



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 12-23-23 VAYIGASH

Ministry News

IF YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE ON THE LIST TO PRAY FOR YOU CAN SEND THEM TO US AT TOLMM@ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG 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 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 8 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 12-23-23 VAYIGASH

VaYigash-and he drew near

Gen. 44:18-47:27

Ezek. 37:15-28

Luke 6:37

Bereisheet-Genesis: 45:1-5

1: Now Joseph could not restrain himself in the presence of all who stood before him, so he called out, "Remove everyone from before me!" Thus no one remained with him when Joseph made himself known to his brothers. 2: He cried in a loud voice. Egypt heard, and Pharaoh's household heard. 3: And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him because they were left disconcerted before him. 4: Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me, if you please," and they came close. And he said, "I am Joseph your brother - it is me, whom you sold into Egypt. 5: And now, be not distressed, nor reproach yourselves for having sold me here, for it was to a provider that God sent me ahead of you.

Can you imagine the shock that Joseph's brothers must have been in? The brother they tried to kill now has an opportunity to take revenge.

But Joseph does none of these things. He is happy to see his brothers. He tells them that they do not have to apologize.

Joseph understands that all the troubles he has gone through have had a higher purpose: They have set in motion a chain of events that has allowed him to save not only his family but the future nation of Israel.

Had he wasted his energy hating his brothers and feeling sorry for himself he could not have been a part of GOD's plan.

Unfortunately, a great many people allow themselves to remain stuck on the treadmill going nowhere fast. In fact, they choose to focus on their troubles, never trying to rise above them.

But even more important is Joseph's ability to forgive his brothers. It is hard to pinpoint exactly when he forgives them. In the Bible, the words "I forgive" are never spoken. By the time Joseph confronts his brothers, forgiveness is not even an issue; he simply tells them that they need have no regrets about what they had done to him. Only later does he mention in passing that what they did was wrong.

Joseph's forgiving attitude is hard to achieve, especially when someone has wronged us. Joseph's life could have been ruined by the actions of his brothers. However, as we see, it did not because he would not give in to it.

We must forgive those who have wronged us. If we cannot forgive them with an open heart, then do it anyway, simply because it is bad for us if we don't.

In Luke 6:37 we read this:

"Don't, and you won't be judged. Don't condemn, and you won't be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

A writer wrote the following: The process of forgiveness - indeed, the chief reason for forgiveness - is selfish. The reason to forgive others is not for their sake. They are not likely to know that they need to be forgiven. They are not likely to remember what they did. They are likely to say, "You made it up." They may not even be alive anymore. The reason to forgive is for your own sake. For your own

health. Because beyond that point needed for healing, if we hold onto to our anger, we stop growing and our souls begin to shrivel.

If you cannot forgive, act as if you can. Pretend that you have forgiven them and extend your hand to them.

Pretend that you can forgive as Joseph did. AA says, "Fake it to make it." You might surprise yourself - before you realize it, you might not even be pretending.

But if you do not try, one thing is certain. Nursing your hurt feelings, your anger, and your bitterness will hurt you.

Now we are going to take a turn here and take a look at Ezekiel 37:15-19. By the time we read these Scriptures you will probably be scratching your heads and asking yourselves, "What the heck do these Scriptures have to do with forgiveness?" But hang in there, I'll bring it all together.

Ezekiel 37:15-19

15: The word of the Lord came to me, saying, 16: "Now you, Son of Man, take for yourself one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Judah and for the Children of Israel, his comrades'; and take one piece of wood and write upon it, 'For Joseph, the wood of Ephraim and all the House of Israel, his comrades.' 17: Then bring them close to yourself, one to the other, like one piece of wood, and they will become united in your hand. 18: Now when the children of your people say to you, saying, 'Will you not tell us what these things are to you,' 19: Say to them: Thus said the Lord God: Behold, I am taking the wood of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel, his comrades, and I am placing them and him together with the wood of Judah; and I will make them into one piece of wood, and they will become one in My hand.

An interesting thing in this passage of Scripture is the term Son of Man. If it were only referring to the prophet Ezekiel then the English in my version of the translation would not have capitalized it making it a formal title, which we know then, refers to the Messiah. So, what we have here is Ezekiel, essentially standing in for the Messiah prophetically, similar to David in Psalm 22. He is speaking as the Messiah and foretelling the coming together of Judah, Benjamin, Levi and the remaining tribes of Israel through Joseph and Ephraim.

