

# 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 BESHALACH – “OY VEY”

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

“Vayehi beshalach Paroh es ha’am – And it was when Paroh sent out the people” (Shemos 13:17). The Medrash remarks that the word *vayehi* connotes woe – similar to “oy vey”. Thus, the pasuk is connoting, “Alas, when Paroh sent out the people.” What was the reason for the “oy vey”? Paroh still claimed that it was he who set them free. Indeed, he lamented, “What is this that we have done, that we have set Yisrael free from serving us?” (ibid. 14:8). Rav Yaakov Galinsky suggests that we should try to imagine all the Egyptian newspapers with headlines blaring, “Paroh frees the Jews!” The lead article explains, “Paroh sought out Moshe and Aharon in the middle of the night. (Some eyewitness reports say that he was wearing his pajamas.) He shouted at them, ‘Get up and get out of here, you and Bnai Yisrael. Go and serve Hashem as you have spoken.’”

In truth, Hashem had struck Paroh with Makkos Bechoros until he cried, “Uncle”. It was clearly done under the duress of a night filled with the deaths of thousands of first-born Egyptians. Even Bilam knew this when he eloquently proclaimed, “It is G-d Who took them out of Mitzrayim” (Bamidbar 23:22). However, many people confuse the means with the cause. Certainly, one cannot deny that Paroh told Bnai Yisrael to leave. However, we should not attribute this decision to him. It must be clear to us that “It is G-d Who took them out of Mitzrayim” and that Paroh was merely the means for their

departure. However, the Torah is pointing out that human perception remains that “Paroh sent out the people.” And that is why we should say, “oy vey.”

Perhaps this would be like someone asking you, “What brings you here?” and you reply, “I came by train.” This refers merely to your means of travel. The intent of the question was to discover the reason for your coming i.e., the cause. In truth, in all situations there is a physical means by which the event took place and the ultimate cause for it happening, which is Hashem Himself. Thus, Hashem is referred to as *‘ilas ha’ilos vesibas kol hasibos’* – the reason behind all reasons and the cause behind all causes.

Thus, when any form of tragedy occurs, the beracha Dayan Ha’emes is recited. It does not matter whether someone, *chas veshalom*, died from an illness or was run over by a drunken driver. The means may have changed, but the ultimate cause was the same – the Ribono Shel Olam. The beracha to be recited is Dayan Ha’emes.

Naturally, we understand that whoever is the means by which the tragedy occurred is still culpable. In fact, as the Ramban explains, this is exactly what Hashem told Avraham, “You shall surely know that your offspring will be strangers in a foreign land, and they will enslave them, and they will oppress them for four hundred years.

But I shall also judge the nation that they will serve” (Bereishis 15:13-14). Hashem decreed that Bnai Yisrael would be slaves; He was the ultimate cause. Since Paroh and the Egyptians served as the means, they were culpable for their actions.

This concept is applicable to each person independently. If *chas veshalom* someone runs out in front of a car, although Hashem decreed that he would die, he himself was the means by which his death occurred, and he will be held accountable. Here too the appropriate beracha is Dayan Ha’emes.

From the very onset of the COVID-19 pandemic it was obvious that Hashem was in control. Any initial assumptions about its limited contagion and geographic scope were rapidly disproved. And just when we thought we were gaining control of it, the virus swirled totally out of control. And with the advent of warp speed vaccines, new and more virulent strains start making their way across the globe. There is no question that Hashem has sent this plague and He is deciding, “*Mi yichyeh u’mi yamus.*” Although Hashem is clearly the cause, it is people who are the means that Hashem uses to spread it. Therefore, we are obligated to take whatever steps necessary to avoid becoming the means for anyone, including ourselves, getting sick. But it is the *Ilas Ha’ilos* Who makes the final decision.

You can bring a zechus refua shelaima for Sandy Bruck - Shalom ben Tila Leah - by signing up for a weekly erev Shabbos contribution at <https://pay.banquest.com/lightuptheworld> and by joining the 2-3 minute daily shiur on the writings of the Chofetz Chaim. The shiur is sent out via WhatsApp and email.

Please contact [rabbigreenspan@firstseder.org](mailto:rabbigreenspan@firstseder.org) to join.

## GIVING THE DOCTOR AN EXTRA 500 SHEKELS

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about the exodus from Mitzrayim and the splitting of the sea. Shortly after the splitting of the sea the Jewish people rested in a place called Marah. The Torah says, "There the law and justice was given to them". (Shemos 15,25). Our Sages teach that among the laws that were taught there was the mitzvah of keeping Shabbos. This leads us to the following fascinating true story.

