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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

6:20 -	פלג המנחה
7:28 -	הדלקת נרות
7:46 -	שקיעה
8:52 -	זק"ש מ"א
9:28 -	זק"ש גר"א
10:37 -	סוף זמן תפילה
7:48 -	שקיעה
8:30 -	צאת הכוכבים
9:00 -	צאת 72

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

You Should Know

When a person with tzora'as was forced to leave the camp, we had to call out "Tamei, Tamei – impure, impure" so others would know of his condition. While part of the reason is to prevent them from becoming impure, Chazal say this is also so that they should pray for him.

Tzora'as is a physical manifestation of a spiritual problem. It is therefore fitting that a spiritual cure can effect a physical healing. This should also serve to strengthen in our minds the fact that the physical and spiritual worlds do not exist independently, but are tightly intertwined.

We will now resume our study of the melachos of Shabbos. The next is:

M'amair - Gathering (bundling sheaves)

Gathering is the fourth of the thirty-nine Melachos. Gathering consists of collecting natural produce into a bundle. The prohibition, in fact, only applies to natural produce - gathering manufactured products is completely permitted. So there's no need to stop your little brother from collecting the candy bags after they have been thrown at the Bar-Mitzvah boy.

Actions that would fall under this category would be piling scattered fruit, putting together a bouquet of flowers, or stringing figs (something that was much more common in the time of the Mishna than it is today). Although this Melacha seems rather innocuous compared to such heavy-hitters as writing, plowing, and lighting a fire, it was the Melacha done by the first person to ever violate Shabbos, the wood-gatherer, in Bamidbar / Numbers 15:32.

Source: Toratots.com / The 39 Melachos, by Rabbi David Ribiat.

Thought of the week:

Nothing is more miraculous than nature, nor anything so natural as a miracle.

- R' E. E. Dessler

”אדם כי יהיה בעור בשרו... צרעת והובא אל אהרן הכהן או אל אחד מבניו הכהנים.” (ויקרא יגב)

“When a person will have in the skin of his flesh a spot...[like] the plague of tzora'as, he shall be brought to Aharon, the kohain, or to one of his sons, the kohanim.”

Rashi here states very matter-of-factly that this is a decree of the Torah that the determination of the purity or impurity of a blemish lies completely with the kohain. The Sifsei Chachamim explains that the posuk could have been written with fewer words. The extra words teach us that if the kohain is an ignoramus, he may bring a Talmid Chacham to view the blemish and guide him.

However, the point is clearly made that the Torah scholar may not declare it impure, nor may he even tell the Kohain that, “such a blemish is impure.” Rather, the scholar may only educate the Kohain in the laws of blemishes and leave it to him to tell the affected person whether he or she is pure or not.

This seems counter-intuitive. If the kohain is an expert in these laws, he should rule on them. If he is not, he should leave the ruling to someone who is qualified. If it is a question of determining whether or not the spot meets the criteria for being tzora'as, why not allow the Torah scholar to rule on it or at least to tell the kohain what the halacha is?

The answer is that tzora'as (a skin disease, but *not* leprosy) is not an open and shut case. Spiritual purity is not about black and white (pardon the pun) or biopsying the blemish to see what it is, but rather about the will of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. Tzora'as isn't impure because some physical virus is at work. It's impure because HaShem decided to show a person the evil inside of them by having an external eruption on their skin.

Therefore, the same G-d can say that only a kohain has the power to effect the impurity. If the kohain makes a mistake and renders it pure, it is pure. What is wrong with a metzora is that he has transgressed HaShem's Torah. If he sees an eruption he knows to be impure, yet the kohain renders pure, he should recognize that the only reason he does not have to be confined is because even sickness follows the word of G-d, but he did not.

The pesukim just before this discuss a woman's impurity when she gives birth. There should be no difference whether she gives birth to a boy or girl, yet when a boy is born, the Torah shortens the period of impurity so the joy of the bris is not lacking. Again, HaShem is teaching us that there are no laws, natural or otherwise, which operate outside His will.

When looking at the world and making decisions, we often feel that logic can prove or disprove halacha. That is because we misunderstand the purpose of Torah. We must understand that things are not inherently right or wrong. Actions are right or wrong because HaShem said, “in this case, this is what I want.” As the Rambam says, theft is not wrong because it hurts someone else, but because HaShem told Moshe that we should not steal (or hurt others.)

The lesson of the metzora is that being a Jew means transcending what our minds can comprehend and bowing to a greater force, the Master of the Universe, even when it doesn't seem to make sense to us.

A group of eighth-graders were learning the Gemara of Rabba bar Bar Chana (Bava Basra 73a) in which he related many fantastical tales, such as ships flying to the heavens on giant waves and day-old animals the size of mountains. The Rebbi taught them the literal explanations of Rashi, then the symbolic meanings written in the Maharsha.

The boys exchanged knowing glances, as if to say that while Rashi was great, they couldn't be expected to swallow these tall tales. Clearly the Maharsha was right in this case. It was only after a number of days of this course of study that their teacher taught them the end of the Maharsha.

It said: “Although I have given symbolic explanations for all these things, because the Gemara quotes them, we must accept them as being literal occurrences as well.”