



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 12-30-23 VAYECHI**

### ***Ministry News***

***IF YOU HAVE A PRAYER REQUEST YOU WOULD LIKE PEOPLE ON THE LIST TO PRAY FOR YOU CAN SEND THEM TO US AT [TOLMM@ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG](mailto:TOLMM@ETZ-CHAYIM.ORG) OR BY TEXT MESSAGE TO 575 644-7706 AND I WILL SEND THEM BY EMAIL ONLY.***

Remember that you can support the work of Tree of Life Messianic Ministries with a donation made via PayPal or by check to PO Box 467, Organ, NM 88052. Your donation helps our continued outreach to inmates and the time it takes to put this Newsletter together.

**Donate**



**Tree of Life Messianic Ministries is a 501 C-3 non-profit. To donate go to [etz-chayim.org](http://etz-chayim.org) and click on the PayPal 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](mailto: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](mailto:Philip@etz-chayim.org). Rabbi Hammond is now affiliated with Rabbi Mordecai Silver and his ministry, Tree of Life Messianic Ministries. Check out Rabbi Hammond at <https://www.etz-chayim.org/australia-affiliate/>.

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](mailto:tolmm@etz-chayim.org)

## **MESSAGE FOR 12-30-23 VAYECHI**

*VaY'chi – and he lived*

*Genesis 47:28-50:26*

*1 Kings 2:1-12*

*1 Peter 1:1-9*

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

### **Genesis 48:16**

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

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

subject) 1a3a) individuals from death 1a3b) Israel from Egyptian bondage 1a3c) Israel from exile 1b) (Niphal) 1b1) to redeem oneself 1b2) to be redeemed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*From Kefa, an emissary of Y'shua the Messiah—To: God's chosen people, living in the Diaspora—in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, the province of Asia, and Bythinia—Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and set apart by the Spirit for obeying Y'shua the Messiah and for sprinkling with his blood: Grace and shalom be yours in full measure. Praised be God, Father of our Lord Y'shua the Messiah, who, in keeping with his great mercy, has caused us, through*

*the resurrection of Y'shua the Messiah from the dead, to be born again to a living hope, to an inheritance that cannot decay, spoil or fade, kept safe for you in heaven. Meanwhile, through trusting, you are being protected by God's power for a deliverance ready to be revealed at the Last Time. Rejoice in this, even though for a little while you may have to experience grief in various trials. Even gold is tested for genuineness by fire. The purpose of these trials is so that your trust's genuineness, which is far more valuable than perishable gold, will be judged worthy of praise, glory and honor at the revealing of Y'shua the Messiah. Without having seen him, you love him. Without seeing him now, but trusting in him, you continue to be full of joy that is glorious beyond words. And you are receiving what your trust is aiming at, namely, your deliverance.*

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

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

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

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 Vayechi: Summary** **Genesis-Bereisheet 47:28-50:26**

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Jacob Gives Advice to His Sons**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **Jacob and Joseph Pass Away**

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

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

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

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

But Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid. For am I in the place of God. Even if you meant to do evil, God meant it for good, in order to bring about what is at present, in order to keep a

numerous nation alive. And now, do not be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” He comforted them and spoke to their hearts.

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

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

## **Parashat Vayechi Discussion Questions**

1. Why do you think Jews still bless their sons on the Sabbath saying, “May God make you as Ephraim and Menashe?” What is so special about them? How does it relate to the sons blessed today? How do Jews bless their daughters today?
2. On his deathbed Jacob gathers his sons and tells each of them what is to become of them in the days to come. What do you think will become of you in the days to come? What do you think will become of your loved ones? Why is this your vision?
3. After Jacob dies, the brothers fear Joseph’s punishment for their previous sins. Joseph instead comforts his brothers and speaks to their hearts. How do you comfort someone and speak to their heart? How are you best comforted by someone else?

## **Haftarah for Vayechi - 1 Kings 2:1-12**

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

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

### **Last Words of Advice**

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

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

The Haftarah for Vayechi features another father — King David — on his deathbed. Like the patriarch Jacob, David had many sons. However, David’s last words are directed only to one of his sons: Solomon. With the backdrop of a contested kingship — more than one of David’s sons seeks to rule after his death — David’s selection of Solomon as recipient of his farewell speech is significant.

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

## Unfinished Business

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

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

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

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



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

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

**Go Forth...**

Go forth...

- Leaving something you like, enjoy or love is not easy..



These moments are often a test for us, especially when it comes to biblical matters.

