

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 TOLDOS – IT'S SHEER INSANITY

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Gemara (Bava Basra 16b) states that Eisav committed five serious sins on the day that Avraham died. One of the five was *kafar Be'ikar*, he denied the essence of Hashem's existence. Rav Aharon Kotler wonders how it was possible that Eisav did not believe in G-d. He had lived for fifteen years in the presence of Avraham, Yitzchok and Rivka who were permeated with an intense awareness of Hashem. The Shechina itself resided in their tents and miracles were common every day. Rav Aharon asserts that it is well known that anyone who saw the Vilna Gaon could not deny Hashem's existence. Furthermore, if Eisav did not believe in G-d, why was he so upset that Yaakov stole his berachos? If there is no G-d, there cannot be any value in "His" blessings.

Rav Aharon suggests that we take a closer look at the Gemara. The Gemara makes a *drasha* from the word "zeh". Eisav said, "*Lamah zeh li bechora* – what use is **this** birthright to me?" The same word *zeh* is used by Bnai Yisrael at Yam Suf when they declared, "*Zeh Keili* – This is my G-d".

Chazal comment that the word *zeh* implies that they pointed with their fingers towards Hashem – so to speak. Similarly, Chazal (Taanis 30a) state that Hashem will arrange a dance for Tzaddikim around Him in Gan Eden and each one will point with his finger saying "Zeh Hashem – this is Hashem." Thus, Chazal interpret that when Eisav said *zeh* he was referring to Hashem and he too had a very palpable perception of Hashem.

Therefore, the question is what did Chazal mean by the expression "*kafar Be'ikar*"? Rav Aharon explains that the principle of free will dictates that there is an even balance between the choice to do good or to do evil. Thus, the Gemara states in Sukka (52a) that one who is greater has a greater yetzer hara. Although Eisav definitely believed in Hashem, his powerful yetzer hara allowed him to ignore Hashem and behave as if He doesn't exist. Hence, Chazal understood that when Eisav said "*Lamah zeh li*" – the *zeh* which referred to Hashem implied, "I don't need to acknowledge G-d and therefore I can do whatever I please."

This phenomenon was not limited to Eisav. Some of the greatest and most scholarly people sinned so severely that they have no share in the World to Come. This includes Bilam, one of the greatest prophets of all time, Doeg, the head of the Sanhedrin at the time of Shaul Hamelech and Yeravam ben Nevat who was as great as Shlomo Hamelech in Torah scholarship. Although they were of great spiritual prowess, they also had a yetzer hara of equal tenacity.

This idea may apply to anyone who does an *aveira* defiantly. What is he thinking?! He knows full-well that Hashem really exists and that He said, "Do not do this." Is he such a spiritual giant that he has such a big yetzer hara? Perhaps there is another way to understand it. Chazal (Sotah 3a) say, "A person does not commit a sin unless a spirit of insanity possesses him." Any way you look at it, listening to the yetzer hara is truly insanity. And that's another good reason to maintain our sanity.

YOU CAN LIGHT UP THE WORLD

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

BEWARE OF DOG!

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion, we find the story of how Rivka and Yaakov used ostensibly tricky methods in order for Yaakov to receive the blessings that he rightfully deserved. Yaakov was a paragon of truth and what he did was truthful even though on the surface it appeared to be deceitful. As we discussed in previous articles, the Torah allows us to deviate from the truth in certain specific cases particularly when it promotes peace. This leads us to the following timely true story.

In Baltimore recently there has been a string of armed burglaries. This occurred in my neighborhood and armed burglars demanded the keys for peoples' cars. After one such incident occurred, we had

a discussion with a few people in my neighborhood about what might be done to prevent this in the future. One person suggested that perhaps we can each place a large sign in front of our homes saying "beware of guard dog" with a picture of a vicious dog. Perhaps if they know that there is a guard dog watching, the burglars would go elsewhere.

On one hand it sounds like a very good idea, and it might help to keep us safe. On the other hand, however, there are the following considerations. If we were to give the impression that there was a guard dog on our block it would keep innocent people away out of fear of a non-existent dog. Perhaps it would be bad chinuch (education) for the young

children to know that even though there was no dog we give the impression that there is one. They might not be mature enough to understand that you are allowed to be misleading in certain cases. But on the other hand, maybe these drawbacks are trumped by the benefit of protecting the neighborhood.

What do you think? Is it OK to have a "beware of dog" sign when there really is no guard dog?

Regarding last week's question of whether it is permitted to take the money from the bag of the thief, Rav Zilberstien wrote that it appears that he cannot take the money, because until the son gets the bag, the bag is still the property of the father, not the son.

IF I DO NOT FINISH WRITING THE TESHUVA, WHO WILL TAKE PITY ON THIS WOMAN AND RELEASE HER FROM HER LONELINESS?

The heroine of our Parsha is Rivka as she protected the brachos from falling into the hands of Eisov. The following is an illustration to appreciate our commitment to the women of our people.

Rav Ovadia Yosef was not feeling well one day. Rav David and R' Aryeh Deri took him to the hospital to be examined. The doctors determined that he had suffered a heart attack, and they told him that he needed an emergency stent procedure to open his arteries.

"I need to go home for three hours," Harav Ovadia replied. "I will then return for the procedure." Rav David and R' Aryeh were concerned that the delay would be dangerous, and they tried to dissuade him from leaving the hospital.

"Why does the Rav need three hours before the surgery?" R' Aryeh asked. Harav Ovadia explained, "I am not sure I will come out of this procedure alive, and I am in the middle of writing a teshuva to free an agunah. If I do not finish writing the teshuva, who will take pity on this

woman and release her from her loneliness?" They brought him home, and he finished writing the teshuva permitting the agunah to remarry. Only then did he return to the hospital for the lifesaving procedure.

(From Maran HaRav Ovadia, by Rabbi Yehuda Heimowitz, published by Artsroll. 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 !