So, you say then, where is the Gentile believer in all this? Remember that the Gentile believer is adopted or grafted into the Hebraic tree. This prophecy, to me,

is all-inclusive and if you read Ezekiel 37:21-28 you will see what I am talking about.

Let me wrap this up with this Midrash - story: A young man once came to Rabbi Akiba. The student seemed troubled and asked to be taught about the nature of faith. The rabbi brought the student over to a sprout in the ground and said, "Pull it up." The student bent over and did so without any trouble. The two then walked over to a sapling. The rabbi pointed and said to the student, "All right, now pull that one up." The sapling took more effort, but the student pulled it out of the ground. Rabbi Akiba took the student to a shrub. The same command was given. This time the student used all his strength to pull the shrub out of the ground. Finally, Rabbi Akiba took the young man to a fully-grown tree. "Now," the rabbi said, "uproot it." The young student put both his hands around the tree and pulled as hard as he could, but the tree would not move.

Rabbi Akiba spoke to the student. "That is also how it is with faith. If the roots of our faith are deep, if our faith is mature and developed, then it cannot be uprooted, even by someone trying very hard to do so. Always remember that the strength of your faith first depends on the strength of its roots."

Chaverim - my friends, the story of Joseph is one of faith. Forgiveness is a part of that faith. If your roots are deep, then nothing can pull you out of the ground. But if you allow your troubles to weaken your faith, how can you ever hope to serve God in spreading the message of Messiah Y'shua? If Joseph gave in to his troubles, where do you think we would all be today? IF Y'shua gave in to His circumstances, do you think we would be here right now reading the prophecy of Ezekiel? God still has work to do, and we are all part of it. Many parts fulfilling one purpose.

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 Vayigash: Summary

Genesis-Bereisheet 44:18-47:27

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

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

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

Revealing His Identity

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

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

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

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

The brothers reached their father's home. They told him that Joseph was still alive and that he had royal status. Jacob's heart stood still because he did not believe them. But when they told him what Joseph had said and when he saw the wagons, the spirit of Jacob revived and he said, "It is too much. Joseph, my son, is still alive. I will go there. I want to see him before I die."

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

"I am here," Jacob said.

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

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

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

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

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

Living in Goshen

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Parashat Vayigash Discussion Questions

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

Haftarah for Vayigash Ezekiel 37:15-28

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

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

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

The Lost Tribes

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

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

Two Sticks Become One

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

When people ask Ezekiel for the meaning of this action, God tells him to offer a message of promise and comfort: God will collect the people of Israel from among the nations and bring them to their own land. There, God will unite the kingdom, never to be divided again. The Israelites will no longer defile themselves with sin because God will save and cleanse them.

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

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

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

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



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

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

Falling Away

Falling Away...

- Something is ready to collapse, die or change if it has little support or if support begins to erode...



- Take the supporting structure away, and collapse is guaranteed.

Falling Away...

- Pondering on these things led me to the following:
- Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Messiah, and by our gathering together unto him,
- ² That ye be not quickly shaken in mind, or lament, neither through spirit, nor through word, nor through letter as from us, as that the day of Messiah is at hand.
- ³ Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;
- ⁴ Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God.
- ⁵ Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?
- ⁶ And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time..
-

Falling Away...

- For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way.
- ⁸ And then shall that Wicked [Rejector of torah] be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:
- ⁹ Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders,
- ¹⁰ And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
- ¹¹ And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie:
- ¹² That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness 2 Thessalonians 2:112

Falling Away...

- How many times have I read these passages. There is so much more to these passages, that I never saw as a Pentecostal Minister..
- So let us take a brief journey through these passages:
- Verse 1: A call to attention **Beseech/erotah** = a request by someone on equal terms or footing. A call to fellow believers.gathering together unto Messiah. In one accord...
- Verse 2 needs a little explaining, as it is very current for us today. Firstly it tells us that believers can become, shaken, disturbed and in fact in danger of toppling off their faith perch.
- This can be done by teachers writing letters of unbiblical doctrine. In this case something had stirred up the community to the point of lament in believing that the Day of the Lord had already come... it appears these thoughts had come via letter, claimed to be written by Paul and Co.

Falling Away...

