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LACK OF CLARITY: PRESIDENTS' FAILURE TO DENOUNCE ANTI-SEMITISM

WRITTEN BY **RABBI SHAY TAHAN**

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Doug Emhoff, the Jewish husband of Vice President Kamala Harris and commonly referred to as the Second Gentleman, expressed concern on Thursday, the first night of Hanukkah, about the rising tide of anti-Semitism in the United States. During a ceremony of lighting the National Menorah, Emhoff pointed to a "crisis of anti-Semitism" that is making it difficult for many Jews in America to celebrate Hanukkah.

Emhoff specifically criticized the presidents of the prestigious universities for their recent testimony regarding anti-Semitism on college campuses. He highlighted this testimony as an example of why numerous Jews in the country feel "unmoored and afraid."

Mr. Emhoff was addressing the presidents of three leading universities in the nation which are facing significant criticism, even from the White House, following allegations of avoiding questions during a congressional hearing.

In a widely circulated exchange, Representative Stefanik pressed the universities' presidents to clarify whether students advocating for the genocide of Jews is against their respective university's code of conduct. Stefanik's line of questioning seemed to combine chants calling for "intifada," an Arabic term associated with violent Palestinian protests, which are being used on US campuses as calls for the genocide of Jews. When asking Elizabeth Magill, the president of UPenn, she responded, "If the speech turns into conduct, it can be harassment", she emphasized that such decisions are context-dependent. Despite being pressed to provide a definitive "yes" or "no" answer, Magill did not comply. Similar exchanges took place with the other presidents.

It might be challenging for Mr. Emhoff to celebrate Hanukkah as he hears the presidents of elite universities failing to denounce the growing anti-Semitism on their campuses. However, for other Jews, celebrating Hanukkah is not difficult at all. In fact, recent events, particularly the testimony of those shady presidents, have illuminated the Holiday of Lights, allowing us to

see the true meanings of the holiday more clearly. Hanukkah serves as a beacon of moral clarity, distinguishing between right and wrong, holiness, and its opposite.

The distinction between Mr. Emhoff and us possibly lies in his perception that Hanukkah is akin to the Christmas celebration that his wife observes—a day of family gatherings and gift exchanges. Such celebrations are indeed overshadowed by recent events; however, the reality is that while there are family gatherings and celebrations during Hanukkah, they are for entirely different reasons.



Let's revisit the fundamental aspects of Hanukkah, perhaps shedding light on this for Mr. Emhoff. During the time of the Greek Empire, their focus was on controlling the mind and soul of the Jewish people. Despite defiling all the utensils in the Holy Temple, the liturgy specifically highlights the defilement of the oils in the Temple by the Greeks. This underscores the Greeks' particular emphasis on contaminating the oil. It is noteworthy that they defiled the oil rather than disposing of it.

The symbolism of oil is crucial here. Oil is often likened to Torah wisdom, as it has the unique quality of rising to the top when mixed with another liquid. Similarly, Torah wisdom can be objective by transcending and rising above all other wisdoms.

Furthermore, it's essential to note that only oil has the ability to produce light; other liquids do not have this illuminating quality. Similarly, only the Torah has the power to shine moral and spiritual light, while other forms of wisdom fall short—leaving the mind and heart in darkness. This concept is reflected in the verse "וְחֹשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם"— "And darkness was upon the face of the deep", where Chazal (the Sages of the Talmud) explain that this darkness refers to the philosophy of the Greeks. In other words, when darkness was introduced, it symbolized the advent of Greek philosophy.

The Greek objective was to undermine the Jewish thought process by corrupting their Torah

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intellect, leading to Jews adopting Greek ways of thinking. Unfortunately, the contaminated intellect of the Greeks largely succeeded, as many Jews embraced Hellenism and assimilated into Greek culture.

However, the success of the Greek influence was limited to those who assimilated into their way of thinking. Thankfully, Hashem showed mercy upon those who remained steadfast and did not alter their way of life. As a result, they were ultimately saved from the decree of conforming to the ways of the Greeks.

This symbolism is embodied in the discovery of the jar of pure oil, underscoring the importance of maintaining the purity of our beliefs and safeguarding them from the influence of Greek intellect.

Another apparent difference is the fact that the Torah is infinite, unlike the philosophy taught at those education establishments. In these institutions, moral standards and life philosophies are interchangeable. Depending on the faculty and the principles involved, the standards might change. Today, we witness a distortion of moral values, often propagated in none other than elite universities. It's not surprising that those appointed to lead these institutions and oversee literature and ethics often fall short of minimal standards. This serves as a wake-up call for our Jewish brothers and sisters

considering higher education at such places. The question arises: Do you truly want to expose your mind to such potential contamination? Especially that it has reached a point where they now teach progressive ideologies that may involve playing with people's genders and minds, which is deeply concerning.

