

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 VAYEIRA – GO STRAIGHT

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Torah describes at great length Avraham Avinu's extraordinary effort in pleading with Hashem on behalf of the city of Sodom. He begs Hashem to forgive him for his boldness in making request after request to somehow save those evil people. Rav Moshe Feinstein notes that such behavior is in stark contrast to human nature. Avraham was a paragon of chesed and Sodom was the epitome of cruelty. Avraham stood for *tzedakah umishpat* – charity and justice – and the people of Sodom had a very perverted sense of justice. Usually people who espouse chesed and ethical behavior cannot tolerate those who do not ascribe to their values and their perception of right and wrong. They quarrel and fight with them and they certainly take no interest in their welfare. ("If you are offended by my behavior you are a racist." "If you don't like communism you are an enemy of the state.")

Since the chesed of Avraham was based on the "derech Hashem", he did not hate those who differed with him or those who fought against his values. He sought their welfare hoping that they eventually would do Teshuva. Therefore, he felt that if there

were fifty tzaddikim in the city who could inspire them to repent, there was still hope.

The Netziv in his introduction to Haamek Davar on Sefer Bereishis explains why Bilam referred to the Avos as *Yesharim* – straight people (Bamidbar 23:10.) He elaborates on how he understands the *middah* of *yashar*. One who is *yashar* cares about the wellbeing of all people, even evil people who stand for everything that he despises. He realizes that these people are still part of Hashem's creation and He really does care about them. (Perhaps this idea is best manifested in Hashem's words to the angels who sought to sing when they witnessed the Egyptians drowning in Yam Suf: "My own creations are drowning in the sea and you are going to sing?")

The Avos were not only great Tzaddikim who loved Hashem to the nth degree, they were also *yesharim*. Therefore, Avraham was deeply concerned about the fate of Sodom and did everything in his power to save the city. This was the *middah* of Yitzchok and Yaakov too. Even though Avimelech's servants filled in all the wells dug by Avraham and fought with Yitzchok over the new wells, Yitzchok readily accepted his gesture of peace and

comraderie. And after all the evil that Lavan perpetrated against him, nevertheless Yaakov was courteous to him and reconciled with him.

The Netziv contrasts their behavior to that of the Jews at the time of the destruction of the second Bais Hamikdash. The Netziv explains that even though they were pious people, they were not *yesharim*. Therefore, they were guilty of *sinas chinam*. They harbored *sin'ah* toward those who did not act in accordance with their own *hashkofos*, labeling them Tzedukim and *apikorsim*. It was this divisiveness that led to the Churban.

Beruriah the wife of Rabbi Meir had the right idea. When Rabbi Meir was harassed by ruffians in his neighborhood, he wanted to pray for them to die. However, she told him, "Don't pray that they should die; pray that they should do Teshuva." He listened to her advice, and indeed, they did Teshuva.

The bottom line: Hate the sin, not the sinner. If you will be straight, you might even be able to straighten them out too.

YOU CAN LIGHT UP THE WORLD

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

I Desperately Need A Cast

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion we have the story of the angels telling how Sarah will soon have a child. The Torah says that Sarah laughed at herself saying, "How could I have children but my husband is so old". Later when HaShem related this to Avraham, He said, "Sarah said how can I have children but I am too old". Our Sages point out that HaShem changed the truth a bit in order to preserve the peace between Avraham and Sarah. This story establishes the Torah principle that one is allowed to change the truth for the sake of peace.

But what are the parameters of this principle? When is one allowed to change the truth for the sake of peace? This leads us to the following true story.

One day Dr. Avi, a doctor from an urgent care clinic, called Rav Zilberstein with the following dilemma. Chaim, a friend of Avi, came into the clinic and told the doctor that he hurt his arm and thought he might have broken it. The staff did an x-ray and saw that it was not broken. Chaim then turned to his friend, "Listen, you may be right that it's not broken, but please give me a cast anyway. I will pay for all of the expenses. It's really important and it may prevent me from losing my marriage."

Chaim then told the following story:

Chaim was married and had a good relationship with his wife. However, he started staying late at work schmoozing with his friends about the news and politics. His wife asked him to please come home for dinner on time so that he could help her with the kids. Chaim promised to come on time, but the allure of schmoozing with his buddies after work was too strong.

One day, after coming home late, he got into a huge argument with his wife. Chaim realized that he would not be able to continue with his relationship like this. He promised his wife that he would shape up and be home on time. The next week he had a great streak. He was home on time four days in a row.

But on Thursday, as he was walking out of work, he started talking to his colleagues. One thing led to another and before he realized it, he was an hour late. Chaim knew that if he came home late without a good justification it would cause very serious damage, perhaps permanent damage, to his marriage. On his way home he had an idea. His arm was hurting, so he stopped at the urgent care clinic to get it checked.

After Avi told him it was not broken, Chaim begged, "I need to tell my wife that I came

home late because of an emergency and I needed a cast. If I don't have the cast there is a good chance my marriage will be lost. I will pay for all of the costs. Please give me a cast anyway, even if there is technically not a break."

"But that would be dishonest", Avi argued. "You are right", Chaim replied, "but the Torah says you are allowed to lie for the sake of shalom bayis."

Avi was very torn about whether he should give Chaim the cast. He picked up the phone and called Rav Zilberstein with this question. What do you think? Can Dr. Avi give Chaim the cast if Chaim doesn't medically need it, and he would be facilitating the dishonesty? Or would we say that this is an example of lying for the sake of shalom bayis? See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume Two page 384

Regarding last's week's question about whether to wake up the teens for Kiddush, Rav Zilberstein answered that they should be woken up to do the mitzvah of kidush. We don't know for sure that they will break the Shabbos, and it's possible that the power of this mitzvah may inspire them to keep Shabbos completely.

YOU ARE NOT A BUS DRIVER, YOU ARE DRIVING AN ARON KODESH

Berel Lazerson was a school bus driver for many years in Eretz Yisrael. After driving for years and getting older, he became frustrated with the job. The boys on the bus were rowdy and it exhausted him. Berel decided that he was going to quit. He told the principal of the school that he was going to switch to become a delivery man instead.

The principal, Rabbi Ben Shalom said, "Okay you can stop, but would it be okay if you speak with my Rebbi, Rabbi Bentzion Abba Shaul before you make your final decision?"

Berel met with Rav Abba Shaul. Rabbi Abba Shaul listened to Berel's story. Rav Bentzion smiled and said, "You should realize that you are not a bus driver. You are driving an aron kodesh. The boys are not boys, they are sifrei Torah. Inside each child is the entire future of the Jewish people and its Torah. Every time you open the door you are not just opening a bus door. You are being mechubad with pesichas ha'aron, opening the aron kodesh. Do you want to give up this kibud?"

Berel was so inspired by Rav Bentzion's words that he agreed to continue with his job. The next day, as he opened the school bus door, he told the boys, "Thank you for the zechus and kibud of being able to drive you every day".

Based on Touched by a Story Volume Two 142, by Rabbi Yechiel Spero, published by Artscroll Mesorah, 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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Good Shabbos!