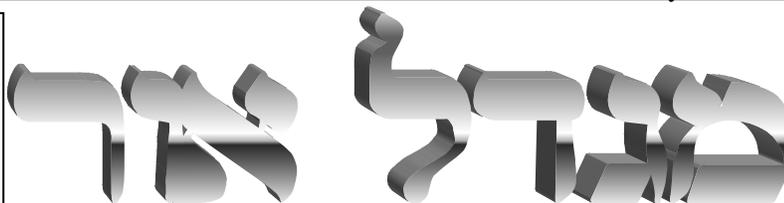


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Wesley Hills, NY

| | |
|---------|---------------|
| 4:09 - | הדלקת נרות |
| 4:27 - | שקיעה |
| 8:43 - | זק"ש מ"א |
| 9:27 - | זק"ש גר"א |
| 10:13 - | סוף זמן תפילה |
| 4:28 - | שקיעה |
| 5:13* - | צאת הכוכבים |
| 5:40 - | צאת 72 |

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

Did You Know?

The eighth verse of this, the eighth parsha in the Torah, famously begins with the words, "Katonti," I have become small from all the kindness and truth You have done for Your servant.

The numbers are important for the Gemara says that a righteous person can have an eighth of an eighth of arrogance. The Vilna Gaon says that is a reference to this verse in which Yaakov fears the good bestowed upon him will use up his merits.

An important part of the Torah's tradition is the trop, or cantillation marks, which indicate the tune to which the words should be pronounced.

Historically the word Katonti has been chanted with an upward crescendo called, "azla geiresh." This seems counterintuitive to the point of Yaakov's diminution. There is another way, however, which uses the decrescendo sound called 'rev'i.' Some believe this "sounds" more appropriate.

In truth, by looking at the meanings of the names of these marks, we see they both fit. The upward sound's name means, "it goes away." The higher one goes in wealth and power, it does not mean he is closer to G-d, but rather he is moving further away.

In contrast, the word rev'il means four. When starting from an eighth and reaching a fourth, one has grown. That only happens when one is humble and lowers himself.

Thought of the week:

Many a man thinks he is buying pleasure, when he is really selling himself to it.

"...ויאמר מי אלה לד? ויאמר הילדים אשר חנן אלקים את עבדיך." (בראשית לג:ה)

"...And [Esav] said, "Who are these to you?" and [Yaakov] said, "The children whom G-d has graciously given your servant." (Beraishis 33:5)

Upon meeting his brother Yaakov after all these years, Esav is shocked to see him with a large family, servants and maids, as well as herds of livestock. We know that Yaakov arrived at Lavan's house penniless, but is it truly so unusual that after twenty years of diligent work a man would have amassed great wealth?

The Midrash (quoted by the Baal haTurim) tells us that when they were still in utero, Yaakov and Esav made a deal in which Esav would inherit this world while Yaakov would inherit the world to come. Esav saw Yaakov had many children and knew that procreation was something of this world, which will not exist in the world to come. He therefore asked Yaakov how he came to have this large family, as it violated their agreement!

Yaakov responded that these were the children HaShem had given him. But if Yaakov was not supposed to enjoy this world, how did this answer Esav's question? Why did G-d give it to him if he had agreed to leave all that for Esav?

The explanation is that Esav's perception was wrong, and Yaakov clarified things for him. Esav asked, "Who are these TO YOU?" That implied that these wives, children, and servants were Yaakov's belongings, there for his pleasure. Yaakov explained that this was not the case.

The children, he explained, were sent by G-d to help him fulfill his job on this world of successfully making it to the world to come. They were not given TO him, but rather, HaShem had sent them to be WITH him. The word es means with, but not belonging to. Thus, they were given to be "with your servant." For what purpose?

Well, the name Elokim is used. That connotes judgment and indicates that Yaakov would be judged on what he did with them. The word used for 'gave' here is 'chanan,' from the word meaning giving graciously or with kindness. This implies that one might not otherwise have recognized that it was a kindness from HaShem.

Let's look at Yaakov's family. His wives were jealous of each other and suffered from infertility; his children caused him grief many times, acting in haste and even selling Yosef. Was this a "gracious gift" from G-d? Absolutely, posited Yaakov. Through these trials and tribulations he grew and his psyche evolved. Though procreation for the pleasure of having children belongs to this world, the family HaShem bestowed on Yaakov was part of graduating him to the next level of his existence. These children were a stepping stone to the world to come, and not a violation of Yaakov's relinquishing this world.

We, too, must remember that the things we have are not for our own pleasure, but rather they are responsibilities, given to us to help us become better people. Just as importantly, we must be mindful and aware that the difficulties we face in our lives are all part of G-d's grace, watching us closely and giving us the tools we need to grow and develop.

R' Yisrael Salanter's wife related that when they got married, they made a deal to divide up the decision-making in their home.

Anything that was related to "ruchnius," spirituality, would be decided by R' Yisrael. Anything that related to the "gashmius," the physicality of their home, would be the decision of the Rebbetzin.

A listener asked her how that arrangement worked out. Smiling, she replied, "I've never made any decisions. To R' Yisrael, EVERYTHING is a matter of ruchnius!"