



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 10-28-23 LECH LECHA

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 or Venmo Link.

Tree of Life Messianic Ministries primarily focuses on its Prison Ministry and helping form groups in the prisons. TOLMM also seeks to help Home Groups and offers a covering for Home Groups and the combined experience of leadership

from Rabbi Philip Hammond and Rabbi Mordecai Silver. Group leaders can receive recognition as Elders under TOLMM, which will help in an advisory role. Your support is needed for the Prison Ministry due to continuing rising costs. We now have an Affiliate in Australia.

HOME GROUPS, CONGREGATIONS AND PEOPLE SEEKING FELLOWSHIP..

Shawn Warren lives in Arizona. If you know of someone who is looking for a group in that area, please let me know and I will send the information to Shawn. Elder Shawn Warren is an Elder affiliated with TOLMM and helps with one-on-one correspondence with inmates in our Prison Ministry Outreach. He also encourages people to contact us about affiliating with TOLMM through Home Groups and our help to group leaders.

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

There is a new Home Group in Las Cruces. For more information email tolmm@etz-chayim.org.

Michael and Gayle Michelucci are forming a new Home Group in Idaho.

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

We thank you for your support. Blessings in Messiah Yeshua, Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph. D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D. and our team

General News

TO SEARCH FOR MY BOOKS ON AMAZON ENTER “**BOOKS BY RAV MORDECAI SILVER**”. MINE ARE AVAILABLE IN PRINT FORMAT ONLY. I HAVE TWO NEW BOOKS ON AMAZON: RAV SHA’UL AND REFLECTIONS ON TORAH. TO SEE MORDECAI’S BOOKS, GO TO: [HTTPS://WWW.ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG/SHOP-OUR-STORE/PRINT-AND-KINDLE-BOOKS/](https://www.etz-chayim.org/shop-our-store/print-and-kindle-books/)

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

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

CHECK OUT RABBI MORDECAI SILVER’S 3 YEARS OF VIDEO TEACHINGS ON THE TORAH PORTIONS AND FESTIVALS ON YOUTUBE.

WE HAVE 7 PRISON AFFILIATES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

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



Rabbi Mordecai Silver tolmm@etz-chayim.org

MESSAGE FOR 10-28-23 LECH LECHA

Lech L'Cha – Go Forth, Yourself!

Genesis 12:1-17:27

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

Hebrews 11:1-16

Genesis 12:1-3

YHVH said to Abram, “Go for yourself from your land, from your relatives, and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation; I will bless you, and make your name great, and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you.”

Genesis 17:4-6

“As for Me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be a father of a multitude of nations; Your name shall no longer be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations; I will make you most exceedingly fruitful and make nations of you; and kings shall descend from you.”

Genesis 17:15-16

And Elohim said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife—do not call her name Sarai, for Sarah is her name. I will bless her; indeed, I will give you a son through her; I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples will rise from her.”

Isaiah 41:8

But you, O Israel, My servant, Jacob, you whom I have chosen, offspring of Abraham who loved Me—

Isaiah 41:10

*Fear not for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your Elohim; I have strengthened you, even helped you, **and even sustained you with My righteous right hand.***

יָרֵא yare' {yaw-ray'} 1) to fear, revere, be afraid 1a) (Qal) 1a1) to fear, be afraid 1a2) to stand in awe of, be awed 1a3) to fear, reverence, honour, respect 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to be fearful, be dreadful, be feared 1b2) to cause astonishment and awe, be held in awe 1b3) to inspire reverence or godly fear or awe

Hebrews 11:1-10; 13

Trusting is being confident of what we hope for, convinced about things we do not see. It was for this that Scripture attested the merit of the people of old.

By trusting, we understand that the universe was created through a spoken word of Elohim, so that what is seen did not come into being out of existing phenomena. By trusting, Hevel offered a greater sacrifice than Kayin; because of this, he was attested as righteous, with Elohim giving him this testimony on the ground of his gifts. Through having trusted, he still continues to speak, even though he is dead. By trusting, Chanoch was taken away from this life without seeing death – “He was not to be found, because Elohim took him away” – for he has been attested as having been, prior to being taken away, well pleasing to Elohim. And without trusting, it is impossible to be well pleasing to Elohim, because whoever approaches him must trust that he does exist and that he becomes a Rewarder to those who seek him out. By trusting, Noach, after receiving divine warning about things as yet unseen, was filled with holy fear and built an ark to save his household. Through this trusting, he put the world

under condemnation and received the righteousness that comes from trusting. By trusting, Avraham obeyed, after being called to go out to a place which Elohim would give him as a possession; indeed, he went out without knowing where he was going. By trusting, he lived as a temporary resident in the Land of the promise, as if it were not his, staying in tents with Yitzchak and Ya'akov, who were to receive what was promised along with him. For he was looking forward to the city with permanent foundations, of which the architect and builder is Elohim. All these people kept on trusting until they died, without receiving what had been promised. They had only seen it and welcomed it from a distance, while acknowledging that they were aliens and temporary residents on the earth.

