



Oasis

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Teach Us to Number Our Days

By Eitan Shishkoff

My dad has a folder on the desktop of his computer. In it are instructions, in the form of a chart, addressed to my sister and me about what to do when he or Mom or both of them pass off the scene. He began working on this chart years ago and insisted that we have a copy. He playfully, but accurately called the file "The Inevitable." The reasons for his choice of title are obvious, but worth exploring...and all the more so because his dear wife, my beloved mother, died just a few weeks ago (as of the time of this writing).

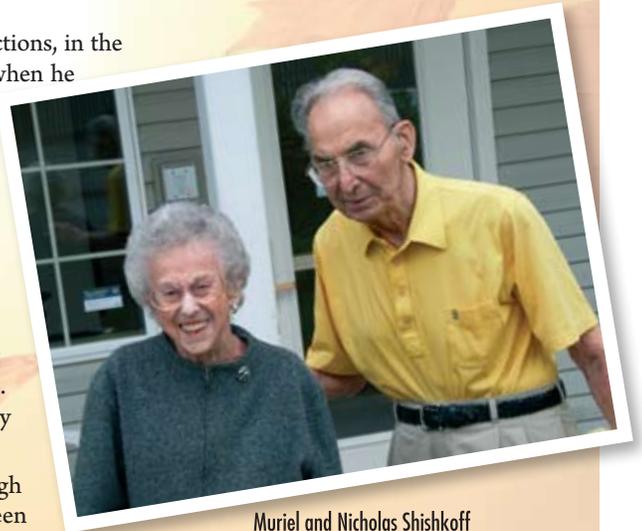
Her passing has caused me to reflect much on the meaning of life and time, death and mortality. I loved my mother very much. She brought me into the world and imparted to me a passion for learning and the pleasure of creativity. Muriel Mendelsohn Shishkoff was a leader in numerous situations throughout her life, including three years as an officer in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Her memory, photos and writings are now precious to me, and part of the legacy my children and grandchildren are enriched by.

My mom lived an extraordinarily long life: 94 years. When we sorted through her possessions I found 8 millimeter film footage from the 1940's that had been transferred to video tapes. What an experience, to see my folks as a young couple, smiling optimistically, handsome, pretty and strong. Dad even did pushups for the camera! I couldn't help comparing those archival images with the aged man and woman of 2011. How dear is life! How rapid do our days elapse! How then can we apply this inexorable, unstoppable reality to the way we live from day to day?

How Shall We Then Live?

That is the very question asked by both the Apostle Peter (II Peter 3:11) and the author Francis Schaeffer. In light of eternity and the approach of life's end we waste plenty of time and energy on things that won't matter in the final analysis. I now find myself re-assessing my priorities. I'm already a graybeard of 63 and every day plenty of people's lives end before or during their 60's. I don't want to waste any more time. I want my days to count for something beyond survival. This is also the prayer of Moses, recorded in Psalm 90. "**The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years...so teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.**" (Psalm 90:10, 12)

What is truly important in life? I was recently given a questionnaire containing the following questions:



Muriel and Nicholas Shishkoff



Muriel and Nicholas in the 1940's

***If you had your life to live over again, what three things would you do differently?**

***If you had six months to live, what five things would you want to do during that time?**

***What three things give you the most meaning to your life?**

These questions are fascinating, sobering and challenging, especially given that we don't really know how much time we have. They provoke me. They make me want to re-order my life in such a way that IF I do have only six months to a year, I will not be sorry to leave life at that point. I want to be glad for the choices I've made. At the same time, we are all faced with the need to ensure physical survival and we all carry responsibility for others too. So, we are frequently trapped within the motions and requirements of survival, living by rote habit/routine. We are busy, pressed by demands. Concurrently, there is a constantly repeated, yet false mantra that material things will bring us the satisfaction our soul craves. This masks what is of true value, enduring beyond our brief lifetime.