## Go forth...

- *Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your country, And from your relatives and from your father's house, to the land which I will show you; And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, And make your name great; And so you shall be a blessing;<sup>3</sup> And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."<sup>4</sup> So Abram went forth as the LORD had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. Genesis 12:1-4 [NASB]*
- Take a moment to absorb the command given by YHVH to Abram [later to be named Abraham].
- The order was to leave the land - Abram's heritage, his place of dwelling, a land he most likely held dear, was familiar with, and was most probably surrounded by family and friends.
- Leave – Go Forth [Lech L'cha] and trust the command of YHVH.
- Abram was to leave very familiar, surroundings and follow the instructions of YHVH.
- Great changes were called for and great blessings were promised upon following the instructions of YHVH

## Go forth...

- Let us view a little closer these words **Lech l'cha**.
- Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains the words lech l'cha in "The Hirsch Chumash" as meaning – "Go for yourself, go your own way, isolate yourself", he then further expands on this and says "The meaning of our verse, then, is: 'Go for yourself, go your own way; go the way that will isolate you from your own land, from your birthplace, and from your father's house – from all your previous connections.'"
- I want to pick up on something very different to how this passage of scripture is often expanded on.
- It is often used for people leaving the Christian system and entering the Torah Instruction system of YHVH... very appropriate.
- The crucial point with all this is – whose voice is giving the instructions?
- Let us consider Hirsch's translation as given above. Suppose you hear these words, but are unsure who is speaking them – disaster could await the obedience thereof.

## Go forth...

- Let us view such a moment in history... obedience to the voice would have spelt the end of mankind...
- **Matthew 4:1-11**
- To understand this passage fully we need to understand the word **tempt**.
- **Peirazo**: To prove something, as to pierce through... To entangle a person to sin, to do that which is in against YHVH's instructions think Job andhasatan
- The connection I am trying to make is "going your own way, leaving your father's house" and whathasatan was trying to achieve with Yeshua.
- Notice the unfolding of this conversation and the answers of Yeshua.. 1<sup>st</sup> Living by following YHVH's instruction. 2<sup>d</sup> Not trying to prove YHVH for your own benefit. 3<sup>rd</sup> Worshipping YHVH and serving Him only
- Today, we are going to briefly view the 2<sup>d</sup> part of this conversation.

## Go forth...

- <sup>5</sup> Then the devil **took** Him into the holy city and had Him stand on the pinnacle of the temple, <sup>6</sup> and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God throw Yourself down; for it is written, **HE WILL COMMAND HIS ANGELS CONCERNING YOU**"; and **'ON their HANDS THEY WILL BEAR YOU UP, SO THAT YOU WILL NOT STRIKE YOUR FOOT AGAINST A STONE.'** Yeshua said to him, **"On the other hand, it is written, 'YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST.'"**
- **Took/Paralambano** Close, familiar, to take or join with one's self, companion @ **Matthew 17:1** For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye **received** <sup>G3880</sup> the word of God which ye heard of us, ye **received** it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe. 1 Thessalonians 2:13
- It is critical to know where the voice is coming from, and how that voice is using scripture... Let's view an example.
- ***4 "I heard another voice from heaven, saying, "Come out of her, my people, so that you will not participate in her sins and receive of her plagues,"*** Revelation 18:4 [NASB]
- Such a directive could be used by hasatan or his little minions... take those who profess to have dreams, and words of knowledge.
- We test the voice with the WORD... for instance **Come out of her, my people!** Who is **her** and who are **my people**? Again we have well meaning [perhaps] Christians encouraging us to come out from under the law... **Her** being the law, **people** being ex Christians.

## Go forth...

- Go forth– Lech L'cha: It is an action– do something. When we do something, there are consequences– good, or not so good.
- When we hear the command of LechL'cha we had better be sure who is behind the directive... because:
- “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it? Jeremiah 17:9
- “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deedsJeremiah 17:10
- **DANGER!!!** We can whisper commands of our Father in our own ears putting Him to the test in an unbiblical manner... example.

## Go forth...

- <sup>3</sup> But when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks and laid them on the fire, a viper came out because of the heat and fastened itself on his hand. When the natives saw the creature hanging from his hand, they began saying to one another, “Undoubtedly this man is a murderer, and though he has been saved from the sea, justice has not allowed him to live.” However he shook the creature off into the fire and suffered no harm. Acts 28:3-5.
- People have been guilty of putting YHVH to the test using this example of scripture. It doesn't always turn out for the best...
- Imagine if Yeshua had listened to hasatan giving direction through scripture. Would not have ended well for us...
- It is when the appearance of good fruit is put before us that we are most at risk...
- There is no God like our God– but be cautious putting Him to the test in an unbiblical manner! LechL'chain the footsteps of Yeshua HaMoshiach...