Foundation: pistis {pis'-tis} ἄ from 3982; TDNT - 6:174,849; n f ἄ AV - faith 239, assurance 1, believe + 1537 1, belief 1, them that believe 1, fidelity 1; 244 ἄ 1) conviction of the truth of anything, belief; in the NT of a conviction or belief respecting man's relationship to God and divine things, generally with the included idea of trust and holy fervor born of faith and joined with it 1a) relating to God 1a1) the conviction that God exists and is the creator and ruler of all things, the provider and bestower of eternal salvation through Messiah 1b) relating to Messiah 1b1) a strong and welcome conviction or belief that Yeshua is the Messiah, through whom we obtain eternal salvation in the kingdom of God 1c) the religious beliefs of Christians 1d) belief with the predominate idea of trust (or confidence) whether in God or in Messiah, springing from faith in the same 2) fidelity, faithfulness 2a) the character of one who can be relied on

יָצַד yacad {yaw-sad'} ἄ a primitive root; TWOT - 875; v ἄ AV - foundation 15, lay 8, founded 8, ordain 2, counsel 2, established 2, foundation + 03117 1, appointed 1, instructed 1, set 1, sure 1; 42 ἄ 1) to found, fix, establish, lay foundation 1a) (Qal) to found, establish, begin 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to fix or seat themselves close together, sit in conclave 1b2) to be founded 1c) (Piel) 1c1) to found 1c2) to establish, appoint, ordain 1d) (Pual) to be founded, be laid 1e) (Hophal)to be founded

Psalm 87:1

By the sons of Korah, a psalm, a song, whose foundation is in the holy mountains.

יִסְוּדָהּ y@cuwdah {yes-oo-daw'} ꝥ from 03246; TWOT - 875c; n f ꝥ AV - foundation 1; 1 ꝥ 1) foundation 1a) founding of city

This parshah begins with the YHVH's commandment to Abram: Lech lecha me'artzecha, "Go out from your land."

YHVH is telling Abram to leave his father's home in Charan and journey to Canaan. But why does the YHVH say lech lecha? Why doesn't He just say "lech - Go"?

Lech lecha can be translated: "Go to yourself." YHVH is not just instructing Abram to travel. YHVH is telling him: You are now starting your lifetime journey. You will be passing through many places, traveling on many paths. Remember, wherever you go - go to yourself.

What does it mean to go to ourselves?

Our real self is what the Orthodox Jews call neshamah, that which wants to serve YHVH, fulfill His commandments and feel close to Him. So lech lecha means that on all our journeys - wherever we go and whatever we do - we will really be going towards ourselves. We will be coming closer to our neshamah's goal of serving the YHVH.

Abram understood YHVH's instructions.

He set out with his entire household towards Canaan, working hard so that each of his journeys - and there were many stops – would bring him closer to the goals of his neshamah.

The Torah tells us "And Abram traveled and journeyed towards the south."

Rashi explains that the "south" is the place that would later become Yerushalayim. There, surrounded by the holiness of Yerushalayim, Abram would reach very high levels.

But Abram didn't stay in this holy place for very long. Soon he found himself on a journey to a place he did not plan to visit: Mitzrayim!

Would you have liked to leave the holy area of Yerushalayim after reaching such closeness to YHVH and go down to Mitzrayim?

But Abram always remembered YHVH's instruction: Lech lecha.

This was another of Abram's journeys on the way to himself - to his neshamah's goal to serve YHVH.

Just like Avraham Avinu, we are on a journey that will bring us to the goal of our neshamos: to serve YHVH fully.

And when we realize this purpose and dedicate ourselves to YHVH, the destination of our journey will come into sight. And then, led by Mashiach, the Messiah Y'shua we and the entire body of believers, will be with Him forever.

Isaiah 41:4

I, the YHVH, am the first, and I am He Who will be with the last generations.

He is the foundation!

We include a Traditional Torah Commentary and my Messianic Commentary. The reason for this is so you can see a Messianic Perspective and a Traditional Jewish one. Remember to use discernment in approaching Traditional Jewish teachings as they do not recognize Yeshua as the Messiah. There are various ideas in traditional Jewish circles about the Messiah and even that there is no Messiah, the thinking in Reform Judaism. So, please be careful to balance the teachings.

We do not agree with the Jewish position on Yeshua, but Believers need to know the Jewish thinking on Yeshua and not buy into this thinking and forsake faith in our Messiah. For those who say they would never do this, we must beg to differ, because we have seen it over our lives as Jewish Believer's in Yeshua. We have been Believer's in Messiah Yeshua for decades. We have seen a lot and had many discussions with our fellow Jews and non-Jews who ultimately turned away from Yeshua because they steeped themselves in Jewish teachings. One does not come out of either traditional Judaism or Christianity and come into the Messianic walk, and then going back, or into, traditional Judaism. *There are many good things in Judaism but denying Yeshua as Messiah is not one of them.*

Berachot (Blessings), Rabbi Mordecai Silver, Ph.D., and Rabbi Philip Hammond, Ph.D.

