



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 2-22-25 MISHPATIM

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 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 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.

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 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 or philip@etz-chayim.org

Home Groups joined:

Arizona – Elder Shawn Warren.

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

Beit HaMidrash is a Home Study Group in Las Cruces. They meet on Friday evenings. Contact them at 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. 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 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.

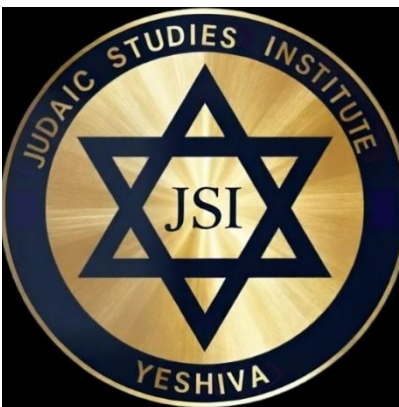
FOR RABBI HAMMOND'S BOOK, **HIS PERFECT GRACE**, GO TO AMAZON.COM AS WELL.

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. OUR EMAIL ADDRESS IS 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

MESSAGE FOR 2-22-25

Mishpatim – Judgements

Exodus 21:1-24:18

Jeremiah 34:8-22

33:25-26

Matthew 17:1-11

Exodus 1:1

And these are the ordinances that you shall place before them:

By placing this section of the Torah (which deals primarily with civil law) side by side with the Ten Commandments and the laws of the altar provide this insight into Judaism.

Religion is not limited to ritual and spirituality. To the contrary, all areas of life are intertwined and all things in life whether spiritual or business related find their source in the Torah.

All life's activities are tied together with God.

*relate the connection with the Tzitzith...

Jeremiah 33:25-26

Thus said the Lord: If My covenant with the night and with the day would not be; had I not set up the laws of heaven and earth, so too would I reject the seed of Jacob and My servant David, from selecting from his descendants rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; for I will return their captivity, and I will show them mercy.”

Matthew 5:17-19

Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yod or a stroke will pass from the Torah—not until everything that must happen has happened. So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Isaiah 29:13

The Lord said: Inasmuch as this people has drawn close, with its mouth and with its lips it has honored Me, yet it has distanced its heart from Me—their fear of Me is like rote learning of human commands—

Matthew 15:8-9

These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from Me. Their worship of me is useless, because they teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines.

Does the Torah demand more than a person can deliver? Is it out of touch with human nature? Are we incapable of truly living up to its lofty ideals?

What is mankind's holiness? In one sense it means uniqueness. Being uplifted. How? It's by being in control of one's life. Enjoy life; but don't become a slave to enjoyment. Don't go to the other extreme either. The Torah doesn't require us to reject the material world. Pleasures and possessions can bring us closer to God if we are in control of our consumption. And the reverse of that is that once we are dedicated to the material world for its sake alone, then we lower ourselves, and we relinquish control. If we are dedicated to a higher ideal, then to the degree that we utilize our physical existence as a means to that end, we have achieved holiness.

This week's parsha contains the many Torah laws governing society. Lending money, responsibilities toward the poor, responsibilities of renters and borrowers, damages, personal injury, and many more can be found.

The message is: live as a physical being in a physical world, but approach life with an ideal and a goal; with a seriousness. Use physical existence for its intended purpose. That is, as a vehicle; a means to an end, a ladder which is grounded on earth, but climbs aloft into the heavens.

How does one begin to climb? Our sages give us the prescription. "Torah learning is great, for it is a catalyst for action". Torah study opens the eyes to new perspectives. Torah study shapes attitudes and encourages elevated behavior one rung of the ladder at a time.

So, is Torah observance beyond humankind? That is not the goal. The goal is to live like people - holy people. Through learning with a sincere and serious attitude, we can indeed begin to fulfill God's plan for us.

Mark 7:8

You depart from God's command and hold onto human tradition.

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 Mishpatim: Summary

Moses informs the people of numerous ethical and ritual laws and seals the covenant between the Children of Israel and God.

Exodus 21:1-24:18

God has just given The Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. The people fell back and stood at a distance.

Moses then tells the people many detailed rules:

More Rules

When you have a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years and in the seventh be freed.

Anyone who murders intentionally shall be put to death. If this murder occurs without intention, there is a place for this murderer to flee.

