



Bet Haraah בית הוראה Shaarei Ezra שערי עזרא

Parshat Kedoshim

Zmanim for New York:

Candle Lighting: 7:43pm

Shabbat ends: 8:50pm

R"T 9:15pm

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UNIVERSITY PROTESTS: EMPOWERING TRUTH ABOVE POPULARITY

WRITTEN BY RABBI SHAY TAHAN

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At various colleges across the nation, student demonstrations have sprung up in response to the Israel-Hamas conflict, following the lead of activists at Columbia University. These protests urge universities to distance themselves from entities supporting Israel's actions in Gaza, and in some instances, from Israel altogether. Since the initial detentions at Columbia on April 18, law enforcement has apprehended hundreds nationwide. While authorities seek resolutions as the academic year draws to a close, students remain steadfast in their activism at numerous prestigious universities.



Notably, teachers and professors are increasingly standing alongside students, emphasizing the importance of safeguarding students' right to protest and advancing their cause.

Upon witnessing the increasing support for this protest among academia, even at the risk of arrest and potential professional consequences, one may ponder whether their stance holds validity. After all, these are some of the foremost academic institutions in the world.

This sentiment is particularly poignant in light of the teachings of our sages, who emphasized the importance of valuing the wisdom of all people, regardless of their background. Perhaps, then, we should indeed take heed and reconsider the grievances being voiced against us.

אם יאמר לך אדם: יש חכמה בגוים - תאמן, הדא הוא דכתיב (עובדיה א') "והאבדתי חכמים מאדום ותבונה מהר עשו." "יש

תורה בגוים אל - תאמן, דכתיב "מלכה ושריה בגוים אין תורה."

"If a person says there is wisdom among the non-Jewish nations - you can believe it. If a person says there is Torah among the non-Jewish nations - don't believe it." (מדרש איכה פרק ב, יג)

The Prophet Jeremiah mourns in the Book of Eicha (איכה פרק ב פסוק ט) that there seems to be a lack of Torah, symbolizing morality, among the nations. However, our sages highlight that while they may not pos-

sess Torah morality, they do possess wisdom.

To address this dilemma, let's turn to the perspective of the Torah on this matter. The pasuk in our Torah portion (קדושים) emphasizes the importance of honoring

not only the elderly but also those who possess wisdom (ויקרא יט, לב). Interestingly, in this context, "wise person" encompasses even young scholars. However, the Gmara (קידושין לבא, וראה פרש"י) raises the question of whether an old wicked person should also be honored, to which it responds in the negative, asserting that we

honor only those who are wise in both knowledge and morality.

We can initially interpret this on a surface level as the Torah discouraging respect for immoral individuals. However, delving deeper, the Torah conveys a profound message: wisdom devoid of morality lacks true wisdom and thus does not merit respect. Let's elaborate on this idea.

In the Amidah prayer we beseech for wisdom, acknowledging that it is divinely bestowed upon humanity:

אֱתָהּ חוֹנֵן לְאָדָם דַּעַת וּמִלְמִיד לְאִכּוּשׁ בִּינָה. וְחֲנִנּוּ מֵאַתֶּר חֲכָמָה בִּינָה וְדַעַת: בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' שֵׁם חוֹנֵן הַדַּעַת

You graciously bestow divine understanding to man (Adam), & teach mortals wisdom; graciously bestow upon us from Yourself knowledge, wisdom & divine understanding. Blessed is You Hashem, Who graciously bestows divine understanding.

The prayer delineates three tiers of wisdom בינה (חכמה) of which pertains to basic information acquired through study. Secondly, there is wisdom (בינה), which denotes a deeper comprehension of complex matters. Lastly, there is spiritual wisdom (דעת), a divine understanding granted solely by Hashem.

Interestingly, the blessing opens by declaring that divine wisdom is bestowed upon Adam.

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What's the significance of this connection?

The Gemara (יבמות סא, א) highlights that only the Jewish nation is referred to as "Adam," אין עובדי כוכבים קרויים אדם, אתם קרויים אדם, emphasizing a unique relationship between the Jewish people and the divine. This distinction is further underscored by the above explained prayer in which Hashem bestows "Adam" from His divine wisdom specifically to the Jewish nation.