A TRADITIONAL JEWISH PARASHAH AND HAFTARAH COMMENTARY



Parashat Lech-Lecha

Summary Genesis 12:1-17:27

Abram and Sarai follow God's call to journey to Canaan, where the covenant between God and Abraham is affirmed.

God said to Abram, "Go forth from your homeland to the land that I shall show you. I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth shall be blessed through you."

So, Abram went as God had spoken to him. Abram was 75 years old when he took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot and all their possessions and left for Canaan. God appeared to Abram and said, "To your offspring will I give this land." Abram built, in Moreh and Beth-El, altars to God and invoked God by Name.

Abram journeyed south but there was famine in the land, and he ended up in Egypt. When they were about to enter Egypt, Abram said to his wife Sarai, "Look, you are a beautiful woman, and it will come to pass in Egypt that they will kill me because you are my wife. Therefore, please say that you are my sister so they will keep me alive."

It came to pass that when the Egyptians saw the beautiful woman Sarai, she was praised to the Pharaoh. Sarai was then taken into the Pharaoh's house. The Pharaoh showed kindness to Abram for the beautiful woman's sake and gave him animals and servants.

Then God struck Pharaoh with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife. And the Pharaoh sent for Abram and said, "What have you done to me? Why did you say that she was your sister, even when I took her as my wife? Take your wife and go."

Abram left with Sarai and all their possessions out of Egypt. Now Abram was very rich in herds and silver and gold and Lot too had flocks. Since the land could not support them both and Abram wanted no strife between them told Lot to choose his preference. Lot left to settle in the land of Jordan near Sodom which was filled with wickedness. Abram dwelled in Hebron where he built an altar to God.

War among the Kings led to the capture of the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and its people, including Lot, Abram's nephew. Abram goes to battle to rescue Lot and is victorious, taking back everything, including Sodom and Gomorrah. Abram dismisses all the spoils except for what is due to him and his men.

After these events, Abram in a vision heard the words of God. God said, "Fear not Abram for I am a shield for you; your reward is very great." Abram said, "O Lord, God I fear I shall remain childless and then to whom shall I give my inheritance?"

God said, "You shall have a son from your own loins." God then took Abram outside and said, "Look at the sky and count the stars. See if you can count them. That is how numerous your descendants shall be."

Abram believed in God and God's charity.

A dark dream comes upon Abram with God saying to him, "One day your nation will be strangers in a land and be enslaved for 400 years. But I will judge their oppressors and set your nation free and with great wealth."

Now Abram and Sarah were very distressed for they had no children. God said to Abram, "Look toward heaven and count the stars to see how large your family will be. I am God who brought you to this land to inherit it." God gave Abraham specific markings of his territory.

Now Sarai, Abraham's wife, had no children, but she did have a maidservant, Hagar. Sarai asked Abram to go to Hagar so that she might birth him a child. After Hagar conceived, she acted as if Sarai was no longer important. Sarai complained to Abraham, who told Sarai to do whatever is good in her eyes. Then Sarai humbled Hagar and Hagar fled from before her.

An angel of God found pregnant Hagar by a spring of water in the desert.

God's angel said, "Return and submit to Sarai. I shall make your family so large you will not be able to count it. You will have a son. Name him Ishmael because God has heard your sufferings. He will be a rebel and have his hand against every man and every man's hand against him. He will take his place over all his brothers."

Hagar said, "You are the God of Vision." Ishmael was born when Abram was 86.

When Abraham was 99, God said, "I wish to set My covenant between Me and you. You shall become a father of the multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful. Kings shall come forth from your nation. This covenant will be for you and your descendants after you for all generations as an everlasting covenant. Now I will give you the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession and I shall be God to you and your descendants but you, too, must keep My covenant. Every male among you shall be circumcised at the age of eight days, including all males that are born in the house or acquired with money from any stranger. My covenant shall thus be on your flesh as an everlasting covenant."

God further said to Abraham, "You shall not call your wife Sarai because her name is Sarah. I will bless her and have already appointed for you a son from her. I will bless her, and kings of nations shall descend from her."

And Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself in his heart, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old or shall Sarah who is 90 years old give birth?"

Then Abraham said to God, "O that Ishmael might live before Thy countenance."

But God said, "Not so, Sarah shall bear a son whom you shall name Isaac. With him will I uphold My covenant. As for Ishmael, I have blessed him already and will make him fruitful and multiply him exceedingly. He shall beget 12 princes and I shall appoint him to be a great nation. But My covenant is with Isaac."

When God went away from Abraham, that very same day Abraham took his son Ishmael and all the male members of his household and servants. He circumcised the flesh of their foreskins and his own.

Questions For Discussion

- 1. Abram was called by God. What does it mean to be called by God? Have you ever felt called by God to do anything? How do you know it was God Who called you? How did Abram know it was God who called him?**
- 2. Abram laughs at God when God suggests that he and Sarah in their old age, after years of being childless, will become parents. Have you ever laughed at God? Or with God? Explain.**
- 3. Restate in your own words the covenant God made with Abraham. Is this Covenant still relevant and important today? Why?**

Haftarah for Lech-Lecha

Isaiah 40:27-41:16

God has not abandoned His people.

