

Shoftim

The Torah in Sedrah *Shoftim* commands that the King of Israel, upon ascending the throne, should write for himself a double copy of the Torah. According to the *Gemorah*,¹ one copy was to be deposited on his bookshelves "*Bivais Ginawzov*"—in the store-chamber of treasured archives—and the other was to accompany him at all times wherever he went. With this first act, the King acknowledged that the Torah was given for him too. He was not above the law, and conscientious faithfulness to the teachings of Torah was to be the unalterable rule of conduct for his life.

The Torah that was kept in the store-chamber served as a constant symbolic reminder for his obligation to adhere to the precepts of Torah even "*B'Chadrei Chadorim*"—in the strict secrecy of his most personal and private life. This Torah stood as a permanent witness both for and against him! It was to direct his personal actions, emotions of the heart and the profound thoughts of his mind ("*Omek Halev*" and "*Pinemius Hanefesh*"). Whereas the other Torah which accompanied the King at all times was a constant reminder that the A-mighty demands his punctillious observance of the Mitzvos in all his interpersonal relations; with individuals, to judge according to Torah Law and with the nation as a whole in times of peace and war, as the Talmud states, "before going to war, permission must be granted to the King by the Sanhedrin and the Kohen Godol's Breast Plate—"*Oorim V'Toomim*."²

"And it shall be with him and he shall read therein all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the A-mighty and conscientiously fulfill all the words of his Torah and these statutes to perform them properly."³ This verse, immediately following the one commanding the writing of two Torahs by the King, succinctly states the purpose of the command. The *Chatam Sofer* interprets in a unique fashion the words of the verse, "and he shall read therein all the days of his life"; he says, the King must "read"—"see" in the Torah all the happenings and events of his life; he must develop

a Torah personality and outlook leading to a way of life where every thought, word and deed is taken from Torah and portrays a Torah foundation. Briefly, the Torah should represent the living "biography" of the King!

As the verse mentions, "And he shall read therein (study) all the days of his life," such a personality and way of life can only come into being with continuous study, in depth, of the whole Torah. Even for the King, to whom the Jewish people must subordinate themselves completely and who they are commanded to serve with the utmost fear and reverence,⁴ to the extent that he can't, although so desiring, renounce any claim for the honor and observance due him.⁵ There can be no doubt but that comprehensive knowledge of Torah and an understanding of its concepts are necessary for a complete and proper Jewish Life. Ignorance of Torah Law is certainly not conducive to piety!⁶

Reb Shimon says, "All Jews are considered as "*B'nei Mlochim*"—princes—and of "Kingly stature."⁷ Every Jew, like the King, must strive to develop a Torah personality to the extent it permeates every aspect of his life. Symbolically the writing of two Torahs by the King serves also to remind each Jew to faithfully and loyally practice the Torah "*B'chadrei Chadorim*"—in the privacy of his personal life and in his interpersonal relations, socially and in the business world. Of course, to approach proper Torah living, knowledge of Torah is indispensable. The American Jewish community is gullible because of a lack of proper study and understanding the Torah.

Any pseudo-theological theory or cult will catch their fancy. Ignorance is our most serious enemy. Torah study is of paramount importance to dispel ignorance and absorb truths of Torah to clearly reveal the fallacy of modern distortions rampant in our society.

The Talmud says, "organize groups and study Torah, for Torah is attained only through the group."⁸ "*Limud Hatorah*"—Torah study should be considered as much a religious experience as Tefillah-prayer. By incorporating "*Talmud Torah Betzibur*"—group Torah study, we can truly triumph in the battle over ignorance and distortion of proper Jewish way of life.

FOOTNOTES

1. Sanhedrin 21b. Devorim 17:18
2. Berachoth 3b
3. Devorim 17:19
4. See Sanhedrin 20b, 22a
5. Ibid. 19b
6. Avoth 2:6
7. Shabbos 67a
8. Berachoth 63b