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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

7:48 - הדלקת נרות
8:06 - שקיעה
8:53 - זק"ש מ"א
9:29 - זק"ש גר"א
10:40 - סוף זמן תפילה
8:06 - שקיעה
8:52* - צאת הכוכבים
9:18 - צאת 72

מולד אלול - Tuesday 6:42:00 AM

*Based on Emergence of 3 stars

Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com and
EzrasTorah.org

A Bit of Bitachon - A weekly infusion of security from Chovos HaLevavos by R' Bachya ibn Pakuda.

Who's The Boss?

R' Bachya continues: One of the very pious men said, "I am amazed that people give others what was decreed for them from Heaven, then remind the fellow of the good they did for him and demand some sort of recognition.

I am even more amazed by those who receive their portion from those others, who were bound to give it to them, and they humble themselves and praise and seek to appease their benefactors.

If they did not receive their parnasa from that source, it is possible they would be supported from something which is already in their possession, or it would come in some other way."

However it is, a person should still make efforts for his income and not be lazy nor avert his eyes from them.

The same applies to good health, in that one should understand that his health is in HaShem's hand, yet he should take steps to preserve his health which by their nature should cure him, while remembering that HaShem is the healer of the sick and it is not the actual medicine or health regimen which has any efficacy. In fact, the healing may come through something quite detrimental, as for example, when Elisha, upon hearing that waters were bad, cured them by pouring salt into the spring. Though it would normally make water unusable, the salt was able to purify it because that was HaShem's will. - To be continued

Thought of the week:

The foolish man seeks happiness in the distance, the wise grows it under his feet.

"ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום ברכה וקללה. את הברכה אשר תשמעו אל מצות ה'..." (דברים יא:כו)

"See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse. The blessing; that you listen to the commandments of HaShem, your G-d, that I command you today; and the curse – if you will not listen..."

The Torah asks us to see very clearly the difference between what happens when we listen to HaShem and what happens when we don't. When we listen we have blessings; when we don't we have curses. What it doesn't say is what that blessing or curse is. In fact, the way it is phrased seems to imply they are one thing, which changes its properties based on our actions.

The Chasam Sofer comments that HaShem is a merciful judge. He gives us blessing - things like the Bais HaMikdash or wealth - before we sin. If we remain righteous, fine. We maintain the blessing. However, if we sin, then HaShem takes back what he has given us, so that we feel the punishment, yet in reality we are no worse than before. This is the kindness of HaShem, and that is why the blessing and the curse are one and the same. We are given the blessing so that HaShem has something to take away from us if we don't follow the Torah.

The Malbim offers a similar but slightly different take on these pesukim. He says that HaShem gives us blessing so that we may use it for good and do mitzvos with it. If we fail to do so, that very same blessing turns into a curse. This is easy to understand. How many people have found wealth to be their undoing or found the home, job, or spouse of their dreams to be the source of much aggravation? If we don't choose HaShem's Torah as our way of life, we are destined to see all that we considered blessing become the source of our punishment.

It is interesting that the Torah says the word "R'eh, see" and not "hineh, behold." Behold would tell us that this is something we didn't know, something that is new to us. "See," however, implies something we know on our own, and are now directed to acknowledge and recognize.

Whether you utilize the approach of the Chasam Sofer or of the Malbim, the Torah is telling us here that we ourselves should recognize that whether something is a blessing or a curse depends on whether the will of G-d is followed.

Nothing in the world is inherently good or bad, beneficial or harmful. It is all a manifestation of HaShem's will, and how we react to it and understand it will determine whether it is a blessing or curse. A fellow who loses his money but sees the loss as the kindness of HaShem, in saving him from himself or from the temptations of wealth, does not experience it as a curse, but as a blessing. The self-same event can be either a bracha or a klala, and that's why the posuk is worded as it is.

It is therefore up to us to see this fact, and choose to acknowledge that HaShem is directing all that goes on in this world and live our lives according to His rules. If we see events as random occurrences, we will be frustrated and bitter. If, however, we can see the hand of G-d in them, and hear the Universe echoing the mitzvos of HaShem, life will be a constant feast.

While on a trip to Masada, a group of hikers who had been there many times decided to take their own route through the surrounding mountains. The dips, curves, and narrow ledges presented quite the challenge. At one point, they were rounding a particularly treacherous stretch where they walked with backs braced against the mountain, and one misstep would mean a fall to the jagged rocks forty feet below. They did not look down for fear of falling, until they heard a group of people on top of Masada cry out, "Noooooooo!!!"

Heeding the warning, the hikers carefully peeked around the bend, and saw that the "trail" they were on abruptly stopped at a cliff. Had they continued, they would have fallen to their deaths.

After carefully making their way down to the bottom, they found the other group who had saved them from certain death and thanked them profusely. "We didn't signal you," said the group. "Our tour leader asked us if the Jews thought Masada would ever fall and we responded, "Noooooooo!!!"