In Haftarat Lech-Lecha, Isaiah offers the people of Israel a message of reassurance. By the sixth century B.C.E., Israel had been in exile for decades, but Isaiah tells the people that God has not abandoned them and is still concerned about their welfare.

Though the overall message of Isaiah's words is of God's support and attentiveness, the prophet's tone is not always comforting. The Haftarah begins with a reprimand: "Why do you say, O Jacob, why declare, O Israel, 'My way is hidden from the Lord, my cause is ignored by my God'? Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is God everlasting."

Isaiah bluntly reminds the people that God is still invested in their lives, and that He remains all-powerful. While He has not abandoned His people, they have lost faith in Him and have turned to idols and other gods. Isaiah is critical of this choice, comparing the idols, which can't even hold themselves up, with God, who is mighty and strong. The woodworker and the smith haplessly fasten the idol with nails so that it won't fall over, in sharp contrast to God, who made the earth tremble in fear, "delivered up nations" and "trodden sovereigns down."

God, through Isaiah, is reminding Israel that He wants His people to stay away from the idol-makers, and those who don't recognize God's might. Israel is "My servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, seed of Abraham My friend," and so Israel is destined for a special role in the future.

Even though Israel is special, Isaiah still characterizes the people as a worm and a maggot (41:13). The nation is tiny and insignificant when compared to God's greatness. Their behavior is sometimes disgusting. Still, Isaiah reassures the people that they will see victory, and glory if they are devoted to God.

In the Torah portion of Lech-Lecha, Abraham is promised that his offspring will be a great nation, more numerous than all of the dust on earth. In order to realize this destiny, Abraham has to withstand many challenges and temptations. So too, the people of Israel are reminded in the Haftarah that they will have good fortune and great things in the future, if only they can be like Abraham, following God's proscribed commandments and resisting the lure of idols.



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

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

LIFE IS WHAT IT IS??

Trust is Vital!

When problems arise, which they always do, how do most address them?

I had only just begun to write this blog when I heard a cow bellowing outside. The sound caused me to stop typing and pay attention to the noise. Debra and I spend a lot of time with our cattle and can often pick up certain signals through their actions. This bellowing sounded a little different to the normal. The cows are calving so it is important to be alert to changes of behaviour. I went outside with binoculars in hand to see if I could notice anything unusual. It didn't take long before I could see that a cow had just calved, and she was looking down at a steep bank that led down to a creek. She was looking distressed and bellowing with a sound of concern. Debra and I quickly jumped in the Land Rover and drove down to where she was. It was soon evident that the cow had given birth to the calf at the top of the bank and the newborn calf had slid down the bank into the creek. The calf was in a dangerous position and the mother had no hope of getting her new calf out of this dangerous situation. I scrambled down the bank into the water, lifted the calf out of the water and brought it onto dry land. It can be very dangerous intervening between a cow and her newborn calf. The mothers can become very aggressive and charge, causing serious harm even death to the

person “interfering”. So how did this cow react to the situation that caused her a problem she could not solve? Fortunately, she reacted well. She certainly showed concern but never showed any sign of charging me as I held her newborn calf in my arms trying to lift it onto dry ground. As soon as I put it down on dry ground, she began to lick it clean and “talk” to it, making sure it was ok. She quickly positioned herself and the calf into a safer position and it wasn’t long before the calf was drinking some fresh cow’s milk from mum. One of the reasons we were able to help the calf without having mum charge us is because of the time we spent with our cattle. Over time we have gained their trust and it is not the first time we have had to come to the rescue in a similar situation.

Any successful relationship must have trust as a key component. Without trust it is impossible to build a solid lasting healthy relationship. Trust is developed over time, as trust must be built on action rather than talk. How many times have you heard the words, “trust me” coming from the lips of someone you hardly know or is trying to sell you something? How many marriages have been destroyed by a spouse or spouses engaging in actions that result in destroying the foundations of trust? Parents and children face this challenge of trust constantly. Trust brings a picture of someone who is reliable and solid in lifestyle, someone who supports rather than destroys, who can safely be confided in. The Prophet Isaiah had some wise words to share:

“Trust in HaShem forever, for HaShem is a rock forever”.

We all need someone we can trust. It is impossible to find a fellow human in whom you can trust 100% all of the time in every situation. Often, we cannot even trust ourselves to be trustworthy. There is little doubt that those who are reading this have at some time let someone down or let themselves down. Every day we witness trust being broken or shattered. As you read that statement there is a greater than even chance that you are thinking of a situation whereby trust has been broken. There is also a fair chance that you are thinking of a time when you hoped you could have trusted someone but were let down.

Well, there is One in whom you can put your total trust in and that is The Holy One of Israel. It is rare that you can say of “Someone” that they say what they mean and mean what they say. HaShem is such a One. If you are looking for someone to trust and confide in, then look no further than HaShem. HaShem is not a man that He should lie!

