



## **TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 2-3-24 YITRO**

### ***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 2-3-24 YITRO**

**YITRO - JETHRO**

**Exodus - Shemoth 18:1-20:23**

**Yeshayahu - Isaiah 6:1-7:6; 9:5-6**

**Mattiyahu - Matthew 5:8-20**

**Shemoth 18:8-11:**

***And Mosheh told his father-in-law all that The Lord had done to Pharaoh and to the Mitsrites for Yisrael's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how The Lord had delivered them. And Yithro rejoiced for all the good which The Lord had done for Yisrael, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Mitsrites. And Yithro said, "Blessed be The Lord, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Mitsrites and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Mitsrites. ones.....Now I know that The Lord is greater than all the mighty***

**Shemoth 18:19-20:**

***Now listen to my voice. Let me counsel you and Elohim be with you: Stand before Elohim for the people, and you shall bring the matters to Elohim. And you shall***

***enlighten them concerning the laws and the teachings and show them the way in which they should walk and the work which they do.***

***Shemoth 19:5, 6, 7, 8:***

***And now, if you diligently obey My voice, and shall guard My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession above all the peoples--for all the earth is Mine--and you shall be to Me a reign of priests and a set-apart nation. Those are the words which you are to speak to the children of Yisrael. And Mosheh came and called for the elders of the people and set before them all these words which The Lord commanded him. And all the people answered together and said, "All that The Lord has spoken we shall do. So, Mosheh brought back the words of the people to The Lord.***

***Shemoth 19:10-11:***

***And The Lord said to Mosheh, Go to the people and set them apart today and tomorrow. And they shall wash their garments And shall be prepared by the third day. For on the third day The Lord shall come down upon Mount Sinai before the eyes of all the people.***

***Shemoth 19:24:***

***And The Lord said to him, Come, go down and then come up, you and Aharon with you.***

***Shemoth 20:4-6:***

***You do not make for yourself a carved image or any likeness of that which is in the heavens above, or which is in the earth beneath, or which is in the waters under the earth, you do not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, The Lord your Elohim am a jealous El, visiting the crookedness of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me but showing kindness to thousands, to those who love Me and guard My commands.***

***Exodus-Shemot 20:1-23***

***20:1 Then God spoke all these words: <sup>2</sup> I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; <sup>3</sup> you shall have no other gods before me. <sup>4</sup> You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. <sup>5</sup> You shall not bow down to them or worship***

**them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, <sup>6</sup> but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. <sup>7</sup> You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. <sup>8</sup> Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. <sup>9</sup> Six days you shall labor and do all your work. <sup>10</sup> But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work-- you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. <sup>11</sup> For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore, the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it. <sup>12</sup> Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. <sup>13</sup> You shall not murder. <sup>14</sup> You shall not commit adultery. <sup>15</sup> You shall not steal. <sup>16</sup> You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. <sup>17</sup> You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. <sup>18</sup> When all the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking, they were afraid and trembled and stood at a distance, <sup>19</sup> and said to Moses, "You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, or we will die." <sup>20</sup> Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid; for God has come only to test you and to put the fear of him upon you so that you do not sin." <sup>21</sup> Then the people stood at a distance, while Moses drew near to the thick darkness where God was. <sup>22</sup> The LORD said to Moses: Thus, you shall say to the Israelites: "You have seen for yourselves that I spoke with you from heaven. <sup>23</sup> You shall not make gods of silver alongside me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods of gold. (Exod. 20:1 NRS)**

**Yeshayahu-Isaiah 9-13:**

**And He said, Go, and you shall say to this people, Hearing, you hear, but do not understand; and seeing, you see, but do not know. Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and shall turn and be healed. Then I said, The Lord, until when? And He answered, Until the cities are laid waste and without inhabitant, and the houses are without a man, and the land is laid waste, a ruin, and The Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places be many in the midst of the land. But still, there is a tenth part**

*in it, and it shall again be for a burning, like a terebinth tree and like an oak, whose stump remains when it is cut down. The set-apart seed is its stump!*

