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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 4:11 - הדלקת נרות
- 4:29 - שקיעה
- 8:45 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:21 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:09 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 4:30 - שקיעה
- 5:12 - צאת הכוכבים
- 5:42 - צאת 72

Times Courtesy of MyZmanim.com

When Yaakov approached the well, it was covered by "the" big rock. Sfias Emes says this refers to the Yetzer Hara which seeks to stuff up our hearts, the wells of tefila, prayer. Only through meaningful, heartfelt prayer can we connect to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, and that connection is the source of life. This is why we begin Sheмона Esrai with the words, "HaShem s'fasai tiftach, May HaShem open my lips."

Clearly, he says, one who conquers his evil inclination and puts it to work for him is greater than one who doesn't listen to it. This is signified by Yaakov's rolling the rock off the well, thus revealing the spring to all. We should all work to have more concentration and focus when we pray, because as Yaakov showed us, that is the source of life, symbolized by the well.

One thing is very noticeable about the relationship dynamics of Yaakov and his wives. Leah's strongest desire was to have Yaakov's attention. With each child born, she thought that would bring her the closeness she desired. Alas, it was Rachel's attention that Yaakov wanted, not Leah's. Unfortunately, Rachel's most pronounced wish was not to be close to Yaakov, but to have children. None of them got what they wanted, but rather what HaShem knew they needed.

This can be a source of comfort and strength to all of us, that what we want and what we need are often two different things. HaShem is not "punishing" us when we don't get what we think we need to succeed, for the greatest of people experienced the same thing. Instead, we must realize that we have what we need to become who we should.

Thought of the week:
Desire is half of life —
indifference is half of death.

"ויפגע במקום וילך שם כי בא השמש ויקח מאבני המקום ושם מראשתינו..." (בראשית כה"א)

"He reached the place and spent the night there because the sun had set. He took some of the stones of that place, and arranged them around his head..."

Most of us know the Midrash quoted by Rashi that the stones fought to be under the head of the tzaddik and HaShem made a miracle that they melded and became one. There seem to be differing opinions as to what really happened. Some say Yaakov took twelve stones, some say three, and some say two. Commentaries explain that the stones were melded into one before he picked it up, that he had one stone under his body, and that he put a second under his head.

The wording that he took "from" the stones of the location is extra, as obviously the stone he took was from that area. Some use it to explain that from several of the stones in the area came a single one and that is what is signified by the unusual language.

The Midrash Rabba explains that Yaakov made a test. He gathered a number of stones and said, "If these stones come together as one, I know I am worthy to father the Jewish Nation." When they did, he knew that HaShem was with him and would watch over him.

Perhaps, though, he took a further lesson from the stones, one that we can take as well. The stones argued with each other. "I wish the tzaddik to lay on me," said one. "No," said another stone, "on me!" This was clearly l'shaim shomayim, but it was still machlokes, something HaShem abhors, says R' Moshe Shternbuch. Instead, HaShem put an end to their fighting by unifying them. When Yaakov lay down on one, he was laying on the all.

The stones were trying to get something they couldn't on their own. They couldn't move or jockey for position. They could only desire. That desire and passion is what HaShem looked at when He made the miracle. Not only did they get what they wanted, to be under Yaakov the tzaddik, but this stone later became the cornerstone of the Bais HaMikdash, far beyond what the single stones had even imagined! But not every rock in that place was taken; only the ones that truly desired to rise in holiness were melded.

Yaakov took the lesson that one must strive for greatness, and constantly seek to improve. If one is not moving up the ladder, he is moving down. But he should not get frustrated if he cannot achieve his goals for he does not really achieve anything on his own. Rather, it is HaShem Who does every action, based on our desire.

We, too, must focus on what we feel passionate about. As Chazal say, a person is defined by what he praises. If we extol the virtues of monetary success, physical pleasures, or luxury items, then we seek only those things and debase the G-dly element within us. On the other hand, if we value Torah scholarship, mitzvos, and righteousness, then we gravitate towards those things and become elevated.

If inanimate items like stones can rise simply by making the most of a single occurrence, how much more so can we, who are given thousands of chances each day to make a difference, succeed if we only have the proper yearning.

As a boy, "Max" was serious and dedicated to learning. He was a bright boy, but had one thing that would stand him in good stead more than anything else. He had clear goals.

Like many children these days, Max had photos of great Tzaddikim on his wall. The Vilna Gaon, the Chasam Sofer, and others. Then he had one more frame that was empty. In it were written the words, "Why not me?"

His goals were solid and so was his success. Today, it is his picture, the photo of R' Mordechai Gifter z"l, which hangs on the walls of other men and boys who wish to emulate him.