- Verse 3 – It all becomes very intriguing. The big statement: “Let no man deceive [**Seduce, beguile**] you by any means.” Kind of mirrors the incident in the Garden of Eden... serpent beguiling Eve.
- **Any means:** By any presentation that has you turn from the truth found in Yeshua and the Word. Especially flattering words that appeal to itching ears...
- Then comes the address of truth: **“That day shalt not come except..so for that day to come certain things must take place first. That should get our attention!!**
- **Falling away/Apostasia**= Departing, rejecting, defection, revolt. Surely we are witnessing this more and more each and everyday... In saying that, what **falling away** are we witnessing?
- Suggestion – Departing further and further from YHVH’s instructions/torah. The list of evidence grows each and everyday. It started way back in the Garden, and is now picking up speed at a rate hard to keep up.

Falling Away...

- After this, the man of sin will be revealed— this has to happen before the return of HaMoshiach. This same one, powered by , will see himself as God. He will demand allegiance... and God help those who refuse.
- Verses 5 & 6: Paul says— Remember the “discussions” we had before about this. These things must happen— the falling away, will occur. Then it will begin to unfold...
- Verse 7: Another verse of intrigue, and much discussed. Personally, the message seems very clear. It goes back to the falling away rejecting torah, and the void being filled by another set of instructions, embraced by the world.
- The Word of YHVH a restraining force against immoral, evil, bad behaviour is almost extinct. Only a presence of God, can restrain evil, otherwise lawlessness [that which is void of Torah] does its evil dark work.
- When peoples minds are empty of God’s Word, then evil abounds. We witness this everyday everywhere— even in those institutions that claim to follow YHVH.

Falling Away...

- The world is taking away anything that is of biblical relevance and throwing it in the trash bin. It will only have itself to blame. But wait there is a more serious matter before us...
- So-called believers are throwing away the very Word of YHVH. It no longer matters what YHVH says or said— it matters what man says and feels. Dangerous position to take:
- **Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience** Ephesians 5:6
- **And YHVH saith, Because they have forsaken my torah which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;¹⁴ but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them.¹⁵ therefore thus saith YHVH of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them *even* this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.¹⁶ I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them** Jeremiah 9:13-16

Falling away...

- The great news amongst all this is YHVH will destroy evil, and the evil ones...
- ¹⁰And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.
- We must love the truth [YHVH's Word], without it there is no salvation...
- ¹¹And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie:
- Who is sending this STRONG DELUSION? A deluding influence. A deceiving error. Links with verse 3... choice is always before us:
- Now therefore fear YHVH, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye YHVH. ¹⁵ 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 24:14-15

Falling Away...

- That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. Again we witness the importance of believing the truth. So the obvious question is: What is this truth spoken of here?
 - We know it is the opposite of unrighteousness so therefore it must be righteousness according to our Father's instructions... so let's wrap up some thoughts on these passages.
1. Our Saviour Yeshua HaMoshiach is coming again.
 2. A falling away of faithfulness will take place before hand.
 3. It appears that which is holding back the tidal wave of wickedness will be removed.
 4. The man of sin will be revealed but eventually destroyed.
 5. YHVH will be sending a delusion on those who are not engaging in repentance.
 6. Those who take pleasure in wickedness will be condemned.

Falling Away...

- The Master said:
- And, behold, I come quickly; and my rewards with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.¹³ I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last Revelation 22:12-13.
- As we close, let us take a peak at the following in reference to the above his work.
- Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?²⁹ Yeshua answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent John 6:28-29
- Who has been sent? None other than Yeshua... the living Word. As that old Hymn goes: Trust, and obey there is no other way...
- There is no God...

Insights into Judaism



9 Jewish Things About Pomegranates

Why this ancient fruit is a Jewish symbol.

Images of pomegranates are mainstays of Rosh Hashanah cards, Jewish jewelry and a range of Jewish ritual objects, and the fruit itself makes frequent appearances in Jewish cuisine. But what's so Jewish about this ancient treat? Quite a lot!

1. The Pomegranate Is One of Israel's "Seven Species."

The pomegranate is one of the seven species of Israel (along with wheat, barley, grapes, figs, olives, and dates) listed in the Torah in Parashat Eikev ([Deuteronomy 7:12-11:25](#)).

2. Pomegranates Traditionally Symbolize Fertility and Love.

In Jewish tradition, pomegranates are a symbol of fertility and love, winning them frequent mention in, among other biblical texts, the Song of Songs. For example ([Song of Songs 4:3](#)): “Your lips are like a crimson thread; your mouth is lovely. Your brow behind your veil [gleams] like a pomegranate split open.”

