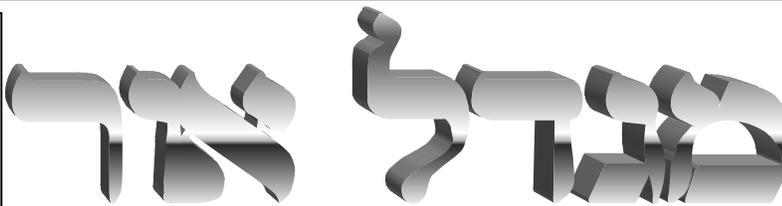


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Prepare for this day?
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Your Thoughts, the Perfect Words

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 7:22 - הדלקת נרות
- 7:40 - שקיעה
- 8:47 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:32 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:40 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 7:42 - שקיעה
- 8:26* - צאת הכוכבים
- 8:54 - צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars
Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Did You Know?

One of the most famous verses in the Torah, "V'ahavta l'rayacha kamocho," You shall love your fellow man like yourself, is in this week's parsha. Many people know that Rabbi Akiva said this was a "great principle of the Torah."

What is not as well-known is the beginning of that verse: Do not take revenge, and do not [even] bear a grudge, [and you shall love your fellow man like yourself.]

So, the person I am commanded to love is NOT just someone who I admire, nor even someone who I have very little to do with. The person I am to love is the very person who has wronged me in the past and I have reason to dislike!

While Jews do not "turn the other cheek" and forgive any wrongs against them unilaterally, and the Torah requires recompense, when the other person wishes to move forward, even if they haven't apologized as fully as we might like (or at all) we are supposed to move forward with them. But how?!

By loving them the way we love ourselves. When we do things wrong, make mistakes, act selfishly, or hurt others, we understand that we are inherently good people who were under specific circumstances that made us act that way. If we understand the same about others, we will be able to forgive them for succumbing to the moment (or decade) and acting less than perfectly.

Thought of the week:

We don't get to decide truth. We only get to decide if we will accept it.

"...קדשים תהיו... איש אמו ואביו תיראו ואת שבתתי תשמרו אני ה' אלקיכם." (ויקרא יט:ג-ו)

"You shall be holy people... a man shall fear his mother and father, and guard My Sabbaths, I am the L-rd your G-d."

From a parsha with the lofty name, "Kedoshim – Holy Ones," we would expect a list of demands that would cause the most ascetic of souls the sublime pain of denying his flesh some exquisite desire. We would expect to hear about illicit relationships that must be avoided, but we don't. In fact, those relationships, read each year on Yom Kippur, were already mentioned in the previous parsha, Parshas Achrei Mos. In this parsha, we are enjoined to be holy, but the directions include much tamer topics.

Let's begin: "You shall be holy – so listen to your parents." Huh? "Oh yes, and keep Shabbos carefully." Shabbos? That's great, but it's not the stuff of which holy hermits are made. "Do this because I am G-d." I know you're G-d, so why not give me the tough commandments, like fasting and wearing burlap, or putting rocks in my shoes?

"Don't turn to empty gods and idols; I am HaShem, your G-d." OK, I'm not worshiping idols but when do we get to the holy part? "When you sacrifice an animal, plan to do it properly, willingly, and try to give Me *nachas*." What about the intricate special ceremonies we should do? Come on G-d, make it hard so we know we're becoming holy!

It seems that no matter what we do, this parsha about becoming Kedoshim, holy people, is counterintuitive. Instead of giving us challenges, the Torah sounds like a farmer's almanac giving us crop advice!

Perhaps that's exactly the point. Being holy isn't about suffering, and it's not about divesting ourselves of all earthly pleasures. On the contrary, Judaism says we should enjoy the world that HaShem created, and we should elevate the physical when we do. Rather, being holy is about controlling ourselves, even when it involves going against our intuition.

We are commanded to listen to our parents. They have a tradition of serving HaShem and how to learn the Torah. Though we may think we know better, that we're smarter, that we've got it figured out, HaShem says, "Listen to your folks. They know better."

We think the way to serve G-d is through extending ourselves beyond our comfort level. HaShem says, "Just keep Shabbos, eat, sleep, study, sit back, enjoy, and make the statement that you're not the real mover and shaker behind the world, I am." That will make us holy because it takes self-control to be able to negate our egos and relinquish control.

"Don't serve other gods, and serve Me with joy," because that's what will work best for us. Not jumping through hoops, not practicing convoluted, painful rituals, just building a strong, warm relationship with our Creator, our Father, and the only One in the universe dedicated completely to us and our benefit. It goes on, saying that we should include the poor in our successes, forgive others their flaws, and be honest in our business dealings. This is how to be holy.

And yes, the advice sounds like a farmer's almanac because it is simple, sound advice from someone who knows how the world works: HaShem, Who created it and devised its operating systems. Just as water makes plants grow, keeping the Torah is what makes us grow.

R' Leib Chasman was speaking to a boy who had come to him asking how to improve his service of HaShem. After some discussion, R' Leib asked the bochur to go to the Rebbetzin in the kitchen and ask her for a cup of tea for him. The boy jumped up to do as he was asked.

As he did, R' Leib grabbed his arm. "Wait! Why did you jump up so quickly?" The boy hesitated, thought a moment, and then replied, "I ran because I have the opportunity to serve a Talmid Chacham!"

"Oy," sighed R' Leib. "It is exactly as I thought. A young man is presented with the chance to improve his Avodas Hashem by doing a true kindness and bringing a feeble old man a cup of tea. But instead of focusing on doing kindness for its own sake, he chooses to focus on other considerations like serving Torah scholars, which in my case is questionable."