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### ***How A Generation Can Sink Lower***

The *Mishnah* in *Avos* (5:2) states, "There were ten generations from the time of Adam to Noach, and they continually were angering [Hashem]."

Certainly, this deterioration in society did not happen all at once. The first generation did not make a drastic change from the proper way. At first, there was just a slight turn from the truth, and then it increased little by little, until the tenth generation, those of the mabul came and acted as they did.

Similarly, the Rambam (Hilchos Avodas Kochavim 1:2) describes how the early generations came to do Avodah Zarah (idolatry): people originally thought that the sun and moon had some power from Hashem; over time, people came to think that these objects created the world.

The Gemara (Bava Basra 75a) tells us, "The elders (in the time of Yehoshua) said, 'The face of Moshe was like that of the sun, and the face of Yehoshua is like that of the moon.'" Why did only the elders realize this? If someone had seen Moshe and also Yehoshua, he knew that Yehoshua was not like Moshe. But if someone only saw Yehoshua, he would think that his radiance was in fact like that of the sun. So we see that people make errors if they do not have the right historical perspective.

The poskim (legal authorities) comment on customs that communities have, and say that some of them are nonsense, and some are actually against the Law! Children think they must hold on to their fathers' customs, and over time, errors get built one on top of the other.

The depth of the problem is that the new generation thinks that what they see is the normal way of life - that it was always this way, and it will always be this way.

As long as they know there is an error, there is hope that it can be fixed. The Torah refers to Hashem hiding Himself with a double concealment ("haster astir"; Devarim 31:18). The Ba'al Shem Tov explains that the problem is not so much that He is concealed, but that the concealment itself is concealed from us, and we do not even feel the need to seek Him. We think He is revealed when He is hidden, and then there is no hope.

### ***Our Generation - The Heels of Moshiach***

Our Rabbis have written hundreds of years ago that our generation is called the ikvesad'meshicha (the "heels" before Moshiach). If this has been true for a long time, we are now at the heels of the heels.

There were errors many hundreds of years ago that our Rabbis tried to remove. But there are other errors that have surfaced in the last few generations. We are here in a world where every average person has what a wealthy man did not have a thousand years ago! One does not see these as luxuries, but as necessities! People get used to these things, and if they lose them, they can even collect charity to replace them, as it says in Kesuvos (67b).

Our Rabbis have taught that the generation of the Mabul would be reincarnated in the period before Moshiach. Is this not being fulfilled before our very eyes...?

Noach looked at his generation, and said to them, "You are in error!" He started building the Ark, and when people asked him about it, he said, "Hashem said that He plans to destroy His world!" He explained to them that "all flesh has corrupted its way" (Bereishis 6:12).

What did they think about that? One who lived then saw his father and grandfather acting that way, so he assumed it must be okay. There were probably "Rabbis" then who also acted that way. "How could we change it all? This is the proper method!" They didn't see the error, because the change from the ninth to the tenth generation was not that apparent.

All of a sudden, one man called Noach comes and says, "You are all wrong!"

They assumed he must be in error, and that they were right. "Perhaps he just imagined his prophecy," they figured. They thought, "We're not much worse than the last generation. Of course, it's always necessary to fix things and the generations tend to decline in level, but not to the extent that he is claiming!"

This is a lesson for how we are today. We may not ask, "What is wrong with us?" but "What is right with us?" Everything is the opposite of how it should be. As Chazal (our Sages) expressed it, "I see an upside-down world" (Pesachim 50a). There is not even a minimal understanding of the true way of life.

### ***Our Lavish Lifestyle***

People here [in America] are not just living in opulent homes, but in palaces! The houses of people here are becoming like graves.

This way of life was not how our ancestors lived. They lived and sought something completely different.

I can practically guarantee that your Gan Eden (Paradise) will not be nice as your houses. The Chovos HaLevavos writes that this world and the next are opponents. If so, they cannot coexist. Where should there be opulence? Either in the Bais HaMikdash (Temple), or in Gan Eden, but there should not be such a thing in this world.

This way of life has become so deep-rooted here that you do not understand that this is not the true way of life. This way of life has been going on for a few generations already.

How much do you work to pay for your house? People are devoting the entire day, their whole lives, to pay for more and more materialism.

If someone from Europe of old would visit this society, he would assume that this is must be Purim, and that gentiles are masquerading as Jews!

What we see is the opposite of how Jews should live.

Why don't you immediately get up and move to the Land of Israel? Isn't it more holy there? Isn't it a little more spiritual there? It is more than a little. So why stay here? Obviously, because there you will have less money, and your home will be a quarter of the size: only five rooms...you want comfort...

Do we all want Moshiach to come and gather us to the Land of Israel?? Do you want to get up and go there when he comes?? If so, why not do it tonight? If we want true life, with spirituality, not with this materialism among the gentiles, are we able to take the first plane to Israel? But people make all sorts of excuses why they don't move.