Honor your parents and do not strike them.

When there is a quarrel and one strikes another, the one who strikes shall go unpunished except he must pay for the sufferer's cure.

When someone strikes a slave with a rod and he dies, the striker must be punished.

If two men fight and a pregnant woman is hit and miscarries, the husband shall fine the one responsible. But if the pregnant woman dies, then you must compensate a life for life, eye for

eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burns, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

When anyone strikes a slave's eye or tooth, the slave shall be set free.

When an ox gores someone, it shall be put to death and not eaten. If the ox is known to gore people and does so, then the ox and the owner shall be put to death.

When anyone opens a pit or leaves one uncovered and an animal falls into it, the person leaving the pit uncovered is responsible for the harm done to the animal. He must make fair payment for the loss but may keep the dead animal.

If a thief is caught with stolen goods, the thief shall pay double the value of what is stolen.

If a person permits his animal to graze on another person's field, then the restitution shall be based on the field when it is most plentiful.

The person who starts a fire must pay for the property lost by the fire.

When a man gives money or goods to another for safekeeping and they are stolen, then the thief shall pay double when caught.

When a man gives another livestock to guard and the livestock dies or is missing without an eyewitness, then an oath must be given before God in court. Guilt will then be decided and fair payment given.

When a man borrows an animal and it dies of injuries without the owner present, then fair payment is due to the owner. If the owner is present, no payment is necessary.

If a man seduces an unmarried, sexually untouched woman, then he must make her his wife. If the father refuses to give her to him, he must still pay a fair rate for untouched brides.

You shall not tolerate a sorceress.

Whoever lies with a beast sexually shall be put to death.

Whoever sacrifices to a god other than the Lord alone shall be utterly destroyed.

You shall not oppress nor do any wrong to strangers, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

You shall bring no harm to any widow or orphan, lest in God's anger you become a widow and your children become orphans.

If you lend money to My people, especially the poor, do not act as a creditor nor take interest.

Return to your neighbor what it is you borrow before the sun sets.

You shall not offend God, nor put a curse upon the leaders of your people.

You shall not delay in offering to God the first bounty of your harvest and the first born among your sons and your animals.

Do not eat flesh torn by beasts in the field. Instead, cast it to the dogs.

You must not utter any falsehood, nor follow others to evil. Neither shall you favor a poor man.

When you see a wandering animal, return it to its owner. Help all animals, even if they are the animals of your enemy.

Keep far from any false matter and do not hurt the innocent and righteous, for I will not free one who is guilty.

You shall accept no bribes, for bribery blinds the clear-sighted and turns the words of the righteous to falsehood.

Six years shall you plant and reap the harvest, but the seventh year you shall let it be for the poor and the animals to graze.

Six days you shall do all your tasks, and on the seventh day you shall cease from work, so that you and your animals, your servers and stranger may recover.

Make no mention of any other god.

Three New Holidays

Three times a year, you shall have a feast for Me. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover) to remember how God delivered you from Egypt out of the house of bondage. The Feast of Harvest (Sukkot), to honor Me with the first and choicest of fruits, and the Feast of Ingathering (Shavuot), at the end of the year, when you reap the results of your work.

You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk.

I am sending an angel before you to guard you on the way and to bring you to the place that I have made ready. If that which is Mine is heeded, I will be an enemy to your enemies and a foe to your foes.

When My angel brings you in contact with other peoples, you shall not bow down to their gods in worship, nor follow their practices, but shall tear them down. You shall serve the Lord your God and God will bless your bread and water and there shall be health and healing in the land.

Early in the morning, Moses set up an altar at the foot of the mountain, with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He made an animal offering to the Lord, saying aloud, "This blood seals the covenant which the Lord now makes with you."

Then God said to Moses “Come up to Me on the mountain and I will give you the tables of stone with My commandments so that you can teach them.”

God told Moses to leave Aaron and Hur in charge of the Israelites. Then the glory of God rested upon Mount Sinai and the appearance of God was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain before the eyes of the sons of Israel. Moses entered into the midst of the cloud and ascended the mountain, and Moses remained upon the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

Parashat Mishpatim Discussion Questions

- 1) In the last portion, God gives us the Ten Commandments. How do the detailed rules in this portion compare to The Ten Commandments?**
- 2) What are some of the concerns of these rules within this portion? Are they relevant today? Which is your favorite rule?**
- 3) God commands Moses to come up Mount Sinai and write down The Ten Commandments on stone tablets so they can be taught. Why is it important to teach the Ten Commandments? Are the Ten Commandments strictly for Jews or for all people?**

Haftarah for Mishpatim

Haftarah Shekalim

A new king collects taxes for the upkeep of the Temple.

