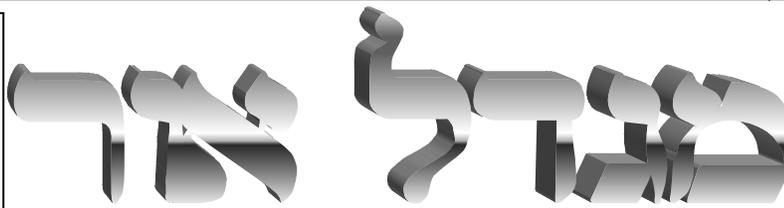


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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

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Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 7:13 - הדלקת נרות
- 7:31 - שקיעה
- 8:56 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:39 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:45 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 7:33 - שקיעה
- 8:16* - צאת הכוכבים
- 8:46 - צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars

Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Don't Try This at Home

A fellow who was known as quite a joker had an interesting custom at the Seder. When he reached the part that read, "Maror zeh," this bitter herb, he would point at his wife!

All joking aside, there is actually a custom brought down in German Haggadas that upon saying those words, "one points to his wife." Incredible? Here's the story.

R' Moshe Meir Weiss Shlit"א offers two insights to why such a custom might be instituted.

First of all, Chazal tell us that when the Egyptians enslaved the Jews, they resorted to psychological warfare as well. Part of that entailed giving men work that was typically reserved for women, such as child-rearing, sewing, and other home-based work.

At the same time, the women were forced to do back-breaking manual labor. This role reversal caused not only physical pain, but mental anguish.

Therefore, when we say that the Egyptians embittered their lives with hard work, we point to the women, who were subjected to the hardest labor.

Also, the Midrash says that the slavery was intended to keep down the Jewish population, so only married people were enslaved, giving an incentive not to wed and have a family.

By pointing at the wife, we highlight that the man was willing to endure bitter labor because she was worth it. But still, don't try this at home. ©

Thought of the week:

No one will turn down a good meal just because he doesn't understand the digestive mechanism.

"דבר אל אהרן ואל בניו ואל כל בני ישראל ואמרת אליהם זה הדבר אשר צוה ה' לאמר" (ויקרא יז:ב)

"Speak to Aharon, to his sons, and to all the Children of Israel and say to them, 'This is the thing that HaShem has commanded,' saying:" (Leviticus 17:2)

Moshe was commanded to convey this message to the Kohanim and all the Jews that when one brought a sacrifice, it had to be in the Mishkan, and not anywhere the wished. One who sacrificed outside of the permitted boundaries was liable for kareis, early death.

The Kohanim had to be given the command because it was they who would perform the sacrificial rituals. The Jews likely needed to hear it so they did not attempt to bring a korban somewhere else.

Though it applies in the Bais HaMikdash as well, what is unique about this command at that time is that in the desert the Jews were not permitted to eat meat on their own. If they wanted to eat meat, it had to be part of a korban Shelamim, a peace-offering.

This subjugation of the desires is key to the phrasing of our posuk, "this is the thing HaShem has commanded." It conveys to us that the way to follow the Torah is as a soldier receiving orders from a commanding officer. We do it not because it makes sense to us, symbolized by the desire to eat meat, but because it is part of our service of G-d.

While the Chacham, the wise son, asks for details of all the rituals HaShem commanded us, the Rasha, the wicked son, is looking for a reason before complying. "What is this ritual about? Why should I do it?" Such arrogance pushes away the Shechina, HaShem's countenance.

Yes, we should seek to understand the reasons behind the mitzvos, but at the end of the day, we do them because this is what HaShem commanded Moshe at Sinai. Being able to subdue our personal desire to understand and carry out the mitzvos simply because HaShem commanded us to do so shows that we have evolved beyond our human nature.

"The Torah was only given to those who ate the mon," say Chazal. Perhaps this is one explanation for that. Only those who ate the mon, but held back from eating meat unless it was a korban, were at the level of accepting the Torah as the will of G-d without their own biases.

"מעשה בר' אליעזר... הגיע זמן קריאת שמע של שחרית" (הגדה של פסח)

The Haggadah tells us that the more one speaks of the events of the Exodus, the more praiseworthy it is. To highlight this, it tells the story of five great sages who spent the entire night discussing the story of Yetzias Mitzrayim until their students came to tell them it was time to recite the Shema.

What is the significance of the fact that it was their students who told it to them, and that it was time for Shema? Could they not have said it was time to pray, or that it was the morning?

Perhaps the purpose of expounding on the story of the Redemption is to gain a better understanding of the mastery of the Al-mighty. By discussing each act, we discover more about how He controls everything. However, it's possible for one to get carried away with his ideas.

The students came to remind their teachers that when all is said and done, no matter how great you are in expounding on the Torah and delving into its depths, you still fulfill it as a student fulfills his teacher's will, accepting the yoke of obedience even if you do not grasp why. The Shema represents that understanding that G-d is unique and we don't have to understand it all.

It is said that when Henry Ford bought parts for his Model T, he insisted that the parts be sent in crates made to his very specific instructions, down to where to put the screws. Not wanting to give up such a lucrative account, the parts suppliers gladly had the crates made the way Ford wanted. While they complied, the suppliers could not imagine what difference it made what kind of crate the parts came in as long as they got to their destination.

When the parts arrived, however, Ford's workers were instructed not to use crowbars to tear open the crates. The wooden crates were then disassembled and became the floorboards for the famed Model T, with holes for the screws already in the proper places! There was a plan behind his orders, and the seemingly random holes and cuts in the crates were all a part of it.