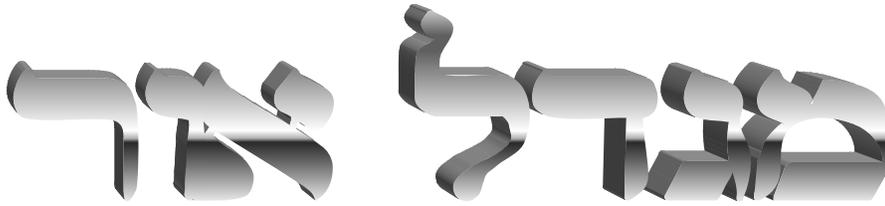


Q: How much
is 1 b'shvat,
and 1 b'shvat?

A: 2 B'Shvat!

♪ Thanks D.N.! ♪



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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 4:37 - הדלקת נרות
4:55 - שקיעה
9:06 - זק"ש מ"א
9:42 - זק"ש גר"א
10:30 - סוף זמן תפילה
4:57 - שקיעה
5:39 - צאת הכוכבים
6:09 - צאת 72

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

אוטען שבת!

Did You Know?

On this Shabbos, Beshalach/Shira, it is customary to feed the birds as a "Thank You" for eating the man put out by Dasan and Aviram to make it look as if HaShem was wrong and man fell on Shabbos. One should be careful to put out the food before Shabbos as it is not permitted to feed an animal on Shabbos unless it relies on you for food.

This week will Y"ח be Tu B'Shvat which is the "Rosh HaShana" for trees. Why is the New Year for the trees in the middle of the winter and not in Nissan, when the trees begin to blossom? It is because at this time, the sap is beginning to rise in the trees. Though on the surface, everything looks cold and bleak, new life is stirring beneath the surface. Man, too, is a tree of the field, (Devarim 20:19) and while he may be experiencing challenges and appear bereft, the best may lie just ahead, with its beginnings already prepared and waiting inside, ready to burst forth.

Thought of the week:

Mishaps are like knives. They either serve us or cut us, depending on whether we grasp them as the blade or the handle.

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"ויסב אלקים את העם דרך המדבר ים סוף וחמושים עלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים." (שמות יג:יח)

"And so HaShem led the people round-about by way of the Reed Sea Desert, and the B'nai Yisrael went up armed from the land of Egypt."

The commentaries generally explain that the Jews brought weapons with them, with which to conquer Canaan and which were used to battle Amalek. Interestingly, the Kli Yakar says they brought no weapons at all, but the verse alludes to the chumash, the five books of the Torah and Tefila, prayer, with which they would be able to vanquish their enemies. According to these explanations, it stands to reason that since they were taking a round-about way, outside civilized cities, they would need weapons on their journey as well.

Most of us, however, are more familiar with Rashi's homiletic interpretation of the word, "chamushim," meaning armed, to mean one-fifth, from whence we learn that only one-fifth of the Jewish nation left Egypt. Four-fifths of the Jews, explains Rashi, died during the three days of darkness (presumably so the Egyptians would not see the burials, thus avoiding a desecration of G-d's name.) According to that interpretation, why mention this fact here, and not earlier, when it happened? What is the connection between their circuitous route and eighty percent of the people dying?

The Jews who died during the plague of darkness were those who didn't wish to leave Egypt. After so long in bondage, why would they not jump at the chance to leave? Perhaps this verse gives us an insight into their thoughts, and why they indeed died while still in a foreign land.

After years of crying out to be saved, they expected G-d's redemption to be swift and complete, but most of all – EASY. It wasn't. The plagues seemed to be having little effect on changing Pharaoh's mind and there were yet obstacles ahead. These Jews who were unready to work for the redemption perished in their servitude.

However, those who understood that G-d has His plans and are ready to wait unquestioningly, and do what they must to achieve His ultimate outcome, do not become discouraged. It was they who merited leaving Egypt. In fact, it wasn't easy. They were chased by the Egyptians, they lacked water, and they had to travel without food provisions. But that was OK. The ones who were zoche to leave Egypt understood that sometimes the straightest path is not the proper one. If they were OK with a circuitous route, they could handle what was to come.

Chazal say that G-d's salvation is like the blink of an eye. Normally, we understand that to mean it comes quickly. It does. But in the blink of an eye, just before the revelation and the vision, there is a moment of darkness; of blindness.

If we wish to survive, and merit witnessing the ultimate salvation and redemption, we must understand that it may not be easy, and the darkness we experience is all part of the process. If we're still willing to follow G-d and go through with it, we will go forward armed with all the weapons and strength we need to meet the challenges ahead.

The fields were parched and brown from lack of rain, and the crops lay wilting from thirst. People were anxious and irritable as they searched the sky for any sign of relief. Days turned into arid weeks. No rain came.

The local religious leaders called for an hour of prayer on the town square the following week, requesting everyone to bring an object of faith for inspiration. At the appointed time the people filled the square with anxious faces and hopeful hearts. The leaders were touched to see the variety of objects clutched in prayerful hands -- prayer books, photos of tzaddikim, Tehillims.

When the hour ended, as if on magical command, a soft rain began to fall. Cheers swept the crowd as they held their treasured objects high in gratitude and praise. From the middle of the crowd one faith symbol seemed to overshadow all the others.

One man had brought an umbrella.