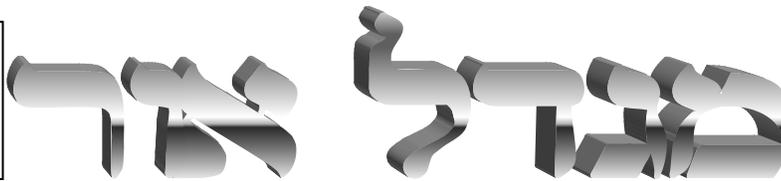


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Chicken or Beef,
The choices are many.
But food for thought?
Why, we didn't serve any!
Your simcha is too important to "get by" with something thrown together at the last minute.
Nobody will remember what you served, but they WILL remember what you say.
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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 7:56 - הדלקת נרות
- 8:14 - שקיעה
- 8:50 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:26 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:38 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 8:14 - שקיעה
- 9:01* - צאת הכוכבים
- 9:26 - צאת 72

*Based on Emergence of 3 stars

Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

A Bit of Bitachon - A weekly infusion of security from Chovos HaLevavos by R' Bachya ibn Pakuda.

My Body, Not My Choice

We will begin with an explanation of the first category, those things which pertain to a person's own body alone. These are: life and death, livelihood, clothing, shelter, health, illness, and abilities.

The proper form of Bitachon in these instances is to rely completely on HaShem and give one's self over to His direction and decrees.

Then, a person shall trust in HaShem and know that nothing will happen in these areas unless it was so decreed by HaShem because they are for the person's good in this world and the next.

Even if these things do not appear to the human eye to be beneficial, without a doubt they are ultimately good for him.

It is also important to know that HaShem runs all these things equally, in that no one has the ability to change these things unless it was so decreed by the Creator.

And, just as life and death or sickness and health are not given over to the hand of mankind, neither are a person's livelihood, clothing, shelter, and other things that relate to one's person.

Despite one's confidence that HaShem will guide him and choose what is best for him, nevertheless one must seek out the means to effectuate his own goodness, to the best of his judgment. Then he should believe that through these means, HaShem can and will fulfill what He has decreed.

- To be continued

Thought of the week:

People who are wrapped up in themselves are overdressed.

"אל תאמר... בצדקתי הביאני... וברשעת הגוים האלה..." (דברים ט:ד)

"Do not say, when HaShem pushes them from before you, "Because of my righteousness did HaShem bring me to inherit the land, and because of their wickedness did HaShem drive them from before you."

The Torah tells us not to attribute our successful conquest of Canaan to our righteousness and the wickedness of the nations who previously dwelled in the land. Instead, we should know it was due to their wickedness.

It seems odd that the Torah would say that neither explanation is correct then state specifically in the next verse that the nations were driven out because they were wicked. If we were partially right, why tell us we were wrong on both counts?

Rashi explains that one might have made the mistake of thinking that both things caused it: first, that the Jews were tzaddikim, and second that the occupying nations were wicked. These two factors combined to entitle the Jews to conquer the land. Therefore, says Rashi, the Torah tells us it was NOT a combination of these factors, but rather the sole fact that the nations were so evil that they were expelled. The Jews then got it because of the promise to our forefathers.

Why was the Torah so emphatic to say that it was NOT because of *this*, but WAS because of *that*? Why not just say, "The nations will be driven out because of their wickedness," and stop there? Why did the Torah have to spell out that it was not as we might think, that it was due to our righteousness and their wickedness?

Perhaps the answer lies in Rashi's explanation that we might think the two things together were the cause. By comparing our righteousness to the wickedness of the goyim, it is possible to develop, "relative righteousness." With relative righteousness, a person looks at himself and at someone else. He says, "Look how bad the other person is," and thereby makes himself feel like a greater tzaddik, better than he really is. His perception is dangerous because he's not looking at himself with objectivity and this can cause laxity in his service of G-d.

Life is not a race or competition against others. Rather, each of us is on his or her own closed course, facing obstacles and challenges designed specifically for us and no other human being on earth. It is not possible to judge our performance by looking at others because their track may be entirely different than ours and their goals are not the same ones as we have. Of course we all share the basic course of Torah and Mitzvos, but the difficulty level is not the same for any two individuals.

The Vilna Gaon says that each person should look at himself and find the sins which seem to be the stumbling blocks he hits again and again. Those, he says, are the reason his soul was sent down to earth again, in order to overcome those challenges and conquer them. Each of us is on our own course, and the relative position of others is no indication.

While one person may find it very easy to daven well and not to talk idly in a shul, another may find it very difficult. At the same time, the second fellow might find it easier to give tzedaka, while the first finds it almost impossible to part with his money. Each of us have some things which come more easily to us, and we cannot judge that we are better because we do such and such while others do not. Instead we must judge ourselves on an absolute scale, viewing where we are and the difficulties we each know we have, compared to what G-d asks of us.

The son of a well-respected Talmid Chacham asked his father if he could grow payos long enough to curl behind his ear, which was becoming more common amongst his peers. His father said no. When he was asked why, the man explained:

"The halacha does not require one to wear payos behind his ears. If he does this, my son may feel superior to others who do not and thereby become lax in other areas. I do not want him to think he has "arrived" when he still has far to go."