

1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah

A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

FIRST SEDER BAIS MEDRASH established in 2012 by Rabbi Uri Greenspan, provides a unique learning program for men with diverse schedules, ages, and backgrounds. Since its inception, the daily learning programs of Gemara, Mishnayos, Tanach, Halacha, and Jewish ethics, have provided hundreds of First Seder participants with a rich, challenging, and authentic Bais Medrash experience. The wide range of subjects and the varying levels of difficulty allow for the participants to choose which learning track best fits their individual needs, enabling them to truly take their learning to the next level.

DAILY SCHEDULE:

9-11:30am: Gemara in-depth and B'Chavrusa

9:10am-1pm: Classroom Learning

Monday 9-9:45pm: Dirshu Mishna Berura Shiur

Tuesday 8:45-9:45pm: Daf HaShovua Gemara Shiur

TO JOIN: Contact Rabbi Uri Greenspan at 732.407.3178
Office@FirstSeder.org, Lower Merion Synagogue

PARSHAS EIKEV – THE MYTHICAL IVORY TOWER

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Chofetz Chaim makes a remarkable observation. There are three pesukim in Parshas Eikev that mention walking in the ways of Hashem:

- 1) You shall observe the Mitzvos of Hashem your G-d, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. (Devarim 5:6)
- 2) And now, Yisrael, what does Hashem your G-d ask of you? Only to fear Hashem your G-d, to walk in His ways and to love Him (ibid 10:12)
- 3) For if you will observe all the Mitzvos which I command you to do, to love Hashem your G-d, to walk in His ways and to cleave to Him (ibid 11:22).

If you look closely, you will notice that in the first pasuk, 'walking in His ways' precedes fearing Him. In the second pasuk, 'walking in His ways' follows fear and precedes loving Him. In the third pasuk, 'walking in His ways' follows love but precedes cleaving to Him.

To explain the significance of these variations, we have to clarify two things. First, we must understand what 'walking in His ways' means. Chazal tell us that it means emulating the Middos of Hashem:

compassion, benevolence, concern for those who are suffering or are in need of help. The second point is clarified by the Chofetz Chaim. The traits of fear of Hashem, loving Him and cleaving to Him are in ascending order. Love of Hashem is a much greater level than fear. However love precedes cleaving to Hashem. One who loves Hashem does not necessarily experience this emotion every moment, however one who cleaves to Hashem is continuously attached to Him.

The Chofetz Chaim deduces from the first pasuk that it is impossible to achieve true fear of Hashem until one develops those Middos which reflect Hashem's goodness – his concern for people and acts of kindness. One must be a *meitiv* – a bestower of goodness – to have any kind of relationship with Hashem. Once one has achieved true fear of Hashem, he might think that he should dedicate himself entirely to studying Torah and contemplating Hashem's greatness and awe, and put aside benevolence and other human interactions. Therefore, the second pasuk informs him that he cannot rise to the next level, Ahavas Hashem, without his involvement with people and concern for their welfare. When he has finally achieved the lofty spiritual level of Ahavas Hashem, he seeks to immerse himself in a spiritual world of Torah, Tefilla and Kedusha in order to come closer to Hashem and cleave to Him. His contact with people, he may

feel, should be extremely limited. The third pasuk, which places walking in His ways after love and before deveikus – cleaving to Hashem, puts the lie to this last contention too. One cannot cleave to the Diving Being without possessing and demonstrating the attributes of kindness and compassion.

This remarkable insight of the Chofetz Chaim shatters the misconception that holiness and an intimate relationship with Hashem demand a total detachment from this world and from "plain" people. The opposite is true, one who seeks to fear, love and cleave to Hashem can only do so by being permeated with the attribute of chesed and a genuine interest in the well-being of other people. Why? Because to connect to Hashem one has to be like Hashem, and the ultimate Middah of Hashem is chesed.

This very message is implicit in Rashi at the beginning of Pashas Va'eira. After Avraham circumcised himself at the age of 99 years, Hashem pays him a *bikur cholim* visit. Suddenly three strangers appear and Avraham turns to Hashem and says, "Please excuse me, I have guests (mere mortals) to attend to." Why does he do this? "Because hachnasas orchim is greater than being in the presence of the Shechina." Why? Rav Noach Weinberg answers: Because being like Hashem is what enables one to be with Hashem. There is no Ivory Tower!

