



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 3-16-24 PEKUDEI

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.

Elder 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.

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

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

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

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

WE HAVE 7 PRISON AFFILIATES THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES.

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



Rabbi Mordecai Silver tolmm@etz-chayim.org

MESSAGE FOR 3-16-24 PEKUDEI - ACCOUNTS OF

*P'kudei - Accounts of
Shemoth 38:21- 40:38
1 Kings 7:51-8:21
2 Corinthians 3:7-18*

Shemoth-Exodus 40:34-35: And the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the esteem of Adonai filled the Swelling Place. And Mosheh was not able to come into the Tent of Meeting, because the cloud dwelt on it, and the esteem of Adonai filled the Dwelling Place.

Esteem in the Hebrew is Khvod-Glory.

Exodus 40:36-38: And when the cloud was taken up from above the Dwelling Place, the children of Yisrael went onward in all their journeys. But if the cloud was not taken up, then they did not set out till the day that it was taken up. For the cloud of Adonai was on the Dwelling Place by day, and fire was on it by night, before the eyes of all the house of Yisrael, in all their journeys.

Exodus 39:29: *And a girdle of fine woven linen with blue and purple and scarlet material....*

Comment about the colors and their being brought together on the person of the High Priest.

Before Aaron and his sons could set upon the work that G-d had called them to do Moses had to dedicate them. He anointed them with oil and blood, and they were cleansed in water.

Moses was the one to dedicate the tabernacle.

1 Kings 18:10-12: *And it came to be, when the priests came out of the Set-apart Place, that the cloud filled the House of Adonai, so that the priests were unable to stand and perform the service because of the cloud, for the esteem of Adonai filled the House of Adonai. And Shelomoh said, "Adonai has said He would dwell in the dark cloud.*

****1 Corinthians 13:12:** *For now, we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, as I also have been known. ***

2 Corinthians 3:7-18

3:7 Now if that which worked death, by means of a written text engraved on stone tablets, came with glory- such glory that the people of Isra'el could not stand to look at Moshe's face because of its brightness, even though that brightness was already fading away- ⁸ won't the working of the Spirit be accompanied by even greater glory? ⁹ For if there was glory in what worked to declare people guilty, how much more must the glory abound in what works to declare people innocent! ¹⁰ In fact, by comparison with this greater glory, what was made glorious before has no glory now. ¹¹ For if there was glory in what faded away, how much more glory must there be in what lasts. ¹² Therefore, with a hope like this, we are very open- ¹³ unlike Moshe, who put a veil over his face, so that the people of Isra'el would not see the fading brightness come to an end. ¹⁴ What is more, their minds were made stonelike; for to this day the same veil remains over them when they read the Old Covenant; it has not been unveiled, because only by the Messiah is the veil taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, till today, whenever Moshe is read, a veil lies over their heart. ¹⁶ "But," says the *Torah*, "whenever someone turns to *ADONAI*, the veil is taken away." ¹⁷

Now, "ADONAI" in this text means the Spirit. And where the Spirit of ADONAI is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ So all of us, with faces unveiled, see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord; and we are being changed into his very image, from one degree of glory to the next, by ADONAI the Spirit. (CJB)

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 Pekudei: Summary

Shemot-Exodus 38:21-40:38

The work of constructing the Tabernacle is completed; Moses receives the command to anoint its vessels and to anoint Aaron and the priests.

All that the Lord commanded Moses was created for the sanctuary under the direction of Ithamar, son of Aaron the priest, Bezalel of the tribe of Judah, and Oholiab of the tribe of Dan.

They made garments of distinction for those officiating in the Sanctuary and sacral vestments for Aaron, the High Priest. Aaron's breastplate had 12 stones corresponding to the names of the sons of Israel. His robe was woven with the color of pure blue and had bells of pure gold.

They made tunics and headdresses and decorated turbans of embroidered fine linen for Aaron and his sons. They made the head-plate of pure gold and inscribed upon it: "Holy to God."

