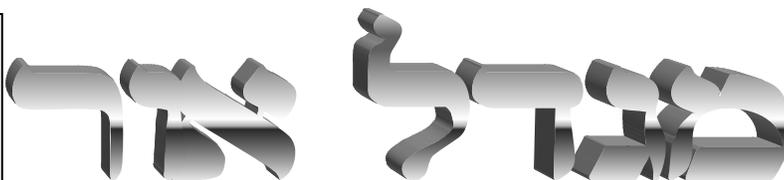


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שבת Zmanim

Wesley Hills, NY

- 5:36 - הדלקת נרות
- 5:54 - שקיעה
- 9:26 - זק"ש מ"א
- 10:02 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:55 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 5:53 - שקיעה
- 6:35 - צאת הכוכבים
- 7:05 - צאת 72

Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

When HaShem told Avram that he would inherit Eretz Yisrael, he asked, "With what [sign] will I know that I will inherit it?"

One Midrash states that because of this, he was punished with the statement, "You shall surely know that your children will be strangers in a foreign land..."

The Kli Yakar quotes a famous question. Why should Avraham's children be punished so harshly just because Avraham asked for a sign? Especially since he himself did not go into slavery, how could this be termed a punishment for him?

The Kli Yakar suggests that the Jews would have gone into galus anyway for other reasons. The punishment was that Avraham was given this news he could otherwise have done without. He did not need to know about the future exile.

However, once he asked to "know" one thing, HaShem told him even something else; something that caused him pain.

Often, people wish to tell others the "news," but we should realize and learn from here that if someone doesn't need to know something bad or depressing, it is hurtful to share it with them.

"Daya tzara b'sha'ata," troubles are bad enough in their time, one should not anticipate problems, or worry ahead of time. Rather, let's remember that we don't need to know everything, and we just might save ourselves or others from pain.

Thought of the week:
When walking through the "valley of shadows," remember: a shadow is cast by a Light.

וירד העיט על הפגרים וישב אתם אברם (בראשית טו"א)

"The bird of prey descended upon the carcasses, and Avram drove them away."

HaShem promised the childless Avram that he would have numerous descendants, as innumerable as the stars. Avram believed this, and HaShem was pleased. Then HaShem told Avram that He would give him the land of Canaan as an inheritance, and Avram asked for confirmation that he would inherit it.

Avram had just won a war with very few men, and captured the wealth of numerous kings. How could he question HaShem about his ability to conquer the entire land, yet trust that he would have many children, when he as yet had not seen any show of HaShem's might in this area?

Clearly, Avram was not questioning HaShem's ability to make things happen, but rather his own merits and qualities. HaShem controls childbirth, so it is entirely possible that He would make Avram's descendants numerous. However, to inherit the land required Avram's participation. He therefore questioned his own righteousness, and that of his children.

To this, HaShem answered, "Take to me" various animals. Most were cut in half, but the birds remained whole. This was a sign that the nations of the world, who surround the Jews like predators, would gradually be wiped out, but the Jews, symbolized by the birds, would be left intact. Then comes our posuk which wakes us from our reverie.

If HaShem was trying to show Avram that his descendants would survive, why did He not prevent the bird of prey from swooping down to interrupt this covenant? Why did that wonderful moment have to be disturbed by this creature, and why did Avram have to chase it away? Could not HaShem have caused it to leave, or not to come in the first place? What is this posuk doing here?

The answer is that this itself was the sign Avram was looking for. "You asked," said HaShem, "for a sign that you would merit to inherit this land. I gave you an idyllic scene, yet it was disturbed by an outside force, which came to ruin everything. You didn't question Me, or second-guess Me. You merely did what was necessary and then were ready to go on. This is how you will survive and ultimately outlive your enemies."

HaShem showed Avram that it was in his power to overcome difficulties, and that his children would share this strength. That is why the next pesukim discuss the travails that the Jewish People would go through and the fact that they would emerge from these challenges intact and with great wealth.

The Targum Yonason explains this verse to mean that the nations of the world will come like birds of prey to steal the wealth of the Jews but the merit of Avram will protect them. The merit to which he refers may be what we have just said, that despite difficulties and the fact that it seems HaShem is not interceding, Avram remained firm in his trust in the Ribono Shel Olam.

This belief stays with us too, offering protection and enabling us to be strong come what may. This is the sign for all generations, and this is how we will ultimately merit inheriting the land HaShem promised Avram, while the forces which seek to stop us will be driven away by our faith in HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

At 13, young Chezky Shoenig had leukemia. He had been in remission for 11 years and they thought he had beaten it, but it was back. A fellow approached his father, R' Elya, and said, "He will be fine. We say every day in davening, 'Some [trust] in horses; some [trust] in chariots; but we shall recall the name of HaShem, our G-d.' The whole town is davening for him, HaShem will heal him." This gave the father tremendous reassurance, but sadly, the unthinkable happened and the boy succumbed.

For months, it troubled R' Elya that the verse promised salvation that didn't arrive. Then it dawned on him. "The posuk isn't telling us how to fight the battle; it teaches us how to deal with the outcome. The next line in that perek of Tehilim is: "They kneel and fall, but we stand and remain firm."

Those who rely on their own strength and tactics second-guess themselves and try to figure what they could have done differently. We, however, know everything is in HaShem's hand, so even after defeat we can stand tall knowing we did all we could, but could not have changed it; it was G-d's will.'