When witnessing the moral breakdown of these university leaders, it becomes increasingly apparent that the Hanukkah message resonates deeply. Hanukkah underscores that only the Torah has the power to guide us to a moral state of mind, highlighting the importance of maintaining moral principles and ethical values in the face of adversity.

I would like to end this article with an expression of gratitude to the remarkable Congresswoman Elise Stefanik of New York, who skillfully addressed those presidents with precision. Additionally, I extend thanks to the shameful presidents of Harvard, the University of Pennsylvania, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) for highlighting the story of Hanukkah for all those who needed a reminder. It allows us all to clearly discern and articulate our stance and say loud and clear: אשר בחר בנו מכל העמים ונתן לנו תורת אמת

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 ח"ד סימן ל"ד), 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 ח"ד סימן ל"ד), 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 ע"ט-ע"ט). 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 י"א) explains that there are different issues to be addressed. Firstly, it is needless 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 (ויקרא י"ט, ד) "אל תפנו אל 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 י"ב, י)

"השמר לך פן תנקש אחריהם" (דברים י"ב, י), 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 קנ"א), 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 (רבי אברהם וינברג ביסוד העבודה Hashem), 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, without contributing to the well-being of the household, is forbidden. This is supported by the response of a sage in the Talmud (



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

פאה (ירושלמי ריש פאה) 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 *והגית בו יומם ולילה*, 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 ח"ג 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 הלכות תנינא) (סימן קלב) is one proponent of this viewpoint.

TORAH PERSPECTIVES ON SECULAR EDUCATION: NAVIGATING THE PATH OF WISDOM

After addressing the concerns of attending non-Jewish colleges and universities, let's explore the Torah's perspective on studying secular subjects in a "kosher" environment, such as at Jewish educational institutions.

The Talmud (קידושין כט,א) explicitly outlines the dual responsibilities of parents—to impart both Torah knowledge and a profession to their children. The concept of a profession, in this context, encompasses any skill or knowledge that enables an individual to sustain himself and his family in life.

Rebbi Yehudah (קידושין ל,א) goes so far as to equate a father who neglects to teach his child a profession to a father instructing his child to become a bandit. Rashi elucidates that the rationale behind this comparison lies in the potential outcome: if the child lacks a profession to sustain himself and his family as an adult, he may resort to illicit activities and deception to secure a means of livelihood.

The Talmud's recommendation (ברכות סג,א) to teach a profession that is "easy and clean" is generally understood to imply something more academic rather than manual labor. This is not to suggest that manual labor is unacceptable, as Chazal (פסחים קיג,א) mentioned that one should even work in menial jobs, such as skinning dead animals. However, the underlying idea is that it is preferable to pursue a profession that is clean and relatively easy whenever possible.

The task of teaching a child a profession is not to be taken lightly; it is a commandment that holds significance to the extent that it can be imparted even on the holy day of Shabbat. Chazal (כתובות ה,א) assert that one may teach his child a profession on Shabbat. While secular studies are generally to be avoided on Shabbat, as the Shulchan Aruch (סימן שס טפ"ז) states that one is forbidden according to some opinions, from studying subjects other than Torah on Shabbat, teaching a child a profession is considered a Mitzvah, rendering it permissible.

There is an additional advantage to learning various wisdoms, as the Vilna Gaon emphasized that studying other disciplines, like

algebra, can aid in comprehending many Torah subjects more accurately. It is essential to acknowledge that even within this perspective, considering the Torah as the primary wisdom and the purpose of our life, Torah should take precedence in our studies, with other subjects serving as supplements to enrich our understanding of Torah.



The command to teach a child a profession isn't literal—that the father himself should sit and teach his son, even though, as mentioned, educating a child is indeed a Mitzvah. Instead, the father's task is to ensure that his son receives the necessary education. This may involve finding him a tutor or sending him to a school that will prepare him for life.

If a child expresses a desire to learn Torah and the father recognizes the potential for excellence, it is advisable to either personally teach him Torah or enroll him in a yeshiva that suits his needs. Rabbi Nehorai mentioned that while the Halacha suggests a father teach his child a profession, he personally instructs his son exclusively in Torah without incorporating any secular studies.

This aligns with the ruling of many poskim, who write of the importance of a person who decides to dedicate his time and life to study Torah. For such a person, the Rambam (סוף הל' שמיטה ויובל) writes that the Torah promises him to be able to have his livelihood and provide for his family, the famous words of the Rambam: "Not only the tribe of Levi, but anyone in the world whose spirit generously motivates him and understands with his wisdom to set himself aside and stand before Hashem to serve Him and minister to Him and to know Hashem, proceeding justly as Hashem made him, removing from his neck the yoke of the many reckonings which people seek, he is sanctified as holy of holies. Hashem will be his portion and heritage forever and will provide what is sufficient for him in this world, like He provides for the priests and the Levites. And thus David declared [Tehilim 16:5]: 'Hashem is the lot of my portion; You are my cup, You support my lot.'"