The Completion of the Tabernacle

Thus all the work of the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting was completed. Then the Israelites brought the Tabernacle and all that was within it to Moses. When Moses saw that they had performed all the tasks as the Lord had commanded, Moses blessed them.

The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: On the first day of the month you shall set up the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting, and all that is within it. You shall take the anointing oil and anoint the Tabernacle and all its contents so that it shall be holy.

You shall bring Aaron and his sons forward to the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and wash them with the water. Put the sacral vestments on Aaron and anoint him so that he may serve Me as priest. Then anoint his sons so that they may serve Me as priests. This anointing shall serve them in their everlasting priesthood throughout the generations. This Moses did, just as the Lord had commanded him.

When Moses finished, the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle.

When the cloud lifted from the Tabernacle, the Israelites would set out on their journeys. If the cloud did not lift, they would not set out. For over the Tabernacle a cloud of the Lord rested by day and fire would appear in it by night, before the eyes of all the House of Israel throughout their journeys.

Parashat Pekudei Discussion Questions

1) The Israelites perform all the work for building the Sanctuary as the Lord commanded Moses. What kind of work does the Lord command of you in building today's Sanctuaries?

2) A cloud covers the Tent of Appointed Meeting and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle. How do you know when the Presence of the Lord fills a Sanctuary?

3) When you look at clouds does it remind you of God? Why or why not?

Haftarah for Pekudei

1 Kings 7:51-8:21

The Temple construction is completed.

Parashat Pekudei marks the end of the cluster of Torah portions pertaining to the construction of the Mishkan—the temporary Temple the Israelites used for worship in the desert. After all the pieces of the Mishkan are in place, and Moses’ work is completed, we read about God’s powerful presence taking over the space: “Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it and the Presence of the Lord filled the Tabernacle” ([Exodus 40:35](#)).

The Haftarah for Pekudei, according to the Ashkenazic custom, describes the completion of construction for the first Temple, under Solomon’s rule. Having brought in all the treasures and donations for the Temple, Solomon gathers the elders of Israel to install the Ark in the Temple.

The Ark contained the two tablets Moses had received from God, and it was shielded by two cherubim—statues of winged creatures. After the priests placed the Ark in the Holy of Holies, the Temple was complete.

Here too, God’s presence is described in physical, overwhelming terms: “A cloud filled the House of the Lord, and the priests were not able to remain and perform the service because of the cloud, for the Presence of the Lord filled the House” (8:10-11).

Solomon’s Speech

Solomon delivers a speech to consecrate the Temple. First, he addresses God: “I have now built for You a stately House, a place where You may dwell forever” (8:13). Then he addresses the people of Israel and recounts the history that led up to the Temple’s construction.

His father David, Solomon says, had intended to build the Temple. But God denied David this right and told him that instead his son would build it.

Solomon declares that now God’s promise has been fulfilled: “I have succeeded my father David and have ascended the throne of Israel. I have built the House for the Lord and I have set a place there for the Ark, containing the covenant which the Lord made with our fathers when He brought them out from the land of Egypt” (8:20-21).

The Sephardic Custom

The Sephardic custom is to read a selection that lists all the pieces that Hiram King of Tyre, a talented bronze worker, created for the Temple. This includes two columns with two globes, 400 pomegranates, pails, scrapers, and sprinkling bowls. This selection is also the Ashkenazic reading for Parashat Vayakhel, and more information about it can be found [here](#).