3. Pomegranates Decorate Many Torah Scrolls.

Rimonim (pomegranate-shaped ornaments) top this Torah scroll. (Israel Defense Forces/Flickr) The decorative ornaments at the top of many Ashkenazi Torah scroll covers are often shaped like pomegranates and are called *rimonim*, the Hebrew word for pomegranate.

4. Pomegranates Are Part of the Sephardic Rosh Hashanah Seder.

The pomegranate is one of several symbolic foods incorporated into the Rosh Hashanah seder, a Sephardic ritual. Before eating the pomegranate seeds, Jews traditionally say, “May we be as full of mitzvot (commandments) as the pomegranate is full of seeds.”

5. A Pomegranate Is Often the “New Fruit” on the Second Night of Rosh Hashanah.

Many Jews use pomegranates on the second night of Rosh Hashanah, for the custom of saying a blessing over a “new fruit,” one that people have not eaten in a long time.

6. Pomegranate Seeds Are Associated With the 613 Mitzvot (Commandments).

The pomegranate is often said to have 613 seeds, corresponding to the 613 mitzvot (plural of mitzvah) derived from the Bible. While this is not actually true (the number of seeds in each pomegranate varies widely), some have theorized that this belief stems from a misinterpretation of a passage in the Gemara ([Berachot 4](#)), which concludes that even “the empty ones among the Jews are full of mitzvot like a pomegranate is [full of seeds.]”

7. Pomegranates Continue to Grow in Israel.

Pomegranates have been cultivated in Israel (and throughout the Middle East) for thousands of years, and they continue to grow there in abundance. When pomegranates are in season, fresh-squeezed pomegranate juice is available in kiosks throughout the country. According to the Israeli Agriculture International Portal, Israel harvests approximately 60,000 tons of the fruit annually, of which about half are earmarked for export.

8. Pomegranates Are Frequently Mentioned in Jewish Texts.

Pomegranates make frequent appearances in the Bible and Talmud, including:

- In Parashat Sh’lach ([Numbers 13:1-15:41](#)) in the Torah, a pomegranate is one of the items brought back by the 12 spies when they return from scouting out the Land of Canaan.
- Images of pomegranates adorn the robes of the high priest, as described in Parashat Tetzaveh ([Exodus 27:20 – 30:10](#)) of the Torah.

- In one story in the Talmud, the wife of a rabbi (Hiyya Bar Ashi) tests him by disguising herself as a prostitute and then seducing him, demanding he pay her with a freshly picked pomegranate. (Kiddushin 81b)

9. Pomegranates Are Found on Ancient Judean Coins.

An image of a pomegranate decorated some ancient Jewish coins, including a recently discovered one from the era of the Bar Kochba revolt (second century CE).



God 101

In Judaism, who or what is God?

GOD

There is no single Jewish conception of God. God has been described, defined, and depicted in a variety of ways in different works of Jewish literature and at different historical moments.

About God

God is beyond human comprehension, but that has not stopped Jewish thinkers from attempting to describe God. The Jewish God is referred to with many names and euphemisms, though God's scriptural names are traditionally only pronounced during religious activities. Belief in one God is one of Judaism's defining characteristics. Nonetheless, some parts of the Torah seem less monotheistic than others. In addition, there are minor currents of thought within Judaism that play down the importance of belief in God.

Biblical vs. Talmudical Depictions of God

The God of the Bible has a multitude of roles and attributes that often contrast sharply with each other. In this sense, God is like a person — experiencing a range of emotions, often torn between competing allegiances and values. The God of the Bible communicates with people through prophets and is even open to critique. Of the varied biblical representations of God, the two that became particularly prominent in Jewish thought are God's oneness and God's role as creator of the world.

Classical rabbinic literature portrays God in a similar way. However, in rabbinic writings, God no longer communicates with people through prophecy, and God is no longer considered a direct legal authority. One of the most radical Jewish descriptions of God can be found in the *heikhalot* literature, an early corpus of mystical texts, which actually describes the physical dimensions of God. Though most early Jewish thinkers did not shy away from depicting God in human terms, Philo, a first-century philosopher, was an exception. He integrated Greek philosophy with Judaism and conceived of God in a more abstract way.

God in Medieval Jewish Thought

The medieval philosophers departed from the non-systematic theology of biblical and rabbinic literature. Philosophers like Maimonides worked tirelessly to make their philosophical interests coincide with the truths of the Bible. They wrote proofs for the existence of God and struggled with passages in the Torah that seem to compromise God's unity. The medieval mystics— or kabbalists—also developed systematic theologies. They posited that God in Himself—known as the *Ein Sof*, or Infinite—cannot be discussed or described. However, God is revealed in the 10 *sefirot*, divine attributes or powers, and this manifest form of God is intelligible to humankind.

