

**The Shul**  
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August 20, 2016

VaEtchanan – Shabbat Nachamu

16 Av, 5776

### One Moment

“You give us twenty-two minutes and we’ll give you the world,” is the slogan of radio station WINS in New York City.

Every 20 minutes you hear a repeat and update of “traffic and weather together,” sports, and local, national and world news. Yes, you too can find out many interesting, inane or important tidbits of information that may or may not affect the quality of your life.

But, what would you do if you were told that if you gave one hour, you really would be given the world or something even much more valuable?

Judaism teaches: “One hour of turning to G-d and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the World to Come; and one hour of bliss in the World to Come is better than all the life of this world.”

In simple words, getting in touch with who you really are, what your essence really is, and connecting that essence to G-d, together with being good and kind and considerate and compassionate and respectful to others for one hour, is better than the Garden of Eden.

And just how good is the Garden of Eden? Well, one hour of bliss in the Garden of Eden is better than all of the pleasure and delight - both physical and spiritual - that one can experience in this physical world!

So, let’s do some Jewish math. If one hour of turning to G-d and good deeds is greater than an infinite amount (as our souls are eternal and infinite) of the Garden of Eden and one hour of the Garden of Eden is greater than a finite amount (as our bodies are limited and finite) of this world then in one hour of turning to G-d and good deeds we can acquire that which is greater than all of this world and all of the Garden of Eden.

What a deal! How could anyone possibly pass that one up?

But let’s say you can pass it up and you don’t want to spend sixty whole minutes in the above pursuits. What can you do?

You don’t have to give one hour, nor even twenty-two minutes. You can start by giving just one moment!

Judaism also teaches that teshuva - turning to G-d and connecting our essence with its G-dly source - is an instantaneous process. For at every moment, a person can turn to G-d and he is deemed totally righteous.

At the moment that a person makes the decision to change, he has actually begun changing. It’s like when we realize we’re driving in the wrong direction on a highway; even before finding an exit or a place to make a U-turn, we’ve already begun the process of getting back on the right track simply by recognizing that we’ve gone the wrong way.

Of course, if we realize we’ve gone wrong but continue on we won’t reach our destination. But the realization in itself is still part of the process.

So give an hour or even just a minute. It will make a world of difference in your life.

*(from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)*

### Appreciating Our Blessings

This week’s Torah portion once again presents the Ten Commandments, the last of which forbids coveting a friend’s possessions. We are instructed not to desire other people’s wives, houses, fields, slaves, animals or any of their belongings. We can easily appreciate a commandment not to act upon our desires and take things that do not belong to us, but how are we, as mere human beings, expected not to even want them? Is desire not a natural tendency? Furthermore, the Torah teaches us, regarding acts that are forbidden, that one is not held accountable for his desires until he acts upon them. How is it that here the Torah expressly forbids a desire?

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Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra (1089-c.1164, composed classic commentary on entire Bible, famous for its grammatical and linguistic analysis) explains with a parable that one should look at desirable things the way in which a peasant views the daughter of the king. She may contain all the attributes he wants in a wife, but he cannot reasonably expect to marry her anymore than he can expect to grow wings and fly. His desire for her is, therefore, pacified by the reality of his situation. Similarly, explains Rabbi Ibn Ezra, G-d allots each person his portion for the year on Rosh Hashanah. For someone to covet what belongs to another is therefore pointless, because if Hashem chose not to apportion this item to him then it cannot be his anymore than he can grow wings and fly.

Another approach to controlling ones cravings is illustrated in the allegory of the very wealthy king who was also very righteous and pious. One day an old friend asked him, "How is it that despite your wealth and honor you maintain your righteousness? Are you not drawn by the lures of alcohol and other worldly pleasures like everybody else?" The king suddenly became incensed and instructed one of his servants to fill up a cup with wine, and have his friend carry it through all the streets of the city. If even one drop spilled from the cup the friend should be hung. Carefully the man carried the cup through the streets and managed not to spill. When he returned, the king asked him if, as he was walking through the streets, he was drawn to bars, restaurants, and other worldly pleasures. The old friend responded that he was too afraid of spilling to even be distracted by those petty pursuits. Similarly, the king explained, that when he walks through the streets he fears the One Above, focused only what He wants, and is not drawn by external distractions.

Ultimately, when Hashem charges us to not covet our neighbor's possessions He is really reminding us of His dominion and control over the physical world. When we realize that our friend's belongings are entirely out of our realm, divinely ordained not to be ours, our desire to have them disappears. With the concurrent appreciation that all we DO have is a blessing showered upon us by Hashem out of his boundless love and compassion for us, we will find joy and satisfaction in our good fortune, as Ben Zoma taught in the Pirkei Avos/Ethics of our Fathers (4:1), "Who is truly wealthy? He who is happy with portion."

*(by Rabbi Shlomo Jarcaig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)*

**Nachamu, nachamu ami . . . "Take comfort, take comfort, my people."** The haftorah reading describes how God will console the Jewish people from their great sorrows and restore their city to its grandeur. May each of us, wherever we are, take comfort and consolation from this Shabbat, and may voices of peace and joy emanate from our beloved Jerusalem!

*(from www.chabad.org)*

**Yahrzeits This Week:**

Yitzchok Jakobi                      22 Av - Thursday night/Friday                      for father                      David Michael Jakobi

**SHUL DIRECTORY**

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**Davening and Shiurim Schedule**

**Friday — Tu b'Av, 8/19 — 15 Av**  
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

**Shabbat, 8/20 — 16 Av**  
 Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.  
 Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:44 a.m.  
 Berachot Gemora Shiur — 6:25 p.m.  
 Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 7:25 p.m.  
 Ma'ariv — 8:38 p.m.

**Sunday, 8/21 — 17 Av**  
 Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.  
 Shulchan Aruch Shiur — 8:45 a.m.  
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.

**Monday, 8/22 — 18 Av**  
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.  
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.

**Tuesday, 8/23 — 19 Av**  
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.

**Wednesday, 8/24 — 20 Av**  
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.

**Thursday, 8/25 — 21 Av**  
 Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.  
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:30 p.m.  
 Tanya Shiur — 9:00 p.m.

**Friday, 8/26 — 22 Av**  
 Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.  
 Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.  
 Candles — 7:28 p.m.  
 Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.