGNS FROM HIM? HOW ARE WE DOING WITH THAT?...
- IT IS SO EASY TO GET CAUGHT UP IN THE WRONG SIGNS:
- AND SEDUCETH THEM THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH BY THE MEANS OF THOSE SIGNS WHICH HE HAD POWER TO DO IN THE SIGHT OF THE BEAST; SAYING TO THEM THAT DWELL ON THE EARTH, THAT THEY SHOULD MAKE AN IMAGE TO THE BEAST, WHICH HAD THE WOUND BY A SWORD, AND DID LIVE. REVELATION 13:14
- FOR THEY ARE THE SPIRITS OF DEVILS, WORKING SIGNS, WHICH GO FORTH UNTO THE KINGS OF THE EARTH AND OF THE WHOLE WORLD, TO GATHER THEM TO THE BATTLE OF THAT GREAT DAY OF GOD ALMIGHTY. REVELATION 16:14

## DECISIONS...

- AND THE BEAST WAS TAKEN, AND WITH HIM THE FALSE PROPHET THAT BROUGHT SIGNS BEFORE HIM, WITH WHICH HE DECEIVED THEM THAT HAD RECEIVED THE MARK OF THE BEAST, AND THEM THAT WORSHIPPED HIS IMAGE. THESE BOTH WERE CAST ALIVE INTO A LAKE OF FIRE BURNING WITH BRIMSTONE. REVELATION 19:20
- I BELIEVE IT IS SO IMPORTANT TO BE WEARING THE SIGNS OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER IN THIS DAY AND AGE ... NOT SO MUCH FOR HIM TO RECOGNIZE US, BUT FOR US TO DRAW CLOSER TO HIM, AND HAVE THE CONFIDENCE WE ARE HIS PECULIAR PEOPLE ...
- NOW THEREFORE, IF YE WILL OBEY MY VOICE INDEED, AND KEEP MY COVENANT, THEN YE SHALL BE A PECULIAR TREASURE UNTO ME ABOVE ALL PEOPLE: FOR ALL THE EARTH IS MINE: EXODUS 19:5
- FOR THOU ART AN HOLY PEOPLE UNTO THE LORD THY GOD, AND THE LORD HATH CHOSEN THEE TO BE A PECULIAR PEOPLE UNTO HIMSELF, ABOVE ALL THE NATIONS THAT ARE UPON THE EARTH. DEUTERONOMY 14:2
- WHO GAVE HIMSELF FOR US, THAT HE MIGHT REDEEM US FROM ALL INIQUITY, AND PURIFY UNTO HIMSELF A PECULIAR PEOPLE, ZEALOUS OF GOOD WORKS. TITUS 2:14
- SUGGEST GOOD WORKS ARE A SIGN OUR FATHER IS LOOKING FOR – A SIGN BOTH CHRISTIANITY AND JUDISM WEAR PRETTY WELL ... BARUCH HASHEM. SO THE DECISION MAKING PROCESS CONTINUES – WHICH TOKEN/SIGN WILL YOU CHOOSE TO DISPLAY?? BECAUSE REMEMBER IN YOUR CHOICE...
- THERE IS NO GOD LIKE THE GOD OF ISRAEL, AND NO NATION LIKE ISRAEL ...

# Hebraic Life



## Is There a Jewish Afterlife?

***Judaism is famously ambiguous about what happens when we die.***

What happens after we die?

Judaism is famously ambiguous about this matter. The immortality of the soul, the World to Come, and the resurrection of the dead all feature prominently in Jewish tradition, but exactly what these things are and how they relate to each other has always been vague.

Jewish conceptions of heaven and hell — *gan eden* (Garden of Eden) and *gehinnom*, respectively — are associated with the belief in immortality and/or the World to Come, and were also developed independent of these concepts.

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Most Jewish ideas about the afterlife developed in post-biblical times.

### **What the Bible Says**

The Bible itself has very few references to life after death. *Sheol*, the bowels of the earth, is portrayed as the place of the dead, but in most instances Sheol seems to be more a metaphor for oblivion than an actual place where the dead “live” and retain consciousness.

