



TOLMM WEEKLY NEWSLETTER for 4-27-24 PESACH

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 SILVERS 3 YEARS OF VIDEO TEACHINGS ON THE TORAH PORTIONS AND FESTIVALS ON YOUTUBE.

WE HAVE 6 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 4-27-24 PESACH-PASSOVER

Exodus – Shemoth 33:12-34:26

Numbers – Bamidbar 28:19-25

Ezekiel 37:1-14

The entire Seder ceremony is replete with symbolic gestures. We drink four cups of wine to represent four Biblical expressions of redemption. We dip and lean like kings to represent freedom and eat bitter herbs to remind us about the bitter slavery. We also eat other symbolic foods that portray our Egyptian bondage: salt water to remember tears, and charoses, a mixture of apples, nuts, and wine that looks like mortar, to remind us of the laborious years in Egypt.

The service is truly filled with symbolism - some direct, and some seemingly far-fetched - and all the symbols are meant to remind us of the slavery we endured centuries ago. But why not take a direct approach? There are overt ways to declare our gratitude, and there are more immediate ways to mark the celebration. Why don't we just recite the four expressions of redemption as part of the liturgy instead of drinking four cups of wine to symbolize them? Why don't we place mortar on the table instead of making a concoction to represent it? And

instead of reminding ourselves of backbreaking work by eating horseradish, why not lift heavy boxes?

A Jewish intellectual in post-war England approached Rabbi Yechezkel Abramsky, who headed the London Beth Din (Jewish Religious Court), with a cynical question: "In reviewing our Hagadah service," he sniped, "I was shocked at the insertion of, 'Who Knows One', a childish nursery rhyme, at the end. Why would the sages put a silly rhyme - 'One is Hashem, two are the Tablets, three are the fathers,' and so on, at the end of the solemn, intellectual Seder night service? It is very unbecoming!"

Rabbi Abramsky was not shaken. "If you really want to understand the depth of that song, then you must travel north to the town of Gateshead. There you will find a saintly Jew, Reb Elya Lopian. I want you to discuss the meaning of every aspect of life with him. Ask him what the meaning of the sea and fish are, ask him what the meaning of the sun and the moon is. Then ask him what the meaning is of one, of six, of eleven and so on."

The philosopher was very intrigued. He traveled to Gateshead and located the Yeshiva at which Reb Elya served as the Mashgiach (spiritual advisor). He was led into the room where a saintly looking man greeted him warmly.

"Rabbi, I have many questions," the skeptical philosopher began. "What is the meaning of life?" "What is the essence of the stars?" And so on.....

Rabbi Lopian dealt with each question with patience, depth, and a remarkable clarity. Then the man threw out the baited question. "What is the meaning of the number one?"

Rabbi Lopian's face brightened, his eyes widened, and a broad smile spread across his face. "The meaning of one?" he repeated. "You would like to know the meaning of one? One is Hashem in heaven and the earth!"

The man was shocked. "What about the depth of the numeral five?"

"Five?" repeated the sage. Why does five has tremendous symbolism! It represents the foundation of Judaism - the Five Books of Moses!" The rabbi then

went on to explain the mystical connotations that are represented by the number five, and exactly how each Book of the Torah symbolizes a component of the sum.

The man left with a new approach and attitude toward the simplest of our rituals.

At the Seder, we train ourselves to find new meaning in the simple things in life. We teach ourselves to view the seemingly mundane with historical and even spiritual significance. We should remember that when Moshe saw a burning yet non-consumed bush, he realized that his nation is similar - constantly persecuted and harassed, yet never consumed. At our Seder, we view horseradish not as a condiment for gefilte fish, but as representative of our suffering. The Matzoh is no longer a low-fat cracker but symbolizes the hardships of exile and the speed of our redemption. In addition, we finish the Seder with a simple song that reminds everyone at the Seder, next time you ask, "who's number one?" don't accept the answer: the New York Yankees or the Chicago Bulls - think on a higher plane! One is Hashem in heaven and the earth!

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let everyone who hears say, "Come." And let everyone who is thirsty come. Let anyone who wishes would take the water of life as a gift.

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



Biblical Readings for Passover

The selections highlight different aspects of the holiday.