None the less it is very difficult to have trust without love. To put total trust in someone is very difficult and without love, it is almost impossible. I would suggest that to trust HaShem in all matters requires a level of love that can only come through building a strong relationship. Trusting HaShem is more than talk, it requires action. It requires us to bellow for help and whilst we may be anxious and a little cautious, perhaps even scared, He is the only One that can come to our rescue. We must trust Him to pick us up and put us on the safe dry ground of Torah and HaMoshiach. Make no mistake the sustenance for mankind is found in HaMoshiach and Torah and we should be desperate to drink from this source.

May I encourage you to, *“Trust in HASHEM with all your heart and do not rely upon your own understanding. In all your ways know Him, and He will smooth your paths”*.

Insights into Judaism



A fascinating list of words that you probably didn't know have Jewish linguistic origins.

When you kibbitz with your friends, does your babble ever lead to a big brouhaha?

Kibbitz, *babble*, and *brouhaha* are just some of the dozens of English words that come from Jewish languages such as Hebrew, Yiddish, and Aramaic.

Here's a fascinating list of words that many of us use every day without knowing their distant Jewish linguistic origins.

Words About Talking

Given Jews' penchant for debate, it's no wonder a number of Jewish words related to speech made it into English.

Babble likely comes from a famous story in the book of Genesis recounting how people tried to build a tower – called the Tower of *Bavel* (Babel in English) – that would reach the very heavens to wage war against God. God thwarted their plans and toppled the tower. Back on earth, people found that instead of speaking a common language as before, they all spoke different languages, which sounded like “babble” to others (Genesis 11:1-8).

Brouhaha sounds a bit like the Hebrew phrase *baruch haba*, which means “welcome” in Hebrew. Many linguists believe it was a dismissive word French people used to describe the sound of Jews speaking Hebrew. English speakers adopted this French word in the 1700s.

Kibbitz sounds a bit like the call of the European lapwing bird: *peewit*. Medieval German speakers called the bird *peewit*; from there, the name possibly evolved into *kibbitz* and moved into Yiddish, where it meant (at various times) to chatter, to visit, or to offer advice.

Shmooze has Hebrew origins. *Shmu'ot* means “rumors” in Hebrew. Yiddish speakers called idle chat *shmu'es*; from there, the word evolved into *shmuesn*, meaning to chat, and entered English as *shmooze*, meaning to have a nice, cozy conversation.

Being a *Mensch*: Words About Kindness and Doing the Right Thing

With Judaism’s emphasis on ethical behavior, it’s no wonder many English terms come from Jewish words.

Cherub – a sweet little innocent child in English – comes from the Hebrew word for sword, *cherev*. In the Torah, a Cherub (*cherev*) is a type of angel which guards the entrance to the Garden of Eden with a fiery sword, ensuring that people never return there (Genesis 3:24).

Jubilee comes from the Hebrew *yovel*, an occurrence once every 50 years when all debts were erased and indentured servants were freed (Leviticus 25:10-11).

Mensch literally means “man” in Yiddish, just as it does in German, but the Jewish version of this word comes with a twist: reflecting the Jewish view that everyone is capable of being upright, honorable, and making a difference in the world. Calling someone a *mensch* means referring to them as a positive, good human being.

Ruthless refers to someone acting viciously, but it comes from the name of one of the heroines in the Bible, Ruth. A Moabite princess by birth, Ruth converted to Judaism and lived with her mother-in-law Naomi in Israel, where she displayed incredible kindness. Ruth’s great grandson was King David. “Ruth” became a byword for kindness; “ruthless” literally means having a lack of Ruth’s quality of empathy and giving.

Eat a Little: Jewish Words About Food and Drink

Cider comes from the Hebrew word for drink, *shaker*. It was translated into Greek as *sikera* and migrated into Latin as *sicera*. In the Middle Ages, French adopted the word as *cidre*, and it began to refer exclusively to strong drinks made from fermented fruit, particularly apples.

Lox migrated into English from Yiddish; Germanic speakers throughout central Europe refer to salmon as *lox*, *lachs*, or variations of the word and early Yiddish speakers adopted the term as well.

Words About Time and Measurement

The Torah instructs us to be scrupulously honest when it comes to our weights and measures (Leviticus 19:35-36). Here are a few English terms that are derived from Jewish words.

Iota comes from the Hebrew letter *Yud*, which is the smallest of the Hebrew letters. Iota was the Ancient Greek form of the *Yud*, and soon became synonymous with anything tiny.

Jot also derived from the Hebrew letter *Yud* and was the Medieval Latin form of translating the letter. As with iota, jot soon became a way to refer to anything very small.

Sabbatical derived from the Hebrew word Shabbat (Sabbath in English), the seventh day each week when we recall God's rest on the seventh day of creation by ceasing to perform ordinary, weekday labor.

Words with More Negative Connotations Derived from Jewish Terms

Given how negatively antisemites have viewed Jews throughout the years, it's no wonder that quite a few Jewish terms have been given a sinister twist in English and other languages.

Bedlam was originally the nickname of England's first mental asylum. It was formally called the Bethlem Royal Hospital. Like many old hospitals, Bethlem began as a religious order; it was founded in the 13th century as a priory dedicated to St Mary of Bethlehem. And Bethlem was corrupted to bedlam.

