



BE A *MENTSCH*

Rabbi Yitzchok Sanders



Time is Precious!

פְּרִשֶׁת וַיְצִיא

In this week's parsha, we learn an important lesson from Yaakov Avinu about being a *Mentsch*: "Don't waste time". Our lives are so precious and we should use time wisely. For example, when Yaakov Avinu arrived in הרן, he asked the shepherds a question, "Why are you gathering the sheep in so early, the day isn't over?" Yaakov was concerned that people shouldn't waste time *when we are working for others*. This is called a "Good Work Ethic".

In fact, ל"ה tell us that Yaakov Avinu himself, was very careful to use his time wisely. When he studied in שם ועבר, he never went to sleep for 14 years *because he was learning Torah*. Imagine, if we had just one hour to collect diamonds from the beach, we would use every moment to gather as many as we could. Yaakov considered his time away from his family learning in the Yeshiva so precious that he didn't want to lose a single moment.

When Yaakov travelled to הרן to find a wife, he passed by Bais El, he turned back so that he could daven to ה' in that place. Even though his journey to לבן's house was going to take so much longer, he did it anyway. Why? *Yaakov wanted to daven* on the same mountain where אברהם and יצחק had davened. Whatever we do, we must think of time as valuable and it should be used wisely. Whether we are doing a job, learning Hashem's Torah, doing a kindness or davening, Being a Mentsch means we should use our time wisely since every act we do counts. We must be full of energy and act with זריזות!

Taking a Seat

Rabbi Eliezer Krohn relates the following moving story:

Rabbi Tanzer, a beloved Rav with a wonderful congregation, lived in Johannesburg, South Africa. Dedicated to his community, he led them with care and patience. One day he received a phone call from America. It was a man calling to inform him that his father, who was living in Borough Park and getting on in his years, had wandered off all by himself and forgot where he was. Considering that Rabbi Tanzer's father was getting old, it was suggested that he no longer live alone. Hearing of the news, Rabbi Tanzer decided that he would bring his father over from Borough Park to Johannesburg and build an extension to his house where his father could stay.

Being that Rabbi Tanzer himself was preoccupied with leading a large Shul, he was quite busy. But nevertheless, whenever he had the opportunity to help his aging father, he was there to take care of whatever was needed. As Mr. Tanzer was brought to South Africa, Ari, a young local community member, took a liking to him. He used to endearingly call Mr. Tanzer "Old man Tanzer." Always looking to help, Ari assumed the role of a caretaker for Mr. Tanzer. He would drive him to Shul every morning, assist him to put on his Tallis and Tefillin and drive him back to Shul. Even for Shabbos, he would make sure Old man Tanzer was taken to and from Shul. For two years, Ari loyally stood by Old man Tanzer's every need. He was an indispensable source of assistance and deeply became attached to the old man like a grandson to a grandfather. After two years of devoted assistance, Old man Tanzer grew even older and frailer. By now, he could no longer go to Shul. And sooner than later, it was even too difficult for him to get out of bed. But Ari stood by his bedside and waited on his every need day after day. And then the fateful day arrived. Having lived a long, satisfied and accomplished life, Old man Tanzer passed away.

Some time later, Ari needed to travel to America for a business convention. Not wanting to spend Shabbos where the convention was taking place, he arranged to stay in a hotel in Borough Park. He had heard that Borough Park was home to countless frum Jews and he figured it would be a delightful experience to spend Shabbos there. Considering that there were so many Jews where he would stay, Ari was unconcerned about finding a place to eat the Shabbos meals. But nevertheless, just to be on the safe side, he purchased two little rolls of challah, a bottle of grape juice and two small pieces of fish. "Of course," he said to himself, "I will not need to use them for I will be invited out. After all, back home in South Africa, whenever someone looks like he is a stranger, he receives numerous invitations out." Ari remained unworried.

Friday night arrives and Ari steps out of his hotel onto the sidewalk. Looking around, he spots a Shul in the distance. He figures that he would go there for davening. Entering inside, he takes a seat and begins to daven. Time passes by and before he knows it davening is over. But now, Ari is stuck. No one had come over to him to wish him a Good Shabbos and he had not been invited out. Left with no other option, he heads back to his hotel room where two little rolls, a bottle of grape juice and two small pieces of fish await him.

Shuffling back to his hotel, Ari catches sight of a different Shul. He can see inside and it looks like everyone is having a great time. They appear to be dancing and singing and immensely enjoying the uplifting words of the davening. It is a Chassidish Shul with an upbeat and noisy crowd, but it dazzles Ari. Thinking that maybe if he would go inside he would be able to receive an invitation for a meal, Ari eventually persuades himself not to do so. "It would be embarrassing," he thinks to himself. And with that, he finally makes his way back to the hotel and nibbles on his meager Shabbos meal.

As morning arrives and Ari gets ready for davening, he begins to think

again, “Maybe I should go to that Chassidish Shul? It looked as if they were davening with tremendous focus and passion.” And indeed, although he feels a bit out of place, he heads there. Walking inside, he is one of the first people there. Davening is only to start in quite some time. Going over to the bookshelf, Ari picks out a Chumash and takes a seat. Some time later, people begin filing in for davening. He is immediately greeted by many of the congregants and wished a hearty ‘Good Shabbos.’ By the time davening starts, Ari feels at home. But it only gets better when he is honored by being called up to the Torah. And to top it all off, someone invites him for the Shabbos meal.

As davening comes to a close, a number of people gather around Ari. “Where are you from?” they ask. “I’m from Johannesburg, South Africa.” “Oh, really? Would you happen to know a man who moved there a few years ago named Yankel Tanzer?” “Do I know him?” astounds Ari. “Of course I do! I became so close to him that I cared for him until the end of his life. I was like a grandson to him!”

Hearing that this stranger from South Africa was in fact not too much of a stranger, one of the men surrounding Ari pulls him aside. “I have something to tell you,” he says. “Do you know that Yankel Tanzer used to daven in this Shul?” Surprised to hear such information, Ari does not respond.” And with that the man continued. “And do you know where he used to sit? In the very seat you sat in.”

*While Ari could have ended up sitting in one of the myriad seats anywhere throughout Borough Park, he found his way to the very Shul and the very seat that Yankel Tanzer had occupied for so many years. Hashem was clearly sending him a message: if you do chesed for somebody else, it will never be forgotten. **No chesed, however small, ever goes unpaid.** Let this be a message how valuable our actions are and how precious our time is.*

Have a Great Shabbos!