## ***Insights into Judaism***



### **Seven Holocaust Films You Should See**

***These under-the-radar movies about the Shoah are affecting, powerful and nuanced.***

The inherent drama of the Holocaust lends itself, too easily, to bad filmmaking. The less-talented filmmaker relies on tropes so well-worn that what might be a compelling and complex narrative comes out, instead, as flat, even offensive. It's why there are so many bad Holocaust films — Hollywood productions that wind up delimiting naturalism, reducing real-live people to archetypes and going for cheap emotional manipulation.

With all that said, the excellent Holocaust films, the truly must-sees, transcend ratings. They have humanist aspirations, tell stories that need to be told, and do so in the affecting and often brutal ways of high art. You'll find few clichés in the films below — only power and feeling and nuance. Unlike *Life is Beautiful*, *The Pianist* or Steven Spielberg's inescapable *Schindler's List*, these are films you might not know about. But trust us: They are dramas that shouldn't be missed.

#### ***Ida (2013, Polish)***

Winner of the 2015 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film, Polish filmmaker Paweł Pawlikowski's masterpiece *Ida* ranks as one of the greatest Holocaust—or otherwise—films of all time. *Ida*, which takes place in 1962, is the story of *Ida*, an orphan raised by nuns, who learns that she is, in fact, a Jew. Together with her aunt, her only remaining relative, *Ida* searches for the truth about her past, leading her, in lush, gorgeous black-and-white cinematography, to realizations better left buried.

#### ***The Pawnbroker (1964)***

On the strength of Rod Steiger's earthshaking performance, this Sidney Lumet tour-de-force was the first American film to depict the horrors of the Holocaust as they manifested after the

war was over—and still remains perhaps the greatest. Steiger is Sol Nazerman, a former university professor who survived the camps after losing his two children and wife. Years later, Nazerman owns and runs a pawn shop in Harlem, where he has become an abject misanthrope, emotionally numb and ruthlessly unsympathetic—until, finally, he snaps. In the annals of survivor depictions, nothing touches Steiger’s grandest achievement.

### ***Phoenix* (2014, German)**

German filmmaker Christian Petzold’s modern film noir is an undertaking of breathless beauty and duplicity. Starring Nina Hoss as Nelly, a survivor rendered unrecognizable after facial reconstruction surgery, *Phoenix* is the story of Nelly’s search for her husband, a lout who may have been the one who betrayed her to the Nazis. Petzold indulges in some of the genre’s well-trod tropes, but his attention to Nelly’s psychology, a survivor plopped back into a world that would prefer to ignore than remember, is more than commendable. And the ending simply devastates.

### ***Son of Saul* (2015, Hungarian)**

Nothing will be the same after *Son of Saul*. Hungarian director László Nemes’ debut, the film is a day in the life of Saul Ausländer, a member of the Sonderkommando — a unit of Jews forced to aid in the killing of other Jews — at Auschwitz. Shot mostly over-the-shoulder, or in very-blurry close-up, the film depicts the mundane horrors of Ausländer’s work — salvaging valuables, removing corpses from the gas chambers and scrubbing the floors — with an unflinching chill. Even without the exceptional work of Géza Röhrig as Saul, a first-time actor and poet, this winner of the 2015 Best Foreign Language Film film would be formidable.

### ***1945* (2016, Hungarian)**

Ferenc Török’s recent film begins on a summer day in 1945, when an Orthodox Jew and his son get off a train in a tiny Hungarian village. This doesn’t bode well for the villagers, who are worried their community’s deported Jews will come back to reclaim the property and possessions stolen from them. Quiet, subtle, and fair, *1945* is a very different kind of film.

### ***Train of Life* (1998, French)**

Released a year after Roberto Benigni’s *Life is Beautiful*, this French film approaches the Holocaust in much the same way: as a cocktail of slapstick and tragedy. Whereas Benigni’s film controversially suggests that optimism trumps Nazism, director Radu Mihaileanu’s *Train of Life* treats the fictional, hilarious tale of an entire shtetl’s escape from Europe as exactly what it has to be: a complete, utter, devastating farce.

### ***Europa Europa* (1990, German)**

Based on a true story, this film follows Solomon Perel, a young German Jew who survives the Holocaust by falling in with the Nazis and posing as a non-Jewish translator. Though the film’s

desire for verisimilitude renders it silly at times — there are many coincidences, tricks of fate, that test patience — the story of Perel is simply too bizarre and too extraordinary to be missed.



