

"One day at a time"

Posted by aryehtahor - 18 Apr 2010 03:54

I'd like to explore the meaning of the eitzah people often give of taking things "one day at a time". What does that really mean?

The simple meaning might be something like : don't get overly discouraged (or ecstatic) about things in the past (or plans for the future). Keep your head down and stay in the present.

The deeper meaning might be that that's all we really ever need to do. Hashem weaves a fabric out of the individual moments of our lives. If we focus on doing the right thing right now, the bigger picture will come into focus on it's own.

How can we apply this on a practical level when faced with a difficult situation? Do we say to ourselves "OK I just need to make it through today without falling?" That seems like a variant on the tachboula whereby you tell the Yetzer Hara to come back later. I have not had success with that approach because I just feel more and more deprived until I give in anyway.

Everyone who has been successful with the 90 days that I have spoken to has said that they got through it by staying clean one day at a time. Can anyone offer ideas on how to apply this important lesson?

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Re: "One day at a time"

Posted by silentbattle - 19 Apr 2010 04:00

I like your second approach - my job is to focus on right now. What will happen tomorrow? Who knows? But right now, I can stay clean.

As you pointed out, not because I'm saying I will fall tomorrow - I'm planning on that not happening. But I don't have to worry about it.

It's like when I start worrying about marriage - I think, how can I stay clean? Who knows when I'll finally get to feel a sexual release ever again? If I knew it would be 6 months, or a year, then that's one thing. But I have no idea how long it'll take!!

And I remind myself that I don't need to worry about that right now. My job is to stay clean for today. Can i stay clean for an indefinite amount of time? Dunno. But for today, I can stay clean, and worrying about more than that isn't my job, and is counterproductive on every level.

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Re: "One day at a time"

Posted by Dov - 19 Apr 2010 09:16

Aryehtahor, it's so nice to read what you wrote about how living one day-at-a-time is not like telling the YH to come back tomorrow. Though I believe that it can be that too, that eitzta isn't realistic for most addicts I know, either. It tends to make the whole thing a waiting game, and the "pressure just builds up", as they say. Never worked for me.

The idea that it's about realism, is much more the way I see it, as SB said above. Practically, that means some things we tend to like, while - if we really take it seriously - it also means some things we don't really like that much. But consistency=honesty, right?

For example:

*no asking for Hashem to keep me sober this week, year (even on R"H), or just "in general" - it's always for today and only for today. Just cuz *other* people can daven for the year or week, doesn't mean *I* can.

*worrying about "what will be with" me/my kids/whatever, in the future is a negation of living one day at a time - can't afford to do it much. I need to find and use tools to let go of my *emotional load* from the future - while not being a moron about it, of course. That takes learning simple trust of Hashem, and not much else.

*focusing on what's really going on today is what it's all about. Before recovery, the only thing that made "today" bearable was the fact that I had a rendezvous with some lust adventure planned *tomorrow*, or living in the euphoric recall of the schmutz I watched yesterday. How the heck are we supposed to ever live right if it's never actually **today** in our hearts?!

*remembering that today is OK. It's the best Hashem has to offer for me, if I make the best of it.

It's more of an attitude than an action, but requires actions like mantras or affirmations of the above repeated a few times per day and trying to reduce the actions and thoughts that contradict it in the way we live. When a lust opportunity presents itself, it is time for surrender of the opportunity by bringing it into the light and sharing it with a friend, explicitly admitting the truth to Hashem about intentions and doing our best to give the struggle up to Him right then, and not worrying about what will be tomorrow - or admitting our hypocrisy based on our stupid behavior from yesterday. All that stuff is shtuyot. As realistic, honest, and sensible it may seem at the time, living one day-at-a-time demands surrender to Hashem right now, I guess.

There's a lot more to it, so thanks for opening this chashuv issue up for exploration.

Of course, living it is all that really matters, not figuring it all out. In fact, the only way I have anything to share about this at all is from living it a bit. Nothing i wrote above was what I had figured out about it before recovery. I threw all that in the trash with every other well-intentioned hashkofa/advice that didn't work for me at all.

Hatzolcha!

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Re: "One day at a time"

Posted by silentbattle - 19 Apr 2010 12:19

I just thought of something else - same idea, but from a slightly different perspective. I can try to deal with m urges for today, while it's today. But if in one day (today), I try to deal with all the urges I'm going to have over the next week, then I'm dealing with 7 times the amount of urge, all in one day! And forget about if I try to think about staying sober for a year, or more - then I'm

dealing with the urge of hundreds of days, all *right this second!*

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Re: "One day at a time"

Posted by truth929 - 19 Apr 2010 14:30

These are really interesting ideas, because I've shared the same thoughts as Aryehtahor- it's like i'm just waiting every day before I do something stupid, it's almost like I know any day could be the day. Dov, i hear what you are saying, but do you have any practical eitzas on how to develop that sincerity and patience? Through davening or personal meditation. Or maybe you mean simply with attitude changes? I am a newcomer on this site and am just trying to pick up some small changes to get started. Thanks

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Re: "One day at a time"

Posted by 1dayatime - 19 Apr 2010 16:35

Is it even possible to live more than one day at a time?

