

Psalm 90: Carpe Diem!

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Seize the day; it is all you have to serve Hashem to the best of your abilities. Don't worry excessively about the future!

Psalm 90: Moshe Rabbeinu's Personal Message of Carpe Diem – Part 3

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This series of posts will discuss how to make the most of each יום (yom, day) by closely examining Psalm 90.

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch adds this succinct commentary on the 5 verses containing the word יום (yom, day):

We short-lived men, whose vision encompasses only the brief span through which we live and which we can survey, cannot

grasp the significance of time (v. 4). All our aims and plans remain unfulfilled, like a thought unspoken (v. 9). Days amount into years and lifetimes; longevity is viewed with pride but in reality is nothing but idle travail for undesirable treasure (v. 10). Teach us to count our days, seeking the genuine reasons for our existence daily. Happiness lies in the blissful certainty of loyalty to G-d and faithful pursuit of His commandments twenty-four hours by sixty minutes by sixty seconds—the sum of each day (v. 12). Hashem trains us with trouble and travail to teach us how utterly dependent we are daily and through the sum of our lives (v. 15).

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Carpe Diem

Carpe diem first appears in the Odes, lyric poems composed by the Roman poet Horace in 23 BCE. *Carpe* means to pluck, harvest, or reap, and so *carpe diem* means to pluck the day, an agricultural term referencing the harvesting of grapes. Horace uses the metaphor of picking flowers or grapes to suggest living for today because life is short and future plans may not come to fruition. And so the ancient meaning of *carpe diem* was to live in the moment's fullness and pluck the day, as there was no guarantee of tomorrow.

Being hedonistic, the Romans understood *carpe diem* as “party today because who knows what the future will bring?” However, the Torah value is markedly different. Starting with Moshe Rabbeinu and continuing through all the teachings in the Torah, the tzaddikim teach and inspire us to pluck the day by doing many mitzvot, studying Torah, and engaging in many acts of kindness.



Seize the day; it is all you have to serve Hashem to the best of your abilities. Don't worry excessively about the future because Hashem is only good, promising to provide what you need and never sending you what you cannot handle. Follow this version of *carpe diem*. You will earn your heavenly reward day-by-day and take part in the eventual redemption of the Jewish Nation and the world.

Mitzrayim (Egypt) was a place of hedonism as well. So, we see a profound message being expressed in Psalm 90 by Moshe Rabbeinu.