YOU CAN LIGHT UP THE WORLD

To find out how, please visit firstseder.org or speak with Rabbi Greenspan

THE TRAINEE

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion the Torah says "And HaShem will guard in you the covenant and kindness" (Devarim 7,14). Our Sages teach us that this means that it is the nature of the Jewish people to be kind and we have to preserve this nature. (Talmud Yerushalmi Kiddushin 1,1,) This leads us to the following story.

In the 1920's in New York it was very common for new immigrants to work in the garment industry. One day a young woman approached a garment factory and went over to the owner and said, "Can I please have a job? It's urgent".

The boss brought her to the manager and told the manager to test the girl to see if she would be a good employee and how experienced she was. The manager was a religious Jewish woman. She asked the girl,

"Can you please show me a stitch?". The girl said, "Honestly I don't know how to sew". The manager told her, "It seems that you applied to the wrong job, for this job you need to know how to sew". The girl burst out in tears. She said, "I am an orphan and I am all alone. I have been searching for a job and I can't find one. I'm starving, I'm very desperate, and I am at my wits end. If I don't find a job soon I'm going to die. Please help me, please. Train me to sew, I'm a quick learner and I will be one of the best employees you have".

The manager was torn. It seemed like this was a matter bordering on life and death. She thought she could train her on her own time and teach her how to be an excellent seamstress. In a few weeks' time she could be up to par. But on the other hand, if she

would accept her when she didn't know how to sew, in the beginning she would be inefficient. Would she be allowed to tell the boss that this girl would be a good employee and be good for this job? On one hand she had the potential to be a good employee and it was a desperate situation, but on the other hand she should be hiring someone who would be a good employee immediately. What do you think? See Hebrew V'haarev Na Volume Three page 501

Regarding last week's question about traveling to the wedding, Rav Zilberstein writes that if he feels resentful towards his friend, and he is not going because of that resentment, then it would be considered revenge not to go.

TWO WOMEN OF GREATNESS

Must the poor suffer just because I'm in aveilus?

Our Sages teach that one who raises money for tzedakah is even greater than one who gives tzedakah. The following two stories demonstrate the greatness of two such women.

The Alter of Kelm testified that his mother, Chaya, never walked more than four amos (cubits) without thinking Torah thoughts. She also made a practice of collecting money for poor families at local funerals. When Rebetzin Chaya's only daughter passed away, at the funeral Chaya collected money for the needy families. When people asked why she was doing this at her own daughter's funeral, she

replied, "Must the poor suffer just because I'm in aveilus (mourning)?"

I earn merit for three people

Renia Finkelstein's mother founded an organization that she called, "For the Needy Who Are Ashamed to Beg." She was successful in her work. When she collected money for her organization, she visited only friends, relatives, and wealthy people who could afford to be generous. Mrs. Finkelstein was also a close friend of Frau Sara Schenirer. The two would

sometimes set out to collect charity together. Frau Schenirer approached storekeepers. If they knew who she was, they would hand her a five-zloty bill. Otherwise, she would get only

one zloty or half a zloty. But she would not turn down even a quarter. Mrs. Finkelstein begged Frau Schenirer not to visit places that gave her groschen only. "You are demeaning yourself," she said.

Frau Schenirer answered with a smile: "My dear, by knocking on a door where I get only 25 grush, I earn merit for three people: the one who gives it, the one who receives it, and the one who collects it. How can I deprive them of giving charity, even if only in a small way?"

From Rav Dessler, By Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum, Published by Artscroll Mesorah, page 37 and Carry Me in Your Heart, By Pearl Benisch, page 140. Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.)

First Seder Bais Medrash's Mishnayos Shel Chesed Program

When a Jew passes away, they can no longer perform mitzvos or get closer to Hashem. By arranging learning for the soul of a departed family member or friend, their soul can be elevated. As their loved ones, it is within our power to help their neshamos (souls) ascend ever higher.

To join the over 200 learners or bring an Eternal Merit to a loved one, please contact Rabbi Greenspan or rabbisilver.firstseder@gmail.com

Good Shabbos!

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