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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

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Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

- 4:45 - הדלקת נרות
5:03 - שקיעה
9:04 - זק"ש מ"א
9:40 - זק"ש גר"א
10:30 - סוף זמן תפילה
5:05 - שקיעה
5:47 - צאת הכוכבים
6:17 - צאת 72

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

אוטען שבת!

Did You Know?

During the reading of the Aseres HaDibros, the Ten Commandments, in Parshas Yisro, it is customary to stand out of respect and to symbolize how we stood at the foot of Sinai and received the Torah from HaShem's mouth. Sefardim do not stand specifically for the Aseres HaDibros as the Rambam said such a custom should be stopped so as not to lend credence to heretics who ascribe greater importance to the ten commandments than the other 603. Ashkenazim generally allow this custom. Normally, one does not have to stand during the reading of the Torah (except for the baal korei and the one receiving the aliyah.) However, some poskim say that one who does stand beautifies the mitzvah of hearing the Torah read and it is also symbolic of our standing to receive the Torah at Sinai. This only applies to the actual Torah-reading but for the Borchu and Bracha before the laining, one is required to stand. That is because it is considered a "Davar She'b'Kedusha" (much like Kedusha of Shemona Esrai) and therefore it is also forbidden to talk during the brachos, even according to those Poskim who permit speaking between aliyos.

Thought of the week:

In the midst of your doubts, don't forget how many of the important questions G-d does answer.

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”וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֵל ה' לֹא יוּכַל הָעָם לַעֲלֹת אֶל הָרַסִּינַי כִּי אֵתָהּ הִעַדְתָּהּ בְּנֹוֹ לֵאמֹר...” (שמות יט:כג)

“Moshe said to HaShem, “The people can not go up to Mount Sinai, for You have warned us saying, ‘Set a boundary around the mountain and sanctify it.’”

The dialogue between HaShem and Moshe here is problematic. If the people didn't need to be warned further, HaShem would know that without being told. If HaShem was repeating it, obviously there was a reason, so why did Moshe interject?

The Mechilta explains that it is normal for one to warn someone in advance of an event, and then to reiterate that warning when the time comes for it to be implemented.

The Ohr HaChaim says that because the Kohanim were now being allowed to ascend the mountain partially, we might have mistakenly assumed that others could too, using the principle that an entity which was part of a group, then was singled out from the group and given a special ruling, comes to teach us the rule for the entire group. Although even Moshe didn't know this principle yet, since one could technically have been justified in using that argument, HaShem went out of his way to specifically preclude others from ascending the mountain.

There are other explanations as well, but there is a great lesson we can take from this conversation. HaShem had previously warned Klal Yisrael not to approach the mountain, and now He repeated it with the warning that even precious people would be lost if they did so. Moshe responded by saying that they were unable to ascend as they were already warned.

If we look at Rashi's commentary, he says, “They are unable to go up for they have no permission to do so.” This implies something striking. To the Jews at the foot of Sinai, HaShem's commandments were not merely words or instructions, nor were they threats or promises. They were instead impenetrable barriers to action.

Were one to stand atop a skyscraper and look down, the realization of what would happen if he were to take one step too far would paralyze him even if he wanted to jump. His limbs would refuse to move for fear of certain death.

This is what Moshe was relaying to HaShem, and to us. “Ribono Shel Olam, You do not need to warn us that if we ascend we will die for we have already been warned that to ascend would be a transgression of Your will, and that, to us, is just as strong a deterrent.”

To that HaShem replied, “Even so, go warn them a second time, lest they get caught up in the moment and do something improper in their zeal to come closer to Me.” We learn from Moshe's words that we have the ability to concretize the mitzvos and incorporate them into our being to such a degree that simply transgressing them would seem to us to be physical harm.

This is possible only through the transmission of Torah. At Sinai the nation could see the sounds that emerged from HaShem's mouth, which is otherwise impossible. So too, by looking at the world through the Torah, we can see sin as the destructive force it really is, and mitzvos as the tangible building blocks of our future.

This year is a Shemitta year. Many farmers in Israel are leaving the land fallow as commanded by the Torah. Unfortunately, not all farmers keep this important mitzva. One secular banana farmer decided to accept Shemitta this time around. As part of his arrangement with the Keren HaShviis, he also agreed to personally be Shomer Shabbos though he wasn't before.

When a severe cold spell hit Israel recently, it was devastating to the banana crops. The cold makes them brown and rock hard. As he drove up to his orchard to inspect the damage, he could see the effects of the cold, as all the banana trees he passed were ruined. Then he reached his orchard.

As if there were a protective barrier around his orchard, all his bananas were yellow and green and unharmed by the cold, while his adjacent neighbors, who were not keeping Shemitta, had lost everything. HaShem doesn't often do open miracles, but every once in a while He will show us that His words are like a protective wall, and that ignoring them leads to disaster.