



**Summary:** This nonfiction book tells the story of the creation of the *daf yomi*, beginning with Rav Meir Shapiro's inspiration for the plan and continuing to its development into an international program.

**Author:** Leah Sokol

**Title:** No Day Without Torah

**Genre:** Biography/Informational Text

### Challenging Book Features

**Content:** Students may have difficulty understanding Rav Meir's thoughts about how different parts of the Talmud were written in different places and how this was an inspiration for his creation of the *daf yomi* program. They may also be unfamiliar with some of the references in the text to the various commentaries, such as Rashi, Tosafos, and the Maharsha.

Explain to them how each of these commentaries explains the words of the Talmud, but they were written after the Talmud and in different places around the world. This showed Rav Meir how learning the same Torah is possible by all Jews, no matter where they live.

### Supportive Book Features

**Content:** Some children may have heard of the *daf yomi* program and will be familiar with its basic concepts, making this book easier for them to understand.

**Text features:** The mix of nonfiction text with illustrations, along with comics-style drawings, helps to maintain students' interest in the story and deepens their understanding.

### Preparing to Read

Read the title and subtitle with students and discuss the cover photo. Ask:

- What do you already know about *daf yomi*?
- What do you notice in the picture? What is the man doing?
- What new information do you think you will learn in this book?

### Developing Comprehension Strategies

**Asking questions to form big ideas:** Explain to students that as they read nonfiction texts, they should be wondering to themselves and asking themselves questions. Based on all of their questions and answers, they should be able to state what this text is mostly about. Model this on pages 5–6, using the following think-alouds:

"At the very beginning of the text, I'm wondering why Meir's mother is so worried? Oh, I see it's because his teacher hasn't shown up..."

"So what? Why does that matter so much? Oh, I guess it's because his mother really, really wants him to learn every single day. To her, it's not ok if even one day goes by without learning. Hey, I just realized — that fits with the title of this book, *No Day Without Torah*..."

"Then, when his mother tells Meir, 'You can never get that back,' what does she mean? Maybe she means that every day is unique, precious, and if you miss one day, it can never be replaced."

"So I'm thinking that so far the big idea in this book will be something about how important every single day of learning is. Yes, that could fit what I've read so far."

Ask students to continue reading silently or in partners, jotting down their questions as they read. Then, have them share their questions and answers and use those to develop some big ideas about the book.

**Monitoring comprehension:** Reading needs to make sense. Sometimes we are so focused on reading the words that we start to think, "Hey, I haven't understood what I just read." When that happens, we need to go back and reread. Model for students how you pause to think as you are reading, being sure that you can retell what you just read. If not, you go back and reread the text to make sense of it.

### Word Study

**Suffix -ed:** Remind students that the past-tense suffix *-ed* can have three sounds. It can sound like /d/, as in *tried*, like /t/, as in *walked*, and like /ed/, as in *wanted*. Have students reread pages 13–14 with a partner and locate the past-tense verbs on these pages. Then have them sort these words based on the sound of the suffix *-ed* in each word.

### Developing Fluency

**Dialogue:** Remind students that text written inside quotation marks is dialogue and should be read so that it sounds like a character is talking. Everything outside quotation marks is the narrator talking and should be read in a narrator voice. Direct students to page 13 in the book. Model how you read aloud the last paragraph on the page, making the dialogue sound like people are speaking, and the speaker tags sounding like the narrator. Ask students, *Did you notice how on this page some parts were in quotation marks and some parts were not? That means that some parts needed to be read in a talking voice and some in a narrator voice.*

Ask students to reread page 14 with a partner, paying attention to words inside quotation marks and words outside of them. Point out that internal thoughts, often written in italics, should be read aloud to sound just like dialogue.

### Oral Language/Conversation

Choose some of these talking points for class discussion:

- One person can accomplish so much. Rav Meir Shapiro began with a small idea at the Knessiah Gedolah of August 1923, and look how much he achieved. Today, close to 100 years later, thousands of people across the world learn the *daf yomi*. Ask your students to share some dreams they would like to accomplish if only they could. What are some small steps they can take toward fulfilling those dreams?
- Rav Meir Shapiro was inspired by his mother's words about the importance of "no day without Torah." Ask students to share something that a parent or teacher once said to them that impacted them in a positive way.

### Other Books

Students can read other books in the Young Readers Biography series, such as *Sarah Builds a School*.

# Teachable Moments

## Siyum HaShas

### A Discussion Guide Based on *No Day Without Torah*

#### Building Background

Begin by building students' background about the *dafyomi* and the upcoming Siyum HaShas planned for January 1, 2020. What do students already know about the program? What details can they share with the class about its history or development over the years?

If available, share with students an audio or video clip from the 2012 Siyum HaShas at MetLife Stadium. Alternatively, you can show Rabbi Yissocher Frand's video titled *The Siyum HaShas — The Opportunity of a Lifetime*. Ask students to jot down their feelings and impressions after listening to or watching the clip.

Have students read *No Day Without Torah* by Leah Sokol. If necessary, split the reading into two sessions, stopping after the discussion of Rav Meir's idea on page 11 and before his presentation to the Knessiah Gedolah in Vienna.

#### Personal Connections

After reading, invite students to share their personal connections with the story. Students can interview family members who learn the *dafyomi* and share their impressions with the class. Some questions they might ask are:

- How long have you been participating in *dafyomi*? Is this your first Siyum HaShas? If not, how many times have you been *mesayem*?
- What are some of your thoughts and feelings as you prepare for the Siyum HaShas? If this is not your first time, how have those feelings changed each time you were *mesayem*?
- Can you tell me about some of the people who support you and help you in learning the *dafyomi*? What role do you feel they play in your *siyum*?
- If this will not be your first siyum, can you describe some of your thoughts and feelings from the morning after the last *Siyum HaShas*? How did you feel when you opened up *Maseches Berachos* to begin Shas again after your previous *siyum*?

#### Lessons to Learn

Discuss with students the following lessons to be learned from this book and from the founding of the *dafyomi* program.

- One person can accomplish so much. Rav Meir Shapiro began with a small idea at the Knessiah Gedolah of August 1923, and look how much he achieved. Today, close to a hundred years later, thousands of people across the world learn the *dafyomi*. Ask your students to share some dreams they would like to accomplish if only they could. What are some small steps they can take toward fulfilling those?
- Rav Meir Shapiro was inspired by his mother's words about the importance of "no day without Torah." Ask students to share something that a parent or teacher once said to them that impacted them in a positive way.
- When the Chafetz Chaim heard Rav Meir Shapiro's idea, he said to Rav Meir, "When you come to Olam HaBa, all those lonely *masechtos* [that were not being learned so much previously] will come out to greet you." Ask your students if they can think of someone else who championed a mitzvah that people were neglecting and brought it back to the forefront of our consciousness. An example might be Rabbi Joseph Weinberger and the mitzvah of *shatnez*.

After reading the book and discussing these ideas, show students Chananya Kramer's video titled *Siyum HaShas — Daf Yomi through the Decades*, where Rabbi Paysach Krohn describes the *dafyomi* movement of the past hundred years. Draw their attention to the scene at the *beis midrash* of Gur on Rosh HaShanah (minute 3:00–3:34). Pause and discuss why the Gerrer Rebbe's actions were so critical and how they helped Rav Meir Shapiro's idea gain momentum among the people. From 6:56, ask students to note examples of how modern communication was used to give people increased access to the *dafyomi*.