**Yeshayahu-Isaiah 6:7**

*See, this has touched your lips; your crookedness is taken away, and your sin is covered.*

**Mattithyahu-Matthew 5:8-20**

*Matthew 5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. <sup>9</sup> "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. <sup>10</sup> "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. <sup>13</sup> "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled underfoot. <sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. <sup>17</sup> "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (NRS)*

**Did you hear what verse 20 said:**

*For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall by no means enter into the reign of the heavens. When you take stock of yourself what do you see? A Pharisee, who parades his so-called righteousness before him so that all can see and tell him what a righteous man he is. Or are you one who lives out the Word of Elohim. Who practices as Y'shua did, paying no mind as to what the world has to say. Are you like the children of*

*Yisrael, who upon hearing the voice of Elohim, ran away. Or are you like Mosheh and Aharon who when called by the voice of Elohim went up on the mountain. I want to leave you with these words from the Talmud: In addition to instituting the precepts of the Torah, God set the Israelites an example of obedience by fulfilling them Himself. 'It is the custom of a human king to make a decree, and if he desires to obey it himself, he does so, but if not, it is obeyed by others. With the Holy One, blessed be He, it is otherwise. When He makes a decree, He performs it first. Therefore, not only in His commandments did the Lord provide the human being with guidance to the true way of life, but in Himself He set the example which is to be followed. The Imitation of The Lord is, in Rabbinic literature, set forward as the ideal after which man should strive. The Lord is the Pattern after which human life must be delineated. Conspicuous in Him are the qualities which should be prominent in human conduct.*

- *Are you following God or man?*

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We include a Traditional Torah Commentary and my Messianic Commentary. The reason for this is so you can see a Messianic Perspective and a Traditional Jewish one. Remember to use discernment in approaching Traditional Jewish teachings as they do not recognize Yeshua as the Messiah. There are various ideas in traditional Jewish circles about the Messiah and 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 Yitro: Summary

### Exodus-Shemot 18:1-20:23

***Jethro, Moses' father-in-law suggests a system for establishing lower courts to settle disputes; God speaks the Ten Commandments to the Children of Israel amidst fire, smoke, and the sound of the shofar.***

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, and the pagan priest of Midian, heard what God did for Moses and the Israelites. He took Moses' wife and two sons and brought them to Moses in the wilderness. After a passionate reunion, Moses shared with Jethro the whole story of how the Lord rescued the Hebrews from bondage to Pharaoh in Egypt.

Jethro rejoiced, saying, "Blessed be the Lord. Now I know that the Lord is greater than all the gods."

Jethro then made sacrifices to God, and everyone feasted.

The next day, Jethro watched Moses settle disputes between the people. "Why do you sit as judge, Moses, while the people stand about you from morning to night?"

"Because the people come to me to seek God. I decide between man and his neighbor and make known the laws of God."

"But this is not right," retorted his father-in-law. "You will tire yourself and the people out. Now heed my voice, I shall advise you. You be a representative to God and teach the people of the path God seeks of them. Then find capable men who fear God and trustworthy men who spurn ill-gotten gain. Set these men over the people as chiefs of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. Let them exercise authority over the people at all times. They will decide the minor disputes and bring the major disputes to you."

Moses followed his father-in-law's advice and set up this system. Then Jethro returned to his own land.

## Camping at the Mountain

The Israelites camped in front of the mountain in the wilderness at Sinai. God tells Moses to say to the Israelites, “You have seen what I, God, did to the Egyptians and how I brought you to Me. Now, if you will obey Me faithfully and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all the peoples. Indeed, all the earth is Mine, but you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

Moses relays God’s message to the people and they answer as one, saying “All that the Lord has spoken, we will do.”

God then says to Moses, “In three days, I will come to you in a thick cloud in order that the people may hear when I speak to you and so trust you ever after. Now, warn the people they must be clean and pure, for the Lord will soon appear at Mount Sinai.” And Moses told the people to prepare for God’s presence.

