

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

PARSHAS
HA'AZINU

בשבת

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

THE GREATEST FORTRESS

Towards the end of *Moshe Rabbeinu's* final address to *Klal Yisrael*, Moshe adjures the nation to, "Remember the days of old, understand the years of every generation."¹ Rashi² explains that the first part of the sentence refers to a general cognizance of Hashem's justice regarding those who have sinned, and the second part is a reference to two particular generations, the days of Enosh, which suffered a partial flood, and the days of Noach, where there was an absolute flood.

Reb Menachem Bentzion Zacks³ (1896–1987) offers another understanding of the term, "Understand the years of every generation." The term for years is שנות which can also be read as 'changes.' Thus, the sentence reads, "Remember the days of old, and understand how to apply them to the changes experienced by every generation."

The Torah is timeless, given by our omniscient Creator. There is no era, generation, or circumstance where the Torah does not apply. However, as the years progress, and *Klal Yisrael* is spread amongst various societies, we sometimes feel challenged by the prevailing culture and way of life. One country may feel a part of our Torah is unusually harsh, while another may feel it is surprisingly lax.

We know as clear as day that the Torah endures. The swirling winds of change may buffet our stalwart citadel of truth, but the light of the Torah stands strong. If we were to crumble in the face of the predominant thinking, we would have never taught the world concepts such as mercy, personal responsibility, and the special relationship one can forge with Hashem Himself.

We have in our hands an exceptional gift, a manual that elucidates with great clarity the world as the Creator envisions it, and what we can do to make that a reality. It is up to us to stand firm and not waver in our recognition of the truth of the Torah.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

Societal influence may be obvious, but in many ways it is subtle. When we feel that we *must* have the newest toy, we are likely being influenced by outside factors.

Of course, the influence can be even deeper. Ideas and doctrines that are foreign to our Torah can interfere with our understanding of the Torah, causing us to revise our perspective in a way that is actually counter to Torah thought. And all this may be very subtle, almost unnoticeable. This being the case, what is a person to do?

There are two approaches that can be helpful in this regard. The greatest aid we have in this battle is education. When we understand the reasons behind what we believe, we are better armed against the pressures of the world.

The second idea may be more powerful than the first. Many people trust an expert even if they don't fully understand why the expert is giving this advice. When we know with clarity that the Torah was given by the greatest Expert, we can be sure that every nuance and idea is true, through and through.

1 *Devarim* 32:7

2 *ibid.* s.v. בִּינו שְׁנוֹת וְזָכַר יְמוֹת

3 *Menachem Tzion* Vol. II, *Devarim* 32:7 s.v. זָכַר יְמוֹת

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One is obligated to study Mussar every day of the year, and not merely during the Yomim Nora'im. - Recorded by R' Chaim Kanievsky shlit"a, in his halachic work *Shoneh Halachos* 603:4

THE MOST IMPORTANT MESSAGE

"Dovid,* we're thinking about putting together a *Sephardic minyan*, are you interested?"

Dovid looked up from putting away his *tefillin*. He was in a hurry, as he had to get to the yeshiva where he taught, but this piece of information was interesting. "I certainly am, what are the details?"

Shimon smiled. "Right now it will only be Friday night, but we're hoping to start Shabbos day soon as well. The *shul* said we can use their basement, and I checked it out, it should suit our needs. One more thing — if you are coming, do you think you can speak?"

Now Dovid wasn't so sure. Coming to *daven* is one thing, but speaking? A speech takes time to prepare, and with the *shuirim* he gave locally at night, his class that he taught in the yeshiva, and the fact that he had a wife and children just made the idea all the more impossible.

"I'm not sure about that, I'd prefer if you find someone else if possible. But I am interested about the *minyan*. Is it this Friday night? What time?"

"We don't have all the details yet, but I'll add you to the Whatsapp group, and we'll tell everyone through that."

Now Dovid smiled. "I don't have Whatsapp. I don't have a smartphone."

"Oh! Ok... I'll just text you, I guess."

Dovid's smile broadened, as he knew what was coming next. "Actually, I don't have texting either."

Shimon paused, at a loss for words. "What? How?"

This conversation came up so often, the words rolled out of Dovid's mouth. "It's simple. I don't have texting for two reasons. I actually find that I'm more productive without it. I'm so busy as it is, the thought of constant interruptions, through Whatsapp or even texting, makes me shudder.

"But even more so, I remember when texting came out, and at the time I noticed how often conversations were interrupted, even for a moment, to respond to a text. I decided then that I don't want my relationship with my wife or children or friends to be like that. When I'm with someone, I give them my attention, no strings attached."

Shimon was incredulous. "But everyone has texting! How do you communicate with anybody?"

"It's true, the fact that everyone has it makes it difficult. And some people get downright annoyed with me. But this is something I am not willing to compromise on, and if I need to speak to someone, I find a way. My phone does make phone calls, you know!"

Shimon laughed. "Very well. We don't know the details yet, but when we do, expect a call from me!"

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- The idea that the Torah should adhere to external culture was a cornerstone of the ancient Sadducee sect, an ideology which the *Chachamim* firmly fought against.¹
- Even the great *Shlomo Hamelech* was taken to task because he had thought certain areas of the Torah were not applicable to his personal circumstances.²

1 R' S. R. Hirsch on *Vayikra* 16:13, s.v. וכסה

2 *Sanhedrin* 21b