But why are we the only ones called Adam?

The Maharal (גור אריה בראשית א, א) elucidates that two entities were created last to fulfill and complete the world's creation. Just as Adam was the final creation, so too is the nation of Israel the last nation created. The essence of creation, as per the Maharal, revolves around wisdom. Therefore, anyone engaging in the study of Hashem's wisdom contributes to the completion of His creation. However, it's crucial to recognize that this wisdom isn't superficial; rather, it encompasses the profound depths of divine knowledge.

While colleges and universities typically impart foundational knowledge and some very basic level of understanding, yeshivas prioritize delving into profound comprehension. Furthermore, yeshivas instill in students a practice of continuously delving deeper into the nuances of Torah and Gemara. Students spend their days engaged in mental exertion, pushing the boundaries of their understanding. This pursuit represents the second tier of wisdom, known as understanding, which serves as a pathway to divine wisdom. However, this level of understanding necessitates moral integrity and righteousness, as it involves a refined wisdom that integrates both intellectual and spiritual dimensions, requiring the involvement of the soul.

That's why the Torah commands us to honor the wise, as their wisdom is intricately linked with moral integrity, and it extends the depth of wisdom to profound levels.

The contrast between university students and yeshiva students is evident in various aspects, including the concerning difference in suicide rates. While suicide is almost unheard of in yeshivas, it remains a prevalent issue in colleges and universities. According to Wikipedia, suicide ranks as one of the leading causes of death among students in the United States. Approximately 24,000 college students attempt suicide each year, with 1,100 tragically succeeding. This alarming statistic places suicide as the second-leading cause of death among U.S. college students. Moreover, around 12% of college students report experiencing suicidal thoughts during their first four

years of college, with 2.6% experiencing persistent suicidal ideation. Additionally, a staggering 65% of college students have connections to someone who has attempted or died by suicide, underscoring the widespread impact of this issue.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), nearly half of the student population in the educational system has been diagnosed with or treated for depression.

In addition to the concerning suicide rates, another aspect contributing to the shaping of academia today is the significant number of disillusioned youth emerging from broken homes, often influenced by progressive ideologies. Many of these individuals are grappling with addiction, with substances like weed being prevalent. According to the American Addiction Center, substance abuse is prevalent among college students and can lead to various academic, physical, mental, and social challenges. A study revealed that almost half of the surveyed college students met the criteria for at least one substance use disorder (SUD). Additionally, the 2019 Monitoring the Future survey noted elevated rates of marijuana and various illicit drug use, notably amphetamines, cocaine, hallucinogens, and MDMA, especially among individuals in the typical college age range, typically in their early to mid-20s.

When you factor in these realities, it paints a stark picture of the demographic influencing academia.

Furthermore, when you engage these individuals in discussions about basic Middle East facts, you often encounter a profound lack of knowledge. Their understanding seems to be shaped more by constant exposure to TikTok propaganda and the allure of popular slogans like "from the river to the sea" than by genuine comprehension.

Given these circumstances, the question arises: should we truly consider their wisdom?

Maimonides (in the introduction to the Eight Chapters of Pirkei Avot), emphasizes the importance of accepting truth from whoever utters it, indicating that truth is not confined to those considered wise but can come from anyone who is factually correct. Similarly, Ibn Gabirol echoes this sentiment.

Indeed, as Maimonides teaches, even if the majority of the world subscribes to a certain belief while a small minority holds a different perspective but is ultimately correct, we must adhere to the truth, regardless of its popularity.

ברוך אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים

TWO PATIENTS, ONE DOCTOR VS. TWO DOCTORS, ONE PATIENT: A TALE OF CONTRASTS

While the unrest in university protests is undeniably concerning, some actually perceive it as a positive development. Let me explain why.

If we examine our Torah portion (Kedoshim), we repeatedly encounter warnings that certain sins warrant the punishment of death. A friend once posed a question to me: why does the Torah need to continually use such harsh language to threaten punishment? The answer can be found in the first commentary of Rashi on the beginning of the previous Torah portion (Acharei Mot). Hashem warns Aaron not to enter the Holy of Holies at all times, lest he die. Rashi raises the question: Why was it necessary to include the warning of

death?