## Does God Hear Our Prayers?

*Traditional Judaism answers with an emphatic "yes!"*

The traditional view of prayer is relatively straightforward. The Bible, for instance, takes it for granted that people have conversations with God the same way they do with each other. To take but one example, Moses pleads with God to pardon Israel's sins, and God duly responds, "I have pardoned, just as you say" ([Numbers 14:20](#)). Sometimes God initiates the conversation; sometimes human beings do. But either way, God appears here as an all-knowing and all-powerful being who welcomes our praise and, if we are deserving, acts positively on our requests.

### Talmudic Beliefs

By the second half of the second century B.C.E., the leaders whom we call the Rabbis were coming into being. So influential were they for all the rest of Jewish history that Jews today are rabbinic through and through. Jewish tradition is the Hebrew scriptures that Jews call the Bible plus the voluminous writings of the Rabbis of antiquity and the subsequent, equally monumental work of other Jewish leaders, also called rabbis, from the Middle Ages up to and including our own day. We customarily differentiate the Rabbis who laid the foundation for rabbinic Judaism until roughly the middle of the sixth century C.E. from the rabbis who are their spiritual descendants by capitalizing the first term but using lowercase for the second.

By the year 200 C.E., the Rabbis had recorded their views on prayer (as on everything else) in a compendium called the Mishnah. By 400 C.E., further generations of Rabbis in the Land of Israel had composed a larger work called the Palestinian Talmud . And sometime around 550 C.E., Rabbis in Babylonia (present-day Iraq) compiled a monumental work (some 16,000 pages in the standard English translation) called the Babylonian Talmud, or sometimes just the Talmud because of its size and influence.

From all of these works, we see that the Rabbis viewed God more or less as their biblical forbears. They knew that unlike the prophets, however, they themselves never heard God speak, so they concluded that actual prophecy had ceased. Apparently God didn't initiate conversations any more.

## **Formalized Prayer**

But the Rabbis were equally certain that God still hears our prayers, and sometimes even answers them by granting the things we pray for. They were sure, in fact, that God wants us to pray—and not just as the mood strikes us, but regularly, and in community, not alone.

That was an innovation beyond what biblical men and women had known. In the Bible, people pray only when they feel like it. Moses asks God to heal his sister Miriam. Solomon requests wisdom so that he can lead his people wisely. Miriam sings God's praises to celebrate crossing the Red Sea; Hannah asks for a baby boy. But once a prayer is said, it is over and done with. No one feels the need to pray the same words twice, and the prayers don't get fixed so that other people in the same situation are obliged to copy them.

The Rabbis did not question a person's right to speak directly to God with heartfelt praise, petition, and gratitude, just as biblical heroes had, but in addition, they took the next step of establishing the times and structure of a regular communal prayer cycle, the one we use to this very day. For the Rabbis, then, personal prayer was juxtaposed with communal liturgy — a far cry from biblical days, when the only public worship service had been the sacrificial cult. The God to whom the community spoke, however, was still portrayed as a personal deity who hears what people say and acts upon our words the way a powerful monarch—the Roman emperor himself, perhaps—did for powerful petitioners in court.

## **Answering the Question Today**

Most of us grew up with that kingly image of God in mind. For those of us who still believe in a God who can be pictured that way, prayer is mostly not a problem. Such a God might easily demand prayers from us, the subjects of the divine kingdom. In return, since God is all-powerful just, and good, we might expect a positive response to our petitions, as long as we deserve it.

But here is where even those who still believe in the biblical notion of a personal God run into difficulty. It is hard to prove that God really does answer our prayers, and sometimes, as when "bad things happen to good people," it is hard not to wonder why God doesn't respond the way we think a good God would.

**Hebrew - עֵבֶרִי -**

**Word (s) of the Week**

**Hot / חם**

**Pronounced: CHAHM**

***Cham* alone means "it's hot," and the related word *chom* means "fever."**



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

### **A Fly in my Coffee**

What happens when a fly falls into a coffee cup?

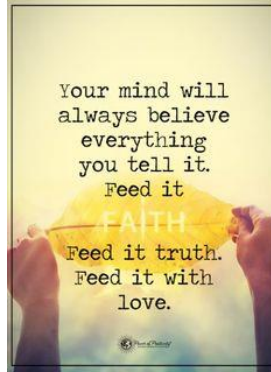
The Italian - throws the cup and walks away in a fit of rage

The Frenchman - takes out the fly, and drinks the coffee

The Chinese - eats the fly and throws away the coffee

The Israeli - sells the coffee to the Frenchman, the fly to the Chinese, buys himself a new cup of coffee and uses the extra money to invent a Device that prevents flies from falling into coffee.