Bethlehem, which literally means House (*bet*) of Bread (*lehem*) in Hebrew, is a town to Jerusalem's south. It is first mentioned in the Torah in Genesis 35:19 where Rachel is buried. Thousands upon thousands of people visit the Tomb of Rachel in Bethlehem today to pour out their heart in prayer.

Beelzebub is a Christian term for a malevolent being and comes from the Hebrew *ba'al* (lord) *zevuvim* (flies), the implication being that a "Lord of the Flies" would somehow be drawn to death and decay, which also attracts flies.

Cabal is an insulting term that's derived from the Hebrew word *Kabbalah*, which literally means "receiving" and refers to Jewish mysticism. Reflecting the widely held, antisemitic (and false) belief that a secret group of Jews somehow controls the world, cabal refers to such a gathering. Surprisingly, the word was popularized by Charles Dickens who used it as an acronym to help students remember the names of five government ministers in the 1600s in his book *A Child's History of England*.

Chutzpah is a Hebrew (and later also Yiddish) word that means impudence or gall. It also has a positive connotation of fearlessness and boldness, to stand up for what you believe and go against the flow.

Macabre likely comes from Medieval plays about the Maccabees, a group of Jewish fighters who resisted Greek rule in Israel a little over 2,000 years ago. Called *Chorea Maccabaeorum* - "dance of the Maccabees" - in Latin, the plays were often bloody and featured the martyrdom

of Maccabee fighters. The plays' name evolved to *Danse Macabe* in French. In time, the name evolved to *Dance Macabre*, and the meaning to "dance of death".

Scapegoat originated in the Torah's description of Yom Kippur. In ancient times, the *Cohen Gadol* (the High Priest who served in the Temple in Jerusalem) would take two identical goats on Yom Kippur. One goat was sacrificed in the Temple and the other was sent into the wilderness south of Jerusalem to atone for the Jewish people's sins (Leviticus 16:5-18). "Scape" was an early English form of the word escape: the scapegoat was the goat which "escaped" being sacrificed. Today, it means one who is blamed for others' sins.



Loving and Fearing God

Should Jews feel one emotion over the other--or both equally?

In Jewish thought the love and fear of God are to be understood as complementing one another. Fear without love can easily result in a too rigorous and ultimately stultifying approach to the religious life. Love without fear can just as easily degenerate into sheer sentimentalism.

Biblical and Rabbinic Love

The great biblical text for the love of God is: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)). “All your heart” in this context refers less to the emotions than to the mind: in the biblical idiom the intellect is located in the heart, the inner aspect of the human personality. “With all your soul” means “with all your being”; the Hebrew *nefesh*, translated as “soul,” really refers in the Bible to what we would call the person rather than the soul.

But in early rabbinic thought the love of God is understood less as an attitude of mind or as an emotional response than it’s advocating a course of action. The rabbinic Midrash known as the *Sifre*, for example, has the following comment on the verse: “Take to heart these instructions with which I charge you this day (Deuteronomy 6:6).” “Why is this said? Because it is said: ‘You shall love the Lord your God, with all your heart’ and I do not know in what way God is to be loved, therefore it says: ‘Take to heart instructions with which I charge you this day.’ Take these to heart and in this way, you will come to recognize God and cleave to His ways.”

In this passage, typical of the rabbinic emphasis on doing the will of God, on the deed, love is understood to mean the practice of the precepts and the study of the Torah. This leads to, and in a sense is identified with, the “recognition” of God and attachment to His laws. There are passages in the rabbinic literature which do speak of the love of God as an intense longing for God’s nearness. But the main emphasis in rabbinic literature is on love expressed in the deed.

Love of God in the Middle Ages

The medieval thinkers, on the other hand, Saadiah, Bahya Ibn Pakudah, Maimonides, and the Kabbalists, do place emphasis on the mystical love of God. Maimonides devotes the opening chapters of his *Mishneh Torah* to an account of the marvels of the created universe, in the course of which he remarks (*Yesodey Ha-Torah*, 2.2): “How does man come to love and fear God? No sooner does man reflect on His deeds and on His great and marvelous creatures, seeing in them His incomparable and limitless wisdom, than he is moved to love and to praise and to glorify and he has an intense desire to know the great Name. As David said: ‘My soul thirsts for God, for the living God’ ([Psalms 42:3](#)).”

The Kabbalists not infrequently use erotic symbolism for the love of man for God, this being compared to human love between a man and a woman, but the pure love of God is often described without any erotic overtones. The Zohar (iii. 267a) understands the love of God to mean that the one who loves is ready to sacrifice everything he has and even life itself in his love for the Creator. “One who loves God is crowned with loving-kindness on all sides and does loving-kindness throughout, sparing neither his person nor his money.”

In Hasidism the love of God generally means completely disinterested service of God with joy in the heart. Tales are told of a number of Hasidic masters who believed that they had forfeited their right to heavenly bliss. Becoming aware of this they declared that now they would have the opportunity of serving and loving God without any thought of self, not even that of the self-enjoying the nearness of God for ever.