On Shabbat, during the month or so around Purim and Passover, we recite four special maftir readings, called the *Arba Parshiot* (four Torah portions). The four Saturdays are named after their readings: Shabbat *Shekalim*, Shabbat *Zakhor*, Shabbat *Parah*, and Shabbat *Hachodesh*.

Shabbat Shekalim takes place the Shabbat prior to Rosh Chodesh Adar or on Rosh Chodesh Adar itself if it happens to fall on a Saturday. On Shabbat Shekalim we read a *maftir* taken from Parashat Ki Tissa ([Shemot 30:11-16](#)).

The maftir describes a census of the Israelites during the time that they were wandering in the wilderness. Instead of counting the people directly, each man over the age of 20 was commanded to contribute half a shekel toward the construction and upkeep of the mishkan, the portable sanctuary, which was used until the Temple found its permanent residence in Jerusalem. When all of the money had been collected, one could calculate how many people were wandering together in the desert.

Later, the collection of the half shekel was done annually in time for the first day of the month of Nisan; we read this maftir a month before that as a reminder.

In the haftarah, we read about King Jehoash of Judah (9th century BCE), who assumed the throne when he was only seven years old after his grandmother, the evil Queen Athaliah, had his family killed. Athaliah herself was then murdered in the subsequent revolution, but Jehoash was hidden in the Temple by the wife of the High Priest Jehoiada.

The Sephardic custom is to begin reading at the end of chapter 11, in which Jehoiada and the people of Judah go to the temple of the foreign god Baal and smash the idols there. Then they rescue Jehoash from his hiding place, and he ascends to the throne.

Sephardim and Ashkenazim alike read from chapter 12, in which King Jehoash commands that all of the money being brought to the Temple should be set aside to make repairs to the structure, which had suffered severe damage.

After 23 years, King Jehoash notices that no repairs have been made on the Temple despite his earlier decree. He summons Jehoiada, who took a box, made a hole in the top, and put it right next to the altar in the Temple.

From then on the priests dropped any money that was brought to the Temple into the box. When the box began to fill up, Jehoiada and a royal scribe counted the money and delivered it to the men who were working on restoring the Temple. The money was used to pay for the carpenters, laborers, masons, and stonecutters, as well as for supplies such as wood and quarried stone.

Just as God commanded the people to contribute money for the upkeep of the mishkan, Jehoash and Jehoiada institutionalized a system to make sure that there were sufficient funds to keep the Temple clean and beautiful.



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

Rabbi Hammond can be contacted at – Philip@etz-chayim.org

[GALATIANS STUDY-LONG STUDY Parts 1-5](#)



GALATIANS STUDY

DIFFERENT GOSPEL

- What was this other Gospel Paul is talking about?
- Perhaps Matthew 15:7 gives an answer.
- **⁷ You hypocrites! Yesha'yahu was right when he prophesied about you,**
- **⁸ 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far away from me. ⁹ Their worship of me is useless, because they teach man-made rules as if they were doctrines.'"**

DIFFERENT GOSPEL

- When we discard and replace the word of truth from The Almighty– the biblical truth of Grace– we have another gospel on our hands.
- Paul certainly drives the point home in Galatians 1:89
- **⁸ But even if we (or an angel from heaven) should announce any "good news" to you other than what we have proclaimed to you, let that person be cursed!⁹ As we have said before, so I now repeat: if anyone proclaims to you "good news" other than what you received, let that person be under a curse!**

DIFFERENT GOSPEL

- Can we make some well informed conclusions on what Paul was telling these Galatians?
- Withdraw from & ditch man made instructions– instructions that misrepresented The Father, Yeshua, The Holy Spirit, even Moshe.
- Was Paul encouraging the Galatians to return to the written holy Torah of faith?
- Again, what was his instruction for those who didn't heed his words?

DIFFERENT GOSPEL.

