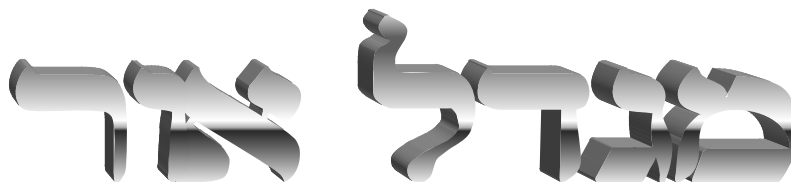


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שבת Zmanim for

Wesley Hills, NY

- 5:08 - הדלקת נרות
- 5:26 - שקיעה
- 8:56 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:32 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:24 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 5:29 - שקיעה
- 6:11 - צאת הכוכבים
- 6:41 - צאת 72

מולד אדר - Sunday 2:27:12 AM

Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com and EzrasTorah.org

א Bit of Bitachon

A weekly infusion of security from Chovos HaLevavos, a classic Jewish work written by R' Bachya ibn Pakuda nearly a thousand years ago.

Continued from last week -

We all think we wouldn't have anything to worry about if we were rich. R' Bachya is now outlining ten advantages of the Baal Bitachon over an alchemist who can turn lead into copper and silver into gold.

2. The alchemist must perform certain actions without which his efforts cannot work. He may be exposed to harmful smoke and fumes, besides for having to work strenuously day and night.

The Baal HaBitachon, on the other hand, is guaranteed that he will not be harmed, and he is sure that he will come to no harm for all that HaShem ordains for him is for his benefit. Therefore, he is happy with everything that HaShem sends his way and he earns his livelihood with peace and tranquility, as it says in Tehillim, "He lays me down in green pastures.

3. The alchemist cannot reveal the true nature of his work to others for fear that they will compete with him and leave him penniless.

Not so the Baal HaBitachon. Not only is he not afraid of others, but he recognizes that he is beyond their grasp and they cannot harm him in any way.

- To be continued

Thought of the week:

Reason itself is fallible, and this fallibility must find a place in our logic.

"ואלה המשפטים אשר תשים לפניהם" (שמות כא:א)

"And these are the judgments you shall set before them."

The Gemara in Eruvin (54b) says that the posuk uses the words "set it before them" and not "teach them," to tell us that a teacher must explain the reasons for mitzvos to his students, so they understand why they are doing what they are doing. We must explain, and not just say, "Do this because I said so."

Rashi comments that it was not enough For Moshe to repeat the lessons a few times, so the Jews could commit them to memory. Rather, he had to explain the reasons for the mitzvos so the Torah was like a table set before Klal Yisrael, ready to be consumed and enjoyed. It is clear, therefore, that part of learning Torah is understanding why we do the mitzvos.

If we look at the first Rashi on this posuk, he says that the 'vov' at the beginning meaning 'and,' comes to connect these mitzvos to the ones mentioned in the last parsha. Just as those were said at Sinai, so did these emanate from Sinai.

The Aseres HaDibros, the Ten Commandments, though, include mitzvos without a reason. "I am the L-rd, your G-d," for example, seems more of a "because I said so," than a mitzvah which has a reason behind it. While we may understand that a society cannot function with murder and theft being acceptable, what's wrong with being jealous of someone else's things?

Further, in the Gemara in Sanhedrin (21b), R' Yitzchak says that the Torah did not reveal the reasoning behind mitzvos lest someone feel they do not apply to him, as we see that two reasons are given for a king not marrying too many wives nor amassing too many horses, and Shlomo HaMelech fell into the trap of thinking he was above them and paid the price for it.

In our day, people have erred and said that the reason not to eat pork was because of the potential diseases caused by improper preparation thereof, and now that we know how to cook it properly there is no prohibition, *Rachmona litzlan*. If that is the case, why does the Torah here teach us that one must teach the reasons for mitzvos?

Perhaps we can answer that this is why the posuk also teaches us that these mitzvos too, were given at Sinai. Although we may understand that murder is wrong, it is possible to justify it when the person is very young (abortion) or very old ("mercy" killings.) Therefore, it is placed with "I am the L-rd" to teach us that though we have some reasons, we do not have all of them, and ultimately we do the mitzvos because HaShem said we should. When we gave the half-shekel, rich and poor gave alike, even if to our minds that is unfair or improper.

The word 'ta'am,' used for reason, also means taste. Torah must be given over like food prepared on a banquet table, delicious and inviting. Understanding a reason behind a mitzvah give us a zest for it, something to motivate us. Regardless, though, the single, deciding factor for why we do any mitzvah is simply because that is what G-d said, through Moshe, at Sinai.

Uri Zohar, a popular Israeli entertainer-turned-Rabbi tells the story of a party he went to before he was observant. He noticed a lovely statuette in his friend's house and he wanted it - so he took it. (He says he knew he had an eye for art, but never realized he had a hand for it as well.)

When he got home, he showed it to his wife. "That's stealing!" she cried. "You must go and return it this minute!" Uri asked, "What's wrong with stealing?" His wife was stunned. "But it's his!" He replied, "Yeah, it was his. Now it's mine. I won't return it until you can give me a good reason why it's wrong to steal."

He concludes his retelling of the story by saying: The truth is that societal convention does not and cannot dictate morality. Society changes, what's acceptable changes. In reality, the only reason you can definitively give to say stealing is wrong is that it is wrong because HaShem told us so in the Torah.