A religious Jew named Chaim, who lived in Israel, needed urgent medical treatment on Shabbos. There was a doctor who lived nearby who was an expert in that field. He was Jewish but not religious. Chaim knocked on his door and told the doctor of his urgent need for treatment. The doctor said "I can help you but I need to be paid before I do the treatment". Chaim asked if he could pay right after Shabbos, but the doctor said that the only way he would perform the procedure was if Chaim would pay upfront.

Chaim knew that one is allowed to violate the Shabbos in the case of a medical emergency.

He quickly went home and got his checkbook. He asked the doctor how much the fee was. "500 Shekels", the doctor answered.

Chaim opened his checkbook and wrote 1000 shekels. "Excuse me, I think you made a mistake. I said 500 not 1000", said the doctor. "Yes," answered Chaim. "But to write 500 hundred in Hebrew is 7 letters (חמשה מאות). To write 1000 in Hebrew is just 3 letters (אלף). That is why I wrote 1000".

The doctor was quiet, and quite impressed. He proceeded to perform the medical procedure. Chaim was healed and went home happily. Later that day, the doctor thought for a long time about what had transpired. This religious Jew was willing to spend 500 extra shekels in order to avoid writing 4 letters on Shabbos. The doctor was so moved that he resolved to learn more about the significance of Shabbos.

Sure enough, after a while, the doctor became shomer Shabbos because of this story. During the doctor's tshuva journey, he

met with Rav Zilberstein. He told him the whole story outlined above and asked two questions. First, was the doctor allowed to cash the check? On one hand, Chaim willingly gave him the 1000 shekel. But on the other hand, Chaim didn't really want to spend that much money, he just didn't want to write unnecessarily on Shabbos. The second question he asked was if Chaim's decision to write 1000 shekels rather than 500 is what the halacha really requires one to do, or was Chaim being extra stringent? Does the halacha require one to spend more money in order to write fewer letters? See Hebrew Veharev Na Volume Two Page 375

Regarding last week's question about the King and the donkey, Rav Zilberstein brought this question to his father-in-law, Rav Yosef Elyashiv. Rav Elyashiv answered that the signs of the donkey and the roots are called "Umdena". We are unable to extract money with an Umdena and so it would not be sufficient in Beis Din to extract the land.

## GIVING HIS WIFE SOME APPRECIATION OF WHO HER HUSBAND REALLY WAS

Rabbi Avraham Stern, a grandson of Rabbi Hirsch Diskind, shared the following story he heard from his grandfather.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky would regularly visit Reb Yechiel Mordechai Gordon, the Lomzer Rosh Yeshiva, each Friday after he finished giving shiur in Torah V'daas. It was not an easy commute. It was a train and a bus, and it was an exhausting trip to do each way and then head home in time to prepare for Shabbos.

My grandfather once asked him why he goes to such lengths to visit him each week. Is it really necessary at such personal sacrifice? Reb Yaakov explained the reason for his behavior. He described how he had been a refugee during the first world war and had found refuge in the Lomza Yeshiva where he spent a good part of the war years. He was

eternally grateful to the Rosh Yeshiva, Reb Yechiel Mordechai, for all that he had done for him, providing him with a safe haven where he was able to continue to thrive, away from both physical and spiritual dangers.

Unfortunately, during the second world war, Reb Yechiel Mordechai lost his wife and children, along with his beloved talmidim and never fully recovered from his devastating loss. Upon his arrival in America after the war, he remarried an American woman who had lost her husband with no children. She was a very choshuve person, but she had never seen Reb Yechiel Mordechai in his former glory, as one of the leading Roshei Yeshiva in pre-war Europe. In America during those years, he did not have any real position either and his stature in her eyes may not have been

reflective of his true greatness. The man she knew was a mere shadow of his former self, with a heart laden with the

loss and pain and suffering from all the horrors he had witnessed during the war years.

Reb Yaakov felt compelled to visit him regularly in order to give his wife some appreciation of who her husband really was and of his importance and regard in the pre-war Torah world. He reasoned that it would surely make a strong impression on her if the Torah V'daas Rosh Yeshiva, Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky, deemed it worthy to shlep out each week to visit her husband, he must really be someone special. Reprinted with permission of [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](mailto: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](mailto:RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org)

**Good Shabbos!**