Rashi provides an analogy to elucidate this point: Imagine a sick person visited by two doctors. The first doctor advises against consuming certain foods, while the second doctor reinforces the warning by saying, "Do not eat them, lest you die like another sick person did." In essence, the second doctor adds a threat to ensure the sick person takes the instructions seriously. Similarly, Hashem warns Aaron's descendants to underscore the



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gravity of the situation and to emphasize that failure to heed the warning carries real danger. Hashem wanted to ensure their compliance by impressing upon them the severity of the consequences.

Many times, problems go unnoticed because they aren't immediately visible, quietly festering beneath the surface until they become too advanced to treat effectively. It's crucial to recognize and address these issues before they escalate. Across the world, terrorists are gradually infiltrating US cities, a danger that's often overlooked. With each passing day, the threat grows more ominous. If left unchecked, it could reach a point where intervention is no longer effective. The recent surge in riots and so-called "protests" serves as a wake-up call, highlighting the symptoms of a larger problem that demands attention before it's too late.

Another scenario highlighted by Rashi (Parashat Shmini) involves a doctor visiting two patients. Upon seeing the first patient, the doctor refrains from prescribing any treatment. However, upon encountering the second patient, the doctor provides detailed instructions on

diet and medical procedures. When questioned about this discrepancy, the doctor explains that the first patient's illness has progressed to an advanced stage beyond cure, rendering any treatment ineffective. As a result, the first patient is advised to live out their remaining days as they wish. Conversely, the second patient's condition is treatable, albeit requiring harsh measures to achieve recovery. This analogy illustrates the critical point at which a problem becomes incurable, underscoring the urgency of addressing issues before they reach this stage.

Drawing a parallel to current world events, we can liken Europe to the fatally incurable patient, as their situation appears beyond repair. On the other hand, America stands as a patient whose condition, if treated promptly, could be reversed before reaching the point of no return. This is precisely why these protests hold such significance—they thrust the issue into the spotlight, showcasing the potential risks of neglecting immediate intervention.

MORAL COMPASS IN EDUCATION: HALACHIC GUIDELINES FOR COLLEGE, UNIVERSITY AND BEYOND

Given the display of moral decline in the most elite universities, there is no better time to reassess the age-old question of whether it is halachically permissible to attend college and university. This involves a careful consideration of which subjects are acceptable and what should be avoided in such institutions. Since the education in these establishments is secular and often involves interactions with gentile teachers, mentors, and colleagues, several issues must be clarified.

Let's begin with the advice of Rav Moshe Feinstein (אגרות משה יו"ד סימן לד), who noted that while he did not advocate protesting against those who attend such institutions, it is essential for individuals to be aware of the numerous problematic aspects, some of which we will discuss here. Rav Feinstein (אגרות משה יו"ד סימן לו אות טז), acknowledges that many people may not have the ability or motivation to engage in Torah study, and for such individuals, learning a profession can be a suitable and practical approach.

It's essential, in my opinion, to bear in mind that when Rav Feinstein wrote his responsa he did not have to contend with the current state of affairs, which includes additional issues we won't delve into here, such as progressive teachings and an atmosphere that contradicts Jewish values and, frankly, any moral values. The eccentric ideologies promoted in these places should be avoided at all costs. Additionally, the escalating problem of anti-Semitism in today's colleges and universities adds another layer of concern.

Another evident issue arises with the coed learning environment where boys and girls sit together in the same classes (אגרות משה יו"ד (ח"ג סימן עח-עט). This extends to the challenge of shared meals in the lunchroom and being on the same campus during break times. The extent of the trials and temptations that arise in such scenarios is beyond the scope of this essay to elaborate on, but the stories heard were quite alarming.

Rav Elchanan Wasserman (קובץ הערות, ביאורי אגדות סימן יא) explains that there are different issues to be addressed. Firstly, it is need-

less to say that if the subjects studied involve heresy—meaning ideas opposed to the Torah—it is strictly forbidden to study or enter such classes. This constitutes a Torah violation of "אל תפנו אל (ויקרא יט, ד) "האילים", which the Rambam specifies as referring to reading books of idol worship. Given that heresy is considered worse than idol worship, it must be unequivocally avoided.