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

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

Way Above My Pay Grade

Way above my pay grade - 3

- The world is in a dark place ... especially if you compare - Government, corporate, and individual policy decisions against biblical instruction from YHVH.
- Yet despite all this we read in our bibles:
- **3** This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you; in them I am trying to arouse your sincere intention by reminding you ² that you should remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken through your apostles. ³ First of all you must understand this, that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and indulging their own lusts ⁴ and saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!" ⁵ They deliberately ignore this fact, that by the word of God heavens existed long ago and an earth was formed out of water and by means of water, ⁶ through which the world of that time was deluged with water and perished. ⁷ But by the same word the present heavens and earth have been reserved for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the godless:

- ⁸ But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, **not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.** ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be destroyed with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, ¹² waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and destroyed and the elements will melt with fire?
2 Peter 3:1-12 [NRSVUE]
- I find the statement **“not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.”** intriguing when compared to some scriptures written in the account of the exodus:

Way above my pay grade - 3

- **...not wanting any to perish but all to come to repentance.** Yet we have the following:
- ²¹ And YHVH said to Moses, “When you go back to Egypt, see that you perform before Pharaoh all the wonders that I have put in your power, but I will **harden** his heart, so that he will not let the people go. ²² Then you shall say to Pharaoh, ‘Thus says the LORD: Israel is my firstborn son. ²³ I said to you, “Let my son go that he may serve me.” But you refused to let him go; now I will kill your firstborn son.’” Exodus 4:21-23.
- ³ And I will **harden** Pharaoh’s heart, and multiply my signs and my wonders in the land of Egypt. Exodus 7:3
- ¹⁰ Then the YHVH said to Moses, “Go to Pharaoh, for I have **hardened** his heart and the heart of his officials, in order that I may show these signs of mine among them ² and that you may tell your children and grandchildren how I have made fools of the Egyptians and what signs I have done among them —so that you may know that I am the YHVH.” Exodus 10:1-2
- Here we find YHVH hardening the heart of the mighty Pharaoh — we all know the outcome of this... so do we find a contradiction in our Fathers’ behaviour, and promises within these scriptures — as Paul would say “God forbid”:

Way above my pay grade - 3

- So, let's have a closer look at these scriptures, and see if there is discrepancy or agreement ... and what it means for us today.
- It is the nature of YHVH for His creation to have life eternal not death eternal. Hence Him not wanting any to perish, His dealings with Adam and Eve, and of course the death and resurrection of Yeshua our Saviour – The Messiah.
- Back to our Exodus account:
- There are 3 different Hebrew words used for the word **harden** or **hardened** in Exodus.
- **Exodus 4:21** Harden/Chazaq חָזַק Firm, stubborn, strengthen, courageous ... @ **Exodus 7:13; 7:22...**
- **Exodus 7:3** Harden/Qashah קָשָׁה Severe, stiffen, sharpen, stubborn ... @ **Exodus 13:15.**
- **Exodus 10:1** Hardened/Kabed כָּבֵד Become heavy, boastful, be important, glory, @ **Exodus 7:14; 8:32 [28].**

Way above my pay grade - 3

- Considering these accounts & the text of 2 Peter 3:9, can we draw some thoughts perhaps a conclusion on all this?
- All things biblically point to Repentance and Yeshua. There is a saying, “follow the money trail”, I suggest we follow the repentance trail – it leads to Yeshua. So what about **the hardening** of Pharaoh's heart?
- I suggest it was all about repentance – for the children of Israel, and an opportunity for Pharaoh to repent, and lead his people to repent. Now I know YHVH would have known the outcome, but He still gave Pharaoh a chance. Allow me to explain my thoughts, and how it even applies to us:
- **How much better to get wisdom than gold! To get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver.** ¹⁷The highway of the upright avoids evil; those who guard their way preserve their lives. ¹⁸Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. ¹⁹It is better to be of a lowly spirit among the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud. ²⁰Those who are attentive to a matter will prosper, and happy are those who trust in the LORD. Proverbs 16:16-20
- Pharaoh was full of himself, and wallowed in wealth, and power:

