

Apply your hearts to all the words that I testify against you today. (32:46)

Are *Klal Yisrael* to apply themselves solely to that which Moshe *Rabbeinu* commanded them that day? What about all of the other days? Are they to be disregarded? **Horav Nachman, zl, m'Breslov** teaches that one's *avodas haKodesh*, service to the Almighty, should focus on *hayom*, today. Yesterday is gone, over, finished. Tomorrow is the future. Who knows if there will even be a tomorrow? Our concern is for today. *Rav Yitzchak* makes the following statement (in the *Talmud Kiddushin* 30b): *B'chol yom* – "A person's *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, renews itself against him (every Jew) every day." Rabbi Shimon ben Levi adds, "A person's evil inclination threatens to overpower him every day and seeks to kill him." The *Gaon, zl, m'Vilna*, explains the idea of the daily power of the *yetzer hora* as an indication that, even if it has failed to convince a person to commit a particular sin the first time, it will make a stronger attempt each succeeding time. It never gives up. Thus, the *Talmud* is exhorting the individual to maintain his vigilance concerning the *yetzer hora's* guile. Beating him out one day is insufficient, because he will return, fresh and crafty, prepared for a renewed fight.

The *Sifrei Chassidus* apply the *Breslov* approach. The *yetzer hora* presents a daily challenge, and that is exactly how we should view it: from a daily perspective. When one views his battle with the *yetzer hora* as a lifelong endeavor, he will become overwhelmed, slothful and depressed: "It is too much"; "It is beyond my ability." When the battle with the *yetzer hora* is viewed as a never-ending battle, which demands constant vigilance, the individual might give up without a fight: "Why make the attempt when the chances are that I will not succeed?" If, however, he views the battle with the *yetzer hora*, as lasting but one day, *hayom*, it becomes much easier, something that he can handle. Tomorrow? Who knows what will be tomorrow? I am concerned only with today. One should stay focused on the present day by removing all thoughts of the past and all concerns regarding the future. It is all about *hayom*.

The *Gaon* suggests that the key to overcoming the wiles of the *yetzer hora* is to maintain one's focus on three points: the individual himself; the activity (the *mitzvah* presently before him); the time. In other words: the entire Torah is comprised of one page; he is the only person in the world; this is his last day on earth. One page – one person – last day/chance.

One should view himself as the only person in the world. If I do not go to *shul* today, the *shul* will be empty. If I do not reach out and help the poor man in need, there will be no one else to help him. If I do not attend the *shiur*, Torah lesson, there will be no lesson. This is step one: it is all about me.

Step two focuses upon the endeavor, the *mitzvah* at hand: this is the only instance in which the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, charity, will be available; the only opportunity to *daven*; the only chance to visit a sick person.

Step three calls to attention that today is the only day that I am alive. There is no tomorrow. This is it.

Horav Sholom Schwadron, zl, asks, “If Eliyahu *HaNavi* would approach any one of us and say, ‘I have been sent to deliver some bad news. It has been decreed that today is to be your last day among the living. Tomorrow you will be gone,’ What would be our reaction? Would we run to the bank to withdraw our assets? Would we order a large fancy meal with all the trimmings? Or – would we run to the *bais hamedrash* and learn like we never did before?” Obviously, the answer is simple – or it should be. One will waste no time in running to the *bais medrash* to learn every precious minute that he has.

Horav BenTzion Abba Shaul, zl, once related to his students, “I accepted a young student into the *yeshivah* based upon his word alone.” The *Rosh Yeshivah* continued, “A young boy approached me and asked to be admitted into the *yeshivah*. Since I saw that he was too young, I suggested that he return the following year for an entrance exam. The boy left and returned about a half hour later, asking, ‘May I at least learn in the *yeshivah* today?’

“I was amazed with this boy’s attitude. I had never come across such a phenomenon. A boy is not accepted into the *yeshivah* because he is too young, yet he asks to be allowed to learn that one day in the *yeshivah*. What does he have to gain from one day in the *yeshivah*? Obviously, this boy understood the infinite value of each and every day’s study in the *yeshivah*. I was amazed by this boy’s maturity. To realize at such a young age that one day in the *yeshivah* is an unparalleled gift indicates the unparalleled love this boy has for Torah learning. I was sure that he will one day be a great Torah leader. Thus, I accepted him.”

We often talk about keeping an eye on the big picture, the larger purpose, the goal that we should set for ourselves in order to complete our mission. While maintaining an eye on the larger picture is important, its fruition is best achieved by working at it day by day, piece by piece; otherwise, one becomes overwhelmed with what he must do. It is so much easier to face the “present” without being encumbered by the “past” and the challenges that might arise in the future.

We certainly do not require the corroboration of secular sources to support the above idea, but, since I just read this story and I am acutely aware that *Peninim* reaches a vast audience of all persuasions, I feel it is appropriate to include the following. Sir William Osler is considered by many to be the father of modern medicine. As a young student in 1871, he read about a short quote from Thomas Carlyle, a Scottish poet that inspired him to change the focus of his life. This led to his becoming an outstanding physician, visiting professor of medicine at Oxford University and founder of Johns Hopkins Medical School in Baltimore. The quote: “Our main business is not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand.” Forty-two years later he gave his famous lecture entitled, “The Way of Life” at Yale University, based upon this simple, but profound, quote.

It is all about *hayom*. So many of us are either bogged down by the errors of our past or the fantasies we have concerning the future, when our primary objective should be *hayom*, what lies so clearly before us today.

Shloimke was a teenager who suffered immensely during World War II. Beaten and hounded, witnessing the murder of his entire family, he himself ended up in a dreaded Nazi death camp. Shloimke might have suffered, but his commitment to Hashem did not wane one iota. One day, the Nazi guard caught Shloimke wearing the *Tefillin*, which he was able to smuggle in with him to camp. With a loud, animalistic cry demonstrating the intense hatred this Nazi harbored for the Jews, he grabbed Shloimke and hurled him to the ground. He then proceeded to strike him on the head with a leather truncheon on the place where he had placed his *Tefillin Shel Rosh*. He struck him long and hard until all signs of life disappeared. Leaving his body on the frigid ground, the Nazi left. Hashem was not yet prepared for this saintly young soul to leave this world. A few hours later, Shloimke came to, and his compatriots removed him to the bunker where, after being nursed back to health, he survived the war. He merited raising a wonderful family, a virtual spiritual empire.

One day, his son asked him, “*Tatty*, what inspired you to choose life, to fight to live in the deadly purgatory that was your lot?” Shloimke took his son in hand and said, “Every morning when I woke up from the few hours of painful rest sleeping on the cold floor, I looked up to Heaven and pleaded with Hashem, ‘*Ribono Shel Olam*, please give me just one day! Allow me to live through today.’ I did not ask for more than one day – at a time. This continued for five years until the liberation.”