Following is a summary of the special Torah readings and Haftarah readings for the days of Passover.

First Day

Torah Reading

In the Torah reading ([Exodus 12:21-51](#)), Moses instructs the elders of Israel in all of the laws of Passover. All generations to come are to observe the Passover traditions. In addition, the children of succeeding generations are to be instructed at Passover as to the origin and significance of the festival.

The Torah reading concludes with the last of the 10 plagues: the slaying of the Egyptian firstborn. Pharaoh summons Moses and Aaron and tells them that he wants them out of Egypt as soon as possible. Moses and Aaron comply, and the children of Israel begin to make a quick exit, not allowing time for their bread to rise.

Haftarah Reading

The Haftarah is taken from the Book of Joshua ([Joshua 5:2-6:1](#), 6:27) and describes the historic Passover that the Israelites observed at Gilgal after they had crossed the Jordan River. It was

the first celebration of Passover in the Holy Land. In preparation for Passover observance, all of the Israelite males were circumcised. They then ate the first *matzot* made from wheat in the Holy Land. [In the Reform tradition [Isaiah 43:1-15](#) is the prophetic reading for the first day of Passover. This reading, which contains a reference to crossing the Red Sea, is a reminder of God's role as Redeemer.]

Second Day

Torah Reading

In the Torah reading ([Leviticus 22:26-23:44](#)), Moses instructs the Israelites in the observance of the Sabbath and festivals. The reading presents a comprehensive description of the sacred seasons of the Jewish year, including Passover, Shavuot, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot.

Haftarah Reading

The Haftarah for the second day of Passover (II Kings 23:1-9, 21-25) was chosen because of its account of the great Passover celebrated after King Josiah's reformation. In the 18th year of his reign (621 BCE), during the course of repairs to the Temple, a scroll of the Torah (possibly the Book of Deuteronomy) was discovered. King Josiah was so stirred by its message that he proceeded to vigorously cleanse the Temple of all idolatry. Part of the account of his reform prefaces the description of his celebration of Passover in the Haftarah, and thus its selection as the Haftarah of the second day of Passover.

The Intermediate Shabbat

Shabbat Torah

([Exodus 33:12-34:26](#)) After Israel worshipped the golden calf, Moses shattered the first set of tablets. Now Moses again ascends Mount Sinai in order to receive the new set of tablets. Moses pleads for God's assurance of support. God reassures Moses and also reveals His 13 divine attributes. Moses then brings down a new set of tablets with the Ten Commandments.

Shabbat Haftarah

The Haftarah is taken from the Book of Ezekiel ([Ezekiel 37:1-14](#)). The prophet finds himself in a valley of dry bones and, under the vivifying effect of God's spirit, the bones knit together and become covered with flesh. Ezekiel understands this vision to mean that the people of Israel, having been exiled to Babylon, will again be reborn as a nation.

Both the fact that Passover, recalling past deliverances, looks forward to future redemption and an old tradition that the resurrection of the dead will take place during Passover determined the choice of this passage as the Haftarah for the Intermediate Sabbath of Passover.

Seventh Day

Torah Reading

The Torah reading ([Exodus 13:17-15:26](#)) describes Israel's experiences following the exodus. Pharaoh mobilizes the Egyptian army and begins his pursuit of the fleeing Israelites. When Moses and the children of Israel reach the Red Sea, Moses raises his rod, the waters split apart, and the Israelites are miraculously saved. When the Egyptians reach the water, they become bogged down, sink to the bottom, and drown. Moses and the children of Israel sing a magnificent song of thanksgiving.

Haftarah Reading

The Haftarah ([Second Samuel 22](#)) connects to the theme of thanksgiving in the Torah reading. In the Haftarah, King David composes his own song of thanksgiving to God for all of his victories and deliverances from the enemy. The Haftarah concludes with this sentence, which is also included at the conclusion of the grace after meals, "A tower of salvation of His king, who shows mercy to His anointed, to David and to his heirs forever" ([Second Samuel 22:51](#)).

