



# Exciting Existence

Why did Hashem make days, months, years and seasons? Why couldn't we have one long continuum, without being bound by different seasons or times?

We see a common theme whenever we observe beginnings. The first mitzva is **החודש הזה לכם** (Shemos 12:2), Rosh Chodesh (time). Shulchan Aruch starts with **יתגבר כארי**, one should rise like a lion, as he shouldn't waste his time sleeping. The Gemara learns from Avraham, the first of the Avos, **זריזין מקדימים** (Pesachim 4a). When we were taken from Mitzrayim it was done **בחיפזון**, in haste, zerizus. This is to tell us about the importance of time.

The minhag is to give a gold watch to a chosson—alluding to the fact that time is golden. We must internalize that time doesn't come back, as we see from dates. To illustrate: the date January 1, 2012, comes only once—it is never duplicated.

The Klausenberger Rebbe preferred a wristwatch over a pocket watch because of the time wasted in removing a pocket watch and then returning it to its place. They say that in Kelm they would have a five-minute Seder, in order to instill the importance of five minutes. The Chassam Sofer said that he became who he was in five minutes—those random five minutes he found at various times throughout his days.

The Chofetz Chaim was adamant about wearing shoes without laces. He calculated that shoes with laces take an extra minute, since they require tying. Saving one minute a day adds up to approximately 360 minutes or six hours a year. In a lifetime that comes out to 420 hours! The Chofetz Chaim wasn't willing to forfeit 420 hours of his life on something so unproductive.

R' Yisrael Salanter was once asked by someone what he should learn if he had only five minutes each day to learn. He responded, "Learn five minutes of mussar, because then you'll see that you really have a lot more time."

Let us cite the unbelievable words of R' Dessler (Michtav M'Eliyahu 5, p. 275): **איסור**

הז"ל חמור כל כך... קל וחומר כשמוציא לבטלה את הזמן היקר שלו, the prohibition of wasting seed is very serious... How much more so is the seriousness of wasting precious time!

The pasuk states, **למנות ימינו כן הודע**, teach us to count our days, then we shall acquire a heart of wisdom (Tehillim 90:12). Dovid Hamelech tells us that the years of our lives are 70—**שבעים שנה**—the days of our years are 70 (Tehillim 90:10). **כן** has a gematria of 70. The purpose of those 70 years is **ונביא לבב חכמה**, to bring the wisdom of Torah (חכמה) into our lives. This explains **ובני יששכר** (חכמה) **יודעי בינה לעתים**, the children of Yissaschar are men of understanding for the times (Divrei HaYamim 1, 12:33)—because they learn Torah.

One can possess many coins but when converted into bills, we notice a much smaller number, making it appear to be much less than it originally was. Likewise, one may have many seconds and minutes to his life, but his life span is only 70 years. For this reason Hashem made different seasons, days, nights, and so on. One should say to himself at the end of each day, "Another day has gone by. What did I accomplish?" The same applies to months, years, and seasons. As the saying goes, "Fear not death, but rather un-lived life."

At the age of 20, one becomes **בר עונשין**, held accountable for his sins (See Bamidbar, 16:27, Rashi). It is written **שנה שבעים שנה**. Each of us has a Yovel in our personal life (See Maharsha in Moed Katan, 28a). Adding 50 (Yovel) to 20 (בר עונשין), we get 70. We should count our days in order to make the days of our lives count. This is the meaning in **וספרת** (Vayikra 25:8. **וספרת** is also related to **ספיר**, illuminate, as one should refine and purify himself during his lifetime.), count the years of Yovel of our lives. Just as slaves and land are set free by Yovel, similarly the neshama is freed from the body after one has his Yovel. When one dies, his neshama leaves him.

We have different words to refer to time: **זמן**, **זימון**, **שעה**, **עת**. **זמן**, because our time in this world is given for us to make use of it, to prepare us for the next world.

As the Mishna guides us, **התקן עצמך**, prepare yourself in the lobby so that you may enter the banquet hall (Avos 4:21). Time is so fleeting that every moment is immediately gone as it feeds into the next second. This is in order for us to realize that the only thing we have from our time is what we do with it. "Today will never happen again, but one good deed can make it last forever." The word **שעה** is rooted in **שוע**, to turn, move, as it says, **ואל מנחתו לא שעה**, Hashem didn't turn to Kayin's korban (Breishis 4:5), since time is moving, fleeting. The term **עת** is sourced in **עתה**, now, the present as we should make the most of the present. There is an expression that "We make our future by the best use of our present."

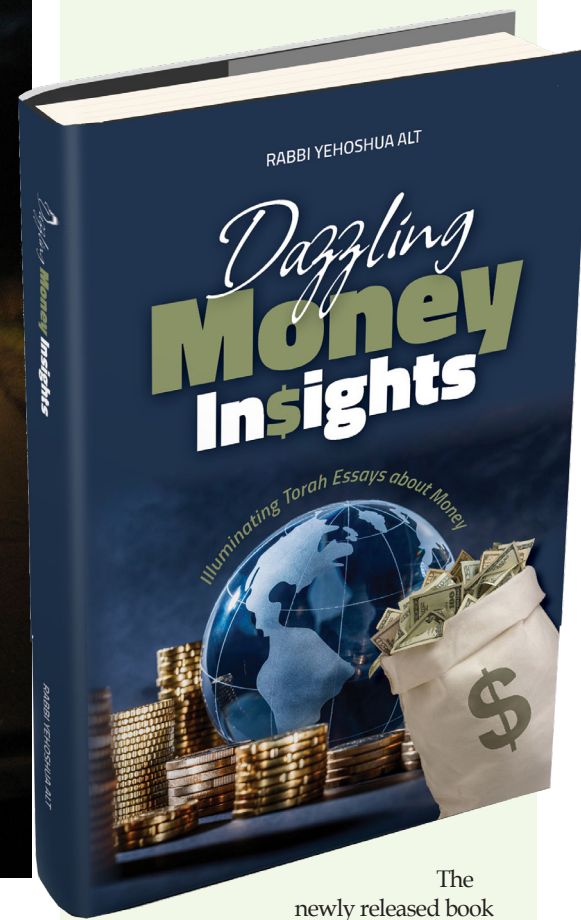
The Ibn Ezra once wrote, **העבר אין, הווה כהרף, העתיד עדיין ודאגה מנין**, the past is nothing, the present is like the blink of an eye, the future is still not yet, so why worry? (See Daas Chochma U'mussar, Volume 1, p 452. The Pele Yoatz (דאגה) quotes a different phrase: **העבר אין, העתיד עדיין, דאגה מנין, קום שתה יין**.)

The pasuk says **זקן בא בימים**, Avraham was old (Breishis 24:1, see the Chidushai Harim, Chayei Sara, s.v. **va'yilhyu**). The Sefas Emes (Chayei Sara, 5652, s.v. **b'midrash**) explains that Avraham came with his days—he utilized every moment of his life. This is what we say in Shemoneh Esrei—**ריקם**—**אל תשיבנו**, don't return us to you empty—rather we should utilize our time properly.

A way to awaken us to utilize our time properly is to remember the day of our birth and death, and as the Mishnah (Avos 3:1) instructs, **דע מאין באת ולאן אתה הולך**, know where you came from and where you will go. When one realizes that his time is limited, he may attempt to make the most of it. This is how we can define **זקן בא בימים**, as **ריקם** is a contraction of **ב' ימים**, two days, referring to these two specific days.

Let us conclude with the following. We don't have time to do everything but we do have time to do the important things. Don't do the trivial many, but rather do the important few.

RABBI YEHOShUA ALT



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