Way above my pay grade - 3

- Often the only way we change our direction is if we lose that which we hold valuable. Hence the reason some have to come to the end of themselves to seek YHVH.
- So Yahweh: **Exodus 4:21** Harden/Chazaq חָזַק Firm, stubborn, strengthen, courageous ... @ **Exodus 7:13; 7:22...** **Exodus 7:3** Harden/Qashah קָשָׁה Severe, stiffen, sharpen, stubborn ... @ **Exodus 13:15. Exodus 10:1** Hardened/Kabed כָּבֵד Become heavy, boastful, be important, glory, @ **Exodus 7:14; 8:32 [28]**. Pharaoh's heart was given the chance to change through challenging his pride and self importance. At the same time Israel was also given this chance, and all were reminded of the power and grace of YHVH.
- I have gone through these thoughts for the purpose of suggesting we have some Israelite and Pharaoh in ourselves. The patterns of our Father don't change, and He will give all, including us to dispose of the elements that impede a fuller relationship with our Father.
- Today we are witnessing the rise of many Pharaoh's. Nearly everywhere you look you find a Pharaoh. Someone wanting to rule the world, refusing to yield to YHVH. So-called leaders denying the power of YHVH, because they deny His existence or His deity. Like Pharaoh they have a shock coming if they don't take the opportunity given. Kind of reminds me:

Way above my pay grade - 3

- ¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world, ¹⁶ for all that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches—comes not from the Father but from the world. ¹⁷ And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God abide forever. ¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that **anti-messiah** is coming, **so now many anti-messiahs have come**. From this we know that it is the last hour. 1 John 2:15-18
- **Anti-messiah** = In place of, in opposition, equal too, challenging.
- So our prayer should be for our Father to show us the little Pharaoh's we have running around in our hearts – and for our Father to give us the wisdom, strength, and humility to change our positions. If not we could find ourselves drowning in the sea of rebellion, and darkness.
- Fortunately we have One Who has stepped forward, Who yielded to the instructions of the Father – Who's heart wasn't hardened. Yeshua HaMashiach. Let us leave today:

Way above my pay grade - 3

- 3 Therefore, holy brothers and sisters, partners in a heavenly calling, take notice of *Yeshua*—the Emissary and *Kohen Gadol* we affirm. ² He was faithful to the One who appointed Him in His house—as was Moses also. ^[a] ³ For He has been considered worthy of more glory than Moses, even as the builder of the house has more honor than the house. ⁴ For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God. ⁵ Now Moses surely was faithful in all God's house as a servant, for a witness of things to be spoken later. ⁶ But Messiah, as Son, is over God's house—and we are His house, if we hold firm to our boldness and what we are proud to hope. **Listen and Obey, or Harden and Fall Away** ⁷ Therefore, just as the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* says, "Today if you hear His voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing^[c] in the wilderness. ⁹ There your fathers put Me to the test, though they saw My works for forty years. ¹⁰ Therefore I was provoked by this generation, and I said, 'They always go astray in their heart, and they have not known My ways.' ¹¹ As I swore in my wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" ¹² Take care, brothers and sisters, that none of you has an evil heart of unbelief that falls away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day by day—as long as it is called "Today"—so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partners of Messiah, if we hold our original conviction firm until the end. ¹⁵ As it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion." Hebrews 3:1-15
- Truly there is no God...

Jewish Practices



When Do Jews Fast?

In addition to Yom Kippur, there are many public and private fasts in Judaism.

Many people know that on Yom Kippur it is traditional for able-bodied adults to fast, consuming no food or beverages. But did you know that there are a lot of other Jewish fast days? Some are full-day fasts, and some are daylight only. Some are observed by the entire community, while others are specific to particular Jewish communities or individuals.

There are many reasons Jews fast, including atonement, communal mourning, supplication or even to express gratitude. Jews don't fast on Shabbat or joyous holidays, so as not to interfere with the celebration (except when Shabbat coincides with Yom Kippur).

