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

# ROSH HASHANA – AIM HIGH

*Rabbi Shlomo Caplan*

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz cites an awesome Medrash which comments on the *pasuk* in Micha (7,8), "Do not rejoice, my enemy; although *(ki)* I have fallen, I will rise, although *(ki)* I sit in darkness Hashem is a light unto me." The Medrash renders the Hebrew *ki* not as although, but as because - "because I have fallen." "Had I not fallen, I would not have risen, and had I not sat in darkness, Hashem would not have been my light." (Yalkut Tehillim 628). The sin itself can be an impetus to rise even higher. This is why "In a place that a *baal teshuva* stands, perfectly righteous people cannot stand."

Rav Chaim suggests that this is the *pshat* of the following pasuk: "Return O Yisrael, to Hashem your G-d, because you have stumbled in your iniquity." Chazal comment, "Great is Teshuva that it can reach all the way up to the Throne of Glory." Here, too, the word *ki* means because. Specifically because of the sin, one is able to do a Teshuva which will rise straight to Hashem's Throne.

Rav Chaim explains that it is the very shock and abhorrence at how low one has sunk that can propel him to the highest levels of Teshuva. However, it is not necessary to wait till we hit rock bottom to accomplish this. Through the sincere introspection generated by Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur one can derive the inspiration to bounce back even higher than before.

However, I believe there is another reason why one who does Teshuva can rise even higher than those who have not sinned. It is based on the Gemara in Menachos (29b) which sheds new light on the process of Teshuva.

The Gemara states that this world was created with the letter *hei* because the letter *hei* is open on the bottom, to symbolize that one who wants to drop out (to sin) is free to do so. The little opening near the top on the left side is for one who wishes to do Teshuva and come back into this world. The Gemara asks why the *baal teshuva* cannot re-enter through the opening through which he fell. The answer is that it won't work.

We need to understand why it won't work. The reason is that Teshuva is not a process of undoing the past by retracing your steps. That path would result in another encounter with the sin, and you don't want that. The key to mitigating the past lies in the future. Teshuva is the process of overriding the past by forging a new self who has risen above the sin. When you struggle and climb to the opening at the top, you have followed a totally new path and created an even higher level of closeness to Hashem. Therefore, those who never sinned, while they may have many more Mitzvos, cannot achieve that special closeness achieved only through Teshuva.

Had we not fallen so low by doing *aveiros* in the past year, we would not be able to rise high enough to reach Hashem's Glorious Throne. Rosh Hashanah is the beginning of Aseres Yemai Teshuva when Hashem is so near and the route to the Throne is even shorter. By acknowledging the lowness of sin, we gain the necessary thrust to climb to the top and propel our Teshuva all the way up to Hashem's Throne.

**YOU CAN LIGHT UP THE WORLD**

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

# THE WRONG NUMBER

*Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner*

Our Sages teach that all of the money that we earn throughout the year is determined on Rosh Hashana. This leads us to the following story.

Yoni, who lived in Israel, was interested in purchasing a lottery ticket. He called the local convenience store and told the clerk "I don't have time to come in to pick up a lottery ticket but can I pay for it now and text you the numbers"? The clerk said that it was not a problem. The man took Yoni's credit card information and Yoni texted him the numbers.

Later that day, to Yoni's incredible excitement, the numbers announced on the radio were the ones that he chose. The prize was $1,000,000! Yoni went to the store to pick up the ticket so that he could redeem it for the prize money. To his utter dismay, on the ticket that he was given, one of the numbers was off. It turned out that the clerk copied the number from the text wrong, and was one number off. Because of that error Yoni lost the million-dollar prize.

Yoni turned to the clerk and said, "I think you owe me $1,000,000 because your mistake made me lose $1,000,000". The clerk said, "I'm really sorry, I feel terrible about my mistake. I made a mistake, and I can pay you for the cost of the ticket, but I am not obligated to pay you a million dollars!"

This question was brought to Rabbi Zilberstein. What do you think? Does the clerk have to pay Yoni for the damage of copying the wrong number? Is he even obligated to return the money that Yoni spent on the lottery ticket? See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume Three 378

Regarding last week's question of the bookshelf that did not fit, Rav Zilberstein wrote in a similar case that it was the buyer's obligation to measure the room before he ordered the furniture.

# THE WAY HOME

George's family came to the United States from Uzbekistan and the Ukraine in the 1980's and settled in Maryland. Growing up in the Soviet Union, George's father remembers being called "the Zjid" - essentially the Dirty Jew - in school. He learned how to defend himself from physical attacks on a daily basis. This was common fare for every Jewish child in the USSR. Nobody let them forget that they were Jews for a moment. George, on the other hand, was raised in Frederick, Maryland and was one of the only Jews in his class in public school. Unlike his father, he kept his Jewish identity a secret out of fear of reprisals from the numerous KKK members in school. "I just wanted to blend in and be like everyone else," he said. Unlike their parents, the second generation doesn't have the same sense of Jewish pride and unless they connect with Judaism in a meaningful way, assimilation is inevitable.

As a student in the University of Maryland, George had no intention of getting involved with Judaism. He didn't realize that the day he met Rabbi Gavriel Horan on campus would change his life forever. George eventually became the president of the Jewish club on campus, participated in numerous Jewish learning fellowships, leadership retreats, and inspirational trips, and eventually got a kosher bris and a pair of tefillin. Last year, George met with a major Jewish philanthropist at a Jewish internship program in Lakewood, who encouraged him to start a program dedicated to Russian Jewish college students and young professionals like himself in Maryland. George is now working with Rabbi Gavriel Horan in building RAJE (Russian American Jewish Experience) Maryland - a growth-oriented community for young Russian Jews looking to explore their heritage.

This Rosh Hashana, in the merit of helping bring HaShem's children back home, He should blow the shofar gadol and bring all of us back home as well.


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**

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**For more information or to register for First Seder, contact Rabbi Uri Greenspan at 732-407-3178 or RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org**

***A Good Shabbos and a Kesiva Vichasima Tova***