- Accursed/Anathema - Greek Lexicons = Religious ban; excommunicate; To separate; destruction; estrangement from Christ.
- Note when Septuagint was written Jews wrote Anathema when translating Hebrew Charem חָרֵם @ in Deuteronomy 7:26 & Joshua 6:17
- Imagine telling believers that they are to accursed/anathema.
- Should or shouldn't we hold to the same thought as Paul?
- Considering this "accursed", can we put ourselves under such?

DIFFERENT GOSPEL.

- Yeshua was asked some valid questions.
- Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-31; Luke 10:25-28.
- These are the book ends of the Torah.
- Our conduct and walk must be inside these bookends.

- Deuteronomy 27:26 = Galatians 1:9

DIFFERENT GOSPEL

- Rabbis encourage Jews and converts to follow the “oral law”, the Talmud etc.
- We have a negative view of this— I ask is there some other “oral law” that comes to mind when we consider the above?

- Again we ask: What qualifies someone being accused?
- Perhaps we should ask; What qualifies one to escape being accused?

Hebraic Life



The Search for the Ten Lost Tribes

What happened to the ten tribes and where are they today?

Biblical archaeology has come a long way over the past century and a half. Discoveries in modern times have unearthed ancient cities, houses, temples, stone tablets, burial caves, coins, jewelry, clothing, weapons, and more, all testifying to what life really was like during the Biblical period.

There are some explorers who are searching for the ten lost tribes of Israel, the majority of the Jewish Nation who were conquered, forcibly displaced, presumably assimilated into other nations and lost contact with the rest of world Jewry over the centuries. In recent years, there has been a renewed enthusiasm in this search among certain native peoples of Asia, Africa, and beyond who retain traditions, customs, and historical memories connected to the Jewish People. But first, some historical context.

The 12 Tribes

The founding father of the Jewish nation was Abraham. The family legacy of monotheism (later to be known as Judaism) was passed on to his son Isaac who passed it on to his son Jacob who was given an alternative name, Israel. Israel had 12 sons; Reuben, Simon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph, and Benjamin. During a global famine, the family migrated to Egypt where they significantly multiplied. The 12 sons of Israel developed into the 12 tribes of Israel, otherwise known as the Children of Israel, which is how the Bible most often refers to the Jewish People. (The tribe of Joseph actually became two tribes, descendants of his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh.)

The 12 tribes eventually inherited 12 portions of territory within the Land of Israel and this remained so for centuries. About 3000 years ago, the 12 tribes were united into a unified political entity led by King David and was inherited by his son King Solomon. This unified Jewish monarchy lasted about 73 years and was called the Kingdom of Israel.

With the succession of Solomon's son Rehoboam, only two of the tribes, Judah and Benjamin, located in the south of the country, remained loyal to the Davidic dynasty while the other 10 tribes came under the leadership of a tax collector from the tribe of Ephraim known as Jeroboam. The realm of Jeroboam retained the namesake, the Kingdom of Israel since it included most of the Israelite tribes, and the realm of Rehoboam was known as the Kingdom of Judah, since the tribe of Judah was much larger than Benjamin.

The two Jewish kingdoms, Judah and Israel, sometimes went to war with each other and other times cooperated with one another both for trade purposes and to combat mutual external threats. In the year 722 BCE, the Assyrian Empire defeated the Kingdom of Israel and forcibly deported most of its population. The question that has piqued the interest of scholars for generations is: What happened to the ten tribes? Where did they end up and who are they today?

Where Did They End Up?

The Bible does give some clues as to destination points of their deportations from ancient Israel: "In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and exiled the Israelites to Assyria, and he repatriated them in Halah, and in Habor, the Gozan River, and the cities of Media" (Kings II 17:6).

Clearly, the general area we're talking about here refers to the Assyrian homeland in what is today northern Syria, northern Iraq and northwestern Iran, in other words modern day Kurdistan. Although the Biblical place names are contested, the reference to "the cities of Media" are commonly understood to be in the region of Hamadan, Iran. Although there are no traces of the lost tribes in that area, it could have been a starting point for a migration further to the east.

Afghanistan and Pakistan

The Pashtun tribes of Afghanistan and Pakistan who migrated to the area in ancient times from northwestern Iran, have long intrigued seekers of the ten lost tribes. On the surface, this is a group of 25 million people practicing a stringent form of Sunni Islam. Many members of the Pashtun are actually associated with the Taliban so it's not exactly the first place you would expect to find lost Jewish tribes, but there's more to it.