Eighth Day

Torah Reading

The Torah reading for the eighth day of Passover ([Deuteronomy 15:19-16:17](#)) deals with a variety of laws, including those related to tithes, the year of release, the release of slaves, and a comprehensive description of the three pilgrimage festivals.

Haftarah Reading

The Haftarah, from the Book of Isaiah ([Isaiah 10:32-12:6](#)), begins with a prediction that Assyria will be defeated. This prophecy comes true. The Haftarah continues with Isaiah's message of hope that the Israelites will again be gathered together from lands of exile and return to Israel.

The Haftarah also contains the famous great vision of the Messianic Era when peace and harmony will reign supreme among all people. Because the Haftarah contains several allusions to the redemption from Egypt, it was especially chosen to be chanted on the last day of Passover.

The Song of Songs

It is customary to read the biblical book Song of Songs on Passover. Ashkenazi Jews read it on the intermediate Shabbat of Passover (or, if there is no intermediate Shabbat, the final day of the holiday), while Sephardic Jews usually read it on the final day of the holiday. Italian Jews read it on the first a second days as part of the evening (Maariv) service. [This paragraph has been edited by MJL to include non-Ashkenazi traditions.]

Rabbinic tradition interprets the book as a love song, where the "beloved" is taken to mean God and "the bride" to mean the congregation of Israel. This tradition made the Song of Songs especially appropriate to Passover, because it marked, as it were, the beginning of the

courtship of Israel and God before, metaphorically speaking, they became finally wedded at Mount Sinai by Israel's acceptance of the Torah.

Another reason given for the reading of this book on Passover is that it is a song of the spring. To the poet and the singer, spring is synonymous with hope and happiness. A people's hope lies in its freedom and its attachment to the law of God. This, too, is the lesson of Passover, for which the people of Israel have fought since they left Egyptian servitude, and this is the eternal message it wishes to convey to the whole of the human race.



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

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

Matzah - מַצָּה – Unleavened Bread.

- ⁵ During the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month in the evening, is *ADONAI's* Passover. ⁶ On the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of *Matzot* to *ADONAI*. For seven days you are to eat *matzah*. ⁷ On the first day you are to have a holy convocation and you should do no regular work. ⁸ Instead you are to present an offering made by fire to *ADONAI* for seven days. On the seventh day is a holy convocation, when you are to do no regular work."



- There is always debate surrounding the feast of unleavened bread. I don't intend to add to those debates today.
- **MATZAH** - מצה It is used 53 times in the KJV ... 33 @ unleavened bread: 14 @ unleavened: 5 @ cakes: 1 @ without leaven.
- As with viewing most words in the bible we begin with the root word and meaning:
- מצץ = Suck out & absorb @ Isaiah 66:11 – Milk...
- Matzah is supposed to be pure, without the added sour dough component. Without leaven.
- **Leaven** -: seh-ore שאר = Ferment, cause agitation [Hirsch] This is the word used in **Exodus 12:15&19**. Both the Master and Paul explain leaven as something causes agitation and infects the body.

- Then Yeshua said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. Matthew 16:6
- How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread? —but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. " 12 Then they understood that He did not tell *them* to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew 16:11-12 [NKJV]
- In the meantime, when an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. Luke 12:1 [NKJV]
- Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 7 Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Messiah our passover is sacrificed for us: 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Leaven/ Zume [Greek] = Boil up trouble, causing a corruption or a pollution.

- So when we are told to eat Matzah, and remove the leaven from our houses, it points to removing the pollution, hypocrisy, mixed doctrines etc:
- You also, as lively stones, are being built up as a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Yeshua the Messiah. 1Peter 2:5
- For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? 1Peter 5:17
- We run around our physical homes throwing out all the physical leaven we can find, yet are very reluctant to view the leaven in our own lives... we need to devour the bread of life - Yeshua.
- We are told to do these for SEVEN days:

- Seven/Shaba שִׁבְעָ = Hirsch says it means: submit to God, complete.
- Leads us to Genesis and creation: 1st day = darkness and light. 7th day rest – complete – blessed.
- Within this appointed time of Unleavened Bread we have 1st day = Sabbath & 7th day = Sabbath. Think 1st day eating unleavened [pure, unpolluted bread – Yeshua]. Coming out of darkness into LIGHT. 7th day having consumed unleavened bread for 7 days, being complete in Yeshua, and therefore BLESSED.
- But wait there is more:

- ¹⁰ Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring an omer of the firsts of your harvest unto the priest: ¹¹ And he shall wave the omer before the LORD, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the sabbath the priest shall wave it. ¹² And ye shall offer that day when ye wave the omer an he lamb without blemish a yearling son for a burnt offering unto the LORD. ¹³ And the meat offering thereof shall be two tenths of flour mingled with oil, a firing unto the LORD for a scent of rest: and the drink offering thereof shall be of wine, the fourth part of an hin. ¹⁴ And ye shall eat neither bread, nor parched corn, nor green ears, until the selfsame day that ye have brought an offering unto your God: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. Leviticus 23:10-14
- The feast of 1st fruits: What a wonderful picture of our Saviour Yeshua we have throughout this time: Having just witnessed the death of our Saviour we can now enjoy the First Harvest after we bring the first of it before YHVH

- In verse 12 we again see a wonderful picture of Yeshua – A male lamb in it's prime being offered up to the Father ...
- We witness the flour, oil and wine being used on this occasion – all having to be crushed before the Children of Israel could partake thereof. Again the perfect picture of Yeshua – crushed before we could partake of the Bread of Life.
- ²⁰ But now is Messiah risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. ²¹ For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. ²² For as in Adam all die, even so in Messiah shall all be made alive. ²³ But every man in his own order: Messiah the firstfruits [1st Omer]; afterward they that are Messiah's at his coming. 1 Corinthians 15:20-23
- Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; ² By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. ³ For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; ⁴ And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

- The moedim or appointed times of our Father, are so vital in building our relationship with Him, and understanding our Saviour Yeshua.
- When we gather together to celebrate these wonderful appointed times, it allows the Holy Spirit to guide, and encourage us through the obedience of seeking – with a humble and joyful heart.
- ¹¹ But Miryam stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, ¹² And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Yeshua had lain. ¹³ And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my LORD, and I know not where they have laid him. ¹⁴ And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Yeshua standing, and knew not that it was Yeshua. ¹⁵ Yeshua saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away.

- Yeshua said unto her, Miryam. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. ¹⁷ Yeshua said unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. ¹⁸ Miryam Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the LORD, and that he had spoken these things unto her. John 20:11-18
- We witness the 1st harvest pattern here. Yeshua as the 1st fruits had not ascended to the Father, as such He was not to be touched, just as the grain couldn't be eaten until offered to YHVH by the priests.
- Yeshua ascended to the Father, and thus we experience:
- ¹⁷ Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. ¹⁸ Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures. James 1:17-18

- And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name scribed in their foreheads.
² And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps:
³ And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. ⁴ These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. ⁵ And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. Revelation 14:1-5
- Guile/Dolos = Bait, trick, deceit. @ After two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take him by craft, and put him to death. Mark 14:1

- We should be filled with excitement, and joy unspeakable as we consider this time. We witness the darkness, and look forward to the coming Light. At a given time we leave this present world, to be before our Father as first fruits, without leaven.
- Behold, I tell you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,
⁵² In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the final trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.
⁵³ For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.⁵⁴ So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on deathlessness, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is scribed, Death is swallowed up in victory. 1 Corinthians 15:51-54
- As we consider the beauty of this promise I want to finish on this link:

- So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on deathlessness, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is scribed, Death is swallowed up in victory.
- I give thee charge in the sight of God, who gives life to all things, and before Messiah Yeshua, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; ¹⁴That thou guard this commandment unstained, blameless, until the appearing of our Lord Yeshua Messiah: ¹⁵Which in his seasons he shall show, who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; ¹⁶Who only hath deathlessness, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.
1 Timothy 6:13-16
- Why would you want to ignore His appointed times? Through these moedim, you can truly hold onto the nailed scared hands of Messiah Yeshua...
- There is no God...

Jewish Life



Keeping Faith

Just as the Israelites maintained their faith through nine plagues, we too should develop our ability to have faith in times of darkness.