On the third day, as morning dawned, there was thunder and lightning and a dense cloud upon the mountain and a very loud blast of the shofar horn. All the people trembled. Moses led the people out of the camp toward God and they took their places at the foot of the mountain.

Now Mount Sinai was all in smoke, for the Lord had come down upon it in fire and the whole mountain trembled violently. The blare of the shofar grew louder and louder. The Lord said, “Go down, warn the people and priests not to try to come up or look at the Lord, lest they perish.”

God spoke all these words, saying, “I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

“You shall have no other god beside Me. You shall not make for yourself a sculptured image, or any likeness of what is in the heavens above, or on the earth below, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the guilt of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and upon the fourth generations of those who reject Me, but showing kindness to the thousandth generation of those who love Me and observe My commandments.

“You shall not take in vain the name of the Lord your God; for the Lord will not clear one who swears falsely by His name.

“Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and accomplish all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of the Lord, your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or daughter, your male or female slave, or your cattle, or the stranger who is within your settlements. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth and sea, and all that is in them, and He rested on the seventh day; therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and sanctified it.

“Honor your father and your mother that you may long endure on the land which the Lord, your God, is giving you.

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit sexual impropriety.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your fellow human’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female slave, or his ox or his ass, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

When the people witnessed the thunder and lightning, the blare of the shofar and the mountain smoking, they fell back in fear. “You speak to us, Moses, and we shall hear. Let God not speak to us lest we die.”

### **Do Not Be Afraid**

“Do not be afraid,” responded Moses. “God only spoke directly so that the fear of the Lord may forever be with you, so that you do not go astray.”

The people stood from afar while Moses approached God in the thick cloud.

“Tell the Israelites,” God said to Moses “you, yourselves, saw that I spoke to you from the very heavens. Therefore, never make any gods of silver or gold. Make an Altar of earth for Me and sacrifice offerings. In every place My name is mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.”

### **Parashat Yitro Discussion Questions**

- 1) Why do you think God chose to give The Ten Commandments to all the people at the same time and not just have Moses relate them to the people?
- 2) Which Commandment do you feel is most important? Why?
- 3) The first commandment says: “I the Lord am your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.” Why is this a commandment?
- 4) The second commandment says: “You shall have no other god beside Me...” What other gods were available to worship? What other gods do people worship now?
- 5) Which is the hardest commandment to keep for you? Which is the easiest? Why?

## **Haftarah for Yitro**

## *Isaiah's initiation as a prophet.*

Ashkenazic Custom: **Isaiah 6:1-7:6**, 9:5-6

Sephardic Custom: **Isaiah 6:1-13**

In Parashat Yitro we read about God's wondrous revelation of the Torah. The Israelites were awestruck as they experienced God's presence: "All the people saw the thunder and lightning, the blare of the horn and the mountain smoking; they fell back and stood at a distance" (Exodus 20:15).

Appropriately, the Haftarah selection for this portion retells another account of a vivid divine revelation—Isaiah's first vision, in which he was inaugurated as a prophet for Israel. In Isaiah's vision, God is seated on a throne on high, surrounded by attendants who are six-winged creatures. These creatures, called Seraphs, call to one other: "Holy, holy, holy! The Lord of Hosts! His presence fills all the earth!" (Isaiah 6:3) This refrain has been incorporated into our synagogue liturgy, in the *Kedushah* prayer.

As the Seraphs cry out to each other, the doorposts shake, and God's house fills with smoke. Isaiah is appropriately startled and humbled: "Woe is me; I am lost! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my own eyes have beheld the King Lord of Hosts" (6:5).

Despite Isaiah's hesitation and self-doubt, his initiation continues. One Seraph takes a coal and touches it to Isaiah's lips, declaring that with this action Isaiah's sin is purged. Then Isaiah is addressed directly by God. God asks: "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?" Isaiah volunteers himself: "Here I am send me" (6:8).