Another scenario one must avoid is if they notice that they are being influenced by schoolmates or becoming overly friendly with them, leading to adopting their ways. This also constitutes a Torah violation of (דברים יב, ל) "השמר לך פן תנקש אחריהם", as explained by the Rambam, is meant to emphasize the need for separation from influences that may lead one astray.

According to Rav Elchanan, when these two issues are not present, it is permitted to study only for the purpose of acquiring a profession to support oneself and one's family, not solely for the sake of acquiring knowledge. The permission is derived from the Talmud (שבת קנא), which allows a parent to teach their child a profession.

Rav Elchanan delivers a powerful point that drives to the heart of this discussion. He emphasizes a fundamental distinction between Torah and secular studies. We are all familiar with the concept of learning Torah lishma, meaning one must study Torah without any external motives, such as seeking honor or securing a prestigious job. The purpose of Torah study should solely be for the love of acquiring Torah knowledge (רב חיים מוולוז'ין בנפש החיים), without any material gain, thereby drawing closer to Hashem (רבי אברהם וינברג ביסוד (העבודה). In contrast, the approach to secular studies should be the exact opposite — pursued only for practical gain, and not merely for the sake of acquiring knowledge without any material benefit.

Engaging in Torah lishma allows one to derive enjoyment from their learning. Although the benefit is derived from the enjoyment, such a gain is permitted and considered part of the lishma approach to Torah study (הקדמה לאגלי טל).

Studying secular subjects solely for the sake of personal enrichment



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ment, without contributing to the well-being of the household, is forbidden.

This is supported by the response of a sage in the Talmud (ירושלמי) who was asked about the permissibility of learning Greek wisdom. The rabbi advised that since the entire 24 hours of the day are meant for Torah study, one should find time, separate from day or night, for studying non-Torah subjects. This is because the Torah instructs individuals to learn Torah day and night (וּלְלִילָהּ וּלְיוֹמָהּ) -- designating these periods exclusively for Torah study.

Rav Feinstein (אגרות משה יו"ד סימן לו אות טז), on the other hand, takes a different approach. He acknowledges that individuals are permitted to pursue the study of various secular fields during their free time. According to him, as long as a person maintains dedicated Torah study hours, engaging in reading other subjects that do not involve forbidden teachings is permissible. However, he cautions individuals to ensure that these pursuits do not interfere with their primary focus on Torah studies.

Nevertheless, it is preferable to have one's child learn Torah at a yeshiva than to send them to study secular subjects. Therefore, if an individual or their child has the capability to dedicate themselves

solely to Torah study, it is highly recommended to do so.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (אגרות משה יו"ד סימן פב) explains that while it might be technically permitted, the likelihood of maintaining the status of a "Ben Torah" (a devoted Torah scholar) and adhering to the high standards of Torah observance is slim in such circumstances. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to avoid such situations. Nevertheless, for a young child, it is forbidden to attend secular schools, even if all the issues mentioned above are not present. This prohibition applies to both young boys (bachurim) and newly married men (avrechim) who have not studied enough Torah to potentially reach advanced levels in Torah studies later in life. The imperative of continuing education in yeshivot and kollelim is considered crucial in such cases. This ensures that individuals have the necessary tools later in life to grow into Torah scholars, aligning with the purpose and mission entrusted to every Jewish man.

It's worth mentioning that there is a third perspective held by those who believe that learning at secular schools is strictly forbidden, and even incorporating secular studies into yeshivas, often referred to as high schools, is not permitted. Rav Menashe Klein (שו"ת משנה) is one proponent of this viewpoint.

ברכת המופלטה

ואכן כך כתבו כמה מרבתינו הפוסקים לברך ברכת מזונות על המופלטה, ראה בספר ברכת ה' לרב משה לוי (ח"ב עמוד רטו), וכן הרב שלום משאש (שו"ת שמש ומגן ח"ד סימן לח) והעיד שם שכן המנהג פשוט שלא לברך על המופלטה כי אם בורא מיני מזונות. וכל שכן אם מטגנים את הבצק בשמן שאז נוסף על זה עוד טעם המובא בשולחן ערוך (סימן קסח ס"ז) שעיסה שעבר בה שמן הרי היא פת הבאה בכיסנין וברכתה מזונות.

