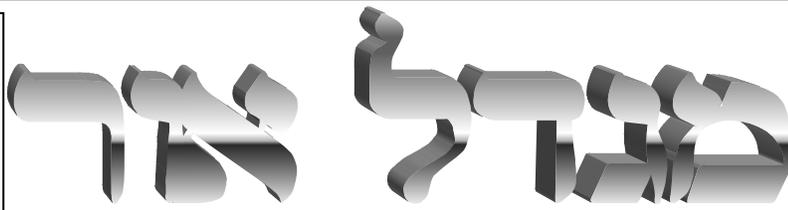


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**Operation Protective Edge – Home Edition**

As a means of protecting the lives and wellbeing of so many of our brethren who are under fire both literally and figuratively, why not perform a mitzvah, even the study of Torah contained in this sheet, as a merit for someone else? Consider this your contribution to bringing world peace.

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*A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah*

**Zmanim for שבת**

Wesley Hills, NY

- 8:07 - הדלקת נרות
- 8:25 - שקיעה
- 8:29 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:21 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:34 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 8:25 - שקיעה
- 9:14\* - צאת הכוכבים
- 9:37 - צאת 72

\* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars  
Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

**Did You Know?**

This parsha contains a disturbing story. In it, the Jews are commanded by HaShem to exact revenge against the Midianites for their role in causing the Jews to sin, and thus the plague that killed 24,000 people. [The Moabites were not to be attacked because they acted out of fear. The Midianites, however, got involved in a battle that was not their own simply because they wanted to fight.] Moshe directs the army to kill all involved, and when the generals spare the lives of women and children, he is incensed at their failure to carry out G-d's command. If the Jewish People are considered to be merciful (which they are), how can we not take pity on the women and children? Are we to believe that Moshe was a harsh and ruthless dictator?

Absolutely not. Moshe was one of the most caring and compassionate people on the face of the earth. However, when someone seeks to kill you, you must rise up first and kill him. If he doesn't care about your life, you are not to care for his. Among the captives the generals brought back were women that could be identified as having caused specific Jews to sin, leading to the terrible plague.

More vile than trying to destroy someone on this world is trying to destroy his eternal soul, and take him out of the World to Come. That is what Midian did and why they had to be completely eradicated.

Sparing such a person, as did King Shaul to Agag, ancestor of Haman, is false pity and only leads to calamity. Morality is dictated by G-d's perspective, not Man's.

**Thought of the week:**

**A person who, no matter how desperate the situation, gives others hope, is a true leader.**

**"וידבר משה אל ראשי המטות לבני ישראל לאמר זה הדבר אשר צוה ה': איש כי ידר נדר..."**

**"And Moshe spoke to the heads of the Tribes for the Children of Israel saying, "This is the thing G-d commanded: A man who makes a vow..." (Num. 30:3)**

Rashi teaches that Moshe gave honor to the princes of the tribes by teaching them the laws first, and then teaching all the Jews. This was not only done here, it was in fact the norm. However, there are some reasons why it might make this point in this place.

The topic at hand is the making and keeping of vows. One who makes a vow is obligated to keep his word. Certain exceptions exist such as in the case of a woman's vows when her husband or father can annul them. The other case is when a person regrets making the vow and approaches a Chacham, a wise Torah scholar, for assistance.

An exceptional scholar can release the vow on his own, or one can apply to a Bais Din, a Rabbinical court, for a ruling that his vow might be permitted. Since a great sage can do it on his own, the Torah chose this place to highlight the respect afforded to the princes.

There may also be another reason to highlight the honor of the Nesi'im at this specific juncture, in light of their role in vows. These great men are deserving of honor precisely because they have been granted to authority and understanding to release people from binding vows that would otherwise constrict them.

The role of a leader is not to encumber his followers, but rather to find ways for them to get the maximum benefit and pleasure out of life, as outlined by the Torah. When a person boxes himself in, usually at a time of crisis when he promises great things to G-d or swears that he will not do something for another because he is angry, he is the one who ties his own ropes. It is up to the sage to find an out for the fellow if the vow should be released.

Of course, if one promised to begin or maintain a specific mitzvah observance or behavior, or a more stringent type of conduct, he should try to uphold this honorable course of action. In the case, however, where the situation is untenable, the sage is called in to help.

Rabbis and scholars do not seek stringencies to make people dependent on them, nor to control the Jews, or for their own personal benefit or amusement. The Torah directs them to be kind and understanding of others and this is how they must behave. That is why honor was specifically doled out to them in relation to their role in releasing vows.

Not only Rabbis and leaders should act this way, but each of us should seek out how he or she can help others, lighten their burdens, and be forgiving and understand that they do foolish things under stress. That is honorable behavior.

*R' Dovid Feinstein Shlit"a once related how his father, R' Moshe Feinstein z"l, became the world-renowned posek (Rabbinic judge) that he was. "After World War II, there were many, many women who had no idea what had happened to their husbands. They were Agunos, "bound women," who were halachically forbidden to be married. No one took up their cause, so my father threw himself into this mission to permit as many as halachically possible to marry. No one else was willing to take a stand, but he did, and that is why the whole world recognized his greatness."*

*Once, R' Moshe said to a student, "To be a Rabbi in Klal Yisrael, you need two things. The first is broad shoulders (as R' Moshe did, figuratively, to stand behind and defend his often revolutionary rulings.) The second is a deep knowledge and understanding of Torah.*

*To say, "No, you cannot" -- any ignoramus can do that. But to say, "Yes, you may" -- to make life easier for Jews, "for that you must know how to "learn.""*