### Isaiah's Mission

Isaiah learns that he is being sent on a mission to tell the people of Israel about their upcoming destruction. Their fate is so definite, in fact, that he is told to dull their minds, stop their ears, and seal their eyes—lest they understand, or hear, or see, and then attempt to repent (6:10).

The destruction will be complete, Isaiah is told. Towns and houses will be emptied of their inhabitants, and the ground will be completely deserted (6:11). But all hope should not be lost. Like terebinth and oak trees, whose stumps live on even after they are cut down, one-tenth of the people will remain a "holy seed" (6:13). This illusion, though open to interpretation, seems to indicate that the entire people will be ravaged, but one-tenth will survive and regenerate Israel.

Ashkenazim conclude this haftarah with another hopeful message: a depiction of a king who will rule Israel justly, and in peace.



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

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

### **The Politics of Life**

#### **The politics of life!**

- Sir Walter Scott said in 1808: “Oh what a tangled web we weave, when we first practice to deceive.”



- Practicing deceit brings damage, in fact ends up in death if not dealt with through teshuvah – turning around, repenting ...

## The politics of life.

- We have an example of the problems these actions can bring examples from one who was declared a man after God's heart.
- <sup>14</sup>But now your kingdom shall not endure The LORD has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart, and the LORD has appointed him as ruler over His people, because you have not kept what the LORD commanded you." 1 Samuel 13:14
- <sup>22</sup>After He had removed him, He raised up David to be their king, concerning whom He also testified and said, 'I HAVE FOUND DAVID the son of Jesse, A MAN AFTER MY HEART, who will do all My will.' Acts 13:22
- Even though David was King of Israel a man after YHVH's own heart, he had plenty of problems, especially family problems, brought about by his own desires and stupidity.

## Politics of life.

- King David's son Adoniyah played politics. He stacked the deck his way, to get his way. He wanted to be the leader, hold a position of great prominence.
- This brings danger, heart ache, and death. Usurping the order of our Father, always, yes always, ends badly.
- We find David in his later years- something like 70 yrs old – a man who had an interesting life to say the least. Having to fight many a battle, both internally and externally – All having a heavy spiritual element to them.
- Here we find David in his later years- something like 70 yrs old – a man who had an interesting life to say the least. Having to fight many a battle, both internally and externally – All having a heavy spiritual element to them.

## Politics of life.

- Though David was indeed a man after haShem's own heart, his life appears to be anything but peaceful. His family situation left much to be desired. Troubles coming from every angle and he found himself crying out to YHVH on many occasions.
- Restless nights over the many wars he fought, but perhaps even more so over family troubles.
- Amnon raped Avshalom's sister Tamar, then Avshalom had Amnon killed. Later we find Avshalom causing trouble for his father, then the usual warfare and Avshalom was killed. Imagine the conversations around the dinner table – the sleepless nights that followed.
- Many of these unhealthy issues happened after the unsavoury business regards David and Bath-Sheva and much pain resulted from that unholy situation.
- As such we find David writing: **Psalm 51:1-4**

## Politics of life.

- None the less we witness that Shlomo the son of David and Bath-Sheva was to be the King after David's death: **1Chronicles 28:1-10**
- As said, I believe all these issues had taken a heavy toll on David.
- David became an old man, weak, in bodily strength, perhaps gaunt and thin from all these issues.
- When one becomes such, it is very hard to keep warm and healthy, often pain is associated with such conditions, and then it becomes difficult to keep on top of things around you – especially all the responsibilities of being King.

## The politics of life.

- It was under these conditions we see another problem arising Adoniyah the oldest living son, whom David never rebuked [1 Kings 1:6] decided he would become King.
- Some commentators say that Adoniyah took this role because it was the custom for the oldest son to follow in his father's footsteps, so he was confident he was in the right position.
- I'm not convinced— It appears he followed someone's footsteps- not King David's but Avshalom's. He was apparently good looking, full of himself, as his father never rebuked him, thus added to his over inflated idea of himself.
- I believe he was far from being on the straight and narrow just look at whom he brought in on the scheme, and those whom he excluded from his little scheme.

