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**For parshas behalasocho 5784**

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**How to Become a Better Student of Torah**

**By Daniel Keren**



One of the featured speakers at the recent Memorial Day Hakhel Event in Flatbush was Rabbi Doniel Osher Kleinman, Rav of K’hal Nachlas Dovid and author of the multi-volume Sifrei Koveitz Halachos. The topic of his lecture was “The Halachos of Talmud Torah.”

He began his lecture by declaring that Talmud Torah (the mitzvah of studying Torah) is an inyan (topic or matter) that is the most widely known and observed mitzvah in the Torah. The Pele Yoetz, however says that Talmud Torah is one of the most ignored mitzvahs.

The Shulchan Aruch (the Code of Jewish Laws) based on the Rambam’s Hilchos Talmud Torah declares that every Jew is obligated to fulfill the mitzvah of studying Torah, whether rich or poor; whether healthy or sick; whether one has a wife and children to support; and one has an obligation to set a kavuah (a fixed time to study Torah during the day or night.)

**Dispute About the Lechem Hapanim (the Permanent Bread)**

There is a dispute in the Gemora about the Shulchan Hatamid (the Table) in the Beis Hamikdash (the Holy Temple in Jerusalem) that held the Lechem Hapanim (the Permanent bread). On Shabbos the Kohanim (the Jewish priests) would remove the Lechem Hapanim and other Kohanim would place the new holy bread.

One opinion says that as one set of Kohanim were taking out the week-old bread, simultaneously another group of Kohanim were at the same moment replacing the Lechem Hapanim bread at the very moment so that there should not a moment when the Shulchan/Table was lacking the Lechem Hapanim. This is the psak, opinion of the Rambam.

Rav Yossi disagreed and said that one could remove the Lechem Hapanim in the morning on Shabbos and place new bread on the Shulchan later closer to nightfall, so long as the precept is not out-of-mind.

Likewise, one’s obligation to study Torah is fulfilled, Rabbi Kleinman said by establishing a kavuah, a set time tin the morning and night, so long as this obligation to learn Torah is not out of one’s mind each day.

**The Ignoramus’ Recital of the Shema Yisroel**

Rashi teaches that an *am ha’aretz* (an ignoramus) can fulfill his obligation to study Torah by his obligatory recitation of Kriah Shema (the recitation of the Shema Yisroel) in the morning and later at night. If the ignorant Jews hear this halacha, it could inspire him to encourage his children to strive to become Talmidei Hachamim (Torah scholars). It may even inspire the *am ha’aretz* to push himself to learn more than just relying on his recital of Shem Yisroel twice a day.

The Mishna Berurah says that the basic mitzvah of Talmud Torah has no shiur, measurement and the obligation to learn Torah is all-day long if he has any free time. The obligation for fulfilling the mitzvah of Talmud Torah is something that each and every one (Jewish males) of us have.

Many times, we have the perception that learning Torah in depth isn’t for us. We sometimes think that this is for those with white beards (the elderly who are retired with plenty of free time) or for those who are tzadikim (extremely pious). But this, Rabbi Kleinman, said is a mistake. We limit and underestimate ourselves. Everyone with an ArtScroll Gemora can learn the entire shas in less than the seven a half years [of the Daf Yomi cycle.]

Rabbi Kleinman declared that Moshiach is coming. Do you think Moshiach is going to care about what type of cars that we drive? Or what type of house we live in? He is going to want to know how long we learn [Torah] each day! If you want to see Moshiach, those who learn the most Torah will most certainly be in the front of the long line.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of The Jewish Connection.*

**Rav Avigdor Miller on**

**Is Rus a Justification**

**For Intermarriage**

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Today when we hear about intermarriage they say that’s the worst thing that could happen to the Jewish people. Yet we could infer from the story of Rus that we could get a great prize by having the malchus Beis Dovid?