הדלקת נרות חנוכה בעזה.

(מצוה רפ) שכתבו שאין מדליקים בספינה. וכן כתב הפני יהושע (שבת כא, ב דה תנו רבנן) אחר שהקשה מדוע בנר חנוכה אין חיוב על כל אדם להדליק, ועוד מדוע אין אומרים בדין הדלקה שמצוה בו יותר מבשלוחו כשם שאומרים בשאר מצוות. ועל פי זה יצא לחדש שחז"ל תיקנו את מצוות ההדלקה כאילו היתה חובת הבית.

לעומת זאת ישנם ראיות הפוכות שמצוות ההדלקה היא על האדם, דבגמרא (שבת כג, א) אמר רב ששת שאכנסאי חייב בנר חנוכה, ורבי זירא אמר שבתחילה היה משתתף בפרוטה עם בעל הבית המארח, ולאחר שהתחתן אמר שכבר אין לו צורך להשתתף כיון שאשתו מדליקה בביתו. ומדבריו עולה שיש חיוב עצמי על כל אחד להדליק או להשתתף עם אחרים. וא"כ משמע שבר חנוכה היא מצוות הגוף. ויותר מבואר כן בדברי הר"ן (על הרי"ף עמוד י) שכתב שאורח חייב אע"פ שאין לו בית, דלא תימא דין נר חנוכה כדון מזוזה דכל מי שאין לו בית פטור מן המזוזה, עכ"ל. ומדבריו עולה בברירות שחיוב נר חנוכה הוא חיוב עצמי ולא חיוב על הבית. למעשה כתב האור לציון (ח"ד עמוד רפח) שהבית יוסף (סימן תרעא ס"ז) הכריע שמי שאין לו בית פטור מדבריו שהדלקת נרות בבית הכנסת נועדה עבור האורחים שאין להם בית להדליק בו.

ואין ללמוד בדין הדלקה בבית הכנסת להדליק במקום התכנסות של ציבור, שיתכן שהמנהג להדליק בבית הכנסת נקבע כך כיון שהמקום נקרא בית מקדש מעט ודומה בזה לבית המקדש, ולכן רק הנמנהג ניתקן רק בבית תפילה קבוע (אור לציון ח"ד עמוד רמט). ולכן למעשה ניתן לצאת ידי חובת הדלקה רק במקום בו החיילים לנים או שיצאו בהדלקה של בני משפחותיהם בבית. והדלקת נרות ברחובות העיר עזה היא רק סימלית.

שלום לרב.
מדי יום אנחנו רואים, ברוך השם, סרטונים של חיילי צה"ל היקרים שמדליקים נרות חנוכה ברחבי העיר עזה, ואף שהדבר מחמם את הלב אבל הסתפקתי אם החיילים יוצאים בהדלקה שכזו, או שמא יש לזה רק משמעות סמלי.

שלום וברכה וחג אורים שמח.

מבואר מהרבה פוסקים שנרות חנוכה מדליקים רק בבית, ואם אין לאדם בית או שנמצא מחוץ לביתו ואין מי שידליק בביתו, אין חיוב הדלקה.

ונתן להסביר זאת על פי החקירה שהביא השפת אמת (שבת כא ד"ה ת"ר) אם מצות נר חנוכה היא חובת גברא, דהיינו שיש חובה על כל אחד ואחד להיות מדליק או לצאת ע"י אחרים בהדלקה ע"י השתתפותו בפרוטה, או שמא היא חובת חפצא כמו מזוזה שמספיק מזוזה אחת בבית אפילו אם גרים בבית כמה משפחות, וכמו נר שבת

דסגי שיהיה בבית נר דלוק, דהיינו המצוה היא על הבית שיהיה בו נר חנוכה. ונפקא מינה לגבי מי שאין לו בית, שאם היא מצוה על האדם להדליק וישנו תנאי שההדלקה תהיה בבית, אם כן יש לו חיוב לשכור מקום על מנת להדליק. אולם אם החיוב הוא על הבית, א"כ כיון שאין לו בית הרי הוא פטור מההדלקה. ומדברי כמה פוסקים מוכח שהחיוב הינו על הבית בלבד, וכן עולה מדברי התוספות (סוכה מו, א ד"ה הרואה) שכתבו שברכת הראיה נאמרה למי שאין לו בית ואין בידו לקיים את המצוה. וכן הוא לשון הרמב"ם: "מצוה שיהיה כל בית ובית מדליק נר אחד", וכן עולה מדברי רש"י (שבת כג, א ד"ה הרואה) שכתב שברכת על הנסים שמברך הרואה הוזקה למי שנמצא בספינה ואין לו בית להדליק, ומוכח שכיון שנמצא בספינה ולא בבית אין הוא מדליק ולכן אינו מברך את ברכת 'להדליק נר חנוכה'. וכן מוכח מהרא"ש (פ"ב סימן ח), ובסמ"ק



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