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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 5:52 - הדלקת נרות
- 6:10 - שקיעה
- 9:20 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:56 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:51 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 6:09 - שקיעה
- 6:51 - צאת הכוכבים
- 7:21 - צאת

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

אוטען שבת!

Did You Know?

Avraham was commanded to circumcise himself, and the mitzvah of bris mila was born. At eight days old, all Jewish males are to have this operation to bring them into the covenant of HaShem. For millennia, this mitzvah has come under fire from people for numerous reasons. Some have called it barbaric; others have claimed that if G-d wanted people to be circumcised He would have created them that way.

R' Akiva was asked whether the deeds of man or the deeds of G-d were superior, in an obvious attempt to make him say that G-d's works were better, thus contradicting man's involvement in performing bris mila. His answer was that the deeds of Man are greater, and brought as his proof a choice of eating a loaf of bread (Man's work,) or some stalks of wheat (G-d's work.) He explained that G-d leaves things in the world incomplete, allowing us to become His partners in creation.

Those who oppose bris by saying it hampers physical function also misunderstand. Bris represents mastery over the physical urges symbolized by that part of the body. In essence, this basic mitzvah reminds us that as Jews we are not merely physical beings, but physical beings in transformation, en route to becoming spiritual ones.

Thought of the week:

Money makes a good servant, but a bad master.

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"ויאמר אברם... אל נא תהי מריבה ביני ובינך ובין רעי ובין רעיך כי אנשים אחים אנחנו" (בר' יג:ח)

"Avram said to Lot: "Please, let there not be strife between me and you, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen, for we are kinsmen."

Lot's shepherds allowed their animals to graze in the fields of others while Avram's sheep were muzzled to avoid theft. Lot's shepherds reasoned that Avram was destined to inherit the land, and Lot was Avram's heir apparent. Therefore, they rationalized that they could graze the sheep wherever they wanted.

When Avram approached Lot, he spoke of a disagreement not only between the shepherds, but between Avram and Lot themselves, and suggests they would be better off if they went their separate ways. The Ohr HaChaim says that Avram was informing Lot that even if they were not fighting now, and Lot protested that he would never go against his revered uncle and teacher Avram, ultimately, this disagreement would spread to them and they would suffer discord because of it.

Avram was not a pessimist, nor was he a cynic. Rather, he knew for a fact that there would be a disagreement and was teaching Lot a valuable lesson about money. Lot knew that the land was not his yet, even if would be his in the future.

Were the question of grazing the sheep hypothetical, Lot's answer would have been the same as Avram's. However, once it became concrete, and involved Lot's own money, the truth would be obscured and thoughts of how to make it permissible would start to sound more logical. Money has the power to make a person twist the truth and rationalize.

Furthermore, though they were as close as brothers, the money and disagreement over whether it was "kosher money," would drive a wedge between them and render them enemies. This was not a prediction based on Avram's specific knowledge of Lot, but an understanding of the power money can have over any man if he isn't careful.

Avram did not place value on money itself and had no problem spending fortunes to enable others to say a blessing and thank G-d for His bounty. Therefore, the longer they remained together, the more Lot would have been upset that Avram was spending "his" inheritance, which in truth, was not destined to be his.

Families and friendships can be torn apart over money, and at that, money that is only imagined to be ours. Let's learn the lessons of Avraham Avinu that money is only ours once HaShem has given it to us, and to be wary of its power to distort reality.

Two men were locked in the heat of a Din Torah, one claiming he was owed money, the other denying it. The judges of the Bais Din required the defendant to swear that he did not owe the money and with that, exempted him from having to pay anything. He swore.

The plaintiff could not contain himself. "He's a liar! I can't believe he would take G-d's name in vain! It's not the money I care about, it's the fact that he could swear falsely!" His tirade continued outside the court. Whenever the other person's name came up he would repeat his statement, "It's not the money that bothers me, but how he could swear falsely." He spread rumors about him and badmouthed him at every opportunity.

One day, he came to the Rov of his town and said, "I was deceiving myself. All these years I have said it wasn't the money that bothered me but the taking of G-d's name falsely. Recently, I was in another town and sat in on the court proceedings. An identical case came up and again the defendant swore. The plaintiff began yelling like I did that he was more upset about the false oath. I noticed that the oath didn't bother me that time. The difference was that it wasn't my money. Now I realize that all the time I blamed him for swearing falsely, my indignation stemmed from my concern about my money and not from concern about HaShem's honor."