## The politics of life.

- I suspect Adoniyah would have known whom his father chose as King but I also suspect jealousy and pride began to eat away at him. Jealousy and pride can be a very dangerous ingredient.
- Where did Adoniyah's loyalties lie? Not with YHVH or King David but with self.
- Imagine how easy it would have been to justify these actions of Adoniyah. A son was to be King whose birth was questionable at best. He probably thought the people would rally behind him, especially as he had General Yoav, with him.
- Yoav himself was in a delicate situation as David was not pleased with him for killing Avshalom, so we can see how he could benefit by supporting Adoniyah.



## The politics of life.

- Another chap of questionable character would join the movement as well. Aviathar [who the Jewish sages say was dismissed from the Priesthood by David] joined Adoniyah, no doubt hoping to become the important High Priest.
- With the support of these high profile leaders and others Adoniyah threw a party to declare himself King.
- Adoniyah sacrificed sheep, oxen and fatlings by the stone **Zocheleth**:
- **Zocheleth** זֹחֶלֶת = crawl, slithering, serpent.
- Remind you of anyone?

## The politics of life.

- But look at those who were not invited, or refused to go **1 Kings 1:8**
- These were faithful to YHVH by being faithful to David. The plot is foiled, and Shlomo goes on to become King.
- No matter who comes against the plans of our heavenly Father, they will not succeed.
- There are always those plotting to install themselves in the place of those truly chosen by YHVH. Most are blinded by their own self importance, and fail to hear the voice of the Holy One of Israel. Fortunately they often trip themselves up with their impatience, self importance, and over confidence.

## The politics of life.

- How many have set up systems that are espoused as being far superior to the Torah/instructions of YHVH.
- How many have set up systems that are supposed to be what we may term biblical– yet have either subtracted or added to the Holy Torah of YHVH.
- However the bottom line is that those who are citizens of Israel are responsible to put things in order before YHVH.
- We are to follow His instructions whereby we walk in the same direction as Yeshua HaMoshiach.
- The One who is both the AUTHOR– ARCHEGOS [beginning, leader, founder, Prince,] and PERFECTER– TELEIOTES [a completer, a finisher] of faith– **Heb 12:2**

## The politics of life.

- Our challenge is not to play politics, and justify our actions, but to walk according to our Father’s instructions.
- We have a problem: We are finite– we do not know or understand it all– we just need to let go of our own wisdom because:
- “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.<sup>9</sup> “For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are My ways higher than your ways And My thoughts than your thoughts.  
Isaiah 55:8-9.
- Trust in the LORD with all your heart And do not lean on your own understanding.  
<sup>6</sup> In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and turn away from evil. It will be healing to your <sup>l</sup>body  
And refreshment to your bones. Proverbs 3:5-8
- Let God be God– He does a pretty good job of it. Indeed there is...

# ***Jewish Practices***



## **Why Jews Read Torah on a Yearly Cycle**

### ***The history of the weekly portion — and the different schedules on which it's done.***

Every week, one section of the Torah, known as the Torah portion or “parsha,” is designated as a focus of Jewish study and is read aloud in synagogue that Shabbat.

The first mention of a scheduled Torah-reading cycle appears in the Bible, in Deuteronomy, where Moses instructs the tribe of Levi and the elders of Israel to gather all the people for a public reading from portions of the Torah once every seven years. The need to read the Torah publicly intensified after the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE; Jews were dispersed into other parts of the Middle East, into North Africa, and into Europe; and their earlier religious and cultural world became decentralized. While most Jews in the Diaspora now follow one Torah-reading cycle, some communities are on a triennial cycle.

Because a reference in the Mishnah (the first effort to permanently record Jewish custom and law, compiled in the 3rd century C.E.) supported Deuteronomy’s prescription, we understand that Jews were continuing to read the Torah publicly; and we also know that there were Torah readings for festivals, special Shabbatot (plural of Shabbat) and fast days.