- God sends the plagues of locusts and darkness upon Egypt and forewarns Moses about the final plague, the death of every Egyptian firstborn. Pharaoh still does not let the Israelites leave Egypt. (Exodus 10:1-11:10)
- God commands Moses and Aaron regarding the Passover festival. (Exodus 12:1-27)
- God enacts the final plague, striking down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt except those of the House of Israel. Pharaoh now allows the Israelites to leave. (Exodus 12:29-42)
- Speaking to Moses and Aaron, God repeats the commandments about Passover. (Exodus 12:43-13:16)

Focal Point

Then *Adonai* said to Moses, “Hold out your arm toward the sky that there may be darkness upon the land of Egypt, a darkness that can be touched.” Moses held out his arm toward the sky, and thick darkness descended upon all the land of Egypt for three days. People could not see one another, and for three days no one could get up from where he was; but all the Israelites enjoyed light in their dwellings.

Pharaoh then summoned Moses and said, “Go, worship *Adonai*! Only your flocks and your herds shall be left behind; even your children may go with you.” But Moses said, “You yourself must provide us with sacrifices and burnt offerings to offer up to *Adonai* our God; our own livestock, too, shall go along with us — not a hoof shall remain behind, for we must select from it for the worship of *Adonai* our God; and we shall not know with what we are to worship *Adonai* until we arrive there.” (Exodus 10:21-26)

Your Guide

What is “a darkness that can be touched?”

Why does the Torah first state that people could not see one another and afterward mention that they could not move around?

Since the plague of darkness occurred before the discovery of electricity, what was the light that the Israelites “enjoyed” in their dwellings?

The events in [Exodus 10:1-12:28](#) take place just before the last plague, during which the Israelite firstborns are saved by the mark of lamb’s blood on their doorposts. How do you think that God knew which houses were inhabited by Israelites in order to save them from the first nine plagues?

The Torah takes five full chapters to discuss the 10 plagues. Why does it give such a detailed description of each plague, when only the last one was successful?

When Moses says, “We shall not know with what we are to worship *Adonai* until we arrive there,” what does he teach us about prayer?

By the Way...

Since [the Egyptians] did not submit, God put them in prison-darkness. ([Tanchuma, Bo 4](#))

Why did the Holy One bring darkness upon the Egyptians? Because there were transgressors within the House of Israel who had patrons among the Egyptians, lived in their midst in affluence and honor, and were therefore unwilling to leave Egypt. The Holy One said: “If in the sight of all I bring a plague upon them also and they die, the Egyptians will say, ‘Just as plagues have befallen us, so has a plague befallen them.’” For this reason, God brought darkness upon the Egyptians for three days so that the Israelites could bury their [disloyal] dead without their enemies seeing what they were doing. ([Exodus Rabbah 14:3](#), *M’chilta B’shalach*)

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of *Adonai* is risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and gross darkness the peoples. But upon you *Adonai* will arise, and God’s glory shall be seen upon you.” ([Isaiah 60:1-2](#))

It says, “Hope in *Adonai*, yea, hope in *Adonai*” ([Psalms 27:14](#)): One hope after the other. “Be of good courage and let your heart be strong” (ibid): If you have hoped and have not been saved, hope and hope again. (*Midrash Rabbah*, Psalms 129a)

“And they had faith in *Adonai*...” Great is faith, for as a reward that the Israelites had faith in God, the spirit of holiness rested upon them and they sang the Song [of the Sea]... The Israelites were delivered from Egypt only as a reward of faith... The reward for the faith that our ancestors had in God in this world, which is all night, is that we are counted worthy for the world-to-come, which is all morning. (*M’chilta B’shalach* 6-7)

Your Guide

“In every generation, each one of us must feel that we personally left Egypt.” (Passover Haggadah) If we want to understand what it was like to leave Egypt, then we have to understand the story unfolding before our eyes not merely in retrospect. What was it like for our ancestors to witness plague after

plague—nine plagues, to be exact—and to see that none of them worked? Have you ever experienced such disappointments time and time again?

“They had faith in *Adonai* and in God’s servant Moses.” ([Exodus 14:31](#)) Remember, Moses did not “brief” the Israelites on the day’s accomplishments or how Pharaoh was gradually cracking and offering more and more to Moses with each successive plague. All they saw was that they were still slaves in spite of their prayers and God’s miracles. So where did they get the faith to continue to believe? Where do you get the faith to continue to believe?

