

# 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

## PURIM - MASQUERADE

*Rabbi Shlomo Caplan*

There is an accepted custom to masquerade on Purim and dress up as famous Purim characters or other personalities. Numerous reasons have been offered to explain this seemingly unconventional practice.

One explanation is that the theme of the Purim story is *hester panim* – the hiddenness of Hashem. Behind every event that unfolds in the Megilla is the hand of Hashem the Director. He orchestrated the downfall of Vashti, the coronation of Esther, the foiled plot of Bigson and Teresh and Haman's ultimate swinging on his own gallows. We are expected to connect the dots and peel away all the layers of concealment.

I believe there is a very profound message here. At the time of Mordechai and Esther, after the destruction of the first Bais Hamikdash, the Shechina was concealed and a state of *hester panim* ensued. This was not an entirely new phenomenon. The Hebrew word for world is *Olam*, which means hidden. The very act of creation was an act whereby Hashem concealed Himself. Although Hashem is omnipresent and there is no place devoid of His presence, we cannot readily detect Him.

Not only is our world a veil which conceals Hashem, but even people are often concealed. If we go back in history we find numerous instances where a person wasn't whom he appeared to be. We can start with Yitzchak Avinu who thought that he was giving his blessing to Eisav, not Yaakov. And Yaakov thought that his new bride was Rachel when in reality she was Leah. And Yehuda thought that the woman at the fork in the road was a harlot, but she was really his own daughter-in-law, the righteous Tamar. The brothers of Yosef thought that the cruel viceroy who confronted them was an Egyptian when he was none other than Yosef.

Even when we are not dealing with mistaken identities we often don't really know the person in front of us. Take Yitzchak who failed to comprehend Eisav's true essence. Similarly, we find that Shmuel mistook Yishai's son Eliav as Hashem's choice to be king. Hashem told him, "Do not look at his appearance or at his tall stature for I have rejected him. For it is not as man sees – man sees what his eyes behold, but Hashem sees into the heart" (Shmuel I: 16,7).

On Purim we learn how to pull away the external layers and look deeper. The little girl at our door is not really Queen Esther; she is our neighbor's

seven-year-old daughter. Things are just not what they appear to be. People aren't whom they appear to be. Events are not what they appear to be. And we ourselves are not whom we appear to be.

And that is where the real challenge takes place. Who are we? Really. Perhaps that is why Chazal recommend imbibing on Purim. Since the Gemara in Eiruvin (65b) tells us, "A person can be recognized by three things: his wallet, **his cup**, and his anger," perhaps we will be able to recognize our true selves. Maybe this is what the Arizal had in mind when he interpreted Yom Kippurim to mean Yom Kippur is like Purim. They are both days when we get in touch with reality and ourselves – unveiled.

This year most of us have not waited for Purim to don our masks. Hashem has brought upon us a plague which has not only enabled us to perceive Him from behind His mask but also has caused us to begin thinking about who the person is behind our mask. We hope and pray that as we proceed to answer this question, we will be motivated to do a sincere Teshuva and thereby be able to remove all of our masks. When that happens, Hashem will remove His mask and bring the Complete Redemption.

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.

## TWO HALVES OF A WHOLE

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week is the Yom Tov of Purim. We know that there is a mitzvah to give Mishloach manos, two food gifts to another Jew on Purim.

Why do we send gifts to each other on Purim? We don't do this for any other Yom Tov. The Sfas Emes offers a beautiful insight that is learned from this mitzvah. Purim is a time of renewed Torah learning. Learning Torah together brings Jews closer to each other. This is alluded to in the famous saying, "Veahavta Lareacha Kamocho, Ze Klal Gadol Batorah". Simply, this means, "You shall love your fellow as yourself, this is the great unifying principle of the Torah". But there is a deeper way to read that saying. Zeh Klal Gadol - Batorah, "They become a great unified group, through the power of learning Torah".

This is why we give gifts to each other. At the time that we learn more Torah we express that we are now more united, more of one unit. Learning Torah has the power to unify us as a community.

This leads us to the following fascinating story. Binyamin once planned to give his friend a very expensive, and very fancy cheesecake for mishloach manos. It was beautiful and cost a great deal of money. As Binyamin was bringing the cake over, he realized that even though he spent a lot of money on the cake, in order to properly fulfill the mitzvah he had to give two items and not just a cake.

He was walking up the steps to his friend's apartment and he had nothing

else to give. He suddenly thought of an idea! He had a knife in the car. He could cut the cake in half and give each part separately and then that would be two gifts. Could he fulfill his commandment to give mishloach manos by cutting a cake in half?

On one hand you can say it is like giving two cakes. But on the other hand it was one cake that was cut. What do you think? Can he give a cake cut in half, and fulfill his obligation? See Chashukei Chemed Megillah Page 115.

Regarding last week's question about the mishloach manos, Rav Zilberstein wrote that he would likely not fulfill his mitzvah of Mishloach Manos, however, he would not have an obligation to notify them about the Hechser.

## THE JOY OF BROKEN BOTTLES

Some time ago we shared a story about the Machlis Family on Shabbos. Here is another beautiful anecdote about their hospitality on Purim. A guest recalled the following beautiful vignette.

"When I graduated high school in 1994, I went to Israel for a year. I was, searching; "finding myself". On Purim, I came to the Machlis home for the seudah. Mrs. Machlis, with a broad smile, was busy preparing a huge meal for scores of guests. Her happiness and excitement was absolutely contagious. Mrs. Machlis

called out to Rabbi Machlis that she needed a case of wine from the car. I volunteered to get it. I walked in the door with a case of wine, and the unthinkable happened. I dropped the whole case of wine! There was glass and wine all over the apartment floor! The wine was needed for all of the guests, and wine was the highlight of the seudah!

I was devastated and embarrassed. But all of a sudden, I heard screams coming from Rabbi and Mrs. Machlis. "Mazel Tov! Mazel Tov!" In a flash, Rabbi Machlis grabbed a circle of

men and began dancing with me and around the broken glass, singing. They danced around the glass like one would do at Simchas Torah.

"Siman Tov UMazel Tov! Siman Tov UMazel Tov!" What love and sensitivity!

(From Emunah With Love and Chicken Soup, By Sara Yocheved Rigler, Published By Shaar Press, 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](mailto:rabbisilver.firstseder@gmail.com)

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[RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org](mailto:RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org)

***Good Shabbos!***