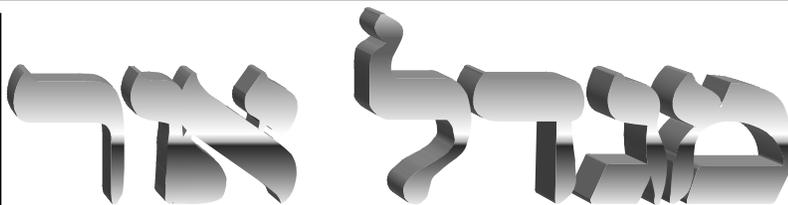


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Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 4:39 - הדלקת נרות
4:57 - שקיעה
9:06 - זק"ש מ"א
9:42 - זק"ש גר"א
10:30 - סוף זמן תפילה
4:59 - שקיעה
5:44* - צאת הכוכבים
6:11 - צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars

Monday 8:05:00 PM - מולד שבט

Times - MyZmanim.com and EzrasTorah.org

Did You Know?

The Talmud Yerushalmi (Rosh HaShana 3:5) says that when Moshe and Aharon were sent to Pharaoh, they were also told to teach the Jews about the laws of setting a slave free. Precisely at this moment, says R' Chaim Zaitchik, was it most propitious for them to get this mitzvah because this was a situation they found themselves in and they could relate.

The warning to them was that when they left Egypt and became wealthy themselves, they must remember their negative experiences and be compassionate of others in those situations, and not *chas v'shalom* forget or become arrogant and make others suffer.

Rashi on the same verse (Shemos 6:13) says that HaShem commanded Moshe and Aharon to be patient with the Jews.

Aharon was a Levi, who did not have to work for Pharaoh, but he witnessed and was pained by the suffering of his brethren. Moshe himself had been cast into the Nile, had to flee from Egypt, and spent ten years in a pit in Midian, before ultimately becoming a king and a free man. Having experienced so much suffering themselves, they had insight into the minds of the Jews and could draw on their own negative experiences to find room to forgive and bear the frustration caused by the Jews' complaints. Having been there themselves, they were able to have compassion and be patient with the Jews.

[Though the numbering system came later, it is no coincidence that the posuk about caring for other is '6:13.' As Hillel said, "Loving your friend is the whole Torah, the rest is commentary!"]

Thought of the week:

What's the point of being omnipotent if you can't forgive people?

וידבר אלקים אל משה ויאמר אליו אני ה'. (שמות ו:ב)

"And the L-rd spoke to Moshe; and He said to him, I am G-d."

The Al-mighty has many names. Two of the most familiar of them are: Elokim, which is often described as the name of judgment, a harsher name as it were, and HaShem, a name reflecting compassion and mercy. In this posuk, which starts off our Parsha, both names are used.

G-d had sent Moshe to save the Jews but since Moshe had spoken to Pharaoh, the servitude had only worsened. Moshe questioned why G-d had sent him. To this, "Elokim" (the name of judgment) answered, "I am HaShem" (the name of mercy.)

Rashi says this name reassures us that "I am trustworthy to pay appropriate reward." Just as HaShem had promised Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov that He would give the land of Israel to their children, so would He do. In essence, HaShem told Moshe that He would fulfill His promise and Moshe should disregard the difficulties in getting to that point, as they were all necessary steps in the redemption process.

However, the phrase "trustworthy to pay reward" needs further attention. As pointed out by Rabbeinu Bachya in Chovos HaLevavos (Duties of the Heart,) G-d owes us nothing for doing His mitzvos. We live by His mercy, act by His grace, and our mitzvos are performed with the tools that He gives us. Were we to do nothing but learn Torah and fulfill mitzvos 24 hours a day, we would still not be able to pay back a fraction of the kindnesses G-d has done for us from the moment of our births. How then can we deserve a "reward?"

The answer is that the reward for Mitzvos is not a payment for our actions, in that we do something and HaShem therefore "owes" us. Rather, G-d built a mechanism into the world that if we follow His ways, He will beneficently grant us reward as if we owed Him nothing. Reward for our actions is a gift from HaShem, given out of His kindness and mercy.

Moshe asked why G-d had made things worse. Perhaps, like Yaakov, Moshe feared that sin would cause the Jews to be unredeemable, or cause G-d to judge that the Jews no longer deserved to be saved.

To this, HaShem answered, "I am trustworthy to pay reward." Built into the judgment of the world is the necessity for Me to act with mercy. Do not fear when you see things go seemingly awry. I am greatly beneficent and magnanimous and will continue to fulfill my promise to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, even if their children don't merit it.

Indeed, the reason we were redeemed precisely when we were is because if we stayed a moment longer we would have sunk to a lower level and become, in fact, unredeemable. The merciful HaShem would not allow that, for mercy is a key component of the judgment of Elokim, and this was G-d's reassurance to Moshe.

In days gone by, kids were not taught the Mah Nishtana in school. Rather it was up to the child to notice strange things going on at the Seder and start asking on his own.

One Seder night when the Imrei Emes was a little boy, his father, the Sfas Emes of Gur, started his Seder and waited expectantly for his young son to start inquiring about odd happenings. However, the boy sat quietly without the slightest hint of a puzzled look on his face. The Sfas Emes did all sorts of strange things in order to get the boy to ask, but to no avail. He began to move things on and off the table and perform other wild antics to break the boy's calm demeanor, but nothing made the young Avraham Mordechai flinch.

Finally the Sfas Emes asked his son if he noticed anything different about that night's meal. Avraham Mordechai said that of course he did. "Then why," asked the concerned Sfas Emes, "did you not seem alarmed and ask any questions?"

The little boy answered with pure innocence, "Because I know my father is a smart man and whatever he does he has a very good reason for doing. Why should I be the slightest bit disturbed?"