The notion of resurrection appears in two late biblical sources, Daniel 12 and Isaiah 25-26.

Daniel 12:2 — “Many of those that sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, others to reproaches, to everlasting abhorrence” — implies that resurrection will be followed by a day of judgment. Those judged favorably will live forever and those judged to be wicked will be punished.



## Resurrection and the Messiah

Later Jewish tradition, however, is not clear about exactly who will be resurrected, when it will happen, and what will take place.

Some sources imply that the resurrection of the dead will occur during the messianic era. Others indicate that resurrection will follow the messianic era. Similarly, according to some, only the righteous will be resurrected, while according to others, everyone will be resurrected and — as implied in Daniel — a day of judgment will follow.

The Daniel text probably dates to the second century BCE, and at some point, during the two centuries that followed, another afterlife idea entered Judaism: the immortality of the soul, the notion that the human soul lives on even after the death of the body. In the Middle Ages, Jewish mystics expanded this idea, developing theories about reincarnation — the transmigration of the soul.

## The World to Come

The World to Come (*olam haba*) is the most ubiquitous Jewish idea related to the end of days. It appears in early rabbinic sources as the ultimate reward of the individual Jew (and possibly the righteous gentile). The Talmud contains scattered descriptions of the World to Come, sometimes comparing it to spiritual things such as studying Torah, other times comparing it to physical pleasures, such as sex.

However, not surprisingly, it is not obvious what exactly the “World to Come” is and when it will exist. According to Nahmanides, among others, the World to Come is the era that will be ushered in by the resurrection of the dead, the world that will be enjoyed by the righteous who have merited additional life. According to Maimonides, the World to Come refers to a time even beyond the world of the resurrected. He believed that the resurrected will eventually die a *second* death, at which point the souls of the righteous will enjoy a spiritual, bodiless existence in the presence of God.

Still, in other sources, the World to Come refers to the world inhabited by the righteous immediately following death—i.e. heaven, Gan Eden. In this view, the World to Come exists *now*, in some parallel universe.

## Heaven and Hell

Indeed, the notion of heaven and hell may be the most ambiguous of all Jewish afterlife ideas. References to Gehinnom as a fiery place of judgment can be found in the apocalyptic literature of the Second Temple period. The Talmud embellished this idea, claiming that Gehinnom is 60 times hotter than earthly fire (Berakhot 57b).

The earliest reference to Gan Eden (the Garden of Eden) and Gehinnom as a pair is probably the rabbinic statement of the 1st century sage Yochanan ben Zakkai: “There are two paths before me, one leading to Gan Eden and the other to Gehinnom (Berakhot 28b).”

Many questions remain, however. If the sources that refer to the World to Come are referring to Gan Eden, then what is the world of the resurrected? And if judgment immediately follows death, then what need is there for the judgment that will follow the resurrection?

Though some Jewish scholars have tried to clarify these ideas, it would be impossible to reconcile all the Jewish texts and sources that discuss the afterlife.

## **עברי - Hebrew**

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

**Mouth / פה**

**Pronounced: PEH**

The Hebrew expression *mi peh l'ozen*, which literally means from mouth to ear, is equivalent to the English expression word of mouth.



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

#### **A Piece of Chocolate Cake**

Chaim Yankel Epstein was a happy fellow but unfortunately grossly overweight. Concerned for his well-being his co-workers forced him to go on a diet.

For three weeks, Chaim Yankel resisted temptation, even changing his route to work to avoid his favorite bakery – Isaac's Bakery.

But then one day, to the horror of his workmates, Chaim Yankel turned up at the office clutching a massive chocolate cake.

When his colleagues berated him, Chaim Yankel was quick to offer an explanation.

"I accidentally drove by Isaac's Bakery this morning and there were so many tasty treats in the window. I thought it was basherte, that I was supposed to eat something, so I davened to Hashem, saying: "If you want me to have one of those delicious chocolate cakes, show me a sign – let there be a parking space directly in front of the bakery. **And sure enough, the eighth time around the block, there it was!"**

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