Modern Jewish Views of God

Secularization and the values of the modern world have created challenges for traditional conceptions of the Jewish God. Jewish thinkers adjusted to the rationalistic universalism of early modern philosophy by focusing on the ethical implications of Judaism's belief in one God. Later, existentialists like Martin Buber focused on the experiential relationship between humans and God. Mordecai Kaplan and Richard Rubenstein took the challenges of scientific naturalism and the Holocaust so seriously that they rejected the traditional Jewish God. Finally, feminism raised serious questions about the problems of a male God.

Hebrew - עֵבֶרִי

Word (s) of the Week

Milk / חֵלֶב

Pronounced: chah-LAHV

Chalav shares a root with the related words *chelev*, "(meat) fat," and *chelbon*, "protein."



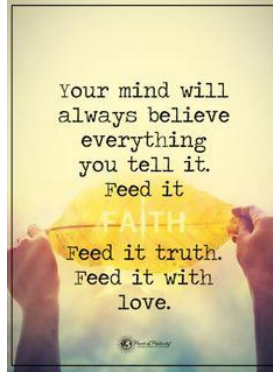
A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Fishy Story

As Moses and the children of Israel were crossing the Red Sea, the children of Israel began to complain to Moses of how thirsty they were after walking so far. Unfortunately, they were not able to drink from the walls of water on either side of them, as they were made up of salt-water.

Then, a fish from that wall of water told Moses that he and his family heard the complaints of the people, but that they through their own gills could remove the salt from the water and force it out of their mouths like a freshwater fountain for the Israelites to drink from as they walked by.

Moses accepted this kindly fish's offer. But before the fish and his family began to help, they told Moses they had a demand. They and their descendants had to be always present at the seder meal that would be established to commemorate the Exodus, since they had a part in the story. **When Moses agreed to this, he gave them their name which remains how they are known to this very day, for he said to them, "Go Filter Fish!" (Gefilte Fish)**



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

Sweet Noodle Kugel

with Spinach Salad with Za'atar, Sumac, and Dates

Kugels of all types are found on many Jewish tables. Whether they are potato or noodle, sweet or savory, it seems everyone has an opinion on kugel. As a child, my mom often made a noodle kugel as part of our Friday night Shabbat dinner. I must admit, her savory version was not my fave. As an adult I discovered a sweet version and soon after decided to create my own. It quickly became a hit in our home, and why wouldn't it? With its slightly sweet, creamy, raisin-studded interior and the crunchy, buttery cereal topping, it is a winner! Serve with a spinach salad with za'atar croutons.

Ingredients

- 6 tablespoons unsalted butter divided, plus more for greasing and dotting
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 12-ounce bag wide egg noodles
- 4 ounces cream cheese
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 3 large eggs

- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 pound small-curd cottage cheese
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- ½ cup golden raisins or other dried fruit plumped in 1 cup hot water if fruit is dry (optional)
- ½ –1 cup cornflake cereal

Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Generously butter eight 1½-cup ceramic souffle dishes. (A 13 × 9-inch glass baking dish may also be used.)
2. Bring a large pot of water to a boil over high heat. Add the salt and noodles and boil for no more than 7 minutes, so as to not overcook them. Drain the noodles, then return them to the pot and toss with 3 tablespoons of the butter.
3. In a microwave or on the stovetop, melt the remaining 3 tablespoons butter. Transfer to a large bowl and add the cream cheese and sugar. By hand or using an electric mixer, beat until smooth.
4. Add the eggs, sour cream, cottage cheese, and vanilla and beat until as smooth as possible. The cottage cheese will remain lumpy. Drain the golden raisins and add to the bowl. Add the noodles and mix well, stirring until completely combined.
5. Divide the noodle mixture into the prepared souffle dishes. Smooth the tops as much as possible. Crush the cornflakes slightly between your hands and sprinkle them over the noodle mixture until completely covered. Dot with more butter.

6. Bake for about 40 minutes, until the kugel feels firm and a knife inserted into the center comes out clean. The tops and edges should be golden, and there should be both crunchy and creamy parts.

7. Set aside to cool slightly, then serve with the spinach salad (recipe follows).

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