וברכה אחרונה מברכים על המחיה, ואם אכל ממנה שיעור קביעות סעודה של 216 גרם יברך ברכת המזון כיון שנראה שהמופלטה דומות לטרוקנין יותר מהטריטא, ואף אם הוא לא שבע ממנה כיון שזהו השיעור שאחרים רגילים לקבוע עליו, כמו שכתב השולחן ערוך (סימן קסח ס"ו).

ולגבי המילויים יש חילוק בהלכה בין הספרדים לאשכנזים, שהספרדים לא מצרפים את המילויים לשיעור קביעות סעודה, ובין האשכנזים ישנם שיטות שונות אם מצרפים לשיעור קביעות הסעודה גם את המילויים. והמגן אברהם (סימן קסח ס"ק יג) כתב שמצרפים לשיעור המזונות בשר ודברים אחרים, ודנו בזה הפוסקים אם זה נאמר רק על דברים שמלפתים בהם את הפת הבאה בכיסנין ולא דברים שרגילים לאכול בנפרד (דרך החיים דיני בורא מיני מזונות אות ג). ובספר זאת הברכה (סימן ט אות ז) כתב שמסתבר שדין צירוף המאכלים לקביעות הסעודה נאמר רק בשקובע סעודה על הכל ולא כשאוכלים באופן ארעי כאותם המופלחות כנאכלין לתענוג ולא לסעודה, ולכן ודאי שאין לצרף את המילויים לשיעור קביעות הסעודה.



שלום לרבנים החשובים. מה מברכים על מופלטה, והאם יש הבדל כמה מופלטות אוכלים. וגם אצלנו נוהגים למלאות את המופלטה בכל מיני מילויים, האם זה משנה את הברכה? שלום לכם.

ברכת המופלטה היא בורא מיני מזונות מכיון שהמופלטה היא בצק דק ורך המרוח בשמן ונאפה על המחבת, וכל בצק דק מאוד שמתקפל בקלות ברכתו מזונות, כמו שביאר הרא"ש (פסקים ברכות מב,א) על הניל"ש שברכתו מזונות: "נילי"ש פירשו בלילה רכה מאוד של קמח ומים ששופכים אותה על מחבת וחותת שעל גבי האש ונאפית מחום המחבת". וכן פסק השולחן ערוך (בסימן קסח הלכה טו): "טרוקנין, דהיינו שעושים גומא בבירה ונותנים בה קמח ומים מעורבים בה ונאפה שם, מברך עליו בורא מיני מזונות וברכה אחת מעין שלש, ואם קבע סעודתו עליו מברך המוציא וברכת המזון. אבל טריטא, דהיינו שלוקחים קמח ומים ומערבים אותה ושופכים על הכירה והוא מתפשט ונאפה, אין עליו תורת לחם כלל ואין מברכים עליו אלא בורא מיני מזונות, וברכה אחת מעין שלוש, ואפילו קבע סעודתו עליו נ פסקתתבונאפית מחום התום התנור".

וטעם נוסף לברכת מזונות מובא בביאור הלכה (ד"ה קמח) שציטט את דברי הרמב"ם (פרק ג'): "עיסה שנאפתה בקרקע כמו שהערביים שוכני המדבריות עושים, הואיל ואין עליה צורת פת מברך עליה 'בורא מיני מזונות'. והסביר הלבוש שהטעם הוא שהעיסה נילווה ונאפתה שלא כדרכה. ומינה לענין מופלטה דיון שגם היא נאפת על מחבת שלא כדרך אפייה ולכן ברכתה מזונות.

Shaare Ezra is a one of a kind, multi-faceted organization that's there for the community. Under the leadership of HaRav Shay Tahan שליט"א, Shaare Ezra feels that proper Halachic guidance should be accessible to everyone, therefore we offer the community the opportunity to call, text, WhatsApp, or e-mail any halachic questions they may have, through the Bet Horaah, where qualified, trained and ordained Rabbis are available to answer your questions in English, Hebrew and Russian. Shaare Ezra is from the community—for the community.

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