Life here is all about seeking materialism. You all live like the wealthiest. This entire way of life is wrong!

If an irreligious person would ask, "What is wrong with my life?" the answer would be, "There is a Torah, and unless you guide your life by it, everything is wrong." He is not someone who occasionally sins. He does not even understand that he must live according to the Torah and the *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law). You all understand this. But Hashem has also enjoined us not to destroy the world! If someone pursues materialism, he destroys the world, because its purpose is to reveal His honor. Is Hashem's honor what concerns us all day? If so, then the world is serving its proper function. But if not, we are destructive.

### ***Sell Your House...!***

Our Avos (patriarchs) focused solely on revealing Hashem in their souls and in the whole world. And we must strive to touch their level.

First of all, [if you want to change], you must sell your homes here. You can use the money from it to support yeshivos, kollels, orphans, and widows.

On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) would pray that in the Sharon region, "Their homes would not become their graves." Yet your homes are your graves!

What does Hashem want from you? Sell your house!

But each person will say, "My spouse doesn't want to." Neither one of them wants to.

Does anyone think that Hashem is pleased with these houses??

I understand that you need a home, and you should not live in the street. But does anyone entertain the slightest possibility that he reveals the glory of Hashem in this way? Is this the purpose of life? Yet you invest the best part of your lives for this.

When a person cannot pay the mortgage, he runs to the Rabbi, who advises, "Read the portion of the man (manna) each day." He should have said, "Why did you buy that house? Sell it! What do you need it for?"

### ***Do we really want to change, now that Rosh HaShanah is approaching?***

We are like a driver on the road who might move over a little when he should make a U-turn, because he is going in the wrong direction. You want advice for improving while staying here. It's like a robber who asks for advice in improving his intentions during his work. The robber prays for success in his work too. Does anyone think that this reveals Hashem's name in the world? Obviously, he must find a new job!

We want to keep the same way of life, and use the same "recipe"... We think that if things aren't a certain way, no one will marry your children... I have a simple suggestion: Come to the Land of Israel, where these demands are not made. People live on a much lower material level. Sell your home here and buy a five-room apartment there. Everything will be wonderful.

If we really want true life, we must realize that all of this large city of Manhattan is **falsehood!!** It is a place for people that want comfort and the kind of opulence which belongs only in the *Bais HaMikdash!* You cannot build a life that is totally the opposite of the proper way of a Jew.

It is of course possible that anyone can fail spiritually, as even great people did, but they fell from their high level. They didn't start out creating a completely wrong life.

You can't keep living here in this way, continuing to raise your children in this fashion. You are worried about not fitting in here if you change? So don't stay here!

The Rambam (*De'os* 6:1) says that a person is drawn after the people of his place. Can anyone claim that he is not drawn after the people here? We cannot argue with the Rambam. *Chazal* say (*Avos* 6:10), "I will only live in a place of Torah." If that is true, why won't you get up and leave? We know that we will all leave one day. Will that be when you die, or before, so you can build a proper life?

Hashem has given us free will. But people say, "I'm already in the middle of life. I have a wife and children and their schools, and we cannot change things easily. Maybe next year." What would happen if a child is somewhat ill and needs special care? You would rearrange your entire life accordingly [so you *do* have free will to change things].

Before the new year comes, we must discover what we really want. Do we want to live with Hashem, or do we want to stay with all we have and also introduce a little bit of *Avodas Hashem* (worship of God)?

People say to me, "I'm not earning enough. You know that the economy in America is not good now." I say, "So what is the problem?" They say, "I need money to give *tzedakah* (charity)." But is that really what Hashem wants? Is that your real motive?

Why didn't the Chafetz Chaim and other gedolim (great Rabbis) think of that brilliant idea? They should have left the *Beis Medrash* (house of study) and made money for charity! The answer is that such is not the ideal. If you're already working, then you must give *tzedaka*.

What do we really want for the New Year? Do we want a *shanah*, a change (*shinui*), or the same way of life? Will we realize that we cannot make a big change the way we are?

When Noach said his words thousands of years ago, no one listened, because they were not willing to accept that we are here for an entirely different goal. It is like a teacher who doesn't go in to the classroom but spends his time drinking coffee or talking on his cell phone.

Is our life serving its proper purpose? I'll give an example that applies even in Israel. There are weddings for 3-4 hours in the evening and people do whatever they can to make them bigger and bigger, and spend tens of thousands. Did Avraham marry Sarah also in such a way? Is Hashem really pleased with all this lavishness and these five-course dinners?

When a girl is born and they make a *Kiddush*, people say, "*Mazal Tov*," and fill their bellies with all the delicacies of the world. What is the point? Does anyone really think that Hashem is pleased that everyone is eating more and more *kugel* and *cholent*?!

