



TIME IS LIFE

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Shemos 5781

With this week's Torah portion, the *Bnei Yisroel* descend from their status of free men to that of slaves. The major distinction between being free and being enslaved is that a slave is at the beckon call of his master 24/7. Being free means being able to spend your time as you see fit. Being a slave means spending your time as the master sees fit.

Time is the essence of life. When Hashem grants a person 120 years of life, that life is 120 years of `time. Every moment is filled with enormous potential for a person to be fulfilling his or her purpose on this earth. As free people, each one of us is granted the choice of what to do with every moment. And every one of those moments fits into the overall picture of what we accomplish on this earth. The notion of `killing time' should be anathema to every Torah sensitive person, because by `killing' time, you are killing a part of your life and your potential.

The major distinction between being free and being enslaved is that the slave no longer has control over his time.

When we recite the *Birchas HaChodesh*, the *Rosh Chodesh benschen*, this *Shabbos*, one of the requests we will make of *Hashem* is that the coming month should bring us "*Chayim Aruchim*" literally – a long life.

What sense does it make to ask for a long life, when we are praying for a period of 29 or 30 days?! Long life is commonly defined by many, many years. How does a long life "fit" into one month?

Perhaps we are being guided towards a deeper understanding of the value of time. We ask for a month when we will make very meaningful use of the time. A person who lives many years eventually accumulates many accomplishments along the way and may measure how worthwhile his life was, based on those accomplishments. Therefore, before each month, we pray that the time contained in the coming month should be spent so wisely, that it will feature many important accomplishments, similar to what some only achieve with the passing of many years.

Time management is so important in the workplace, that a multi-billion-dollar industry has flourished for many decades, consulting and guiding businesses large and small on ways to increase productive use of time. In education, constructing schedules balancing work times and break times is the subject of great analysis, as each grade level and subject is scrutinized as to how to maximize the benefits of the time allotted for each.

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What should the proper attitude at home be about time? Home should be a safe place for relaxing and unwinding. Home is certainly a refuge from school and work pressures. Some may therefore think that one need not focus on time, on scheduling when at home. The thinking goes that when one is at home he can enjoy a break for however long he doesn't have to be working.

Great Torah thinkers and leaders over the years have shown us a very different approach. Every minute of the life *Hashem* has granted us is to be devoted to serving Him. That is a truism that applies throughout the entirety of one's life. What does that mean practically? Who besides a few unique individuals can live that way?

Every moment needs to fit into a thought out, consciously determined framework. We daven, learn Torah and do *Mitzvos* and *Chessed* at every possible moment. But being humans and not angels, there are limits as to what constitutes "every possible moment." We work, play, eat, sleep and socialize because those activities give us the physical, social and emotional wherewithal to pursue our *Avodas Hashem*. Those activities are not a "vacation" from serving Hashem – just the opposite – they are the fuel that energizes our service of *Hashem*. Even vacations and travel can serve this lofty purpose. If this outlook is in our mind, that we do all these human activities to enable us to better serve *Hashem*, then we imbue every mundane activity with *Kedusha*.

Apportioning more time or less time to work, leisure, sleep, entertainment etc. is each person's individual challenge in being the best servant of *Hashem* possible. For our children, we have the opportunity at every step along the way, to show them how fun activities such as playing ball, going on family trips etc., are very much a part of how a wholesome person lives life with *Hashem* as his focus. The children will have life-long benefit from being imbued with the *Hashkafa* that every second of life needs to be devoted to *Hashem*.

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Derech Eretz Kadmah L'Torah – matters of life on this earth precede the (study of) Torah. We need to be healthy humans before we can be successful in matters of Torah. If all our human endeavors are positioned to give power to our service of Hashem, we will truly be models to our children of how one can spend every moment in the service of Hashem.

Best wishes for a free and fulfilling *Shabbos*,

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