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Re: "One day at a time"

Posted by Dov - 19 Apr 2010 17:01

[1dayatime wrote on 19 Apr 2010 16:35:](#)

Is it even possible to live more than one day at a time?

Of course not, but we can sure make a lifetime effort of trying to! Just cuz it's crazy and stinks, apparently doesn't stop us. It didn't stop me till it got crazy and stinky enough that I really thought I couldn't afford to do it any more.

[truth11 wrote on 19 Apr 2010 14:30:](#)

...waiting every day before I do something stupid, it's almost like I know any day could be the day. Any practical eitzas on how to develop that sincerity and patience? Through davening or personal meditation. Or maybe you mean simply with attitude changes?

True, every day *could* be the day, but I won't sit and wait for myself to do something

Practical eitzos are probably different for each person, depending on a lot of things. I'll still take a shot at generalizing:

Whatever it is that I am holding onto right now, surrender it. If it's a resentment against another person (even if they were at fault) - I can accept their limitations and tolerate them politely. perhaps I can even forgive them. Perhaps there is something I can *do* for them, whether they'll know about it or not - all just to let go of my self-centeredness and get a bit of freedom from that poison.

stupid, though I won't be suprised of it, either!
Perhaps it is a lust "opportunity" that I am hiding, maybe I am telling myself that "there is no reason to *tell* anyone about it, for *I may beat it yet!*". This may simply be my way of protecting the "opportunity" and my ability to eventually do it. "It *will* be a bit harder to actually do it once my trusted buddy knows what's running through my mind." By telling someone (safe) about it - I am not shaming myself, at all. Rather, I am letting go of the right to do it, a little bit. It may hurt, but calling it "embarrassment" is just an excuse to stupidly keep hiding a live grenade in our pocket. It *will* go off.

How does this relate to one day-at-a-time? Simple. The reason we don't live in reality is because we are holding onto some kind of shtuyot. We **can** let go of big things in small pieces...but it takes time and we cannot do it alone.

And man, is it worth it - we are worth it.

Hope this helps.

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Re: "One day at a time"

Posted by aryehthor - 19 Apr 2010 19:29

Last night I was looking at the Attitude Handbook and stumbled upon the link to the video called "Seal of Truth" (which can be found here : video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-7332930594849349840&hl=en#) about a person experiencing heavenly judgement after death before getting resuscitated and coming back to life. It's actually a shockingly eery film because his account is totally in accord with our Sages' descriptions.

Anyway, I bring this up because this movie really gave me a jolt. I've been feeling like junk because I'm imagining being judged by the heavenly tribunal after I die and I know that I have very few good deeds and A LOT of really bad aveiras. In fact, I think a cheshbon would show that I'm severely lacking. This idea has been obsessing me, but it hasn't seemed to actually have a positive effect.

I need to bring things back to this life, and once I've done that, I need to bring things back to today, where I can actually make a difference. If I'm honest with myself, I know I've slacked off and haven't done my best at life. I'm totally governed by bodily desires. The fact the HaShem judges according to effort and not results is no consolation to me. I haven't really tried. But both HaShem and I know that I have great potential and for some reason he keeps giving me wakeup calls, like finding that video last night...

To bring this back to the topic of the thread, I think my only way out of this conundrum is to try a microscopic little bit harder every day, building up "trying" muscles to overcome my now monstrous instincts towards eating, sleeping and lusting. I can't change a lot at a time, but I can change a little over a long time. When I realize that I'm only expected to do a little each day, I feel that instead of being set up to fail, I can get on a path to success whenever I decide to.

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Re: "One day at a time"

Posted by DovInIsrael - 19 Apr 2010 21:51

i would love to take the time to read and think about all the posts on this thread...

but they are all too long, and life is too short.

I need to figure out how I can make it through this day, first.

HASHEM - YOU ARE AIN OD MILVADO...please guide me (and my family and friends on GYE) safely through this day!

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Re: "One day at a time"
Posted by silentbattle - 19 Apr 2010 22:10

Reb Aryeh - that's all hashem wants you to do - every day, build up those muscles a little more, improve just a bit. Every day. it doesn't matter where you are, it doesn't matter where you were. From wherever you are *right now*, you can begin to grow, one day at a time.

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