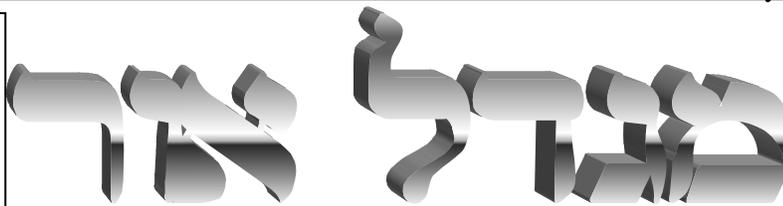


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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 4:13 - הדלקת נרות
- 4:31 - שקיעה
- 8:35 - זק"ש מ"א
- 9:19 - זק"ש גר"א
- 10:07 - סוף זמן תפילה
- 4:31 - שקיעה
- 5:16* - צאת הכוכבים
- 5:43 - צאת 72

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

Did You קפוא? Effective Peace Talks

The last bracha of Shemona Esrai is the one in which we ask HaShem to bless us with peace. Peace, Chazal tell us, is the vessel necessary to contain and maintain all the other blessings we have asked G-d to grant us, and thus it is the most essential bracha of the prayer.

Immediately after we conclude the blessing, "Who blesses His nation, Israel, with peace," we begin a silent supplication called Elokai N'Tzor.

In it, we ask HaShem to help us guard our tongues from evil and trickery. We ask to be able to ignore the derision of others, and remain silent when cursed.

What is the nature of the juxtaposition of these two items? Why is it that our mouths are linked to peace?

In truth, one of the most powerful tools we have to make peace is also one of the most violent weapons of discord.

The words we use, the way we speak to and about others, can cause hurt and dissension, or they can soothe and bring people together.

When we ask G-d to grant us the strength to speak nicely and honestly to others, we understand that by ensuring our proper treatment of others, we are actually taking the first step in "making peace," and it is then that the Al-mighty will step in and grant us the peace we are working for.

Thought of the week:
G-d helps those who help themselves — as long as you're not helping yourself to other people's stuff.

"ותאמר הנה אמתי בלהה בא אליה ותלד על ברכי ואבנה גם אנכי ממנה" (בראשית ל:א)

"And [Rachel] said, "Behold, here is my maid Bilhah, take her and she shall bear children upon my knees, and I too, will be built up from her." (Genesis 30:3)

Desperate for children, Rachel gave Yaakov an ultimatum, "Give me children or I shall die." The meforshim explain that she wanted him to pray for her as his father had davened for her mother. Yaakov got angry and asked, "Am I taking G-d's place, Who has withheld children?!"

Upon hearing this, Rachel did what Sarah had done, and gave her husband her maidservant in hopes of having a hand in the building of the Twelve Tribes. Aside from the maid bearing children (once she had been freed,) the growth process of taking a competing woman into the household would have an effect on Rachel and make her worthy of bearing children of her own.

Why was it that Yaakov got upset with her, and what can we learn from her response?

The way Rachel posed the request for Yaakov to pray for her was inappropriate because Tzaddikim do not have the power to make their tefilos come true. It is only through HaShem's kindness that they are answered, so Yaakov's response reflected that she had put too much faith in his abilities to give her a child, when she should have turned to HaShem.

True, his father Yitzchak had prayed for Rivka, but Rivka, too, had toiled in prayer, as the Midrash tells us that they would stand in opposite corners and daven for a child. Yaakov told Rachel that she could not expect others to provide her desires if she did not do her hishtadlus, making her own efforts to achieve her goals.

Rachel undoubtedly davened, but she did something else as well. She took steps to bring about her own salvation by using the proven formula of taking in a sister wife. She understood that HaShem does not merely wish us to daven, but to actively take a role in solving our own problems, as long as we realize that our success depends on G-d. This is underscored by the fact that the efforts she made were ones that were spiritual in nature, to show that she ultimately relied completely on HaShem to grant her a child, not on her personal efforts.

There is a mitzvah in the Torah (*Shmos 23:5*) of "Azov ta'azov imo," that when one sees [even] his enemy's donkey lying under its burden, he is surely to help the fellow unload the animal. The word "imo" means with him. From this we learn that if the donkey's owner is doing nothing to help himself, one has no obligation to do it for him.

HaShem gave us the Torah but He lives by it as well. Therefore, when we begin working to solve our own problems, HaShem follows His own Mitzvah and helps us. This is a strong lesson we can take from Rachel. She asked Yaakov to give her a child. Yaakov said, "Am I to take G-d's place," meaning to say, "If you have not satisfied HaShem's requirements for receiving help, how can I override His rules and help you?" Thereupon she took action and gave Yaakov her maid Bilhah as a wife, and was answered not only with children from her maid, but children of her own.

Let us always remember that we can bring salvation upon ourselves by taking responsibility and taking action, thereby making HaShem a partner in removing the burdens of our people.

A childless couple came to their Rebbe in tears. They had been married for many years and wanted a child desperately. The Rebbe heard their pleas, and felt very bad for them, but told them, "I'm so sorry, but I can't help you. I see that you are not destined to have children."

The husband, a devout follower of the Rebbe, was crushed, but accepted his lot with faith. Not so his wife. Incensed, she said, "Let's get out of here. We don't need a Rebbe who tells us we can't have children. We will go daven to HaShem on our own and we'll see that He will answer us!"

Indeed, the couple was answered just a few months later when they found out the woman was expecting a child. The Rebbe was right when he said he could not help them, because it was not the Rebbe's prayers they needed, but their own.