In ancient times, public and private fasts were common and practiced throughout the course of the year, often proclaimed with short notice. For that reason, there was a widely circulated calendar, called *Megillat Ta'anit* (Scroll of Fasts), that listed all the days on which it was *not* permitted to fast. There's also evidence that some individuals made regular fasting their own private spiritual practice. For example, during the three years that the Second Temple was besieged by the Romans, Rabbi Tzadok fasted continually in an effort to save the city. The Shulchan Aruch discusses examples of people who fasted every day and became so accustomed to it they found it difficult to eat. These are extreme examples, but what's clear is that Judaism has built the structure for an abundant cycle of both fasting and feasting.

Here are ten possible reasons Jews might be fasting:

1. It's a major fast day

There are two major fast days on the Jewish calendar. The best known is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. On that day Jews abstain from all food and drink, as well as wearing leather, bathing, intimacy and other luxuries so that they can focus on the sanctity of the day. Fasting on this day is for atonement.

The other major Jewish fast day is Tisha B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of both Temples in ancient times as well as other catastrophes that have befallen the Jewish people, from the Crusades to the Holocaust. This day, too, is marked by a full fast that extends from sundown to sundown; in this case it is a mourning ritual.

2. It's a minor fast day

In addition to Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av, there are four minor fast days on the Jewish calendar. These are observed only during daylight hours, which means they begin at sunrise and are completed at sundown the same day. Three of these fasts are connected to the destruction of the Temples:

1. Tzom Gedalia, observed on the 3rd of Tishrei (the day after Rosh Hashanah), this fast commemorates the murder of the Jewish governor of Judah, an act that was considered a tipping point leading to the destruction of the First Temple.
2. Asarah B'Tevet, the Tenth of Tevet, marks the beginning of Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem — also a precursor to the destruction of the First Temple.
3. Shiva Asar B'Tammuz, the 17th of Tammuz, commemorates the day on which the Romans breached the walls of the Second Temple.

The fourth minor fast is Taanit Esther, the Fast of Esther. On the day before Purim, many Jews fast just as Esther fasted before she went to see King Ahasuerus and request that the decree of death against the Jews be lifted. (Note: If Purim falls on a Sunday, the fast is not held on Shabbat or even Erev Shabbat but moved back to the Thursday before Purim.)

3. It's their wedding day

There is a tradition of fasting on the day of one's wedding from sunrise until the ceremony is complete, so that the couple eat for the first time that day when they are together in *yichud* (a brief period of seclusion after the marriage ceremony is complete). This is not a requirement (*halakhah*), but a custom (*minhag*), and it is more common in Ashkenazi communities than Sephardi communities.

There are several explanations for this practice. One is that the wedding day atones for the sins of the two partners and therefore it is, for them, like a personal Yom Kippur. Another is that the fast prevents the newlyweds — who may be tempted by all the booze at the pre-wedding banquets — from arriving at the *huppah* intoxicated. Marriage is a serious obligation and should be undertaken in a fully sober state.

4. It's their conversion day

Converting to Judaism is often a lengthy and intense process that culminates with immersion in a *mikveh* (ritual bath). Some choose to fast on the day of their immersion until they emerge from the mikveh.

In a rabbinic responsa, the 20th-century halakhic authority Rabbi Moshe Feinstein explained that a convert fasts on the day of immersion to atone for sins committed prior to conversion and compares the custom to a groom fasting on his wedding day.

5. It's Erev Passover

This fast applies specifically to firstborns (traditionally first sons) and commemorates the tenth plague on Egypt which took the lives of all firstborn Egyptians, while firstborn Israelites whose homes were marked with lamb's blood were spared. This fast is observed from sunrise on the 14th of Nisan until the Passover seder that evening.

6. It's Sigd

Sigd is an Ethiopian Jewish holiday observed 50 days after Yom Kippur on the 29th of Heshvan. Traditionally, Sigd is marked by fasting from sunrise until mid-afternoon.