Love Defeats Death

Therefore, we must take time to re-evaluate. Where am I headed? What am I living for? Is there any possibility of "cheating death" by the way we live? The Scriptures provide a hopeful, arresting and practical answer. **"Set me as a seal upon your heart...for love is as strong as death."** (Song of Songs 8:6) One phenomenon in all human experience rivals death, and indeed overcomes it. That is love. The author of Hebrews declares that mankind is held in bondage to the fear of death

(Heb 2:14). The Holy One, however, took on flesh and blood in order to defeat Death and set us free. The apostle of love, Yochanan (John) assures us that **"He who abides in love abides in God...there is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear."** (1 John 4:16, 18) When I walk in genuine love, toward God, my family, my friends, my work associates, my fellow congregants and "the man on the street," I am overcoming death and establishing the everlasting Kingdom of Heaven. In his immortal description of love, Paul adds that (in every situation) **"Love never fails."** (1 Cor 13:8)



Eitan and his mother



A young Eitan and his mother

Connie and I have been incredibly blessed to enjoy more than 42 years of married life. In that time she developed a close relationship with Muriel and Nicholas (my father). She was not able to travel with me to participate in our family's memorial time after Mom died. But she wrote a lovely letter for me to read on the occasion. An excerpt illustrates what I am saying about the centrality of love in the face of death.

A Valuable Lesson

I have learned a valuable lesson from the death of beloved family members. It's a truth that we don't think about when we're young and we think that everything revolves around us

and that things will continue to be as they are indefinitely. When a loved one dies, people often (or always) have regrets... things that they did which they shouldn't have, or things they regret not having done. My wisdom is to urge people to live in a way so they won't have regrets at the end of their lives or the lives of others. Keep short accounts, being generous to forgive and quick to ask forgiveness. Don't hold grudges or treat others meanly or disrespectfully. Appreciate each other and express love and tenderness and thankfulness. Enjoy this precious time together. I love you all.

I couldn't have put it better, my dear. In fact, the way of life Connie so succinctly and touchingly described opens the hearts of people everywhere. This is not only wisdom for family relationships, but in all relationships. As disciples of Yeshua we are deeply concerned to help others know and embrace our Messiah. After all, He said **"...this is life eternal, that they might know you, the only true God, and Yeshua H a M a s h i a c h , whom you have sent."** (John 17:3) Yet breaking

through the wall of indifference and unbelief seems at times impossible. Well, here's the bridge to others' hearts: LOVE. Simple, unselfish, practical, sacrificial love is in short supply in today's world. It will not go unnoticed. Then we can make its source known.

Is death inevitable? Of course. Consequently, what I've told my dear dad (though I don't think he's taken my advice yet), is that our preparation needs to go beyond a chart with financial and burial instructions. If our "The Inevitable" file is missing the spiritual preparation – both ours and that of our loved ones – it is incomplete and begs further attention. ✨

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Our Vision:

Tents of Mercy - to participate in today's historic exodus by assisting Israel's returning exiles.

No spectators in the Kingdom - to be a worshiping, sharing community based in homes, equipping each one for service.

Come back Yeshua - to welcome Yeshua home to Israel, by restoring the Jewish roots of New Covenant faith.