If a person will dive off a boat in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean during a hurricane, let's say, and he'd be submerged for a minute or two and he'd come up holding a casket of jewels, so therefore would you say that there's any virtue of diving off a boat in the middle of a hurricane in the Atlantic Ocean?

No. It's just his dumb luck. That's all. You don't dive off to look for jewels in the middle of a raging ocean and anybody who would be happy with an intermarriage because of the hope that it will bring back a jewel, probably will bring up an oyster.

And so, in this case it was min haShomayim. It was rigged up. It was one of the mysteries of history that Hakadosh Baruch Hu had planned and that's why it's written in Megillas Rus. But nobody else should attempt to emulate Machlon and Chilyon because what happened to them will happen to him. And if he won't be destroyed in this world, he'll be destroyed in the World to Come. He’s much better off if he's destroyed in this world – at least he'll have the Next World.

And anybody who even countenances such a thing – it means if he's even friendly to relative who has an intermarriage among his children chalilah – then that person who is friendly towards them is also an accomplice and is going to lose out. The only way to deal with such a situation is the way Naomi dealt with it while her sons were still alive. That's hostility and opposition. (Tape #264 – May 1979).

*Reprinted from an email of Toras Avigdor, based on the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller, zt”l. Adapted from (Parshas Naso 5784)*

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Behalotcha 5784**



It is a terrible personality trait to be a complainer. It is hard to live with complainers at home, in the workplace, and in the community. In this week’s parsha we are made aware of the dismal consequences of complaining. Rashi points out that the complainers in the desert had no real basis for their complaints. They were just dissatisfied somehow and so they complained against Moshe and eventually against G-d.

Moshe in his final oration to the Jewish people in the book of Dvarim will himself complain that the people of Israel are unnecessarily quarrelsome and a bunch of complainers. There is a Jewish joke, more ironic than funny, about three Jewish matrons eating lunch at a restaurant in New York and the waiter approached them in the middle of their meal and asked them “Is anything alright?”

Rashi’s interpretation of the lack of justification for complaints in the desert portrays for us a very serious character defect within the Jewish people. They are chronic complainers and a vast majority of the time their complaints are baseless. The many complaints in the desert follow the usual pattern – food, Moshe’s leadership, the unfairness of life and the difficulty of living up to the role of being the chosen people.

All through First Temple times we find that the prophets of Israel were barraged with complaints about their mission and words. The prophets were the solution to Israel’s troubles. The people complained that they were the problem. Destruction and exile came in the wake of the unjustified complaints.

I am not a mental health professional by any stretch of imagination. Yet my instinct tells me that chronic complainers are not happy with themselves and project that dissatisfaction outwards on events and humans that are not the cause of their original dissatisfaction. There is something deep within us that requires self-justification and self-empowerment.

When that need is fulfilled, we are happy, and optimistic. When that ingredient in our soul and psyche is absent, we are complainers, carpers, sad and sometimes destructive people. We recite in our daily morning prayers the statement as to how fortunate we are to be the special people that G-d has chosen to lead the world in service to Him. We may all recite that prayer but how many of us are really convinced in our heart of hearts of its truth?

The rabbis of the Talmud harshly disdained the chronic complainer – “Is it not sufficient for you that you are alive?” Nothing is perfect in life but that is not a justification for complaints. We are bidden to deal with problems to the extent that we can and not to dwell on them and constantly complain about them. We have to seek an inner peace that will allow us an optimistic attitude and an avoidance of complaints. Our parents, schools and society should somehow concentrate on achieving this goal with our coming generations.

Shabbat shalom.

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**The Perpetual Light of the Menorah and the Jewish Home**

**From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah portion, Beha'alotcha, opens with the words "When you light the lamps."

Aaron the kohen (priest) was commanded to kindle the menora in the Sanctuary every day. The menora was required to burn at all times, as the Torah states, "To cause a light to burn perpetually."

Just as Aaron lit the menora in the Sanctuary, so is every Jew required to illuminate his home and surroundings with the Torah's holy light.