According to Beta Israel tradition, the individual's sins are forgiven by God on Yom Kippur, while communal introspection and repentance occurs during the 50 days following Yom Kippur. Sigd is believed to be the day that God would forgive all communal sins, as well as the date on which God first revealed himself to Moses.

Most of the Ethiopian Jewish community is concentrated in Israel, where a national Sigd celebration is held in Jerusalem annually.

7. It's an emergency

An entire tractate of the Talmud, Ta'anit, explores the rules around fasting in response to a communal emergency such as a drought, plague or a marauding army. Sometimes, these fasts are observed only by certain leaders in the community, and sometimes by all adults. Usually they are daylight fasts held on Monday and Thursday and can last just a few days or go on for weeks, depending on the emergency. Fasting in the face of disaster is less common in modern times, but some Jews in Israel did declare a fast in response to the coronavirus pandemic in 2020.

8. It's "Little" Yom Kippur

The custom of fasting on the day before each Rosh Chodesh (first of the Hebrew month) seems to have originated with the kabbalists of Safed. It was never a fast observed by the entire community, but the reserve of particularly pious members. Dubbed Yom Kippur Katan, or "Little Yom Kippur," as the name implies this is a day of fasting for atonement, allowing the participant to enter the new month with a clean slate. The inspiration for Yom Kippur Katan comes from the biblical prescription to bring a sin offering on the first of every month ([Numbers 28:15](#)).

Yom Kippur Katan is not observed for four months of the year. The days before Rosh Chodesh Tishrei and Rosh Chodesh Heshvan are not considered Yom Kippur Katan because of their proximity to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. The days before Rosh Chodesh Tevet and Rosh

Chodesh Nisan are also not fast days because the first falls during Hanukkah and the second is similarly part of the Passover season. If the last day of a month falls on a Shabbat, Yom Kippur Katan is moved back to Thursday.

9. They had a bad dream

Jewish tradition takes dreams seriously. Joseph's dreams came true, after all, as did the dreams he interpreted for the pharaoh and his servants. And in the Talmud, Rav Hisda teaches: "A dream not interpreted is like a letter unread." ([Berakhot 55a](#)) So a bad dream is not just unpleasant; it can be a dangerous omen. To reverse possible future misfortune that one learns of in a dream, there is a tradition of fasting the day after one has had such a dream to affect atonement. In fact, according to the Shulchan Aruch, one may fast on the day following a bad dream even if that happens to be Shabbat — a day fasting is normally prohibited. But if you do, then you should also fast the next day as well (Sunday) to atone for fasting on Shabbat! (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim, 288:4)

10. Someone dropped a Torah scroll

There is a common belief that Jews who witness a Torah scroll being dropped must fast for 40 days (daylight only). The sources for this practice are murky, but some contemporary congregations have responded to a dropped Torah in this way.



Reconcilable Truths

It is possible to hold both the deep pain of this moment and a sense of gratitude for the blessings that surround us.

It's a nice coincidence that one of Judaism's most profound utterances on appreciating the holy is read from the Torah right around the time of Thanksgiving, the American holiday of gratitude celebrated in late November. And yet, with conflict and dissension weighing on many of our hearts, it might ring a little differently this year.

The utterance in question is a rabbinic favorite: Jacob, after his wondrous dream of the ladder to heaven, awakens and says, "God was in this place and I didn't know it!" ([Genesis 28:16](#)) Many times have I used this phrase as a metaphor for understanding the power of meditation, prayer and other spiritual practices to wake us up to the holiness that is around us. This quality of the sacred is always available. It is we who often are not.

Likewise, the practice of thanksgiving is meant to awaken us to the blessings we might otherwise take for granted. But for many of us, Thanksgiving this year is overshadowed both by the violence in Israel and Gaza, and by the strong feelings many of us have about it — feelings often at odds with others around the holiday table. So allow me to offer a different kind of gratitude practice in the hopes that it might provide a little solace, and even a little coexistence.

