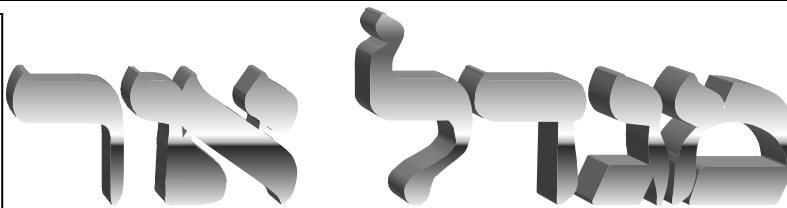


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In Honor of the 51st Wedding
Anniversary of my parents
**Rabbi Jonah and Blanche
Gewirtz**
*Though Mom isn't here anymore for
a party, it is still a day worth
commemorating for all the good it
brought about.*

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 8:14 - הדלקת נרות
- 8:30 - שקיעה
- 8:15 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:11 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:26 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 8:33 - שקיעה
- 9:24* - צאת הכוכבים
- 9:45 - צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Did You Know?

Bilaam's most famous words were, "Mah Tovu Ohalecha Yaakov, Mishkenosecha Yisrael," translated as, "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel."

In fact, these words have become part of our liturgy and are said in the morning at the beginning of our prayers.

The Sipurno says the word 'tents' refers to the Bais HaMidrash, the study hall, while the word 'dwelling places,' refers to the closeness of G-d, and therefore to synagogues where we pray. It is in these places that the Jews excel, because they are enhancing their relationship with G-d.

Rashi says the word tents refers to the Mishkan, and to the Bais HaMikdash when it was standing. The word dwelling place refers to the place of the Bais HaMikdash after it was destroyed for it acts as collateral for the sins of the Jews and HaShem expressed his anger by destroying the Temple of wood and stone, rather than by destroying the Jewish People.

It is appropriate that these words are read in shul as we enter the Three Weeks, the period when we mourn the siege of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash on Tisha B'Av.

It reminds us that even in mourning, we are to remember the kindness of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, even when we can't see how the pain is beneficial or protective, or how the destruction is actually planting the seeds of rebirth.

Thought of the week:

**Now you see it; now you
don't. Think it matters?
Maybe it won't!**

”ויתר אף אלקים כי הולך הוא ויתצב מלאך ה' בדרך לשטן לו...” (במדבר כב:כב)

“And the L-rd’s wrath flared because [Bilaam] went, and an angel of HaShem situated himself on the path to be an obstacle for him...” (Numbers 19:12)

Though HaShem told Bilaam not to go curse the Jews for they are a blessed nation (even today,) Bilaam's desire to go was evident, and HaShem allowed him to go with the understanding that it was not what HaShem wanted, and that Bilaam would not be able to say anything other than what G-d would tell him.

When Bilaam went, though, it was clearly apparent that he wanted to go against HaShem's orders and earn himself a nice reward from Balak by cursing the Jews. At that point, HaShem's wrath flared and He sent an angel to stop Bilaam from doing as he planned.

Normally, HaShem does not stop sinners from sinning. He will wait for them to repent, but their sins do not diminish G-d's greatness in any way, so He is patient. Why now did He get angry, and also take action to stop Bilaam? A look in Rashi may surprise you.

Rashi says that this was an angel of mercy, sent to keep Bilaam from destroying himself by flagrantly sinning against G-d. This concept is borne out by the fact that the angel is called a "Malach HaShem," a messenger of HaShem, the name which refers to mercy. However, now we must reconcile this with the beginning of the posuk which says that G-d was angry.

The word for anger in Hebrew, 'charon af,' literally means a flaring of the nostrils. This body language usually conveys anger, but it is not absolute. We find in many instances that HaShem might display anger, though in truth He is unaffected by our actions and has no reason to be angry. G-d also knows the future (He is above time) so he knew that we would act this way all along. This is perhaps what He did with Bilaam.

Bilaam's understanding of the world was great. He knew that HaShem controls everything and that he could not go against G-d's will. He thought, however, that he could change HaShem's mind and influence Him. HaShem allowed Bilaam him to maintain this belief in order to enable him to use his free will.

When Bilaam wished to sin, HaShem displayed anger, yet at the same time His mercy was invoked and an angel dispatched to frustrate Bilaam's plans. The 'man of the blind eye,' Bilaam, had great vision, but was unable to see to the depths of G-d's intent.

Perhaps even Bilaam realized this when he later had the opportunity to bless the Jews and was saved from sinning. In hindsight, he may have recognized HaShem's kindness in preventing him from carrying out his plans, which at the time, seemed to him to be a tremendous disappointment and difficulty.

The lesson to all of us is to recognize that despite how things appear to us, we must remember that HaShem's vision is much greater, broader, and deeper than ours, and His mercy for us is unending. Further, all the mitzvos and commandments He gave us are not intended to limit us or prevent us from enjoying life; but, on the contrary, they are to protect us and ensure that our lives are pleasant and worth living.

Having sold his home and all his meager possessions in Europe, Moshe Goldman prepared for his emigration to America. He hired a coach to take him to the nearest large town. From there he would travel by train and ferry to England, where he would transfer to a ship bound for New York.*

When he arrived at the town, the train had just left. There was no other train to catch, nor could he get a refund. He was now penniless and returned to his own town with no place to live and just the few belongings he had packed. How could HaShem have been so cruel to him?

A week or so later, he came to shul and asked for an aliya, as his life had been saved. The newspaper reports clarified this for him. He was now utterly thankful that he had missed the train to England, and thus his passage to America -- aboard a ship called the Titanic.