D’var Torah

How long can people have faith when miracles do not work? If God answered our every prayer, if our own personal miracles arrived the minute we call out, we could never understand our ancestors’ despair as they waited and waited, their hopes dashed time and again. But it doesn’t happen for us, either. We and our loved ones suffer illnesses that are not cured with a single pill or a single course of treatment. We endure physical therapy, falling time and again as we try to regain control of our muscles. We enter depressions that seem unending. We struggle for causes that are just but seem always to be out of reach.

We need to understand the faith it took for the Israelites to say, “Maybe this time, Moses will succeed. Maybe this time, Pharaoh will let us go. Maybe this time, the miracle will really happen.” It is easy to have faith in miracles if we can call them up at will. But it is hard—very hard—to have faith in miracles and in God when we are repeatedly disappointed. Yet the Israelites did it, and so can we. It is fine to say that we Jews need to feel that we personally left Egypt. But it will mean more and teach us more if we can acknowledge that we personally are waiting to leave Egypt.



What’s In A Miracle?

The miraculous experience of the Exodus and redemption inspires us to seek the miraculous presence of God in our daily lives.

Alright, God, I'll grant that you may have had something to do with taking my people out of Egypt, but what have you done for me lately? In an age where employees are rarely allowed to have a "bad year" without being terminated, one might wonder why we haven't "fired" God.

We know that our collective story, the story we're obliged to teach our children, begins with our liberation from Egypt. We also know that the Holy One's overt presence has gradually diminished throughout the ages. We also know that that the purpose of many of the commandments we are told to observe is to "remember the Exodus from Egypt." To name a few: Passover, Sukkot, Kiddush on Friday night, *mezuzah*, *tefillin* and the redemption of the first-born male, which is performed a month after the birth of a naturally birthed first-born son.

Nahmanides, the *Ramban*, comments on why it is important to transmit this memory to our children, as it says at the end of the portion, when your son asks "What's this?" [Why is this ceremony of the first born happening?] You tell them that with a strong hand, YHWH took us out from the house of bondage" ([Exodus 13:14](#)). He also wonders why so many commandments are committed to preserving this memory.

God Will Not Be Present

To paraphrase, he says that the redemption foreshadows that God will not be present later on. God embarks on the scene in this sensational fashion to create a memory of the overt miraculous, so that we may appreciate the covert miracles that happen in everyone's lives. For if the sea had split and no people had been there to cross it, it would not have been a miracle, but rather it would have been a fluke of nature. A miracle happens when you need it. Good timing is the stuff of the miraculous.

The proof of God's overt presence in the past and the observance of commandments that recall the Holy One's presence, remind us to seek out God's presence in the ordinary domain of our reality. Nahmanides would argue, unlike his colleague Maimonides, that the fact the sun rises every day is no less miraculous than the splitting of the Red Sea. The fact that we are here to recall the Exodus is as miraculous as the Exodus itself.

Beyond the pyrotechnics of the Exodus is what the Exodus represented, which was the establishment of a unique relationship between the Holy One and His people. That is the true ongoing miracle. In ancient times we were given a memory to carry with us always. As long as we testify to this memory, we also testify to the fact of a living God in all our lives. A God who is not removed, but who is involved in history.

May we all be blessed with enough insight to witness and acknowledge the miraculous sense of wonder that accompanies our people's ongoing relationship to the Holy One.

עִבְרִי - Hebrew

Word (s) of the Week

Sky, Heaven / שָׁמַיִם

Pronounced: sha-MA-yeem

Shamayim literally means "water there" because in ancient times, it was believed that the sky's function was to hold back waters above.



A Taste of Jewish Humor

A Higher Power

Mrs. Rosenberg was teaching her Hebrew school class an important lesson.

"We have been learning about how powerful the kings and queens were in Biblical times, haven't we class?"

"Yes, Mrs. Rosenberg," they children answered dutifully.

"But there is a higher power, isn't there? Who can tell me what it is?"

Little Moishie Weinberg blurted out, "I know, Aces."

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