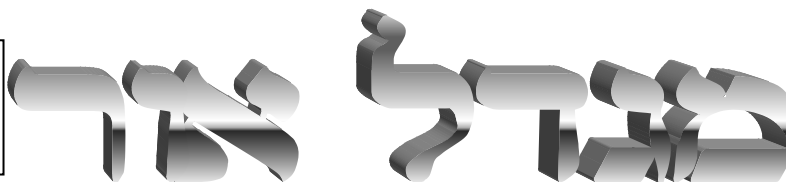


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Your Thoughts – The Perfect Words

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

5:47 -	הדלקת נרות
6:05 -	שקיעה
9:22 -	זק"ש מ"א
9:58 -	זק"ש גר"א
10:52 -	סוף זמן תפילה
6:04 -	שקיעה
6:46 -	צאת הכוכבים
7:16 -	צאת 72

Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

A Bit of Bitachon - A weekly infusion of security from Chovos HaLevavos by R' Bachya ibn Pakuda.

The Lonely Man of Faith

R' Bachya continues on the topic of not having a family and how such solitude can allow one to reach great heights.

We find that such was the case with Elisha, who was plowing a field but once Eliyahu Hanavi signaled for him to come with him, Elisha said, "I will go kiss my parents goodbye and come after you." He then left his family behind to serve Eliyahu.

It is told that a tzaddik came to a place to teach its inhabitants about serving HaShem and found that they were all wearing similar garments of a single color. Further, their graves were near their front doors, and he did not see any women there. They explained:

Our uniformity of clothing is to keep poor people from feeling bereft and to keep rich people from becoming arrogant.

The graves are near our doors to remind us that the day of our deaths will come soon enough and we should live our lives preparing "food for the journey," mitzvos and good deeds to bring us to our resting places.

The women and children live close by, but in another settlement, so that we not be disturbed by constant worry about them, as we have seen how draining and burdensome that can be. This way, we are free to choose spiritual matters and disdain worldly matters.

The tzaddik approved of their words and praised their way of life.

- To be continued

Thought of the week:

If what they are saying about you is true, mend your ways. If it isn't true, forget it, and go on and serve the L-rd.

”ותכחש שרה לאמר לא צחקתי כי יראה ויאמר לא כי צחקת.” (וירא יח:טו)

“And Sarah denied, as if to say, “I didn’t laugh,” for she was afraid; and he said, No, but you did laugh.”

This exchange is enigmatic. We are not told who “he” is, who contradicted Sarah, and after the statement that she had truly laughed, the Torah moves on and says no more about it. Further, it states she was afraid. What was she afraid of?

The Ramban explains that Avraham repeated HaShem’s words to Sarah when he said, “Is there anything beyond G-d’s ability?” He then asked G-d’s question, “Why did you laugh?” Sarah assumed that Avraham saw on her face that she didn’t believe the travelers’ promise of a child, or that he noted that she was not ecstatic about it and out of fear of Avraham, she denied that she had laughed.

However, when he said, “No, for you did laugh,” she realized it was a prophecy from HaShem and she did not respond further. The Ramban comments that perhaps Avraham had not yet had the opportunity to share with Sarah HaShem’s promise of children so she didn’t know about it. The question is: how did Sarah know it was a prophecy simply from Avraham’s statement that she had laughed?

In explaining her fear, the Sipurno says she was afraid to say, “I have sinned,” but she repented in her heart. On Avraham’s contradiction of Sarah, he comments, G-d is not a Man who can be fooled, and he did not believe her. If Avraham implied that, it might be construed that HaShem was the source of this knowledge. But there may be another explanation.

We know that the angels asked where Sarah was so that Avraham would be proud of his wife’s modesty for remaining in the tent, and that HaShem omitted Sarah’s words about Avraham’s age when He told Avraham what she had said, to avoid marital strife. Avraham and Sarah were the picture of Shalom Bayis, harmonious matrimony.

When Avraham asked Sarah why she laughed, she was afraid to disappoint him, so she tried to excuse her behavior. But then he pressed the issue. Avraham was trying to help her rectify her error for the future so she not do it again. But this was not typical of Avraham. The Avraham who was so kind, who sought out chesed and saw the G-dliness in each person would not make someone squirm and be uncomfortable, especially based only on his assumptions or interpretations of her actions. He knew he could not judge anyone, and would not have contradicted her once he had made his point by asking the question.

If Avraham said something, it was clearly from G-d, Who knows all and knew what was in her heart. She did not need to deny it, nor did she need to defend herself. Her fear of admitting to laughing was gone because she was not disappointing her husband. One can always bare his soul before HaShem, and know that he will never be rejected.

As R’ Hirsch comments, Avraham told her, “You don’t need to deny it; you need to know the truth for yourself that you did laugh.” It was not judgmental, it was not critical. It was a statement of fact and Avraham gave Sarah the chance to absorb it and do with it what she would, without having to answer to him for it. He sought no apologies, but instead wanted only Sarah’s benefit. This is the type of relationship from which we can all learn.

R’ Aryeh Levin z”l, who lived in Yerushalayim during the first half of the twentieth century, has many stories told of his righteousness and thoughtfulness towards others. One of the most poignant stories involves his wife, Chana.

She had a problem with her foot and they went to the doctor. When they met with him, R’ Aryeh said, “My wife’s leg is hurting us.” Such empathy and concern for another is truly possible, and it is a worthy goal to seek.