A TIMELY

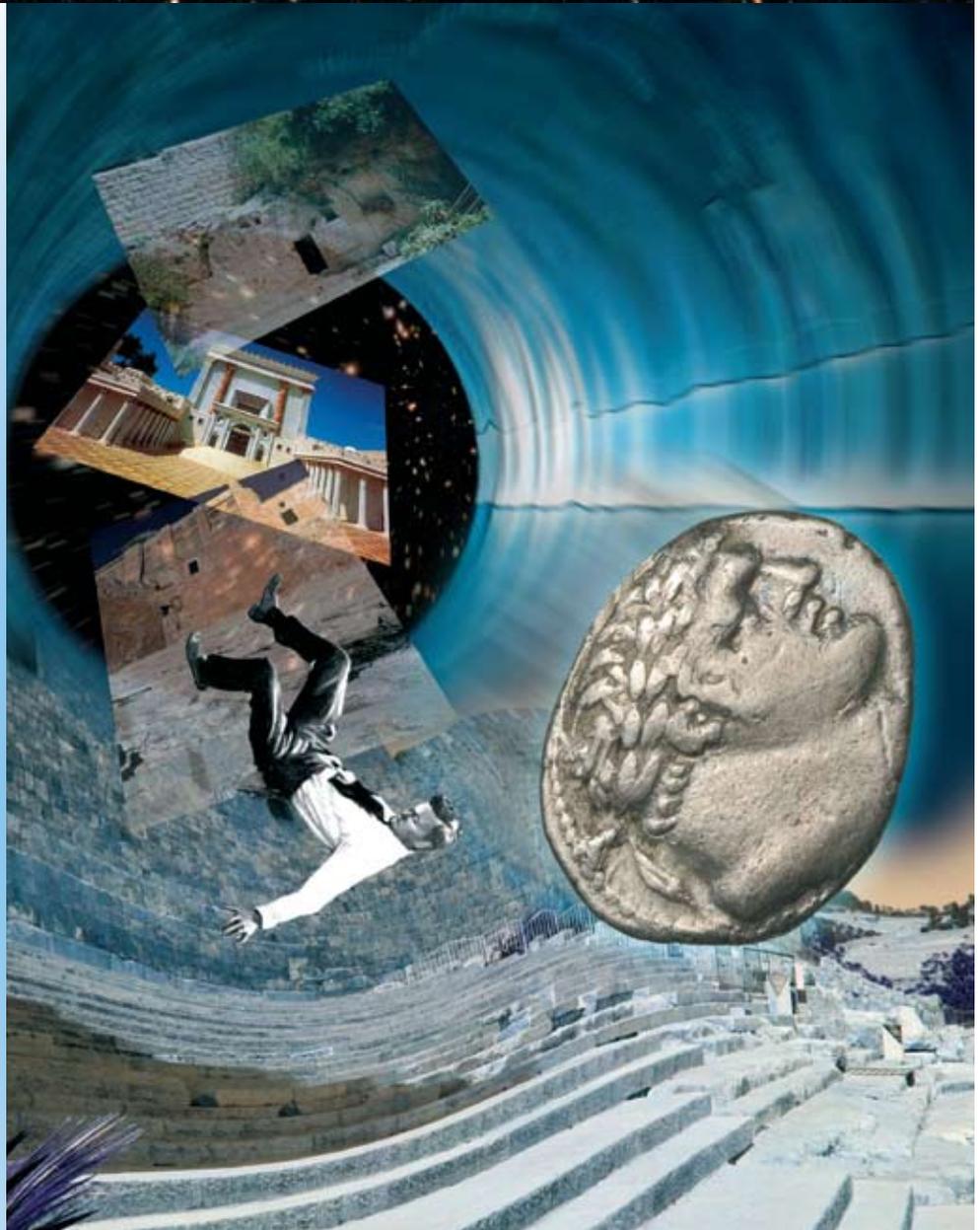
From the time he was a young child, David Kavanitzky had a love for King David. His mother remembers him at the age of 3, driving her crazy, clapping his hands and singing over and over again, “Dahvyd melech Yisrael, chai, chai, v’kayam...” (David, king of Israel, lives, lives, and lives forever.) Any bedtime story was acceptable as long as King David was in it. Though it seemed at times excessive, his family couldn’t complain about his choice of a role model.

The Kavanitzkys were faithful Jews; they went to the synagogue every Sabbath as a family. After his bar mitzvah, David attended a private Jewish high school, intending to study in a Yeshiva after graduation. During his teen years, his studies only increased his love and respect for King David. There was much to admire in the life of this godly, warrior poet who, though he had feet of clay, was a man after God’s own heart.

After two years studying at the yeshiva, David had done well in all of his courses and he excelled in ancient Near Eastern languages. But he was restless and uncertain about his future. He decided to travel to Jerusalem for Shavuot, something he had been longing to do for years. This festival, coming 50 days after Passover, celebrates the wheat harvest and commemorates the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai. Jewish tradition says that King David was born and died on Shavuot. Perhaps this was a subconscious motivation for David’s timing; he probably would not have admitted it, but David hoped that while he was in the land of Israel, somehow David, the king of Israel might have something to say to him.

On Shavuot, religious Jews stay up all night reading portions from every book in the Bible, the Mishnah, and other significant Jewish texts. David chose a small synagogue in the Jewish Quarter for the nightlong reading. He left at around 4 a.m. to pray at the tomb of King David on Mt Zion. The area around the tomb was packed, but David squeezed himself into a corner and quietly read psalms for about an hour. He pondered the paradox of Psalm 16, standing at King David’s tomb while reading the king’s words about not being given over to the grave and decay.

As David left, he heard loud singing from an outer courtyard connected to what was known as the upper room, a Christian holy sight above King David’s tomb. “Davyd, melech Yisrael, chai, chai, v’kayam.” The words made him smile, but he was surprised to see that it was a



SHAVUOT

By Moshe Morrison

group of Korean pilgrims doing the singing. Why were they singing “his” song? Did they know something about King David that he did not? He continued to mull this over as he approached the “Wailing Wall” for the morning service.