The Pashtun do have historical memories of their ancestors originating in ancient Israel. Their tribal names very much resemble Israelite tribal names; Rubeni, Gadi, Ashuri, Efridi, Shinwari, Lewani, and Yousefzai. Many Pashtun people have a distinct Semitic appearance in contrast to other tribes of Afghanistan and Pakistan. They circumcise male babies on the eighth day, women light candles on Friday night, they practice levirate marriage, and even have cities of refuge as mandated by Biblical law. Unlike typical Muslim custom, the Pashtun move back and forth when they read the Koran in a similar manner to Jews who engage in prayer and Torah study. Many of the Pashtun also have sidelocks similar to Orthodox Jews. Interesting connections!

India

Within India, there are several groups who claim descent from the ten tribes including the Bene Israel, the Bene Ephraim, and Bene Menashe. The Book of Esther seems to indicate that there were Jewish populations in all the provinces of King Ahasuerus: "It was written according to all that Mordecai commanded, to the Jews and to the satraps and the governors, and the princes of the provinces from India to Ethiopia" (Esther 8:9).

Jews of Cochin, A Malabar Jewish family (1900)

All these groups practiced the most basic levels of Judaism, circumcision and Shabbat, without retaining much more knowledge of their Jewish roots. Between the 18th and 20th centuries, these groups became increasingly in contact with world Jewry and started practicing Judaism to a greater extent. In the aftermath of Israeli independence, large chunks of these populations have immigrated to Israel, but many remain behind.

Ethiopia

The Beta Israel tribes of Ethiopia have long been theorized to be members of the ten lost tribes. According to one local tradition, they are descendants of the tribe of Dan who left ancient Israel prior to the exile. Another tradition places their origins in the union between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba whose visit to Jerusalem was recorded in the Book of Kings.

Interestingly enough, the Judaism practiced by Ethiopian Jews distorted certain Jewish customs like family purity. Ethiopian Jews also were not familiar with the common Jewish custom of tefillin (phylacteries), which is practiced by men. This points to a Judaism that could have been taught by a Jewish woman following her conversion, someone like the Queen of Sheba. Reference to Jewish communities in northeast Africa is even recorded by the Prophet Isaiah: "And it shall come to pass that on that day, the Lord shall continue to apply His hand a second time to acquire the rest of His people, that will remain from Assyria and from Egypt and from Pathros and from Cush and from Elam and from Sumeria and from Hamath and from the islands of the sea" (Isaiah 11:11).

Pathros is understood to be southern Egypt and Cush is interpreted either as Sudan or Ethiopia.

Conclusion

There are in fact dozens of ethnic groups around the world who claim Israelite origins, some with stronger cases and others with less evidence. Highlighted above are just the most common cases. It's interesting to note that today's Jewish population of some 15 million is not much more than it was 3000 years ago. As we uncover more and more ethnic groups with ties to ancient Israel, we are perhaps seeing a Jewish family reunion on a massive scale the likes of which were spoken by the prophets:

“So says the Lord God: Behold I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim and the tribes of Israel his companions, and I will place them with him with the stick of Judah, and I will make them into one stick, and they shall become one in My hand” (Ezekiel 37:19).

Hebrew - עִבְרִי

Word (s) of the Week

Praise God / הללויה

Pronounced: hah-leh-loo-YAH

A favorite word of the psalmist, *hallelujah* is found throughout the Bible's famous collection of religious poetry, and it is one of a handful of Hebrew words that have made it into English.



A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Rabbi's Dozen

A Rabbi and his wife were cleaning up the house. The Rabbi came across a box he didn't recognize. His wife told him to leave it alone, it was personal.

One day she was out and his curiosity got the best of him. He opened the box, and inside he found three eggs and \$2000. When his wife came home, he admitted that he opened the box, and he asked her to explain the contents to him. She told him that every time he had a bad sermon, she would put an egg in the box...

He interrupted, "In 20 years, only three bad sermons? That's not bad."

His wife continued... "and every time I got a dozen eggs, I would sell them for \$1."

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Philip Hammond
Phone: 0416087400 or
61 + 416087400
Philip@etz-chayim.org

