

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 VAYISHLACH – JUST FAKE IT

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Yaakov tells Eisav “I have dwelt (*garti*) with Lavan and I have lingered until now.” Rashi notes that the gematria of *garti* and *taryag* (613) are the same. Thus, Yaakov was stating, “I dwelt with Lavan and I kept *taryag* Mitzvos and I did not learn from his evil deeds”. Rav Meir Shapiro observes that the words “I did not learn from his evil deeds” appear to be redundant. He suggests, homiletically, that Yaakov was really bemoaning the fact that despite his having kept all the Mitzvos, he did not learn from Lavan to keep them with the same degree of enthusiasm and devotion that Lavan displayed in his evil ways.

While it is difficult to read into Rashi such a sharp critique of Yaakov, the loftiest patriarch, the message is a very powerful one. Oh, that our passion and diligence in the performance of Mitzvos would parallel the zealotry of the wicked. Perhaps this is what the Mishna in Avos means by, “Who is wise? He who learns from **every** person.” We can learn even from wicked people. Indeed, we can learn even from ourselves. Do we learn and

daven with the same passion as we pursue our personal interests? Do we get excited over a beautiful Dvar Torah the way we delight over a scrumptious meal?

The pleasure and excitement which we have when doing something are not merely superficial factors. The more we enjoy something the more likely we are to do it. Moreover, these factors define our priorities and who we are. One who avidly follows baseball or football is a sports fan. One who indulges copiously in fine dining is a gourmet (or perhaps a glutton). Thus, the *simcha* and enthusiasm that we experience when doing Mitzvos is a crucial factor in defining who we are. Little wonder that the sainted Arizal attributed his great spiritual accomplishments to his having performed Mitzvos with *simcha*.

How do we go about developing these positive feelings and enthusiasm toward Mitzvos? The Mesilas Yesharim (Chapter 7) suggests, “For the person that this passion does not burn in his heart, it is advisable that he

intentionally animate himself. This will result in the desire becoming part of his nature. For the external movement will stimulate the internal (feeling). The external is certainly more under his control than the internal.”

This approach is the foundation of behavior modification psychology. As a noted psychologist observed, although this approach may seem phony, it is the very essence of the process of change. To transition from who we are to whom we would like to become, we must act like the person we want to be. The brain learns and mimics these new feelings until they become habitual and natural. That is the only way to get there. Or, in street lingo – “Fake it and you’ll make it.”

We must first start with a true evaluation of ourselves. How do we perform Mitzvos? Do we do them with the same, or at least similar, enthusiasm and joy that we do non-Mitzvos or aveiros? If the answer is no, then we need to learn from Lavan. Why not begin now? If we fake it, we can make it!

YOU CAN LIGHT UP THE WORLD

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

THE CHOCOLATE PARTY

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Torah portion we find the story of how Shimon and Levi tricked the people of Shechem. They gave the impression that they wanted to assimilate, and join the people of Shechem and told them that Shechem first had to get circumcised. Once they were circumcised, Shimon and Levi surreptitiously killed the people of Shechem and rescued Dina. This deception leads us to the following interesting true story of deception.

Yoel and Baruch were friends in High School. Yoel knew that Baruch loved Schmerling milk chocolate. One day Yoel decided to play a practical joke on Baruch. Yoel gave his friend Baruch a certificate offering a \$500 rebate on \$500 worth of chocolates purchased from the Schmerling Chocolate company. The certificate said Schmerling would offer a full rebate on \$500 spent on the chocolate.

Baruch loved Schmerling Chocolate and he was very excited to get this rebate. Baruch bought \$500 worth of candy bars and he enjoyed them with his friends. Soon after he mailed the the rebate certificate to the company. However, to Baruch's great chagrin, the Schmerling company sent it back saying that it was not a real rebate certificate. It was fake.

Baruch, who felt that he was scammed, went to Yoel and confronted him. Baruch asked Yoel to pay him back the \$500 that he spent. "I never would have spent \$500 on chocolate if I had not been given this fake certificate from you. You caused me this great loss of money."

Yoel agreed that it was fake, and that he was just playing a joke. However, he argued that Baruch still ate and enjoyed the chocolate.

"Why should I pay for all of the chocolate if you ate it and enjoyed it?", Yoel argued. Baruch still felt that he should be repaid all of the money because he wouldn't have spent the money had Yoel not tricked him.

Who is right? Does Yoel have to pay Baruch the \$500 for the chocolate?

Regarding the question about the two insurance companies, Rav Zilberstein writes that the first company is allowed to pay people to leave another company to join them. However, the second company is not allowed to demand that doctors drop patients who change insurance. Therefore the doctor should not comply with this request.

"WHAT BETTER KADDISH CAN I SEND MY FATHER THAN TO HELP

ESTABLISH A HOUSE OF TORAH?"

Every year, Rav Eliyhau Dessler had the practice that he would stay in Gateshead for the week of his father's yahrzeit so that he could spend the week immersed in learning and lead the davening in the Kollel.

One year, however, on the very evening of his father's yahrzeit, Rav Dessler asked Rabbi Waltner to accompany him to the train station. There were no cabs available, and they had to walk all the way to the Newcastle train station. Rabbi Dessler absolutely refused to permit his younger friend to carry his bag

despite the very long walk. On the steps of the train, Rabbi Walter wondered why Rav Dessler was departing to London precisely at the moment when he should be davening at the amud.

Rav Dessler explained to Rabbi Waltner that he had received a call from a rosh yeshiva in London that a shidduch between a girl in Gateshead Seminary and a yeshiva bachur in London had run into difficulties, and that Rabbi Dessler might be able to save it " I

thought to myself," said Rabbi Dessler, "what better kaddish can I send my father than to help establish a house of Torah?"

Rav Dessler was prepared to give up his long-established hanhagos (ways of conducting himself) for the benefit of helping others. To him that was the best way to say kaddish.

From Rav Dessler, By Rabbi Yonason Rosenblum, Published by Artscroll Mesorah, page 228, 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

The logo for "First Seder" features the word "1st" in a large, bold, white serif font, with the word "Seder" written in a large, elegant, white cursive script below it.

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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 !