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הדלקת נרות	5:36 -
שקיעה	5:54 -
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* Based on Emergence of 3 Stars
Times courtesy of MyZmanim.com

Now You Know!

Avimelech knew Avraham's children were promised the land, and now that he saw Yitzchak weaned, he knew it was only a matter of time before Avraham's descendants took possession of the land of Grar and kicked out his children.

He therefore made this request of Avraham: "Promise me you will do no harm to me or my descendants. Just as I showed you kindness and allowed you to live in the land as my guest, so should you allow my children to remain in the land."

Avraham agreed to swear, but first told Avimelech about the wells which had been stolen from him. Avimelech professed ignorance. Avraham gave him animals as a show of friendship and to establish the treaty, but left seven sheep separate.

Curious, Avimelech asked what they were. Avraham responded they would be witness that he had dug the well.

It wasn't the sheep, per se, but the conversation related to them which would recall his ownership. However, this only worked because Avimelech noticed something was unusual.

Hashem also sets up things in such a way that we sense purpose. If we acknowledge it and inquire, we will find Hashem's mastery in the world. He's counting on us to pay attention, and that's how HIS covenant works.

Thought of the week:
Life is a matter of choices, and every choice you make, makes you.

"וירא אליו ה' באלוני ממרא והוא ישב פתח האהל כחם היום." (בראשית יח:א)

"And Hashem appeared to him in the terebinths (a type of tree) of Mamre, and [Avraham] was sitting at the door of the tent in the heat of the day." ***(Beraishis 18:1)***

On the third day after his circumcision, Avraham could have been excused from hosting guests. He was old and in pain, but yet, he was sitting in the doorway of his tent, looking for people to whom he could offer hospitality. Hashem didn't want Avraham to be bothered by guests. Therefore, He took the sun from its "covering" so it would be so warm no travelers would venture out.

Avraham sent Eliezer to see if anyone was outside. He came back and said there was not. Avraham didn't believe him. He went to see for himself. When he came outside, Avraham saw Hashem waiting to visit him. Understanding that Avraham was pained by not having guests, Hashem then sent three angels in the guise of men.

We might wonder. If there were no travelers because Hashem had taken the sun from its case, in order to release Avraham from having to have guests, why, when He saw that Avraham *wanted* guests, did Hashem not just put the sun away and make it cooler?

The simple answer is that it was already high noon, the heat of the day, and no one would begin their travels at that point. Further, it would have taken time for people to get on their way and once they were, few would be willing to stop to eat. It simply wasn't practical. But there's another reason as well.

Hashem did not want Avraham to be bothered by guests. He was infirm and needed to rest. However, he felt the urge to be kind to others, and to teach his family how to behave, so Hashem wanted Avraham to have that outlet. Rather than bring guests to Avraham, Hashem continued with His plan, which was to send angels to Avraham. One came to heal him, one came to announce the birth of Yitzchak, and one came to destroy S'dom.

They were always going to be sent, but because of Avraham's desire to host guests and show his care for them, Hashem made them look like human travelers. Hashem's ultimate will was going to be carried out, but he gave Avraham the chance to choose to do good. Though the angels didn't need his kindness, Avraham's offer fulfilled his mitzvah because of the choice he made.

We have free will in this world, but it will never overrule Hashem's plan. We get to make the choices, but we cannot decide the results. At the end of the day, it is Hashem's plan which will unfold as He wishes, but He gives us the opportunity to choose to assist. He doesn't need our help, nor will our efforts make a difference in the outcome, but the choices we make will earn us reward and Divine grace, for ourselves and for posterity.

On April 15, 1912, the RMS Titanic sank in the North Atlantic. Supposed to be "unsinkable," there weren't enough life boats and over 1500 people died in the frigid waters. A man who heard the news of the tragedy prayed to G-d, asking how He could let such a thing happen.

"Al-mighty G-d," the man said. "You are all-powerful. You control the sea and the dry land, the heavens and the earth. Why did You let this tragedy occur? How is it that You could not, or did not, stop the Titanic from sinking, and You allowed all those people to perish?"

"Are you kidding?!" G-d replied. "Do you have any idea what I had to do to get all those people on one boat?!"

[It is worth noting that American businessman Nathan Strauss was scheduled to be onboard, but during his visit to Mandatory Palestine, he felt connected to the land and people. He stayed behind to help them, building medical facilities, soup kitchens and supporting the wellbeing of the land. His life was saved by his compassion for others. His brother Isidore was not so fortunate (or caring), and he went down with the ship.]