Jewish Tribune – Vaeschanan

**Holy-days**

How many hours do you sleep a night?

Let’s say you sleep six hours. You go to bed at midnight and are up at six every morning. By the time you are eighty years old, you would have spent twenty years asleep in bed.

And if you sleep eight hours a night, that becomes thirty years in bed by the time you are ninety.

After 120 years, how does HKBH look at the twenty or thirty years spent asleep? Is it possible to perform mitzvos when you are sleeping? Can you ever get rewarded for the hours spent fast asleep?

A friend of a friend ran a business operating cold drink vending machines in universities in Scotland. It could be 3am, and the owner of the business is fast asleep and a thirsty student in Aberdeen pays a pound for a cold can of coke and the owner makes a profit whilst in the land of nod. Can this ever happen in the world of Torah and mitzvos?

The Rambam in the fifth perek of Shemona Perokim (his introduction to Pirkei Avos) writes that everything we do should be with the end goal of serving HKBH. That applies to all aspects of our lives, our eating, drinking, sleeping, work, exercise etc.

If our goal when engaged in these activities is with that in mind, we have elevated the mundane into something meaningful. We have transformed parev in to positive. Twenty or thirty years of sleep can actually become a mitzva. All that is needed is a mindset of serving HKBH in all aspects of our lives. If, before you go to sleep, you intend to recharge the batteries so that you can function and serve Hashem, every moment of sleep becomes a mitzva.

People think that a kiddush Hashem requires publicity and is only possible to perform in front of others. Actually, a kiddush Hashem is simply living with an awareness of HKBH. The opposite, a chilul Hashem, is derived from the word chalal which means void or vacuum - not recognising HKBH.

A businessman was told by his accountant that the Inland Revenue had mistakenly reimbursed him with too much money. It was highly unlikely they would ever discover their error. It was a considerable sum and the accountant asked his client what he would like to do. The businessman said he would like to consult with his partner and quietly left the room.

He came back a few minutes later and instructed his accountant to return the money. The accountant knew that his client had no partner but had gone to think about it and discuss the matter with HKBH. He came back with a mind made up.

For this businessman, HKBH was real. Living with that reality is living a life of kiddush Hashem.

That should help focus us during the holiday season. People need a break. They need a change of scene and a chance to get off the treadmill for a bit. The holiday season is a time which presents plenty of opportunities to create a Kiddush Hashem. I once heard a beautiful allusion to this in the Shmonei Esrei of Shabbos Mincha.

People need a rest and go on holiday for different reasons and we refer to them in this Shmonei Esrei. One is “menuchas ahavah u’nedovah” – time to spend quality time with family and loved ones. “menuchas emes v’emunah” – time to recharge spiritual batteries, to think, dream and contemplate more, to daven more slowly and spend more time learning. “menuchas sholom, v’shalva, v’hashket u’vetach” – time to recharge physical batteries and relax in quiet tranquillity.

All of these types of rests are fine, so long as “al menuchosom yakdishu es Shemecha”, that they create a Kiddush Hashem.

May we all merit to recharge our spiritual and physical batteries over the summer and live lives of Kiddush Hashem.

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