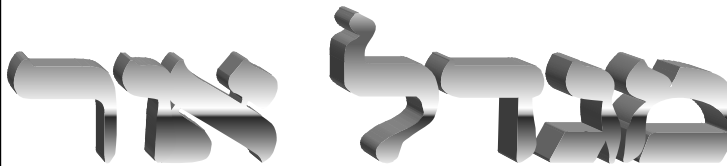


The Chosen People? Find out WHY they are chosen.

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A publication dedicated to Harbotzas Torah

This Shabbos, the 24th of Elul, is the
Yahrtzeit of the Chofetz Chaim.
In his memory, and for the merit of the
entire Jewish nation, please refrain from
speaking Lashon Hara during at least one
Shabbos meal.
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Zmanim for שבת

Wesley Hills, NY

7:05 -	הדלקת נרות
7:23 -	שקיעה
8:58 -	זק"ש מ"א
9:40 -	זק"ש גר"א
10:45 -	סוף זמן תפילה
7:22 -	שקיעה
8:04* -	צאת הכוכבים
8:35 -	צאת 72

* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars

Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Now You Know!

Moshe told Yehoshua, "Chazak v'ematz," be strong and firm. Hashem also said to Yehoshua, "Chazak v'ematz." What is the difference?

The Kli Yakar explains that when Moshe said it, he meant Yehoshua should strengthen the people's Emunah in Hashem. Moshe was considering the converts and those of little faith who would need ongoing support to keep believing.

Hashem, though, told Yehoshua, to be strong and firm in the Torah and Mitzvos, because Hashem was focused on the righteous Jews who followed their forefathers and trusted in Hashem. They didn't need constant miracles and reassurances in order to serve Him. In their merit, Hashem would be with him, and Yehoshua would be empowered and victorious.

From Elul through Shmini Atzeres, we say Psalm 27, *L'Dovid, Hashem Ori*. The last line says, "Hope to Hashem, be strong and strengthen your heart, and hope to Hashem."

The Ibn Ezra explains that it doesn't mean YOU strengthen your heart. Rather, when you 'chazak,' strengthen yourself in Torah and mitzvos, then 'v'yaametz,' Hashem will strengthen your heart, and you will be able to continue hoping to Him and seeing success.

Thought of the week:
The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step — but it must be in the right direction.

"לא יאבה ה' סלח לו כי אזיעשן אף ה' וקנאתו באיש ההוא ורבעה בו כל האלה..." (דברים כט:יט)

"Hashem will not want to forgive that man, for then His wrath and vengeance will burn against that man and all the curses shall descend on him..." (Devarim 29:19)

Our Parsha opens with Moshe telling the Jews that on that day, every single one of them was joining a binding covenant with Hashem. Not only was this covenant with the people there, but with all future generations as well. The ancestors were entering this treaty on behalf of their descendants, as the Jews committed to being the Chosen People.

Every Jewish person, from that moment, until the end of time, has been pledged to serve Hashem, love Hashem, and not worship any other gods or powers. Then the Torah says something scary. When someone hears of this covenant, and chooses to exclude himself, he is not excused from it. On the contrary, one who laughs it off, saying, "I will follow my own truth; I will act as my intellect sees fit," will bear the wrath of an angry G-d, Who will eradicate that person and wipe his soul off the map.

While this should be terrifying, the person who so disregards the will of Hashem Who created the world and gives him life, is generally the last to realize his own folly. Instead, he ridicules those who follow the Torah, and considers himself enlightened, though drowning in the darkness of his foolishness.

But we are on the cusp of Rosh HaShana, the day of judgment, and this verse teaches us a much different lesson as well. The Torah tells us Hashem will not wish to forgive one who so callously disregards His commands, thinking he is wiser than the Master of the Universe. Such a person will be wiped out and erased from history.

However, short of this behavior, one does not lose Hashem's favor. One who sins but feels bad about his failures; who tries to avoid them even if he falters anyway, is still someone that Hashem WANTS to forgive! What an empowering message as we approach the holy days of judgment.

A person could waste his life, succumbing to temptation on a daily basis, but if he's trying to serve Hashem - even if he's not succeeding in defeating his Yetzer Hara - as long as he feels bad about it and wishes to improve, Hashem wants to hold him close.

One of the most powerful tools of the Satan is convincing us that we are not worthy of Hashem's love. He tries to instill hopelessness and despair in us. "How could Hashem ever love a sinner like me?" But this isn't the case. The Baal Shem Tov is quoted as saying, "If only I could love the greatest tzaddik like Hashem loves the greatest sinner."

We are Hashem's chosen people, and as long as we are willing to be the chosen ones of Hashem, by battling our inclinations and striving to do what He wants us to do and become who He wants us to become, then we will never be cast away by Him, nor forgotten. Instead, He wishes to help us pick up the pieces and come back to Him whole.

As the King made his rounds through the prison, he spent a few moments listening to the stories of his prisoners. "I am innocent," explained one. "It was mistaken identity."

"My neighbor framed me," said another. "He wished to steal my property so he lied to the magistrate about me." A third called out "It was not my fault! I was orphaned at a young age and had to take to a life of crime. I am a victim of circumstance."

One by one the men clamored at their cells to be heard, for the opportunity to plead their cases. Only one man remained silent, and it struck the King. "What is your story?" he asked the solemn man. "Sire," he replied, "I am guilty as charged and am ready to serve my time."

"Release him!" said the ruler. "He obviously has no business in here with all these innocent men."