**Every Jew is Transformed into a “Kohen”**

Aaron was a kohen, but so too is every member of the Jewish people, as it is written, "You shall be to Me a kingdom of priests." The giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai transformed every Jew into a "kohen."

The menora stood in the Sanctuary (and later in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem). Similarly, every Jewish home is a "Sanctuary" to G-d. The verse "I shall dwell in their midst" means that G-d dwells within each and every Jew; hence, every Jewish home is an abode for the Divine Presence.

The light that Aaron kindled was "perpetual"; so too must the light in every Jewish home be always shining. The Torah's light of holiness must burn night and day, and pervade all corners of a Jewish residence.

All Jews, and especially Jewish children, have the power to imbue their homes with holiness. How is this accomplished? By expressing an awareness of G-d every moment of the day.

As soon as a Jew opens his eyes in the morning he says "Modeh Ani ("I give thanks to You"); whenever he eats he recites the proper blessings both before and after. Throughout the day he conducts himself according to the Torah's laws, and at night he says the "Shema" ("Hear O Israel") before going to sleep.

**“A Mitzvah is a Candle, and the Torah is Light”**

The Torah and its mitzvot are likened to light: "A mitzva is a candle, and the Torah is light." Indeed, the Torah and its commandments are the medium through which the Jew is able to illuminate the "Sanctuary" in his home.

Lighting the menora is also associated with the Final Redemption with Moshiach:

The menora that stood in the Sanctuary and the Holy Temple was composed of seven lights, as it states, "The seven lamps shall give light."

When Moshiach comes, the Jews who are dispersed around the world will return to Israel in seven paths, as is written in the Book of Isaiah, "And [G-d] shall wave His hand upon the river...and smite it into seven streams."

Thus, disseminating the light of Torah and mitzvot in our own homes serves to hasten Moshiach's coming with the Final Redemption, may it happen at once.

*Adapted from Volume 23 of Likutei Sichot*

*Reprinted from the Parashat Beha’alotcha 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn. Adapted from Volume 23 of Likutei Sichot.*

**Thoughts that Count**

*Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you light (Beha'alotcha) the lamps* (Num. 8:2)

As Rashi notes, from the word "Beha'alotcha," which means "going up," our Sages derived that there was a step in-front of the menora upon which the priest stood. A question is asked: If the menora was only three cubits tall, and therefore within easy hands-reach, why was it necessary for the priest to stand on something? The answer is that Aaron wore the special headdress of the High Priest, with its golden plate on which the words "Holiness to the L-rd" was engraved. As Jewish law forbids the High Priest from raising his hands higher than the gold plate, a step was placed in front of the menora to make his service more comfortable. *(M'lo HaOmer)*

*And Aaron did so (*Num. 8:3)

As the Midrash explains, "This comes to declare the praise of Aaron, that he did not act differently" (i.e., that he carried out everything G-d commanded him to do in an exact manner." Another person in the same situation might have lost his composure: spilled the oil, dropped the wicks, etc. Aaron, however, did not allow his intense emotion to interfere with the performance of his holy service. *(Kedushat Levi)*

*Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion; for behold I come, and I will dwell in your midst, says the L-rd* (from the haftorah, Zech. 2:14)

Our Sages taught that the Divine Presence only rests upon someone who is joyful. G-d therefore advises the Jewish people to rejoice, as preparation for His presence among them. *(Tzavarei Shalal)*

*For behold, I will bring My servant Tzemach* (literally "Branch") (from the haftorah, Zech. 3:8)

Why is Moshiach referred to by this name? To emphasize that even though it may seem as if the branches of the royal House of David have been cut off, the "root" still exists, and when the proper time arrives, Moshiach, a descendent of King David, will be revealed. In the same way that a root can lie dormant and concealed for many years, yet germinate and develop into an entire tree under the right conditions, so too will Moshiach arise to redeem the Jewish people when G-d determines the right time has come. *(Malbim)*

*Reprinted from the Parashat Beha’alotcha 5761/2001 edition of L’Chaim*

**The Impediments to Peace**

The Alter Rebbe (Rabbi Schneuer Zalman of Liadi, 1745-1812) explains that the cause of machloikes (disputes or quarrels) is the narrowmindedness of being unable to tolerate another’s perspective; achdus (unity) comes from broadmindedness, the ability to accommodate two approaches to an issue.

