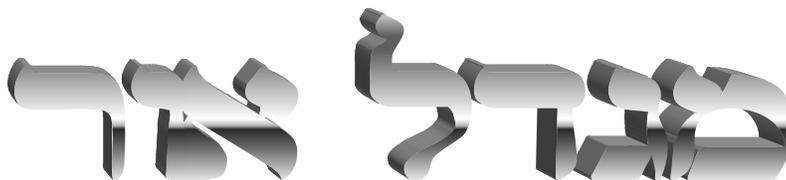


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Torah – it's never too late to start.

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

5:43 - הדלקת נרות
6:01 - שקיעה
9:23 - זק"ש מ"א
9:59 - זק"ש גר"א
10:53 - סוף זמן תפילה
6:01 - שקיעה
6:43 - צאת הכוכבים
7:03 - צאת 72

מולד מרחשון - Wednesday 2:42:14 PM

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com and
EzrasTorah.org

Did You Know?

At first, Man was forbidden to eat animals. As the posuk (1:29) says, he was given all herbage and the fruit of the trees as his food. One might mistakenly believe that this was out of concern for animals and that G-d prohibits the use of animals as their lives are on par with Man's. This is clearly disproved from the fact that G-d made Adam and Chava clothing of animal skin (e.g. rabbit fur.)

While one may not cause animals undue pain, they are intended for mankind's use. The eating of met was permitted only after Noach cared for the animals in the Ark during the Flood. This was not a payment for his work, but rather, his care for them built within him a respect for them so that he would not destroy animals unnecessarily. Being able to put animal use into perspective is key, as is differentiating animal life from human life.

It has been suggested that the first "animal-rights activist" was Cayin. He brought a sacrifice of produce to G-d, thinking that one ought not to kill animals. When he saw that Hevel's offering of sheep was accepted while his was despised, he came to the conclusion that one may kill life, animal or human, for a purpose. This twisted outlook gave him the rationale to become the first murderer in history, killing his brother.

Without the Torah's perspective, Man's understanding can lead to tragedy and destruction instead of joy and creation.

Thought of the week:

Your past is not your potential. In any hour you can choose to liberate the future.

”כי עפר אתה ואל עפר תשוב... וישלחך... לעבד את האדמה אשר לקח משם” (בראשית ג:יט, כג)

“[By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread until you return to the ground, from which you were taken:] For you are dust and to dust shall you return... And the L-rd, G-d, sent him from the Garden of Eden to work the soil from which he was taken.”

It seems that much focus is put on Man's origin. It is repeated over and over that he came from the earth and that it was the source of his physical composition. These pesukim seem to convey a hopelessness for improvement and a destiny of lowliness, but this is far from the case.

First, the posuk says, "you are dust," presently, and "to dust shall you return." How can one "return" someplace he already is? The Vilna Gaon explains the words "you are dust" as saying that had Adam not sinned, he would have purified his physical nature and transcended his origin. He would no longer have been dust. However, because he failed to do so, he is still in that category. What then is the "return to dust" referred to?

A few verses later, man is sent to work the land, "from which he was taken." If the point of this was to refer to the Earth and the soil within it, why specify that he was taken from it? There was no other place he was going to go, no other planet where he might work, so what do these words tell us?

The answer to all these questions is that as long as one is alive, he has the ability, the capacity, and the moral obligation to rise above his physical nature and transform himself into a holy being. He begins as dust, and will eventually return to dust, but what he does in between makes all the difference in the world.

Indeed, there are stories of honest and righteous people whose bodies were exhumed and were found not to have decomposed (including the Vilna Gaon) because they had so elevated themselves as to no longer be just "dust."

HaShem warns us that this will be a constant struggle until the day we die, but this is our charge and we must fight the good fight.

The possibilities of what we can achieve are hinted to in the posuk which states that Man was sent to work the soil "from which he was taken." Here was simple dirt, yet by giving it form and infusing it with holiness, G-d created Man, in the form of angels and His own likeness, unique upon the earth.

Perhaps this is why, each year, after we have been reborn during the high holidays, we read the story of Beraishis, the beginning of G-d's creation of heaven and earth. The new year can be the beginning of our creation, when we take the physical "earth" within us and through dutiful and determined toil, infuse it with holiness and raise it all the way to the heavens.

Members of a Chevra Kadisha in Israel had occasion to disinter several bodies to move them to a new location. Upon doing so, the members moved one corpse which to their utter shock and surprise had not decomposed.

One worker exclaimed, "Zeh tzaddik! Zeh shalem!" ("This is a righteous person! He is complete!") Upon inquiring into the fellow's identity, they discovered that he had not been a great rabbi or scholar, but rather a simple shopkeeper.

Someone who knew the man in life, however, heard the words that had been exclaimed in surprise and understood. "This man was a shopkeeper but he was scrupulously honest. The Torah says not to have a false measure or partial weight in your store. Because he dealt with integrity, and his weights and measures were always fair and honest, his body, too, remained whole and complete.