First, spirituality in general is not about denying the presence of suffering, or even evil, in the world. In the spirituality business, this is known as toxic positivity — the idea that you should always look on the bright side and emit "good vibes only."

Of course, good vibes are more pleasant than bad ones, but sometimes it's inauthentic to try to pretend everything is alright, and the effort to do so is strained, false and shallow. I would also argue that right now, doing so would be offensive.

No, a mature gratitude is one that holds a seemingly irreconcilable pair of truths: that there are blessings all around us, and that there is also deep pain. As the Christian mystic Richard Rohr puts it, there is both great love and great suffering.

This complexity was certainly true of Jacob, whose statement of awe came as he was fleeing his brother Esau, who was plotting to kill him. He knew that, his miraculous dream notwithstanding, all was not sweetness and light; he was running for his life. And yet, he was able to perceive the holy as well. Perhaps his awareness of his own precarity even added to that perception.

We also know this to be true in our own lives. If we have lost someone over the past year, for example, giving thanks may seem impossible. And yet, the wisdom of Jewish mourning rituals is that we give time to descend into deep, inconsolable sadness precisely so that we may, at the right time, emerge from it and return to the world. Gratitude, in the context of grief, can be a step toward healing — not by denying our pain, but by holding it with us as we turn toward love.

The same is true, it seems to me, in our public lives.

We can gather with our families of choice or origin this year and give thanks, all the while holding the pain of the last six weeks in our hearts. We have not yet processed or healed. But we are able to bring both the suffering and the love to the practice of giving thanks.

This is also true of the pain of our disagreements. Both those who support Israel's actions in Gaza and those who oppose them are often not merely impassioned but impelled by deep moral beliefs and intuitions. However crudely the debates may play out in public, they are not petty disputes; they go to the heart of who we are as Jews and as people. It is profoundly painful to watch families and friends be torn apart, as I have seen firsthand.

We all know that these debates will not be settled by angry exchanges over the Thanksgiving table. And yet, the moral depth of this moment seems to demand that we take a stand, does it not?

I would submit that it does not.

Just as it is possible to hold the pain of this war together with the gratitude we are cultivating, so it is possible to hold the pain of our disagreement without trying to dispel it. Yes, it hurts that there are people close to us who seem to be so terribly wrong about something so terribly important. So let's stay with that pain absent the vain belief that if we just make that one point, the other person will be persuaded and the pain will go away. They will not, and it will not; the Thanksgiving table is not the space where your activism will bear fruit.

For many of us, pain is an unavoidable part of the emotional landscape of this year. But it is not the only part. We can choose to direct our attention to blessings while not in any way denying the screams of anguish that echo around the world, or the different responses we have to them, or the pain of that difference. We can choose our words carefully — not to deny the elephant in the room, but so that we might not be trampled by it. And we can seek to reenact the moment of Jacob's revelation, when in the midst of extreme duress, he perceived the holiness present in his life.

May we have the courage to do likewise.

Hebrew - עֲבָרִי

Word (s) of the Week

Star / כּוֹכָב

Pronounced: koh-KHAV

In Genesis, God promises Abraham that his descendants will be numerous like the *kochavim* in the sky.



A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Hairy Exchange

A young boy had just gotten his driving permit. He asked his father, who was a rabbi, if they could discuss his use of the family car. His father took him into his study and said, "I'll make a deal with you. You bring your grades up, study your Talmud a little, get your hair cut, and then we'll talk about it."

After about a month, the boy came back and again asked his father if they could discuss his use of the car. They again went into the father's study where the father said, "Son, I've been very proud of you. You have brought your grades up, you've studied the Talmud diligently, but you didn't get your hair cut."

The young man waited a moment and then replied, "But father, in my studies I've learned that Samson, who was loved by God and a leader of the Jewish people, also had long hair. Can't I follow in the footsteps of the great Samson?"

The rabbi replied, "Sure you can follow in Samson's footsteps, because he walked everywhere he went."

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