Elsewhere, the Alter Rebbe writes that machloikes comes about because of a negative spirit that enters one’s heart, causing him not to trust his friend, despite that person’s friendship. Another cause of machloikes: Instead of focusing on quarreling with himself in order to overcome his yetzer hara, a person diverts that energy to quarreling with others.

*Reprinted from the Parashat Bamidbar 5784 email of The Weekly Farbrengen.*

**Don’t Be Surprised**

**By Antisemitism**

**By Elliot Mathias**



***Antisemitism throughout Jewish history is the norm. The Golden Age of American Jewry is the aberration.***

“I can’t believe what is happening on college campuses.”

“It’s crazy that this could be happening in 2024.”

“I thought the world had evolved. To see antisemitism today is shocking.”

These are sentiments I have heard from many Jewish friends and family, people concerned, frightened, and confused by the onslaught of Jew hatred seen today across the United States.

My response: We shouldn’t be surprised. Bothered and upset? Yes. Angry and concerned? Yes. But surprised? No, for the following three reasons:

**1. Antisemitism is woven into Jewish history.**

The last 75 years of Jewish history have been an aberration, not the norm. The sentence from the Passover Seder, “In every generation they rise against us to destroy us”, is not meant as a dramatic exaggeration – it’s a fact.

From our slavery in Egypt, where it was said about the Jews that “if a war will occur, they may join our enemies” (Exodus 1:10); to Persia after the destruction of the First Temple where Haman attempted a genocide against the Jewish people; to the Greeks who imposed social segregation against the Jews for rejecting pagan ways; to the expulsion of Jews from Rome in 139 BCE; to thousands of Jews killed in the Alexandrian pogrom in 38 CE; to the banning of circumcision by the Romans Emperor Hadrian in 119 CE; to Constantine’s expulsion of Jews from Jerusalem in 325 CE; to Jewish book burnings in Persia in 351 CE; to the centuries of Jews being forced to convert to Christianity or face expulsion; to the decapitation of 600 Jews in Medina in 624; to the pogroms committed by both Christians and Muslims over the centuries; to the Crusades of the 11th and 12th centuries; to the frequent blood libels across Europe; to the expulsions of Jewish communities from almost every country across Europe; to the burning of the Talmud ordered by Pope Innocent IV in 1244; to the Black Death persecutions that destroyed entire Jewish populations across Germany in the 14th century; to the Inquisition of the Middle Ages; to the Hebron and Tzfat attacks of 1517; to Martin Luther writing “On the Jews and Their Lies” in 1543; to the massacre of over 100,000 Jews by Ukrainian Cossacks in the mid 1600’s; to the blood libel of Damascus in 1840; to the Dreyfus Affair in France in 1894; to the Kiev pogroms of 1919; to the printing of Henry Ford’s “The International Jew” in 1920; to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935 leading to the murder of six million Jews in the Holocaust.

And I left almost everything out – the list is endless. This is the history of the Jewish People.

Since the Holocaust, the majority of the Jewish community in the west – certainly in the United States – has not faced real antisemitism. Possibly due to a feeling of guilt because of the Holocaust, antisemitism laid dormant.

For anyone born from 1970 on, antisemitism was something of the past, read about in textbooks, or maybe in the testimony of grandparents who had family in the Holocaust.

How wrong we were. Antisemitism is a pillar of Jewish history; it’s the norm. The Golden Age of American Jewry is the aberration.