By the time the service ended, David was exhausted. He headed for the exit that would take him back up through the Jewish quarter of the old city. Suddenly he felt compelled to walk over to the southern steps of the Temple. He had been there once before and they certainly were interesting, being for the most part, the original stairs worshippers climbed up to enter the Temple 2000 years ago. However, the former entrances had been sealed up for centuries. Even if he could walk through those bricked up gates, David would find himself in the courtyard of two mosques. Why his feet were carrying him there now was a mystery, but he didn’t have the strength to fight it. The area was empty, for which David was grateful. He sat down on the top step, still wrapped in his tallit. Sitting in the warm June sun, David fell asleep.

It was the noise that woke him. There were sounds of voices shouting, the commotion of a crowd, the pounding of sandaled feet - and the sound of the wind. A wind like he had never heard before overpowering every other sound. David was literally swept up in the throng of people running to the Temple entrance - now somehow open. Everything around him had changed. The mosques were gone; in their place stood the awesome sanctuary of the 2nd Temple. Stretched out in front of him were the courts of the Temple filled with thousands of Jews, worshippers from all over the ancient world gathered to celebrate Shavuot. Each one was dressed in the manner of their adopted lands of exile. David also recognized many ancient dialects from his linguistic studies.

This was impossible. Where was he? Who were these people? How did he get here? And what was going on? Was this a movie set? There seemed to be clusters of people gathering around certain individuals who addressed each cluster in a language they understood. Some listened intently, others mocked. Someone shouted something about the speakers being drunk. He glanced at his watch and saw it was only 9 a.m. A man standing next to him noticed and commented in Aramaic on his strange bracelet. David drew his tallit up over his arms in order to cover his obviously different clothing - not that anyone was paying any attention to him.

The wind had stopped and one very rough-looking, dynamic man was speaking. Flanked by 11 of his associates, his voice boomed over the crowd, like the voice of God from Sinai. He seemed to be speaking in Aramaic and biblical Hebrew, but there was something very strange about it. Judging by the faces of those around him, David knew that they all were hearing him and understanding him quite clearly even though for many it was not their mother tongue. David had a reasonably good grasp of Aramaic and ancient Hebrew, but he was amazed that he could understand this man as clearly as if he were speaking English. David was familiar with the tradition that God spoke

70 languages from Mt Sinai simultaneously in order for everyone to understand what he was saying. Was that happening here also?

The speaker (someone said his name was Shimon Kepha**) quoted the prophet Joel, promising that the Spirit of God would be poured out, bringing about supernatural signs and wonders, dreams and prophecies. David understood that he was experiencing a supernatural sign. Somehow he had been brought to the time when the Temple still stood, and whether it was just in his mind or also in his body, he needed to hear what Shimon was saying.

Shimon began to speak of the crucified one and David was sure that this crowd of Jews would tear him apart for mentioning that name in this holy place. But they continued to listen with rapt attention. Then it happened, as if King David stepped out of the even more distant past and spoke to David personally. Shimon was quoting from the psalms but David knew it was the king’s voice.

“I wrote those words,” he seemed to say, “but they’re not about me. I’m not the one who was raised up and freed from the suffering of death. It’s not me that death could not hold. I have been given over to the grave and decay. You visited my tomb just a short while ago and wondered about these very things. These men are witnesses to the exaltation of a greater king, my descendent, Yeshua the Messiah. Hear them.”

Thousands responded to the invitation that followed, “Turn from sin, return to God and be immersed in the name of Yeshua Ha’Mashiach** and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Shimon stressed that the gift was for those near and far. David thought surely he was the one who had come the farthest - 2000 years. Suddenly, aside from the 12, there were over 100 individuals that began guiding about 3000 people to the mikvot***. David, with great joy stepped down into the mikvah. His beloved King David had brought him here and opened his eyes to the truth of Yeshua. The last thing he remembered were the waters closing over his head.

David woke about noon. He found himself leaning against some stones by the ancient mikva under Robinson’s arch at the southwest corner of the support wall of the Temple mount. Surrounding him was the rubble from the Temple’s destruction 2000 years before. He slowly got to his feet. The memory of it all was crystal clear, but had it been a dream? His tallit had been folded up and placed in its velvet bag neatly by his side. When he picked it up he felt something hard inside. He opened the bag and found an ancient silver half shekel, required to pay the obligatory Temple tax. David had seen these coins before in museums and private collections. However, they all looked as if they had been around for 2000 years.

This one looked as if it had been minted last week. ✡

*Hebrew for “Simon Peter or Cephas”

**Hebrew for “The Messiah”

*** Plural for the Hebrew “Mikvah”, ceremonial bathing pool for ritual purification