



A Lively Life

How much of our lives do we truly utilize? The pasuk says *מהי מקץ ימים*, שנתים ימים, it was at the end of two years... (Breishis 41:1). A deeper meaning encoded in these words is that for many, at the end of their life (*מקץ*), the *שנתים*, years they lived were only *ימים*, a few days that they actually did something worthy as many waste their time on futility (See Mayana Shel Torah, Miketz 41:1).

Similarly, the words *ימי שנותיו בהם שבעים שנה*, the days of our years among them are seventy years (Tehillim 90:10), can be interpreted as within a few days (*בהם*) you can compress the achievements of 70 years.

This can be compared to the astonishing fact that the 100 trillion-dollar (At one point in 2009, the 100-trillion-dollar bill couldn't buy a bus ticket in the capital of Harare.) bill in Zimbabwe in 2015 was worth just 40 US cents. Although 100 trillion dollars seems like a lot, in this case it was little. Similarly, one can live a long life but have little to show for it.

Someone once put it: "The question is not how long he lived, but how did he live." Esav is called *איש ידע ציד איש שדה*, one who knows hunting, a man of the field. Rashi comments *אדם בטל* - a man who is idle, wasting his time (Similarly, on the words *איש ידע ציד*, Targum Unkolos comments *גבר חסיר* - one who is idle - see Tosafos, Baba Kamma 92b). So what do we have to show for the days we lived? Let us ask this question to ourselves now so that we make our time fruitful. There is an expression, "*Time is what we want most, but what we use worst.*"

R' Chatzkel Levenstein who spent several years at the Mir in Brooklyn (in the interim between the Mir in Shanghai and Yerushalayim) once gave a mussar discourse and said the following: "I have heard there is a place in America where there are actors and actresses who are the wealthiest and most self-indulgent people in America. But those people die just as everyone else does. At the funeral of such an actor or actress, a person of their own kind stands at the grave and delivers a eulogy. What does he say? Does he talk about how wealthy or handsome the deceased was? No. In the history of the world, no one ever stood at an open grave and described the dead person as a beautiful or wealthy person. They comment on the fact that no matter how glamorous and busy a life he led, he would always take the time to visit his parents and the like. They remember the deceased for helping the poor, the homeless, and the unfortunate. Before a grave falsehood closes its mouth and for a few minutes truth reigns. And everyone realizes that the only acts of true value that a person performs in this world are his acts of kindness." We must ask ourselves, will our focal points today be part of our legacy? Will they matter next week, in a month or decade?

R' Yeruchem Levovitz would say that many people cry by *תתה תקר* at the words *ומי ימות*, who will die. In truth, they should cry at *מי יחיה*, who will live, because the real question is will you live a spiritually uplifting life or will you waste your life away. We must live a life that is in consonance with eternity.

R' Shalom Belzer (1781-1855)- the first Belzer Rebbe- recalled his younger years when he would smoke. Once when he was learning in the Beis Midrash he saw one of his peers clean out his pipe and fill it. While he did this, R' Shalom learned a page of Gemara. After seeing this, he said that if this object can take me away from a page of Gemara, I can't put it in my mouth anymore. From then on, he never took it again (Taamai Haminhagim, p. 102. Even if smoking wasn't dangerous to our health, we must realize it is such a waste of time. One who smokes for a half hour a day wastes close to 200 hours yearly!).

The saying goes, "More important than adding years to your life, add life to your years." In the words of a different phrase: "It is not the years in your life that count, it is the life in your years that count." Someone once put it this way: "Life is short. Stay awake for it."

Many spend a tremendous amount of time trying to impress others. This may be in the clothes they wear, the house they live in, the car they drive, the subjects they talk about and so on. **The time people spend trying to impress others, they can spend doing things that others would be impressed by.**

When the Gra wasn't well, he was asked where he was holding (how he was feeling). His reply: in Mesachta Keilim. Even in a circumstance such as this, the Gra didn't let his time be squandered.

Adding up each moment we utilize, it can accumulate into something big. This is alluded to in the letter *א* which has a numerical value of one, as if we spell it out, we get 1,000, *אלף*. That is to say, by accumulating each moment we use, we can amass an abundant amount.

Of the many times R' (Zelig) Reuven Bengis (1864-1953) finished Shas, he once made a Siyum on it a few weeks after he just made one. He explained that this one was different and very dear to him, as this completion of Shas wasn't part of his regular cycle. Being a Rav, he explained, he had many Simchos to attend and the like. These, many times, didn't start promptly. Not letting these random few minutes slip through the cracks, he learned with this time. After 17 years of doing this, he completed Shas, now making a Siyum on it! Remember, "The key to time management is to see the value of every moment."

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