The Palestinian - blames the Israeli for the fly falling into his coffee, protests the act of aggression to the UN, takes a loan from the European Union for a new cup of coffee, uses the money to purchase explosives and then blows up the coffee house where the Italian, the Frenchman, and the Chinese, are trying to explain to the Israeli why he should give away his cup of coffee to the Palestinian.



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

Jachnun, savory-sweet Yemenite pastry rolls, are cooked overnight and served on Shabbat morning with overnight hard-boiled eggs and spicy tomato salsa. This is the perfect weekend baking project and feeds a crowd.

### **Ingredients**

#### **For the jachnun:**

- 2 lb all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp dry yeast
- 4 Tbsp light brown sugar
- 2 Tbsp honey
- 3 ½ tsp kosher salt
- 2 ¼-2 ½ cups lukewarm water
- ¼ cup vegetable or corn oil
- 2-3 slices day-old bread (to pad the pot)
- 8 Tbsp melted butter, clarified butter (ghee) or oil
- 6-8 eggs (one per person), to serve

#### **For the zhug (optional):**

- 5 Serrano or jalapeno peppers

- 1 bunch cilantro (at least 1 cup of chopped leaves)
- 4-6 garlic cloves, chopped
- ½ tsp ground cumin
- kosher salt, to taste (start with ½ tsp)
- 1 Tbsp oil (optional, but recommended if you want it to keep for longer)
- 2 Tbsp water

## For the spicy tomato salsa:

- 4 ripe tomatoes
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 1–2 tsp zhug or chopped Serrano, to taste
- kosher salt, to taste

## Instructions

1. Put flour, dry yeast, sugar and salt in the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with the dough hook and mix a little using a spoon. Turn the mixer on medium-low and add honey and 2¼ cups water, then knead for 5 minutes. If it seems too dry, add 1 Tbsp water at a time, until the dough seems soft.
2. Remove bowl from mixer, cover bowl with plastic wrap and let rest for 1 hour. After 1 hour, knead again for 5 minutes. Let the dough rest again for another hour, covered with plastic wrap.
3. Put ¼ cup oil in a small bowl. Divide the dough into two, roll each half to a 2-inch-thick log and cut into five equal pieces (for a total of 10 pieces). Roll each piece into a ball, dip in the oil to cover, and let rest on a baking sheet. Cover dough balls tightly with plastic wrap and let rest for 3-4 hours. Resting will make stretching the dough easier.
4. Preheat the oven to 200°F. Grease an ovenproof pot, put a layer of day-old bread at the bottom (optional, to prevent the bottom layer from becoming crispy) and top with parchment paper.
5. Use a rolling pin to roll the first ball into about a 10-inch circle. Using your hands, stretch the dough further into a very thin 15-inch circle. Do



it slowly by lifting the sides of the dough and stretching again and again until you can almost see the countertop through the dough.

6. Using your hand or a pastry brush, spread about 2 tsp of the butter all over the dough. Fold the left third of the circle inside, and then fold the right third on top, like an envelope. Stretch the dough a little more and start rolling into a cylinder shape. Put in the pot. Repeat with the rest of the dough. (You can freeze some of the jachnun for later use. Simply wrap each roll individually in plastic wrap and put in a freezer bag. Bake it next time straight from the freezer, no need to thaw.)
7. Cover the jachnun pot with its lid. If the lid is not tight enough (or if there's no lid at all), cover the whole pot with a double layer of aluminum foil.
8. Ideally, you should put the eggs in a separate small lidded pot next to the jachnun pot. Cover eggs with salted hot water and cover the pot. You can also just arrange the eggs inside the jachnun pot, but try to put them on the sides, so as not to disturb the jachnun itself too much (it will simply change its shape because of the eggs).
9. Transfer both pots to the oven and bake overnight, or for 8-10 hours.
10. To make the spicy tomato salsa, start by making the zhug (optional): First, seed the Serranos or jalapenos if you're nervous about the spiciness. Roughly chop the peppers. Then put all the ingredients in a food processor and mix to a slightly chunky paste. Add an extra Tbsp of water if the mixture resembles a chopped salsa and not a paste. Adjust salt to taste.
11. Finish the tomato salsa by grating the tomatoes and mixing with the rest of the ingredients. Add salt to taste. Serve alongside the jachnun for breakfast.

## Notes

1. After completing Direction 6, you can freeze some of the jachnun for later use. Simply wrap each roll individually in plastic wrap and put in a freezer bag. Bake it next time straight from the freezer, no need to thaw.
2. The zhug will keep in a sealed container in the fridge for a week, or you can freeze it for a few months.

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