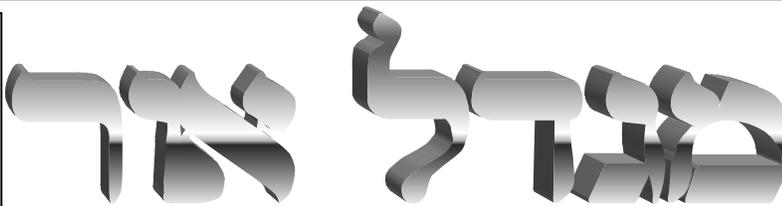


What would G-d want you to do?

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 7:26 - הדלקת נרות
- 7:44 - שקיעה
- 8:51 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:36 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:43 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 7:44 - שקיעה
- 8:27* - צאת הכוכבים
- 8:56 - צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars

Monday 7:34:14 PM - מולד אלול -

Rosh Chodesh is Tuesday and Wednesday
Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com and EzrasTorah.org

Did You Know?

Parshas R'eh finds the outlawing of 'bamos,' private altars. Yes, back in the day, everyone had an altar out back, perhaps next to the kiddie pool and the barbecue, and on them they offered sacrifices to G-d as the mood struck them.

No longer. Moshe told the Jews that upon arriving in the land of Israel they would no longer do, "each man as is fit in his eyes." The reason is that thus far they had not come to "menucha," resting place or "nachala," inheritance.

The Gemara in Zevachim has different opinions of whether Menucha refers to the Mishkan that was built in Shilo or to Jerusalem but either way it refers to a dwelling place of HaShem.

Judaism doesn't often require us to determine whether something is right or wrong. Just as kosher animals are delineated or categorized, so are kosher actions outlined. We have precedents, laws, and scholars to guide us.

Is that a bad thing? Not at all! Menucha, the ability to rest, comes from the fact that we don't need to second-guess our decisions if they were made according to Torah. If they were, we can rest peacefully knowing that we have followed the Torah.

One who wishes to decide for himself what is pleasing in his own eyes, trying to "imagine" what is good and proper is moving backwards, and will likely end up regretting that path.

The path to peace-of-mind is the one laid out by the Torah which takes the burden of decision-making off our shoulders.

Thought of the week:
Sometimes you make the right decision and sometimes you make the decision right.

"ראה אנכי נתן לפניכם היום... את הברכה אשר תשמעו... והקללה אם לא תשמעו..."

"See that I am giving before you today blessing and curse. The blessing - that you listen to G-d's commandments... and the curse, if you don't listen..." (Deut. 11:26-28)

At the mountains of Grizim and Eival, the Jews were given a listing of acts that were praiseworthy or accursed, depending on whether one did them or not. Moshe here tells the Jews that the choice is theirs to make, and they should choose what HaShem (signified by *Anochi*, the pronoun referring to G-d in the Ten Commandments) would want them to choose.

There are several nuances in the text here that make a very striking statement. First of all, the word "today" seems superfluous. They have always had a choice to be good or bad. It is possible to say that today, on these mountains, they were given the unique opportunity to see the pendulum swing either way and be able to see that one behavior has the potential for to be a source of blessing or curse based on how one proceeds with it.

Another difference is that regarding the bracha it says, "that you will listen," and regarding the curse it says, "if you do not listen." What is implied by the difference in use?

As we approach Elul, our minds turn to repentance and making amends for our errors, sins, and deviations. This parsha teaches us that when these feelings arise, we should make the most of them. HaShem says, "I'm giving you this choice 'this day.'" The word "Hayom" is used to mean 'today.' That means that it was not a choice given only on a specific day in history, but that each day we can choose our direction. (See Sanhedrin 98a, 9 lines from the bottom.)

We are not bound by yesterday's choices. If we chose good, we must choose it again today and not rest on our laurels. If we chose evil, we can make a clean break because it is a new day. The Arizal said that each day we awake with a new soul, so we are new creations, and able to do new things.

So what of the other difference in word choice? It seems that HaShem is giving us encouragement in our behavior. "Asher tishme'u," that you will listen, implies future intent. HaShem says, "Once you decide to choose good, I will bless you now, even before you listen to Me for you have made up your mind to do so."

The flip side, however, says only, "If you do not listen." In that case, HaShem gives us the opportunity to correct ourselves and the punishment is not immediate. Simply deciding to do evil is not enough to warrant the punishment in most cases.

The message is clear: At any moment, we have the prerogative and ability to change the direction of our lives simply by aiming to do what is right in the eyes of HaShem.

R' Noach Weinberg z"l, who devoted his life to teaching people how to return to HaShem and how to teach others to do the same, was once approached by a fellow who told him, "I don't need your Yeshiva. I already have a great relationship with G-d. He loves me the way I am and does miracles for me."

Impressed, R' Noach asked for details.

"I ride a motorcycle," the fellow explained. "Once, I was riding down a narrow road and a truck came around the corner out of nowhere. I swerved and went over a cliff. As I began to fall, I called out to G-d to save me. Suddenly, my bike caught between two rocks and I was thrown into a soft hedge. I lived to tell the tale. You see? G-d does miracles for me. I don't need to learn your Torah."

R' Noach smiled, then asked the young man: "And Who do you think sent the truck? Do you want HaShem to send you another reminder of how much He loves you?"