But it was not until the Talmudic era, about the 6th century C.E., that the Jews in the Land of Israel began to read the entire Torah in public and do so until all the Five Books of Moses were completed. At that time, the cycle took three years in a pattern called the Palestinian triennial, beginning the first year with the first book, Genesis, and finishing, at the end of the third year, with the fifth book, Deuteronomy.

The Jews of Babylon, however, followed a different custom, established by the beginning of the 7th century CE, and completed the entire cycle each year, which they did by dividing the Torah into 54 weekly portions. (Because the number of portions exceeds the number of weeks in a given year, more than one portion is read during certain weeks.) In Hebrew, the word for portion is parsha (plural, parshiyot).

In the 19th century, a reintroduction of the Palestinian triennial cycle was attempted at the West End Congregation in London but was unsuccessful. In the middle of the 20th century, various congregations in the United States (primarily Conservative ones) were seeking ways to modernize the service and also to spend more time on Shabbat on Torah study. They too attempted to revive the Palestinian cycles with the argument that reading only a section of the weekly Torah portion would make Torah study more concentrated and thus enhanced.

The reintroduction failed for two reasons. First, in the pattern of the Palestinian triennial cycle, the weekly reading would have differed from what the rest of the Jewish world was reading. Second, Simchat Torah (the holiday in which Jews celebrate the conclusion of one Torah-reading cycle and the beginning of the next) celebrations would occur only one out of every three years, instead of annually.

Finally, in 1988, the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards of the Conservative Movement passed a legal responsum that put into practice a new American triennial cycle. This new triennial cycle, rather than dividing the entire Torah into thirds, as was done in the Palestinian cycle, divides each of the individual 54 portions into thirds. Therefore, a congregation can be reading within the same portion as those who follow the annual cycle but will only read one-third of each portion per year. In addition, this pattern enables the congregation to read from Genesis through Deuteronomy each year, providing for an annual celebration of Simchat Torah.

There is an obvious drawback to this system: Only one-third of each conventional Torah portion is actually read per year; and the readings, because incomplete, do not flow smoothly into the portion of the following week. Nonetheless, the vast majority of American Conservative and Reform congregations prefer this new cycle. All Jews in Israel, however, and Orthodox Jews in America continue to follow the annual cycle with the full portion read each week.



## The Art of Teshuvah

***The Jewish practice of repentance involves not merely turning away from sin but turning toward the dark parts of ourselves.***

Teshuvah is the foundational practice of the High Holy Day season. Literally translated as “return,” *teshuvah* is a process of turning away from those ways in which we missed the mark so we may come back into right relationship with others, with the Divine and with ourselves.

Whether through carelessness, egotism or laziness, teshuvah challenges us to admit our transgressions, make amends, and resolve to do better in the coming year. Yet according to the great Hasidic master Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira, teshuvah is also a kind of creativity. More than a simple return to what has been, it is a process of remaking ourselves anew. But how?

Rather than turning away from our missteps, the creative potential of teshuvah lies in a turning toward those places in which we faltered or failed. In the words of psychologist David Richo, “Hidden in everything negative is something alive and beautiful that wants to belong to us.”

Immense power and potential dwell in the dark, unresolved places in our soul. For it is only when we allow ourselves to come face to face with these less desirable parts of ourselves that we can understand and unlock the creative vitality contained within them. In this way, we emulate the creative process of the Divine.

The practice of making art can help connect us to these wild, untamed parts of ourselves.

Start with a desire, the call of what attracts you. It could be something small, the pigment of a color, the feel of a certain brush. From there, make marks on a page, seeing where the next mark will take you. Each moment, each stroke, is guided by each subsequent desire. And each desire is a call from intuition, that place beyond the rational, intellectual mind, a place older

than time and beyond words, the source of creation. We could call it God. You can feel it when you create in this way, it is tangible.

This way of painting appears simple, almost childlike. Yet the skill required is in some ways much more demanding than accurately portraying the dimensions of a still life. It is that of opening to intuition, to God, of following the path into the bright sunshine, the dark damp woods, the rocky cliffs, the murky depths within.

