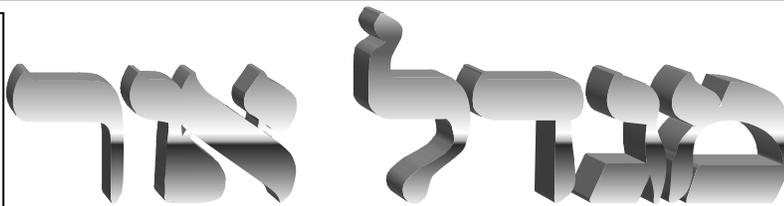


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This issue dedicated לע"נ  
**חנוך אברהם בן מרדכי ז"ל**  
**Mr. Haney Dombroff z"l**  
*He will be missed dearly by friends  
and family, but his legacy will live  
on in those whose lives he touched.*

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

## Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 7:22 - הדלקת נרות
- 7:40 - שקיעה
- 9:01 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:37 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:44 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 7:40 - שקיעה
- 8:23\* - צאת הכוכבים
- 8:52 - צאת 72

\* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

## Did You Know?

One of the many directives in our parsha is that when we besiege a city in times of war, we are not to cut down fruit trees to create battering rams. Rather, only trees which we know will never produce fruit are to be used for this purpose.

This is not an absolute, as one may cut fruits trees down if the enemy hides within them and it is necessary to do so. (The same applies to killing animals for food, clothing, or any other legitimate purpose, as opposed to simple sport.)

One of the key phrases used here is, "Is the tree of the field a man [that it is your enemy]?" This can also be read to compare human beings to trees. This interpretation bears an important lesson for us, especially in the days of Elul.

A tree should not be cut down if it produces fruit. Even if it produces apples and you prefer pears, you must protect it. The only time you may cut down a tree is when it is clear that it will not bear fruit of any kind.

Before Moshe slew the Egyptian taskmaster who was beating the Jewish man to death, he "looked here and there and saw there was no one." Chazal say that he was looking into future generations to see if this man would have any righteous descendants. Only when he was sure there would be none did he kill him.

Too often, we discount others (or even ourselves) and tear them down for being "worthless." We err, though, and fail to think of what the future may bring, in their children, grandchildren, or even in themselves. Like trees, we can grow and change, and we can reach heavenward. Yes, Man is like a tree, and none should be cut down and discarded.

## Thought of the week:

**Never be afraid to trust an unknown future to a known G-d.**

"אשר ידבר הנביא בשם ה' ולא יהיה הדבר ולא יבא הוא הדבר אשר לא דברוה'..." (דברים יח:כב)

**"What the prophet shall speak in G-d's Name and it does not come to pass, this is something which G-d has not spoken..." (Deut. 18:22)**

After cautioning us to heed the words of the Prophets, the Torah says that we should not listen to the prophet who willfully misleads us by prophesying something that HaShem has not told him to speak, and that he is to be put to death. The way we can identify such a prophet is that he will tell us the future, or offer signs, and they shall not come to pass. Such a man is wicked and must die. It seems simple enough; if a prophet foretells the future and it does not happen, he is a false, willful prophet.

The problem is that we've already learned previously about the Navi Sheker, the false prophet, who correctly predicts the future or performs wonders. The Ramban there (Deut. 13:2) says that there are also some people who intuitively know the future. They don't claim to be prophets, but they have some knowledge of future events and though they don't understand the cause of future events, their predictions come true.

It would seem, then, that the predictions coming true is not proof that these people were sent by HaShem to deliver a message to Klal Yisrael, and conversely, it does not seem that a false prophet will necessarily be wrong, as he may well have information on future events.

We may suggest, therefore, that the Torah is not merely giving us a guide to measure whether the person is telling the truth based on their ability to know the future. Rather, HaShem is telling us that should someone deliberately attempt to mislead people using his ability to tell the future, HaShem will change the future, so the "prophet" is wrong!

What that tells is that the future is fluid and can always change. There is no such thing as finite "destiny," manifest or otherwise. This is, in fact, a basic Jewish tenet, as we say, "Even if a sharp sword is on one's neck, he should not despair of HaShem's salvation." We are told not to seek out the spirits of the dead or other means of predicting the future, but rather to be "Tamim," whole, with HaShem. We are to be satisfied with whatever HaShem brings our way and understand that it is good.

If, however, we aim to determine the future and act in some way to protect ourselves from trouble and difficulty, we should know that this is a futile endeavor as HaShem may just change the future so that our efforts do not achieve what we hope they will. There is, of course, one notable exception to this.

When the Navi warns of an impending calamity, it may be that it does not come to pass because in this case, HaShem has informed us of the future so we might protect ourselves from it. This was the case when King Chizkiyahu was pronounced to be a "dead man," or when Nineveh was warned that it would be destroyed. In both cases, they people receiving the message took the opportunity to repent, thereby averting the foretold evil.

As we make our way through the month of Elul, forty days when we are able to be close to HaShem, we should take advantage of the chance to change the future by regretting the past and resolving to make the most of the present.

*It was a beautiful summer day. There was no school - just blue sky, green grass, and warm breezes. The little boy stood with his bat and ball and as he looked out at the imaginary audience he declared, "I am the greatest hitter in the entire world!" He then tossed the ball in the air and swung the bat mightily. Whoosh! He missed the ball completely.*

*Undaunted, he tossed it again, and swung with more intensity - Whiff - missed again, strike two. Finally, a third time, and a third swing and miss.*

*Most people would be devastated, but not our hero. He stood there a moment, then smiled, raised his arms, and proclaimed to the non-existent crowd, "I'm the world's greatest pitcher!"*