**2. Our enemies are upfront. We should believe them.**

Another reason we shouldn’t be surprised by the outward antisemitism of today is that the haters of the Jewish People have been very clear and vocal about their intentions. Many have just not wanted to listen.

Adolf Hitler was evil, but he was not crazy. Crazy people pick up a gun and start shooting people. Adolf Hitler had a plan. He said and wrote exactly what he intended to do in his book *Mein Kampf* and elsewhere. Many didn’t want to believe him or take his words literally. But he meant every word.

**Our enemies today are also very clear.**

The Hamas charter written in 1988 quotes a Muslim hadith saying, “The Day of Judgment will not come until Muslims fight the Jews, when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say, 'O Muslim, O servant of G-d, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him.'”. Their intentions are clear.

Iranian leader Ayatollah Khamenei in 2014 described Iran’s 9-point plan to destroy Israel, stating the “barbaric” Jewish state “has no cure but to be annihilated.” Pretty clear.

Nick Fuentes, a popular right-wing Christian nationalist has stated that Christians are in a holy war with Jews saying, “We're in a holy war and I will tell you this. Because we're willing to die in the holy war, we will make them die in the holy war. And they will go down." He’s not mincing his words.

When Israel haters are screaming on campuses for the erasure of Israel through chants like “From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be Free”, “By any means necessary” and “Long live the Intifada” – we should believe them. They mean what they’re saying – they want to destroy Israel.

**3. This is what Judaism says will happen.**

Perhaps the most surprising reason we shouldn’t be surprised about the wave of antisemitism is that Judaism predicted this would happen. In the Torah, as well as the Talmud, multiple references to antisemitism are found.

In Leviticus (26:36), the Torah prophesizes that Jews in exile will live under tremendous fear and horror: “I will cast a faintness into your hearts in the land of your enemies. The sound of a rustling leaf shall put you to flight. Fleeing as though from the sword, you shall fall though none pursues.”

In Deuteronomy (28:32), the Torah continues, “You will become an object of horror, an example, and an abject lesson among all the nations.”

And in Deuteronomy (28:65-67), the Torah says: “Yet even among those nations you shall find no peace, nor shall your foot find a place to rest. The L-rd will give you there an anguished heart and eyes that pine and a despondent spirit. The life you face shall be precarious; you shall be in terror, night and day, with no assurance of survival. In the morning you shall say, ’If only it were evening!’ and in the evening you shall say, ’If only it were morning!’ – because of what your heart shall dread and your eyes shall see.”

According to the Torah, Jewish existence in the exile will be one of persecution and terror.

Why should this be?

**A World With or Without G-d?**

There are two traditional approaches, and each one presses some politically incorrect buttons. So, gird yourself and invest some time delving into them before rejecting them out of hand.

The Torah’s descriptions of terror in exile is a result of what will happen if the Jewish people remove G-d from the picture. If instead of seeing G-d’s Hand in our personal lives and national events, we view events as random and happenstance, G-d says He will fulfill our wish. “You want to take Me out of the picture, then fine, I’ll remove Myself and see how that goes for you.” When G-d’s protection is removed, chaos ensues. The solution? To realize there is an Infinite, Loving Being Who watches over every iota of existence, and that we are only protected from the whims of the world if we have G-d’s protection.

Of course, we must do our part in confronting antisemitism. Lobbying our elected officials, writing letters to the editor, organizing protests, posting on social media, speaking up whenever we can. This is all crucial. But the Torah is teaching that our ultimate success in battling antisemitism is ensuring that G-d protects the Jewish People by our choosing to bring Him into our lives.

**Source of Hatred, Source of Pride**

The second explanation for antisemitism is explored in the Talmud. The question is asked: Why is the mountain where the Jewish People received the Torah called “Sinai”? The Talmud answers: Because when G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish People, hatred “*sinah*” in Hebrew, towards the Jews descended. Why would receiving the Torah solicit hatred? Because the Torah conveys an all-encompassing code of ethics and morality that demand selflessness, humility, sacrifice and self-restraint. While many embrace this opportunity for self-perfection and making the world a better place, many reject the responsibilities and expectations as too onerous and burdensome. Stamping out the message requires stamping out the messenger – the Jewish People.

