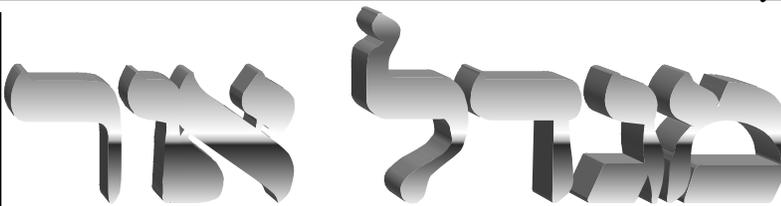


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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 4:10 - הדלקת נרות
- 4:28 - שקיעה
- 5:06 - סוף תענית
- 8:48 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:32 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:18 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 4:29 - שקיעה
- 5:15* - צאת הכוכבים
- 5:41 - צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars
Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Did You Know?

Friday is Asara B'Teves which marks the beginning of Nevuchadnetzar's siege of the first Bais HaMikdash which culminated in the Temple's destruction three years later on 9 Tammuz. We fast even on Friday, a day we do not normally fast, because it is the beginning of tragedy, and represents all that comes after it.

It also commemorates the tragedy of the Septuagint. The Egyptian-Greek king Ptolemy kidnapped 72 Jewish sages and locked them in separate rooms with orders to translate the Torah into Greek. Miraculously, all 72 of them came up with identical translations, even making the same changes to the text to avoid offending Ptolemy. (Megilla 9b)

Despite the open miracle, Chazal say this day was as bad for the Jews as the day the Golden Calf was made. This is because it enabled people to misuse the Torah by "studying" it without the guidance of a proper teacher. Without the Mesorah, the tradition from Sinai, it could be (and has been) twisted to say things the Torah didn't intend.

Yaakov's blessing to Asher was, "Of Asher, his bread is fat and he will provide royal delicacies." Chazal say that the girls of that tribe were beautiful and married kings and Kohanim Gedolim.

The Alshich says we can read it differently. To Asher, bread is "hearty" and he is satisfied with simplicity. But when he gives to others? Maadanei Melech, only royal delicacies will suffice!

Thought of the week:

Envy is the art of counting someone else's blessings instead of your own.

"וישלח ישראל את ימינו וישת על ראש אפרים... שכל את ידיו כי מנשה הבכור" (בראשית מח:ד)

"And Yisrael cast his right hand and placed it upon Ephraim's head... he maneuvered his hands, for Menashe was the eldest." (Gen. 48:14)

The incident when Yaakov blessed Yosef's children gets much attention, and the fact that he crossed his hands to place his right hand on the younger son's head is highly commented upon. The blessing that Jewish parents give their sons is that they be "like Ephraim and Menashe" -- once again placing Ephraim before Menashe. What is so significant about this story that we have perpetuated it for generations and millennia?

One explanation is that they were born in exile, in the foreign land of Egypt, yet they were committed to Torah and serving HaShem. So do we wish our sons, living in exile, to be able to overcome the negative surroundings and thrive in their relationship with HaShem.

Another explanation is the fact that though Yisrael gave preferential treatment to the younger son, the older son was unfazed. He did not feel bad nor protest. How could he see his brother surpass him and receive the blessing of the right hand and not be upset?

When Yaakov asked Yosef who these boys were, Yosef replied they were the sons G-d had given him. This is similar to Yaakov's response to the same question posed by Esav when he said, "These are the children that G-d has graced me with."

What they both understood was that the children they had were, like everything else, a gift from HaShem, given to them to sanctify G-d's name and put to good use. They didn't look at others' possessions as something they missed out on, but rather as what HaShem gave to THAT person, and it has no impact on what they had.

This may be the "Toras HaGulus," the Torah of Exile, which Yaakov transmitted to Yosef. It is the understanding that we do not have our own things, but rather only what HaShem grants us for the short time we are here on Earth. It acknowledges that we don't own our land or possessions, but are merely travelers in a strange land.

In that case, we are able to accept with equanimity the success of others because it does not impinge on our success nor cause us to be lacking. Yaakov learned this Torah in the Yeshiva of Shem and Ever, and taught it to Yosef. They both struggled with this concept, though, because they had brothers who were jealous of their success.

Both Ephraim and Menashe, who lived as exiles in Egypt, were born into this situation, however, and lived with it easily. This is how we want all generations to be, recognizing that HaShem is the source of everything and that they have no need to be jealous of others. THAT is a true blessing.

A homeless beggar used to sit on the sidewalk asking for handouts. One day, a well-dressed benefactor handed him a small bowl with oriental designs on it and walked wordlessly away.

Shrugging, the poor man began using the bowl to ask for alms and people would drop coins into it. Years later, a passerby recognized the bowl as a priceless artifact and the bowl sold at auction for a huge sum.

When he heard the news, the beggar began to cry. "Why aren't you ecstatic?" asked the auctioneer, "You can now live comfortably for the rest of your days!"

"I am happy about that," replied the no-longer homeless man, "but I am crying for all the years I lost because I spent them begging for the pennies of others when I already held a treasure in my own hands."