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To be Born and Die Every Day

From the verse “I shall fill the number of your days,” (“*et mispar yamecha amalai*”)¹ the sages learned that God fills the years of pious individuals from day to day and month to month, so that they are born and pass away on the same date. While there have been *tzaddikim* (pious individuals) in recent generations who have indeed been born and passed away on the same date – for example the Mittler Rebbe of Chabad, Rebbe Dov Ber, whose birthday and day of passing is on the 9th of Kislev – most of the *tzaddikim* were born and passed away on different dates. What can we (“And Your nation are all *tzaddikim*”) learn from this teaching of the sages?

Both a person’s birthday and day of passing have a special *mazal*. *Mazal* is the Divine source from which different powers flow to the soul. (In Hebrew, the word *mazal* shares a root with the word, *nozel*, which means “to drip” or “flow”). On a person’s birthday, his “Upper *Mazal*” shines. This is the power and strength that the soul undertakes to perform its mission when it is sent from Heaven above to our world. “They make it take an oath, be a *tzaddik!*”²

On the day of a person’s passing, his “Lower *Mazal*” shines. This is the day when all of a person’s Divine service ascends from below to above, with all the spiritual assets that he has acquired, clarified and rectified in this world. On that day, it becomes clear to the world what good fortune it had that this righteous person had descended to it and elevated it. [The person who passed away can also wish himself “*mazal tov*” (good *mazal*) for all the spiritual assets that he has acquired.

Actually, a person’s birthday and day of passing express the “descent for the sake of a subsequent ascent” that defines the secret of the descent of the soul into this world. The birthday is the day of descent and the passing is the day of ascent. For a *tzaddik* who merits to fully realize the “descent for the sake of a

¹ Exodus 23:26

² *Nidah* 30b

subsequent ascent," there is no difference between the two days. "Blessed are you when you come and blessed are you when you leave," "May your exit from the world be free of sin as was your entry into the world." When the *tzaddik* leaves this world, he leaves with great spiritual acquisitions.

This is the meaning of the filling of the days of the *tzaddik* from day to day, when the Upper *Mazal* and the Lower *Mazal*, the *mazal* of the descent of the birthday and the *mazal* of the ascent of the day of passing, reach total unity. An allusion to this is in the word *amalai*, (אמלא) "I will fill" from the verse cited above. The first and last letters of אמלא are alef, representing the birth and passing. Between them are the letters *mem* and *lamed*, which equal 70, "the days of our lives are 70 years."³

Chassidut explains that we do not have to wait to die in order to merit the ascent for which our soul descended to the world. The "descent for the sake of a subsequent ascent" is accomplished in and of itself, in the service of our souls in this world. Thus, the inner meaning of "I will fill the number of your days" is daily: We must fill every day of our lives with illuminating, open and pleasurable service of God – by learning Torah, praying and performing acts of kindness. We are born anew every day. Our soul, which ascended to heaven while we slept, descends back into our body renewed and refreshed. When we go to sleep, it leaves our body, depositing our spirit once again in the hands of its Creator.

Chassidut explains that the soul-searching that we do before going to sleep has to remind us of the final account-taking that we will perform before we die. The difference is that we have another day ahead of us tomorrow. A person who justifies (*matzdik*) his day by serving God throughout it, transforms it into a day worth living because of the "descent for a subsequent ascent" that has come to fruition through it. He is the *tzaddik* who is born and dies every day! And by doing so, he induces a fruitful unification of the two *mazals*, which evokes great abundance in all the worlds.

³ Psalms 90:10