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**The Golden Hour**

Do not put off till tomorrow what can be put off until the day after tomorrow just as well. So said Mark Twain. But our parsha, says the Chofetz Chaim, tells us otherwise.

**הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה** ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ מְצַוְּךָ לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת הַחֻקִּים הָאֵלֶּה וְאֶת הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים

**Today,** Hashem your G-d, commands you to perform these statutes and decrees (26:16)

The emphasis is on today. And in case we didn’t get the message, twice more in the next pesukim, we are told: אֶת ה' הֶאֱמַרְתָּ **הַיּוֹם** and וַה' הֶאֱמִירְךָ **הַיּוֹם** לִהְיוֹת לוֹ לְעַם סְגֻלָּה.

As the saying goes, procrastination is opportunity’s assassin. Or as Abraham Lincoln said: “You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today.”

In the world of medicine, there is something called the golden hour. This is the hour immediately following traumatic injury where medical treatment to prevent injury and optimise the chance of survival is most effective.

There is a “golden hour” in the world of Torah and mitzvos too. Delay is dangerous and is often the work of the yetzer hora.

Rabbi Abraham Twerski tells the story of Rabbi Nochum of Chernobyl who was once approached by a man who desperately needed funds to marry off his daughter – a hefty 150 rubles. The following day, a wealthy chossid came to Rabbi Nochum with a donation of 150 rubles for tzedokah. Rabbi Nochum was overjoyed. He sent for the man, with the intention of giving him the money.

While awaiting the man’s arrival, Rabbi Nochum began to think that perhaps it would be better to give him 75 or 100 rubles, still a very respectable sum and give the rest of the money to other needy people. The more he thought about it, the more it seemed appropriate to divide the money among the several needy cases he encountered.

Rabbi Nochum then thought, “Here I have two differing opinions. Obviously, one emanates from the yetzer hatov and one from the yetzer hora. Which is which? He concluded that his initial impulse to give the entire sum to the man was indeed from the yetzer hatov. It is characteristic of the yetzer hora to nag.

The slogan “Do it now!” applies to spiritual matters. Physical gratification should preferably be delayed, to give an opportunity to reflect on whether they are really essential.

Rabbi Twerski added that when a businessman displayed a sign “Do it now!” in the office, his accountant promptly took off with a huge sum of company money.

In the sixth perek of Mesilas Yeshorim, introducing the trait of zerizus (enthusiasm and diligence in avodas Hashem), the Ramchal writes:

והנה אנחנו רואים בעינינו כמה וכמה פעמים שכבר לבו של האדם יודע חובתו

ונתאמת אצלו מה שראוי לו להצלת נפשו ומה שחובה עליו מצד בוראו, ואף על פי כן יניחהו,

לא מחסרון הכרת החובה ההיא ולא לשום טעם אחר, אלא מפני שכבדות העצלה מתגברת עליו.

We can observe with our own eyes how so often a person comes to understand his duty in this world and grasps the truth of what is required to save his soul and what is his duty towards his Creator, but despite this, he disregards it. This disregard is not due to insufficient clarity of this duty, nor any other cause but the heaviness of laziness which overcomes him.

The mishna in Pirkei Avos tells us: אַל תֹּאמַר לִכְשֶׁאִפָּנֶה אֶשְׁנֶה, שֶׁמָּא לֹא תִפָּנֶה, Do not say

“When I am free I will learn” for perhaps you will not become free. One should not postpone learning Torah and performing mitzvos.

That is really the message of our Parsha - הַיּוֹם. When it comes to Torah and mitzvos, the emphasis is on today. Heeding this message ensures that every hour is a golden hour.

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