

## And he shall pay the evaluation of that day, it is holy to Hashem. (27: 23)

Every valuation shall be in the sacred *shekel*. (27:25)

In the *Talmud Arachin* 24a, Chazal state, *Ein l'hekdesch ela mekomo u'sheato*, “Hekdesch has only its place and time.” This means that, if a man makes an *erech* – vow, but lacks the means to pay for it, the *gizbar* of Hekdesch, the Sanctuary’s treasurer, must assess his possessions to establish the amount that the donor can really afford. The assessment of value is commensurate with the place and time in which the vow occurred. For example, if the donor possesses a slave who is worth twenty *dinarim*, but when he is dressed up in a thirty *dinar* outfit, his value would appreciate considerably, adding one hundred *dinarim* to his worth, which now stands at one hundred twenty *dinarim*, we value him according to his original value of twenty *dinarim*. For the purpose of the *erech*, the assessment, the slave is valued at his current worth.

Likewise, if the donor possesses a diamond, which in the donor’s home city – a larger city – would fetch a price of one hundred *dinarim*, but, in the village where diamonds are scarce, would fetch twice as much, we value the diamond according to its current time and place.

Horav Lazer Brody, *Shlita*, suggests a powerful lesson to be derived from the fact that the jewel’s value is determined by the present time and location. What will be tomorrow or how much its value increases elsewhere is of no concern. It is the present which matters. Every minute of a person’s life is an invaluable jewel which is worthy of being sanctified – if the person acts immediately. If he waits, pushes it off, claims that he will act later or elsewhere – it will be too late. This minute has vanished.

We have three opportunities for spiritual ascendancy: Torah study; *tefillah*, prayer; *tzedakah*, charity/acts of lovingkindness. Anything else, however mundane, becomes sanctified if it benefits, enhances, empowers the performance of these three. Otherwise, the mundane is a waste of precious time, the destruction and ultimate loss of a jewel whose value is incalculable. Why? Because we cannot discern the value of an individual’s potential. Who knows, if properly motivated, how far a person can excel; how much he can achieve? Before one realizes what he is – or is not – doing, however, that moment is gone. It is fleeting and does not wait for us to become properly motivated or to have all the “conditions” in place before we declare “all systems go.” That “moment” begins now, and it is over before we know it.

As the *Kohen* is not permitted to delay exchanging the diamond with the hope that its value will increase, so, too, are we not allowed to delay in “cashing in” our personal diamond. Our *neshamah*, soul, is a diamond whose potential value is attained by our actions. For the most part, we know what is right and proper, how to act and what we should do. Along the road to success, however, we encounter self-imposed challenges that impede our ability to grow properly.

We fabricate excuses, establishing time lines for when we will make time to learn, to *daven*, to give *tzedakah*. Hillel *HaZakein* says, “Do not say, ‘When I am free I will study,’ for perhaps you will not become free.” How can we push it off until tomorrow, when we are not guaranteed that we will “complete” today?

A second lesson which may be derived from the laws of *Arachin* is that every valuation should be in the sacred *shekel*. The Torah is teaching us that our goals and objectives, our destiny, must be bound up in the sacred *shekel*; our assessment of anything valuable should be: How holy is it? How will this promote/help holiness/spirituality? It is not about how many material possessions with which one has been blessed; it is how he uses said abundance. Wealth which is used only for self-promoting purposes, luxury, control, arrogance – is a waste and, ultimately, destructive. Wealth that is used for *kedushah*, holiness – is valuable.

We should measure every activity, thought, and speech by the following barometer: What value does this have to Hashem? How does it promote increased spiritual affiliation? Will it glorify G-d? If it does not measure up to these criteria – then the action is not worth doing. Hashem has given us a body with various capabilities for one purpose: to serve Him. This is how we should evaluate our actions – indeed, our life.