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 LECH LECHA – *IMO ANOCHI BETZARAH*

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

When Hagar, the maidservant of Sarah, acted disrespectfully to her mistress, Sarah responded by treating her harshly. Hagar fled to the desert where three angels appeared to her. They consoled her and told her to return to her mistress. "And she referred to Hashem who spoke to her (through the angels) saying, 'You are the G-d Who sees' for she said, 'Could I have seen [angels] here after having seen them (in the home of Avraham)?'" (Bereishis 16:13). Rashi elaborates on Hagar's intent: "You are the G-d who sees the pain of those who have been shamed. Would I have expected to see Hashem's messengers even here in the desert after having been accustomed to seeing them in the house of Avraham?"

Rav Shimshon Pincus explains that the home of Avraham and Sarah was like the Bais Hamikdash. A candle burned continuously like the Ner Tamid in the Bais Hamikdash. There was a special blessing in the dough resembling the miracle of the Lechem Hapanim. There was a cloud over their tent denoting the presence of the Shechina. Living in such a home was an extraordinary opportunity for Hagar to see many angels. Now, Hagar was far from this holy abode and she was very surprised to see angels there.

Rav Pincus goes on to explain that Hagar discovered that there is yet another place where the Shechina resides: in the presence of one who is suffering. As it states in Tehillim (91:15), *"Yikra'eini ve'e'eneihu, imo Anochi betzarah* – He will call to Me and I will answer him; I am with him in his distress." Similarly, in Yeshaya (57:15) it states, "I am with the broken-hearted and humble, to revive the spirit of the lowly and the heart of the downcast." When one is suffering, he feels alone and abandoned. But the truth is that due to his plight he is really not alone. The Shechina, along with the *kedusha* of the Bais Hamikdash, is with him. Indeed, Chazal state, "The Shechina is above the head of one who is sick" (Shabbos 12b). And since Hashem is so close to someone in distress, there is a special opportunity to reach out to Him with fervent *tefillos.*

When Hashem appeared to Moshe in the burning bush, He conveyed this same message: "*Imo Anochi betzarah.* I am, so to speak, in bondage together with Bnai Yisrael." Regarding this very site He told Moshe, "For the place upon which you stand is holy ground." *Imo Anochi betzarah* does not mean, "I feel your pain". It means, "My Shechina is here with you in your pain."

The caravan to which Yosef was sold was carrying sweet-smelling spices. Rashi (Bereishis 37:25) comments that although the caravans usually carried foul-smelling cargo, such as naphtha and tar, for the sake of Yosef, Hashem arranged that this caravan had fragrant spices. The Meforshim ask what was the significance of such a kindness in light of the fact that the caravan was carrying Yosef into bondage where he could endure slave labor or even death? Rav Mordechai Gifter answers that this was Hashem's way of demonstrating to Yosef that "I am here with you; I have not abandoned you. I am going to accompany you into Mitzrayim."

Even in the darkest times of *hester panim,* Hashem lets it be known that He is very much with us. Klal Yisrael as a whole and each individual must realize that regardless of the severity of our plight, the Shechina is "suffering" with us. Therefore, He is waiting for our *tefillos* and He is ready to help.

YOU CAN LIGHT UP THE WORLD

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

WAKING THEM UP

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion, we have an allusion to the mitzvah of Chinuch, to educate our children to follow the ways of the Torah. The Torah writes that Avraham took his "chanichav" to go to war against the four kings. (Bereishis 14,14) Our Sages teach that chanichav is a reference to Eliezer, whom Avraham was mechachech (educated) to do mitzvos. This leads us to the following true story.

Alyssa and David had two teenage children who lived at home with them. They were beginning to learn more about Torah and Mitzvos and slowly became more Shabbos observant. They were growing but they still had a lot to learn. They were trying to observe Shabbos in its entirety but the children were not fully on board yet. They still went to a secular school and all of their peers were not observant. The children were not yet ready to become Shomer Shabbos.

One summer when Shabbos started late, David came home from shul and was ready to make kiddush. The table was set but the children were not there.

"They were tired and went to bed early", Alyssa told David. "Should I go upstairs and wake them up?", David asked his wife. "I considered that" Alysa, answered. "It would be wonderful to have them with us for kiddush and for at least part of the meal. But I had the following thought. If we let them sleep they would be not doing any activities that break or desecrate Shabbos. They would not be doing any melachah. If we wake them they may join us for kiddush, but then they will get on their phones, computers and may go out with their friends. Perhaps letting them sleep would be a better way for them to keep Shabbos.

"That's a good point", David responded. "You may be right. But perhaps waking them for kiddush would be a more effective way to educate them about the beauty of Shabbos. If they hear kiddush and join us for the meal and zemiros, they may become more inspired to keep Shabbos in the future. If they simply sleep, they may not do melacha, but there is less of a chance that they would be inspired to keep Shabbos in the future.

This question was brought to Rav Zlberstein. What would be a preferred thing for David and Alyssa to do? Should they let their kids sleep Friday night to ensure that they keep Shabbos by not doing any melacha. Or should they wake them up to join them for the mitzvah deoraisa, Torah mitzvah of kiddush, but may likely do more melachah, forbidden activities, over Shabbos? See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume One page 196

Regarding last week's question about the TENS unit, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the "tackler" should have been more observant and aware that it was really a sick man with a medical device, and he is therefore liable to pay for the damage.

I AGREE TO COME ON THE CONDITION THAT WE DO NOT SPEAK DIVREI TORAH AT THE TABLE

Rav Yosef Tendler would often speak about the principle of Mishkal Hachasidus, balancing two acts of piety, discussed by the Mesilas Yesharim. Sometimes a person may think that he is doing a mitzvah or a hidur of a mitzvah. But before you do that Hiddur mitzvah it's important to consider if you are causing any harm by doing the Hidur. To illustrate this consider the following two stories.

Rabbi Yisroel Salanter was once observed using a small amount of water to wash his hands. His talmidim asked why he did so, as it is written that one should wash his hands with much water, which brings extra berachah. Rav Yisroel explained that the water was carried by the maid. If he washed with a large amount of water as usual, the maid would have to replace the water by going to the well. It is now very cold outside and I don't have the right to make her go out to get more water.

Rav Yisroel Salanter was once invited to dine with a talmid, a student of his, for the Friday night seudah. The talmid was known for having long Torah discussions at the Shabbos meals. Rav Yisroel told the talmid that he would agree to come on the condition that they would not speak divrei Torah at the table, only sing the Shabbos zemiros. The talmid agreed, although he was understandably surprised why his Rebbe did not want to have Torah discussions during the meal. The meal ended quickly and after the meal the cook in the home went to Rav Yisroel. She blessed Rav Yisroel for the brief meal. "I work hard and am so tired that I cannot stand on my feet. I really hope you come again next Shabbos." It was then clear why Rav Yisroel made his request.

Similarly, Rav Tendler said that some people like to stretch out the Pesach Seder. The wife is often very tired and there may be guests and children who have difficulty remaining awake at the table. Mishkal hachassidus suggests not prolonging the seder.

Coming late to a chavrusa because of another mitzvah may not be what HaShem wants. Coming home late at night when the family is waiting and has not been told the reason, may not be what HaShem wants. Similarly people who hire a babysitter must consider her before deciding to stay out later than arranged. Based on I Am Your Servant, By Rabbi Akiva Tendler, Published By Artscroll Mesorah page 219, 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

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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

Good Shabbos!