There is thus no single Jewish understanding of the concept of the love of God. On the whole, two distinct tendencies emerge. On the one hand, there are Jewish teachers, represented particularly in the rabbinic tradition, who prefer to speak of the love of God in terms of the practical details of the religious life. For them, to study the Torah and keep its precepts is the love of God. On the other hand, there are those who understand the love of God in its mystical sense of intense longing for the nearness of God and for communion with Him. But even this latter group of teachers emphasize the great difficulties in the way of attainment of their ideal and teach that in its highest reaches it is only for a few very rare souls.

Biblical and Rabbinic Fear

From the many references in the Bible to both the love and the fear of God, without any clear distinction being made between the two, it would seem, as many biblical scholars suggest, that the two are essentially identical with an intense relationship with God, especially as realized in ethical conduct.

The very expression “the fear of God” often refers to an extraordinary degree of piety and moral worth. Of the Hebrew midwives who defied Pharaoh’s order for them to kill the infants the verse says: “The midwives, fearing God, did not do as the king of Egypt had told them; they let the boys live ([Exodus 1:17](#)).” Job is described as “wholehearted and upright, and one that

feared God, and shunned evil ([Job 1:1](#))." In the rabbinic literature, the usual expression for the fear of God is *yirat shamayyim*, "the fear of Heaven," by which is meant the determination to carry out God's will and not commit sins.

Fear of God in the Middle Ages

Nahmanides understands the positive precepts of the Torah—commands to do this or that—as based on the love of God and the negative precepts—not to do this or that—as based on the fear of God. Love is the motivation for action where this is demanded. Fear is the motivation for inaction where this is demanded.

In medieval Jewish thought, a distinction is drawn between two kinds of fear: fear of punishment and fear in the presence of the exalted majesty of God. The latter comes close to the feelings of awe and dread described in Rudolf Otto's phrase the "numinous."

Medieval thinkers believed in reward and punishment. It is not that they rejected the fear of punishment but that they believed this to be inferior to the higher fear of which they spoke. The Zohar, (i. 11b) remarks:

"There are three types of fear; two of these have no proper foundation but the third is the main foundation of fear. A man may fear God in order that his sons may live and not die or because he is afraid of some punishment to be visited on his person or his wealth and because of it he is in constant fear. But it follows that such a man's fear has no proper foundation. There is another man who fears God because he is terrified of punishment in the next world, in dread of Hell. Both these types of fear do not belong to the main foundation of fear and to its root meaning. But the fear which does have a proper foundation is when a man fears his Master because He is the great and mighty ruler, the Foundation and Root of all worlds and all before Him are accounted as nothing, as it is said: 'And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing' ([Daniel 4:32](#))."

Hasidic thought is, generally free of references to the fear of hellfire. In Hasidism the idea is often repeated that the fear of God has to be attained by human effort, but the love of God is given to man by divine grace once he has attained fear. Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev introduces into the concept of fear the Hasidic doctrine of annihilation of selfhood. In the lower fear a man is necessarily aware of himself since he dwells on his sinfulness. But in the higher fear a man is so overawed by God's majesty that he has no self-awareness at all, not even a sense of his own unworthiness.

In the [ethical] Musar movement the emphasis is placed on the lower fear. Taking a somber view of human nature, the Musarists say that only simple reflection on the severe punishments in store for the transgressor can penetrate man's stony heart. It is somewhat surprising that in modern Jewish theological thinking there is very little on the fear of God. This is no doubt partly because of the move from a God-centered to a man-centered universe and partly because of the unwholesome emotions the concept of fear is said to generate. But it is an odd religious

outlook that can blithely ignore, for all its difficulties, such a deeply rooted concept as the fear of God.

עֵבְרִי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

Path or Way / דֶּרֶךְ

Pronounced: DEH-rech

Derech can refer to a physical road but can also mean "by way of."



A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Cute Couple

Moishe and Miriam Epstein, in their late 80s called a handyman to do some work around their condo.

"Honey why don't you sit down by the table, and we'll start supper," said Miriam to Moishe, husband of 50 years.

"Sure thing," Moishe replied, settling himself down.

"Now darling, would you like the soup first or the salad?" asked Miriam.

"Umm I guess I'll take the soup," Moishe responded.

After a whole meal of one endearing term after another, the handyman who was watching in disbelief couldn't contain his curiosity any longer. He snuck into the kitchen and asked, "Excuse me Mrs. Epstein. Do you always talk to your husband like that?"

"Son, I'll be honest with you," Miriam replied. "It's been five years now, and I just can't remember his name, but I am just too embarrassed to ask!"



This is not your Bubbie's Chicken Soup Recipes shared by Cooks and Bakers



Caramelized Banana Bread Babka

The ultimate comfort food mash-up.

Is there anything better than curling up with a warm slice of banana bread topped with a slab of butter? Turns out, yes! My desire to combine some of my favorite American classics with Jewish confections led to the creation of banana bread babka.

