

Shabbat Mevorchim 06 February 2016 – Mishpatim

I'm going to deviate from my regular Devar Torah today to speak about an item for sale.

Please press on this link: <http://mytikker.com/>

It's an item which went on sale from April last year and has been widely advertised in the media.

It's called the Tikker (TIKKER) watch and it's a timepiece which has been designed to count down to a person's death – calculated, based on the watch owners age and gender and an algorithm; the United States Federal Government uses to calculate life expectancies

The watches creator, a 37 year old former gravedigger called Frederick Colting, says his grandfather's passing made him:

Think about death and the transience of life and he realized that: "nothing matters when you are dead. Instead what matters is what we do when we are alive."

That gave him the idea for what he calls The happiness watch.

Because, if we are aware of death and our own expiration, we will have a greater appreciation for life.

Of course we realise that watch makers are not in charge with what happens in this world. Any more than let's say doctors are in deciding when a person's time is up. The purpose of a watch giving us a little bit of an idea of how long we have left in this world is there solely to inspire and motivate. And they can easily get it wrong. The watch is not taking into account environment; genetic disorders; accidents and life expectancy in individual areas. So you could I suppose definitely outlive the life of your Happiness Tikker watch. Alternatively, it could well outlive you!!

I read these following advertising promotions on the website: mytikker.com:

Anger or forgiveness? Tic toc

Wearing a frown or smile? Tic toc

Happy or upset? Tic Toc

Remember says the ad – it's not really about how much Time you have. It's what you do with it.

Wearing a Tikker is a statement to the world that your biggest priority in **life is living**.

In the words of one commentator "The numbers are but tools in the pursuit of a particular kind of mindfulness; a particular urgency of life."

So – how does Judaism look at such a watch? And, hoping that it is affordable should I purchase one?

I am reminded of the Gemara Berachot 5a-which asks how can one overcome the strength of the Yetzer Hara? The evil inclination. How can you do Teshuvah?

The Talmud then sets forth four strategies:

No 1- fight the yetzer Hara (Evil inclination)

No2 – study torah

No 3 say krias shema with kevana

No 4 if all the above doesn't work then you are advised remember the day of death.

The Chafetz Chaim asks why is it that remembering the day of our death comes last in the equation? He answers that the first three are all dealing with serving G-d through joy and love, feeling privileged that we are standing before the almighty. But when it comes to the last one, remembering the day of death, our own mortality it's about fear- and that is deemed an inferior way of Serving G-d and should be left as a last resort.

I will take it one step further.

Reading Krias Shema or studying Torah can positively effect a change on the person for the good.

Remembering ones own mortality- it depends –how do I approach that fact? Do I say that I've only got X number of years left and I haven't lived it up as much as I would like to, and I use it as an excuse to waste my time on hedonistic pursuits, what we call making a bucket list-since anyway I'm going to die. Or, do I say I've only got X number of years to live am I utilising the years that have been allotted to me to do some good to make a change a difference in myself?

So the fact that I'm awakened to the fact of my own mortality is parev; it's neither milchig or flaishig. It can prompt me to become a better person or it can do the opposite. It can be a conduit to Teshuvah or it could actually lead me to despair, depression and a greater separation from Hashem G-d forbid.

But the main thing is that we are mortal; we are here for but a short time on this world and therefore we need to recognise our purpose, our mission down here.

So a day like today on which I am celebrating my birthday it gives me an opportunity to meditate: what have I achieved in my life until now? What have I yet to achieve? Have I utilised my time to the upmost in my relationships? Have I done some goodness in this world? Or have I immersed my life in frivolities? These are the questions I ought to be asking.

In the Jewish world we have different courses of Torah study that we can take. The most popular has become the daf Yomi- to learn a double page of the Talmud every single day. It's a tall order. It literally takes hours of study to learn the daf every day with Gemarah, Rashi, Tosfot and to retain the information, with the aim of concluding the entire Talmud every seven years.

Then there is something called Amud Yomi – instead of a full double page of the Talmud you do just one side every day which takes 14 years to finish the Talmud.

Then there Daf Shavua which means you finish off one full double side of the Talmud page in a week.

Then there is Halacha yomit – learn one law from Shulchan Aruch every day.

A chapter of Rambam every day. Or for those who want to finish in a year you study three chapters every day.

Or keep it simple – just studying through the weekly sedra with Rashi or Ramban every week.

But the goal however large or small the aim is to grow in ones Torah study to become a better person because the watch is always ticking, can you hear it? Tic Toc Tic Toc

Shabbat Shalom