It can be terrifying to think where this creative exploration might lead us, or what we'll find in our swirling depths. We weren't raised to be explorers of our soul, to hear the voice of the universe refracted through us. We've been conditioned to replicate an image of what we think — or have been told — the paintings of our lives should look like.

But in opting for safety, we miss the wild, fertile place of all possibility, our innate creativity. And without this connection, teshuvah becomes impossible.

A beautiful Midrash about the creation of the world conveys an argument between a certain philosopher and Rabban Gamliel, the leading rabbinic authority of his time. Reflecting on the first verses of the Torah, the philosopher remarks, "Your God is indeed a great artist, but surely God found on hand suitable materials which were of help in creating!" Intrigued, Rabban Gamliel asks, "What are those materials?" The philosopher replies, "chaos, void, darkness, water, wind, and the depths" ([Genesis Rabbah 1:9](#)).

When teshuvah leads us back into the texts of our lives, we too find chaos, void and darkness in our depths. Rather than turning away from our human failings, teshuvah beckons us toward these complicated, as of yet unintegrated places within. The ways in which we miss the mark arise from those dark and unknown corners of ourselves, those places of chaos and void.

But it is also within these very places that our own artist's palette lies hidden. Like a half-finished painting that yearns to be fully realized, teshuvah is the work of re-engaging with all that yet remains unknown and unresolved so that a fuller, richer, more vibrant image may emerge.

In the High Holiday season of new beginnings, teshuvah beckons us to return to our depths so that we may encounter these places of primordial chaos within. May we have the courage of spirit, intrepidity of mind and openness of heart to see all that we find there as pigments on our palette, the raw materials for us to create ourselves anew.

**Hebrew - עִבְרִי**

**Word (s) of the Week**

With / עִם

Pronounced: EEM

Without punctuation, *im* can easily be mixed up with *am*, or "nation," which is also spelled ayin-mem.



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

### **A Girl's Best Friend**

A woman named Judy walks into a dinner party with a much older man. At dinner, the lady sitting next to the woman turns to her and says, "My, that's a beautiful diamond you're wearing. In fact, I think it's the most beautiful diamond I have ever seen!"

"Thank you," replies Judy. "This is the Plotnick Diamond."

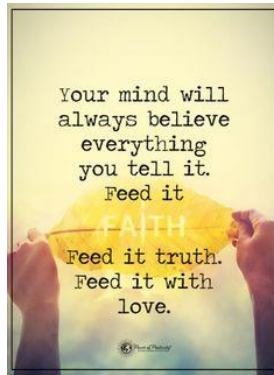
"The Plotnick Diamond? Is there a story to it?"

"Oh yes, the diamond comes with a curse."

"A curse?" asks the lady. "What curse?"

**"Plotnick."**





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



# Lox, Eggs and Onions (LEO)

*The LEO is a classic Jewish American breakfast dish, and a staple of delis nationwide. This simple scramble of lox, eggs and onion tastes far greater than the sum of its parts and comes together in under 30 minutes.*

- **Total Time: 20 minutes**      **Yield: Serves 2-3**

## Ingredients

- ½ white or yellow onion
- 6 large eggs
- 3 oz Nova lox
- 1 Tbsp butter
- 2 tsp olive oil
- pinch of salt
- freshly ground pepper, to taste
- fresh chives or dill, for garnish

## Instructions

1. Start by prepping your ingredients: Dice the onion and roughly chop the salmon. Season the eggs with just a pinch of salt and pepper, as the lox will add a lot of saltiness later. Whisk the eggs until well-beaten.
2. To a skillet over medium heat, add the butter and oil (this prevents the butter from burning). Add the onions to the pan and sauté for 10-15 minutes, depending on how brown you like your onions.
3. Add the eggs to the pan and scramble them to your liking. Right before the eggs are finished cooking, add the chopped lox to the pan and gently fold them into the eggs.

4. Garnish with fresh dill and/or chives, if desired, and serve immediately.

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