

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

MIKETZ – DO YOU GET IT?

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

When Yosef's brothers went down to Mitzrayim during the famine to purchase food, they appeared before the viceroy, who was really Yosef. The Torah states, "Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him" (Bereishis 42:8). Rashi explains that he recognized them because they already had full beards the last time he saw them. However, they did not recognize him since his beard had not been full when they last saw him.

The Meforshim find it astonishing that such wise and clever men were unable to discern that the Egyptian viceroy was really their brother Yosef. Rav Yaakov Galinsky deepens the paradox by citing events that should have convinced them that the viceroy was really Yosef. Upon their return to Mitzrayim along with Binyamin, they were invited to eat with the viceroy. "They were seated before him, the firstborn according to his seniority and the youngest according to his youth; and the men looked at each other in astonishment" (Bereishis 43:33). How could he have realized this even though all ten of them were born in a span of just fourteen years? Additionally, when the portions were passed out, Binyamin received five portions. Why did he show such favoritism to Binyamin?

Furthermore, Rashi (ibid 43:7) states that the brothers related to Yaakov that the viceroy was even familiar with matters relating to their childhood. How is it possible that they still did not suspect that the viceroy who treated them in a totally inscrutable manner was their brother Yosef whom they had betrayed?

Rav Galinsky answers that they were operating on a preconceived notion. Since Yosef was sold as a slave, there was no way he could have risen to such a high position. The Egyptian protocol barred such an appointment from taking place. While their assumptions may have been reasonable, they failed to recognize the omnipotence of Hashem who even controls the hearts of kings. Although all the evidence was there, they still didn't get it.

When the army of Aram besieged the city of Shomron, a terrible famine ensued. Finally, Elisha prophesied that tomorrow the price of a *se'ah* of flour in Shomron would plummet to merely one *selah*. The King's captain replied, "Even if Hashem were to make windows in the sky, is such a thing possible? (Melachim 2, 7:2). That night Hashem created sound effects replicating the sound of a mighty army

approaching and the entire army of Aram fled, leaving behind a huge cache of food and valuables. Indeed, the next morning the price of a *se'ah* of flour had fallen to one *selah*. Although the captain could not conceive of a miracle so great, he failed to realize that there is literally nothing that Hashem cannot do. Thus, Chazal tell us, "Even if a sharp sword is resting on a person's neck, he should not refrain from pleading for Hashem's mercy" (Berachos 10a).

Aside from this significant lesson in *emunah* and *bitachon*, there is another fundamental message here. We all have preconceived notions about life, about people, about ourselves, and even about G-d. Even when the truth is staring us in the face, we somehow don't get it. We continue to go about our lives oblivious to what may be very obvious to others. Therefore, when things just do not seem to make sense, we need to step back, take a deep breath, and reconsider all the possibilities. What is the truth about this person, this event or ourselves. If we are brutally honest with ourselves, we will discover the truth and we will finally **get it!**

YOU CAN LIGHT UP THE WORLD

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

PRIORITIES

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion, the Torah tells us how Yosef distributed life-saving food to the people of Egypt and the Neighboring lands. This week, life-saving vaccines to stop the spread of the Coronavirus are becoming available. They will be distributed in Eretz Yisroel starting December 20. In the US, the CDC guidelines established the priority for issuing vaccines as follows. Frontline health care workers will get the first available doses. Next will be people who are in long term health facilities who are very vulnerable to the virus such as elderly people in nursing homes. After that, the vaccines will be available to the general public. Other states have more detailed policies.

What is the Torah perspective on these priorities? According to the Torah, in general, priority should be given to those who are most needy. So, in states where there is a limited number of vaccines who should get priority? For example, Maryland will only have 155,000 vaccines available this week, with a total population of 6 million people. This means that approximately one in 50 will be able to get it. It will be many months before it will be available to everyone.

Front line care workers are of course saving lives and they are essential to keep the healthcare system running. But they may not be as vulnerable to death as elderly people. Perhaps it should be given to the elderly first because they are more vulnerable to die. Do we focus on who is most likely to die or do we focus on who can bring the greatest amount of benefit to others?

Taking this to the next level, once the vaccine is available to the general public how should we prioritize distributing it in prison? In Massachusetts they plan to give it to prisoners first because people in prison can be more vulnerable to getting COVID because it is a closed, confined area with limited movement and limited freedom. Do we say that they should get priority before the general public, or do we say that perhaps they forfeited that priority because of their crimes?

Next, how about leaders? In many cases, government leaders such as mayors, congressmen, senators, and presidents will be getting first priority. Should they have priority because they are needed to give leadership? Or should all vulnerable people

be given before leaders get it? How about Police officers and emergency responders? Should they take priority over the general population? Over the prison population? Over the elderly population? In Montana they are giving teachers priority to the vaccine in order to keep the schools open. Uber has been lobbying that its drivers should take priority within the general population as their drivers keep society functioning.

What is the Torah's perspective on these questions? How should they prioritize this in Eretz Yisroel? What do you think?

Last week's question about calling the ambulance in Shabbos, was brought to Rav Elyashiv, Zt'l. Rav Elyashiv answered that if the wife is sure that it is nothing serious again, because she knows her husband well, then she does not have an obligation to call the ambulance. Similarly, if the doctors are certain that he is not in danger, and he is just being overly cautious like before, then they don't have to break Shabbos. However, if the wife or doctors are not sure that it is not a danger, they are obligated to break the Shabbos to check it out.

DA'AS TORAH

An older bachur was once having trouble finding a shidduch. To make matters worse, he had a precondition that the girl he married would have to agree to allow his elderly mother to live with them. His friends told him to drop his demand; it would just make the search harder. He refused to compromise. They advised him to consult da'as Torah, so he went to speak to Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt"l.

Rav Shlomo Zalman told him that if it was important to him, he could insist on it. It would be a good test of the girl's character,

he added. Furthermore, if he'd have to place his mother in a nursing home because of his wife, he'd always resent her for it. After giving the bachur a bracha for success in his search, the bachur left.

A short while later the bachur returned to Rav Shlomo Zalman to inform him that he had found his zivug.

"Wonderful!" exclaimed Rav Shlomo Zalman. "Now you must place your mother in a home."

"What? Why? My kallah agreed to let her live with us!"

"I know. And you see she has a golden character. If it were up to her, you wouldn't put your mother in a nursing home so you have no reason to resent her. But there is no way that a newly married couple can have the husband's mother living with them, so I'm telling you, you must put your mother in a home."

From Impact Volume Two, by Rabbi Dovid Kaplan, published by Feldheim, 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!