Although there was a minhag (custom) to make a Kiddush, the real minhag was to thank Hashem, except that in addition, since we have a body, we need to have some food to involve the body also in the simchah (celebration). They really wanted to thank Hashem, but they added a little food.

Where has it come now? They don't thank Hashem anymore. So what remains? Just more and more food. If a person doesn't want to make such a Kiddush, he is criticized for not keeping ancestral tradition. To the contrary, keep the minhag! Gather people who can understand gratitude to Hashem, and also add a little food for the body. But now, the soul of it, the thanks, is gone, and only the food for the body remains.

This was a single example of our whole way of life nowadays. The soul is more and more hidden from people here, and there is more and more body. Had I not seen this with my own eyes, I would not believe it. If one doesn't live here and suddenly visits and sees it, he cannot fathom this. Are these proper, sincerely religious Jews? It is unbelievable.

I hope you recognize the truth, not just because I am saying it. Is this how our ancestors lived? Do you think next year will be better? The only way it will be better is if you do *teshuvah* (return, repentance); tefillah (prayer) and tzedakah alone cannot help.

You have to know how to return. We came as a neshamah, and we will need to return the soul in its purity. Teshuvah means to live as a soul, not only as a body. Otherwise, there is no repentance. One who is bound with the body will be affected by it to sin. If we are unwilling to disconnect from our material perspective, all of our prayer and charity will not help.

### ***Leave Your Fancy Apartment In Manhattan And Move To Eretz Yisrael!***

I realize that my words contradict the norm in this city and such places. The fact that you live this way here does not indicate in the least that this is the truth. The fact that many people are like this does not mean anything. In the generation of the mabul, there were also a lot of people, but almost no one survived.

Do not expect that you will naturally improve over time. You must decide: What do you want? If you want falsehood, there is nothing to talk about. But deep down, we all want truth, but you have never heard anyone who speaks it. Everyone does the opposite.

Now one person has come and spoken differently: Get up, leave everything, separate from all of this, spend your time learning Torah, have a little parnasah (livelihood), and that's all. But definitely not here. This is an impure place. There is no holiness here. There cannot be kedushah (holiness) with so much tum'ah (impurity).

It is so obvious to someone who slightly feels the truth. But this is novel to someone immersed in a certain perspective.

When you come to the Heavenly court, remember that someone once told you that this whole way of life is false. Don't say, "I didn't know." I'm not saying this to make you guilty there. But some people have to stand up and say, "Enough! The party is over!"

You are living like gentiles. Your homes are hardly different from the homes of the gentiles.

### ***Going Out to Eat In Restaurants- True or False?***

How could it be that a Jew and gentile would eat in the same restaurant? How could a Jew eat at a sidewalk café?!

Did Avraham Avinu open a restaurant to fulfill the desires of people? Of course not! But people come in if there is a hechsher (certificate that the food is kosher). I don't understand how a hechsher can be given in a place where there is so much peritzus (promiscuity)! It is like a store where they sell kosher food, but on the way in, you need to bow before an idol. They ask the mashgiach (kosher supervisor) about it, and he says, "There's nothing to worry about; the food is kosher." Everything is *not* kosher!

Do you think Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, or Rav Aharon Kotler zt"l, or one of the Chassidic Rebbes, would come in with his wife to eat in such a place? Of course not! Would our Avos have gone to such places? They would rather have died than step foot in such a place! The fact that we need to speak about this shows how low we have fallen.

### ***Nothing But The Truth***

I am not here to give an inspirational talk. This is like seeing someone who is about to fall, or has fallen, in a river and doesn't realize. You won't say, "Inspire yourself; Elul and Rosh HaShannah are coming." You'll say, "You are falling! Save yourself immediately!"

All the lecturers and tzaddikim (righteous people) cannot help you with speeches. You must decide to separate from everything. If a person and his family decide to get up, take their things, and leave this place, because it is a place of tum'ah, and he wants to go to the Holy Land, he starts to build a true life. But if you want to stay here and try to improve in the midst of all this commotion of everyone chasing after money, you would have to be on an incredibly high level to succeed.

I hope that those who were here will tell others that a strange man came from Yerushalayim and said strange things. At least this way, other people will hear about it. Let them hear that someone says that this is not the right way to live.

I don't know if any of you will heed these words. But I know that each of us has a true choice: either to live in falsehood - or to get up and live in a place of holiness, the place of our ancestors, and there to try to connect to Hashem by putting effort into Torah, mitzvos, and good deeds, with very little time for parnasah.

I hope your hearts will be opened and each of you will feel the truth on his own, and we will seek the King of the World, the Creator, blessed be His Name.

Shanah Tovah to all.

(**Note:** The Rav gave a similar speech in another location addressing women. [Click to read an additional point »](#) [1])

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#### **Links**

[1] <http://www.bilvavi.net/english/address-women>