



Day 2

The Blessings of Time

Imagine that life was all just one long day, a day that had no night to follow it, a day that actually had no hours or minutes. Life was just one long chain of existence. Such a life would be unbearable. There would never be an hour to spend in concentration on one item or one achievement!

In fact, the separate segments of time that Hashem in His infinite wisdom has fashioned for us allow for blessings to no end. Let us focus on but a few.

There is a famous incident related about the Steipler Gaon.

While the Steipler Gaon was serving in the Russian army, he had to spend a bitterly cold winter Friday night on guard duty. The previous guard had left a warm winter coat hanging on a tree, right near the guard post, ready for the next soldier to wear. The Steipler knew that it was halachically prohibited to remove the coat from the tree branch on Shabbos, and thus he remained on duty

without a coat, in below-zero weather. At times throughout the incredibly frigid night, he wondered whether his situation was deemed *pikuach nefesh*, which would allow him to remove the coat from the tree, but in an act of extreme fortitude, the Steipler persevered an entire night without removing it from the branch.

When asked how it was that he survived such an ordeal, he famously explained, “I said to myself, although it is impossible for me to last an entire night like this, *five minutes I surely can handle*. And so, I would take *just five minutes* at a time and try my hardest to push through. After the interval of five minutes had passed, I pushed myself to survive another five minutes; and with that mindset, *b’ezer Hashem*, I made it through the night!”

The fact that Hashem has separated our lives into intervals of time is one of the greatest possible blessings, for we now have the opportunity to use time as a unique measuring stick for achievement. We can use time to enable us to maximize each moment for what it is in itself, and to appreciate each hour for its special quality and opportunity — unique to it alone. The fact that time is broken up provides us with the ability to *divide and conquer*.

Yet, besides the intervals of *minutes or hours*, as we explained above, the Torah tells us that one of the *purposes* of the luminaries is to create the concept of *days* as well.⁴

Rav Avigdor Miller⁵ writes, “The dividing of time into days is a contrivance of infinite benefit, and the Creator designed this process with endless cunning and boundless might.” Earlier in the *sefer*, he states, “If time continued in unbroken succession, men would continue in unchanging patterns. A quarrel would

4. See below, Day 108, for more on this topic.

5. *The Beginning*, p. 32.

be forever, a sorrow would linger, and a discouragement or depression would drag on endlessly.... The advent of a new day is a stimulus to new courage, to new understanding, and to new hope.”

The concept of a break in continuity is what affords man the opportunity to have a better tomorrow. Even if today was a rainy day, tomorrow could be sunny. The new morning awakens within a person the fresh feeling of a new chance to become even better than yesterday. And, it's the separate segments of time that allow yesterday's mistakes to become things of the past, rather than festering endlessly in one's mind.

Included in all of the above is the infinite blessing of months and years. Hashem has given each month its own uniqueness and each year its own *tafkid* (purpose) and mission. The blessings of time allow a person *to count* each day, month, and year — to appreciate how ephemeral and fleeting are the opportunities of life. For this reason alone, we must thank Hashem Yisbarach for the blessings of time.