The exact origins of banana bread are unknown, but it is believed to have gained in popularity during The Great Depression as a way to decrease food waste from tossing overripe bananas, though some would argue it was developed to sell more baking soda. This might explain why it became the quintessential at-home treat at the start of the COVID pandemic, when people were limiting their visits to the grocery store and spending lots of time indoors. While I baked my fair share of loaves during the pandemic, as the world began to open up, I wanted to elevate banana bread. The fluffy texture of the babka dough and ribbons of cinnamon-spiked brown sugar running through this banana bread babka are a definite upgrade, but still honor the original recipe.

While babka is more time-consuming and complex than banana bread, the two have a lot in common. They're both cakes with a long history that have risen to fame in the U.S. in the past decade, and they both use yeast as a leavening agent. This dough needs to rise for at least eight hours; you can also make it the day before and leave it to rise overnight.

Serve this banana bread babka alone, topped with butter or jam, or my personal favorite: topped with caramelized banana slices.

Note: As this recipe makes two loaves, I like to keep one for myself and give one to a friend as a gift. You can also freeze the second loaf while you make your way through the first. Store in the freezer for up to a month. To thaw your frozen loaf, allow it to defrost on its own by letting it sit out on the counter overnight.

Ingredients

For the babka dough:

- 1 cup milk
- 1 packet (or 2¼ tsp) active dry yeast
- ¼ cup sugar
- ¼ cup canola oil
- 2 overripe bananas, mashed
- 4 cups bread flour
- ½ tsp salt

- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tsp cinnamon

For the filling:

- 1½ cups dark brown sugar
- ¾ cup butter, softened
- 3 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

For the topping:

- 1 egg
- 1 Tbsp water
- coarse sugar

For the caramelized bananas:

- 2 bananas, sliced
- 2 Tbsp brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp butter
- dash of cinnamon

Directions

1. Start by making the babka dough. Heat milk to 100-110°F (about 30-90 seconds in the microwave). Stir in yeast and allow to sit for 10 minutes. Yeast will activate and become foamy.
2. Add remaining dough ingredients and milk/yeast mixture to a mixer fitted with a dough hook. Mix until combined and then allow the mixer to continue kneading for a further 10 minutes.
3. Transfer dough to a greased bowl and cover with a towel or plastic wrap. Leave to rise in a dry place for 8 hours or overnight.
4. Once the dough has risen, remove from the bowl and divide the dough (it will be sticky) into two equal halves. Prepare two loaf pans with parchment paper.
5. Mix the filling ingredients together and set aside.
6. Flour your work surface and rolling pin generously. Roll out half of the dough to about 16×10 inches and spread with half of the filling, leaving about ½-inch of dough bare on one of the short ends. Wet the bare dough with water and then roll the dough into a log starting on one of the longer sides.
7. Using a sharp knife, cut the log in half lengthwise. Pinch both halves together at one end, then cross one side over the other repeatedly until you reach the other end. Pinch

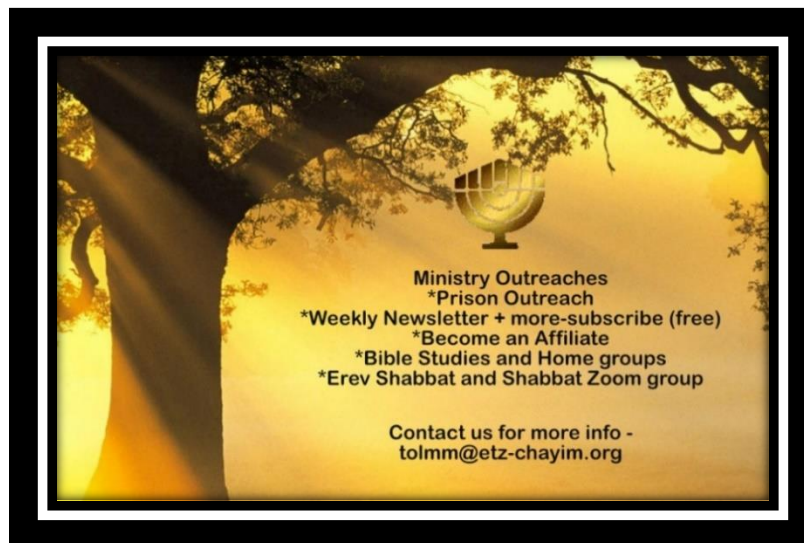
that end together and fold the pinched end under the loaf to neaten it before carefully transferring it to one of the prepared loaf pans.

8. Repeat steps 6 and 7 with the remaining half of the dough.
9. Preheat the oven to 350°F and allow the 2 loaves to rise for 30 minutes.
10. After the dough has risen, whisk together the egg and water and brush over the tops of each loaf. Sprinkle tops with coarse sugar before putting in the oven for 40 minutes. Allow to cool before eating.
11. To make the caramelized bananas (optional but encouraged): In a small pot over medium-low heat, melt butter with the sugar and cinnamon. Place banana slices in the mixture and use a fork to gently toss them until they're fully coated. Cook for 4 minutes on each side before removing and putting on top of your banana bread slices.

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