

And the days of the death of Yisrael drew near. (47:29)

A well-known secular quote caught my attention. “When your life flashes before your eyes, make sure it is worth watching” (There are variations to this quote.) A life review, or experiencing a rapid image of one’s life history, is a phenomenon that can occur when one experiences a serious trauma, especially if it is life-threatening. The image, however, has merit – especially in light of the following exposition from *Horav Shlomo Wolbe, zl (AleI Shur)*.

The Torah describes Yaakov Avinu’s *petirah*, passing, in an unusual manner: “And the days of the death drew near.” A person dies on one specific day and at one specific moment; he does not experience “days of death.” What is the Torah teaching us with its unique phrasing? What is meant by days of death? The *Zohar HaKadosh* explains that when the moment of truth arrives, the moment that a person’s *neshamah*, soul, is about to separate from its earthly container and ascend to its Source, all of the person’s days (of his life) are assessed for quality and calculated. Each day is reviewed and, if it is found to be worthy of merit, it is brought near to Hashem. If, *chas v’shalom*, Heaven forbid, a day is found to be less than meritorious, it is isolated. Thus, the days of the righteous which the Torah deems to be “drawing near” is a reference to those days that achieve connectivity with Hashem. These are days that had been used wisely and were, thus, consecrated and elevated, worthy of being presented to Hashem.

Chazal (Midrash Rabbah, Shemos 25:13) offer another concept that goes hand-in-hand with the *Zohar*. They quote Hashem as declaring, “I gave you the Torah in order for you to engage in it *yom yom* – each and every day. I will, therefore, satiate your (physical) hunger with the Heavenly *manna, yom yom, every day.*” *Chazal* intimate that our days are not granted to us for the purpose of Torah study; rather, it is the other way around, with Hashem giving the Torah to us, so that we will properly fulfill our allotted days.

Each of us has been granted a specific number of days to fill – this is called life. Those days which we fill appropriately, in the manner that Hashem expects of us – studying Torah and performing *mitzvos* – are counted on our behalf and will accompany us to the Heavenly realm. Those days, however, that are tainted by sin, flawed and unacceptable, will not gain access to connect us with Hashem. As the *Mashgiach* sums up: “A wasted day is not merely a lost opportunity for growth; it is in a certain sense a failure, since it is a day that is lost for all eternity.” There is a flipside. A day which is filled with Torah, a day in which we carry out *mitzvos* and perform *maasim tovim*, good deeds, is not only a day which is a vehicle for personal growth, but it is also a day gained – a day that we have used for its true Heavenly purpose. Such a day will be credited to one’s Heavenly account in the World-to-Come.

At first glance, this *dvar Torah* is a practical one, underscoring the importance of not wasting our G-d-given time. Once the message sinks in, however, it is frightening. Imagine a person who has lived a seemingly full life, but, when the sum total of the “days of his life” is calculated, he realizes that many of his days have been discarded: What he thought were “good” days were days during

which he merely existed. Hashem grants us days to fill with Torah and *mitzvos* – that is it. He gives us the Torah and *mitzvos*, specifically so that the days He has bestowed upon us will not go to waste. So, the next time we ask ourselves: “What am I going to do today?” The answer should be: “Do I want today to be counted, or do I want to waste it for eternity?”