**Ironically, antisemitism can spur Jewish pride.**

The Talmud’s message is that antisemitism can teach us about the essence of the Jewish People. If they hate us because of the morality and ethics we have brought to the world through the Torah, then we have the opportunity to respond by embracing the mission of the Jewish People.

Ironically, antisemitism can spur Jewish pride. When it becomes clear that the battle is against the ethics and morals the Jewish People represent, then we see the nobility and importance of standing up against antisemitism. The answer to antisemitism isn't to run and hide; it’s to be even more strong and proud to part of the Jewish People's role of being a light onto the nations.

*Reprinted from the current website of aish.com*

**Herman Wouk’s Shabbat**



**Herman Wouk (1915-2019)**

*In This Is My G‑d*, Pulitzer Prize winning author Herman Wouk describes his own experience with Shabbat observance:

The Shabbat has cut most sharply athwart my own life when one of my plays has been in rehearsal or in tryout.

The crisis atmosphere of an attempt at Broadway is a legend of our time, and a true one; I have felt under less pressure going into battle at sea.

Friday afternoon, during these rehearsals, inevitably seems to come when the project is tottering on the edge of ruin. I have sometimes felt guilty of treason, holding to the Shabbat in such a desperate situation. But then, experience has taught me that a theater enterprise almost always is in such a case. Sometimes it does totter to ruin, and sometimes it totters to great prosperity, but tottering is its normal gait, and cries of anguish are its normal tone of voice.

**Taking Leave of His Colleagues on Friday Afternoon**

So, I have reluctantly taken leave of my colleagues on Friday afternoon and rejoined them on Saturday night. The play has never collapsed in the meantime. When I return, I find it tottering as before, and the anguished cries as normally despairing as ever. My plays have encountered in the end both success and failure, but I cannot honestly ascribe either result to my observing the Shabbat.

Leaving the gloomy theater, the littered coffee cups, the jumbled scarred-up scripts, the haggard actors, the knuckle-gnawing producer, the clattering typewriter, and the dense tobacco smoke has been a startling change, very like a brief return from the wars.

**His Wife and Boys are Dressed in Holiday Clothes**

My wife and my boys, whose existence I have almost forgotten in the anxious shoring up of the tottering ruin, are waiting for me, dressed in holiday clothes, and looking to me marvelously attractive.

We have sat down to a splendid dinner, at a table graced with flowers and the old Shabbat symbols: the burning candles, the twisted [challah](https://www.chabad.org/theJewishWoman/article_cdo/aid/323423/jewish/Taking-Challah.htm) loaves, the stuffed fish, and my grandfather’s silver goblet brimming with wine. I have blessed my boys with the ancient blessings; we have sung the pleasantly syncopated Shabbat table hymns.

The talk has little to do with tottering ruins. My wife and I have caught up with our week’s conversation.

**A Retreat into Restorative Magic**

The boys, knowing that Shabbat is the occasion for asking questions, have asked them. We talk of Judaism. For me, it is a retreat into restorative magic.

Shabbat has passed much in the same manner. The boys are at home in the synagogue, and they like it.

They like even more the assured presence of their parents.

In the weekday press of schooling, household chores, and work—and especially in play producing time—it often happens that they see little of us. On Shabbat, we are always there, and they know it. They know too that I am not working and that my wife is at her ease. It is their day.

It is my day, too. The telephone is silent. I can think, read, study, walk, or do nothing. It is an oasis of quiet.

One Saturday night, my producer said to me, “I don’t envy you your religion, but I envy you your Shabbat.”

*Reprinted from the current website of Chabad.Org. Excerpted from the article “Sabbath: Shabbat” by Mendel Kalmenson and Zalman Abraham.*