

Good Shabbos Everyone. The Torah this weeks spells out the rewards for living a life dedicated to mitzvahs. As it states in the opening verse of the Parsha, "This shall be the reward when you listen to these laws, and you observe and perform them; Hashem, your G-d will safeguard for you the covenant and the kindness that He swore to your forefathers. He will love you, bless you and multiply you... You will be the most blessed of all the peoples..." (Devorim 7:12-14)

Hashem has given us a limited number of days on this earth. Happy is the man who realizes the purpose of life and uses his limited time wisely. The purpose of life is happiness in growing closer to Hashem, through the performance of mitzvahs. We must therefore use our time wisely in this world by focusing on Torah and mitzvahs.

There once was a man named Yankel who planned to travel from Eretz Yisroel to America by ship. A month before the sea voyage, Yankel noticed on the ship's itinerary that the ship would stopover in France for one day.

Yankel was very excited at the possibility of visiting France. He immediately began to learn French, spending all of his free time mastering the language. Yankel also went to a tailor and had the tailor fashion for him a suit in the latest French styles.

When it finally came time for the ship to sail, Yankel realized his mistake: Yankel had spent all his free time preparing for his one day in France, but he had neglected his final destination of America. It was too late; he boarded the ship without a word of English and with no clue of American customs.

The ship soon arrived in France. Yankel's fellow passengers were envious of Yankel as he came down off the ship like a perfect Frenchman. Yankel was able to talk to the locals in their language and he was able to shop in stores.

By the next day, it was already time for the ship to set sail. Yankel had enjoyed himself, but he dreaded the last leg of journey, because he was not prepared at all for life in America. (adapted from The Midrash Says)

Hashem should be kind to us and grant us long lives; however, we must know that our ships can sail at any moment to our final destination. This world is merely a preparation for the world to come, as the Mishnah says "this world is similar to a lobby before the world to come, prepare yourself in the lobby in order to enter into the banquet hall." (Avos 4:21) It is ironic that we often envy those whose success is in based on their wealth! We would do better to envy those who are spiritually successful, because those people are best preparing themselves. In this world we do mitzvahs which bring us closer to Hashem and prepare us for the World to Come.

One of the most powerful mitzvahs we can do in this life is the study of the Torah. In fact, the study of Torah is greater than all other mitzvahs of the Torah! Why is that so? Because it is only through learning Torah that we will know the correct path to take in life. We therefore must utilize as much time as possible in life learning Torah. The following amazing true story illustrates the importance that one great Torah leader placed on the use of one's time wisely on this earth to learn Torah.

He was a relatively young man; however, Naftali Trop's legendary ability to dissect a topic in the Talmud was enough of a qualification for the Chofetz Chaim to hire the young man as the Rosh Yeshivah of the Radin Yeshivah. Reb Naftali was commonly known as the "Granat" (an acronym for Gaon Reb Naftali Trop). The young men in the yeshivah loved their rebbi and eagerly drunk in every word of Torah that he spoke, always thirsting for more.

Sadly, Reb Naftali's was struck with illness, and his physical condition began to deteriorate to the point where he was no longer able to teach as he had for over twenty-five years. The young men of the yeshivah, his devoted students, stormed the gates of Heaven, beseeching Hashem to grant Reb Naftali a complete recovery.

But it was to no avail, as his condition worsened. Shifts were arranged for groups of students to recite Tehillim - Psalms for the recovery of their beloved rebbi.

One group of young men even went so far as to take up a most unusual collection — asking fellow yeshivah boys if they would donate time from their own lives, to give to their rebbe. The boys quickly responded. Some gave days, other weeks and some were even willing to give up to a year. All tolled, the amount of time they had accumulated was over five years' worth of life. And now they wanted to approach the Chofetz Chaim, Reb Yisroel Meir Kagan, for a pledge.

They knocked on the door to the Chofetz Chaim's room and presented their idea to the venerated sage. The Chofetz Chaim listened and then placed his hand over his forehead. The furrows of his forehead bore evidence of the burden of this critical decision. Reb Naftali was considered one of the "oros Shel olam" (lights of the world) and no one knew that better than the Chofetz Chaim.

After a few moments the Chofetz Chaim looked up and announced that he had come to a decision. The young men waited breathlessly. "I've thought about it. Because of Reb Naftali's greatness I am willing to give — one minute of my life to Reb Naftali!"

Had they heard correctly? They were astonished! The Chofetz Chaim blessed them and thanked them for their noble work on behalf of Reb Naftali. They exited the room and walked back to the beis medrash - study hall. But one notion dominated their thoughts. There is absolutely no one in the entire world who is more sensitive and giving than their rebbe, the Chofetz Chaim. And there is no one who is more aware of Reb Naftali's greatness than he. Yet all he would give was one minute of his life!

How precious, then, is time! How precious is life! Perhaps what the Chofetz Chaim was teaching the bochurim - yeshiva students is that the greatest merit for Reb Naftali's recovery would be for them to use their time properly.

They returned to the beis medrash, related what had transpired, discussed it and agreed to return to their learning with a new understanding of what a moment of Torah learning can accomplish. (Reb Yechiel Spero, Touched by a Story 2, p. 214)

A Torah lifestyle is a rewarding path for every Jew. Let us therefore take advantage of every minute, especially to perform the greatest mitzvah, the study of Torah which leads to happiness, mitzvahs and goods deeds. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**