

## **A DAY'S IMPACT**

### **Parshas Shelach**

By Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

A popular notion is often heard that life begins at forty. A more correct account may claim in all of life a total of forty meaningful years, the forty years from adulthood to the age of sixty, which are most exuberant, ambitious and intense.

In Parshas Bechukosai the Torah enumerates various monetary contributions to the Beth Hamikdosh based on the age of the contributor. Twenty to sixty of age is considered the physical prime. [This does not contradict the Talmudic statement: "Torah scholars the older they become the more they grow in wisdom" (Shabos 152a). The optimum of the earlier forty years relates to the physical realm].

Such a viewpoint, forty years representing a complete life cycle, may serve as a clue to a significant numerical calculation.

Moshe studied Torah on Sinai from the Al-mighty for forty days. This number may represent forty years in miniature. Indeed the awesome depth and breadth of Torah which Moshe acquired in forty days took him forty years to bequeath to the Israelites.

The Talmud relates (Chagigah 5b) there was a student who would walk to the academy a distance which took him three months. He started the journey after Pesach, stayed at the academy for one day, and returned home to spend Succoth with his family. They called him a "student for a day". Though this designation was meant as a humorous description of the man, it was not meant to slight him. It was to demonstrate the power of Torah study for even one day of the year, giving sufficient inspiration and intellectual stimulation to last for a year. This insight is used in the Talmud to explain the fairness of the judgment decreed upon the Israelites for the iniquities of the Meraglim (spies). The Meraglim Moshe sent to the Land of Israel spent there forty days before

they came back with their discouraging report. The retribution for their lack of faith was to remain in the desert for forty years. For every day in the land of Israel a year in exile in the desert (Bamidbar 14:34). The Talmud derives from this extraordinary "measure for measure" that living in sin for one day, too, is regarded as committing sin the whole year.

The actual phrase in the Chumosh is "Yom Lashono", which literally means "a day for a year." According to the harsh punishment of a year for a day the phrase should have been "Shono Layom". However, the emphasis here is on the great importance of each day spent in the Holy Land and the unusual opportunities of Kedusha and encounters of religious ecstasy in Eretz Yisroel where "Yom Lashono" one day is worth a whole year. "The air of the Land of Israel scintillates wisdom" (Bovo Basra 158b).

The opportunities of one day and its significance is found also by King David. The Talmud relates (Shabbos 30a) that David asked the Al-mighty to be given advance notice of the day of his death. He was told it will be on a Shabbos. He prayed for one more day of life, so that the Shabbos peace would not be disturbed. This was refused on the ground that one kingdom (of David) cannot interfere with another (that of Solomon). He then asked to relinquish one day and to die on Friday. The Al-mighty told him, "One day of your indulgence in the study of Torah is more important to Me than the thousands of sacrifices brought by Solomon.

The calendar of Torah life is more than a calculation of the total number of observances or of Talmudic pages studied. It is a computation of the sum total of days which Torah is observed and studied. Every day thirsts for its sustenance. Every day craves for its spiritual nourishment. The total of three hundred sixty five restrictive Mitzvoths thus correspond to three hundred days of the year according to the Rabbis. (Tanchuma

Parshas Saisai) to emphasize the co-relation between the Torah and the yearly cycle. A day elapsing without Torah study causes a missing link that perturbs the entire cosmic mechanism.

The Torah says of Abraham when he became of age that "he came in days" (Braishis 24:1). A sage once interpreted he came with all his days, accounting for each day as a day of achievement.

One of the six remembrances recited daily (according to some authorities) following Shachris is the Sinai experience. The emphasis is on "the day" that you stood before Hashem, your G-d at Sinai (Devorim 4:10).

A philologist once identified the word "Yom" (day) with "Yemin" right, and the word "Esmol" (yesterday) with "smol" (left). The right way is to start the day (today) anew. Thus we pray every morning that "You rescue me today ... from .. an evil mishap .... " "Grant us today and every day grace, kindness...." "For He is your life and the length of your days" (Devorim 30:20).

"Day unto day utters sayings and night unto night conveys knowledge" (Tehillim 19:3). The task of the assiduous person is to assure that there are no missing links in the cycle of the calendar so that one day indeed meets the other through Torah.

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