

**The woman said to the serpent... “Of the fruit of the tree which is in the center of the garden, G-d has said: ‘You shall not eat of it... lest you die.’” The serpent said to the woman, “You shall not surely die.” (3:2-4)**

The serpent immediately went to work enticing Chavah to commit the sin which forever altered world history. The question that glares at us is: Where was Adam during this time? It is not as if there was much to do. The world had just been created. Human beings had just entered the scene, with the female as the last creation. One would expect Adam to spend some “time” with his wife. Chazal ask this question, and the replies vary. One answer that deserves insight is given by Abaye: “Adam went for a nap.” Adam’s nap was not like ours in any way. Horav Chaim Zaitchik, zl, cites the Talmud in Succah 26a that says that David Ha’melech would sleep sixty respirations. Certainly, Adam’s nap was even shorter than that! This was the yetzir kapav shel Hakadosh Baruch Hu, creation of Hashem’s hands. The Heavenly angels mistook him for a celestial creation and were about to sing shirah, a song of praise, to him. Clearly, his sleep was but a moment that changed the world.

Rav Zaitchik emphasizes how a rega, short moment, can spell the difference between acquiring eternal light or losing it, causing darkness to descend for oneself and all future generations. The Navi Yeshayah (54:7) says, “For but a moment have I forsaken you, and with abundant mercy I will gather you in.” The Radak explains this to mean that, although the exile has extended for so very long, it will be considered as a quick moment in comparison with the magnanimity of Hashem’s compassion when He gathers us in.

Rav Zaitchik goes so far as to interpret this pasuk as a warning about the daunting responsibility one has to compensate for the loss of a rega katan, small moment. It is lost forever. To correct the loss of this “small moment,” which has incredibly large repercussions, takes rachamim gedolim, great compassion. We simply do not understand the overwhelming significance of each and every moment.

When one realizes how much can be achieved in a moment and the difference it makes, he will appreciate it that much more. The Talmud in Berachos 58a relates that Rabbi Chana ben Chanilai would not remove his hand from his pocket, always keeping it ready to give charity. He feared that

a respectable poor man might approach him for a donation and he would have to spend a moment looking for money, thus embarrassing the man.

One moment – that is all it would be, but if someone would be humiliated, this moment would be magnified many times over. One moment can make the difference between life and death. One moment separates Shabbos from the rest of the week. One hairbreadth spells the difference between a kosher shechitah, ritual slaughter, and one that is invalid. One step separates the boundary of one country from its neighbor, one nation from another. One slight deviation can mean the beginning of an altered view, a changed relationship, a turning away from a Torah life. It all begins that one moment. How important it is for us to value every moment that Hashem grants us. It is His greatest gift. One moment, it is here; the next moment, it is gone forever.

The Chafetz Chaim, zl, knew how to value the gift of time. He knew the infinite value of every single moment. Once, when the Rosh Yeshivah of Radin, Horav Naftali Trop, zl, was gravely ill, the students of the yeshivah prayed fervently for his return to health. Alas, the situation did not improve. Out of love for their revered rebbe, each student donated a part of his own individual life to their rebbe. One gave a day; another, a few days; yet another a week. They decided to ask the saintly Chafetz Chaim to join in their endeavor. How much would he contribute? How many hours would he spare for the Rosh Yeshivah? The Chafetz Chaim sat down and made an accounting of the time he had expended, to determine how much he could “spare.” He thought long and hard, as the students stared in awe and consternation while he seemed to wrestle with himself for a figure. Suddenly, he turned to them and said, “I will give you one moment!”

How startled and shocked they were by his answer. They had just witnessed an individual of unparalleled piety demonstrate to them the value of time. One moment of life was an eternity! It was invaluable. Here was an individual who never wasted a moment! It was G-d's gift. How could he squander it? When word of the Chafetz Chaim's reply spread through the yeshivah, it engendered an unprecedented inspiration and arousal for learning b'hasmadah, with great diligence. Indeed, it was later related that the hasmadah in the yeshivah that year surpassed that of any previous or following year. The students now understood the value of a moment.

