

# 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 EMOR – GOING UP?

*Rabbi Shlomo Caplan*

The Chinuch (306) explains that the simple reason for the Mitzvah of Sefiras Ha'omer is to commemorate the forty-nine days between the exodus from Mitzrayim until Matan Torah on Shavuos. The purpose of our redemption from the bondage in Mitzrayim was for us to receive the Torah, which is our entire *raison d'être* and makes us a *Mamleches Kohanim vegoy kadosh* – a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. By counting these days, we demonstrate our great desire to arrive at Zeman Matan Toraseinu – the day we were given the Torah.

The Sefer Hatoda'ah delves deeper into the structure of the Mitzvah. The Torah states, "You shall count for yourselves from the day after Shabbos – from the day that you bring the Omer – seven complete weeks. Until the day after the seventh week... and you shall bring a New Mincha to Hashem" (Vayikra 23,15-16). Why does the Torah refer to the first day of Pesach as Shabbos? Why does the Mitzvah of counting begin "when you bring the Omer" and end the day before "you bring the New Mincha"? Additionally, the Torah instructs us to bring the Omer – *lirtzonchem*, of your own will.

Why is this term used specifically by the Omer in contrast to all other communal offerings? The Sefer Hatoda'ah explains the whole process beautifully.

There is a major distinction between the kedusha of Shabbos and the kedusha of Yom Tov. The kedusha of Shabbos derives from Hashem; when He created the world, He sanctified the seventh day. The kedusha of Yom Tov is bestowed by Bnai Yisrael. Thus on Shabbos we say *mekadesh Hashabbos* – referring to Hashem, and on Yom Tov we say *mekadesh Yisrael vehazemanim* – since Yisrael sanctifies the *zemanim*. However when Bnai Yisrael had sunk to the forty-ninth level of *tumah* in Mitzrayim, they lacked the kedusha to sanctify the Yom Tov of Pesach. Hashem invested the kedusha into that day and elevated them to the highest level of kedusha thereby making them worthy of redemption. Nevertheless such an unearned kedusha cannot last and the very next day, the day after Shabbos, they found themselves down in the proverbial cellar. Now the gradual process of counting and growing began in preparation for Matan Torah; forty-nine

days corresponding to the forty-nine levels of kedusha.

Our counting of the Omer replicates the process of Bnai Yisrael's spiritual ascent during the forty-nine days between their exodus from Mitzrayim and their receiving the Torah on Har Sinai. On the first of the forty-nine days we are commanded to bring a meal-offering consisting of one omer of barley flour. This small mincha of inferior barley flour symbolizes the initial effort extended by Bnai Yisrael as they ascended the ladder of kedusha. What is important is not the quantity or the quality of the offering but the intention. It must be *lirtzonchem* – of our volition and initiative. After the completion of the climb to the forty-ninth level we are told to bring a Mincha Chadasha – a Mincha of fine flour from the new crop of wheat symbolizing the new elevated state accomplished at the conclusion of their forty-nine day ascent, an accomplishment that they never thought was humanly possible. They were now prepared to receive the Torah and become the *Mamleches Kohanim vegoy kadosh!*

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.

## RATS IN THE JUNIPER

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha, Emor, talks about how the Omer has to be the first offering brought before we can eat from the new crop. This leads us to an interesting question that relates to gardens and plants.

Shira and her family bought a new home in Baltimore. It was a nice home on the corner of a block. One of the most appealing parts of their new house was the fact that it had a large back yard surrounded with bushes.

Shira and her family slowly settled into their new home. A few days later a man knocked at the door. "Hi there, my name is Yisrael and I live two doors down. Welcome to the neighborhood. I'd like you to know that you have juniper bushes in your yard. It is a well known fact among gardeners and exterminators that Juniper bushes attract rats. These plants make wonderful homes for them. You see, rats seek out areas where they feel protected from predators. Dense

plantings, tall weeds, and plants like juniper bushes provide safe harbor to a rat. Ivy and bushes close to the ground and around buildings are particularly attractive. Rats will burrow into any available earthen space within close proximity to food but prefer fresh, fertile soil to make their nests—a garden is prime real estate to them. A rat burrow can be anywhere from one to six feet deep and will have an entrance, an exit, and maybe even an escape hole. A typical burrow will house a family of approximately eight rats. We have been having a rat problem and I'm certain that it is your bushes that are attracting them".

Shira didn't know how to respond. The man sounded knowledgeable, but she had never heard of such a thing, that bushes attract rats. "Ok, I will look into it and get back to you" Shira told Yisrael.

Shira called a landscaper for an estimate, to see how much removing the bushes

would cost. She was given a quote of \$1000. That was a lot of money. Shira wanted to know if she had an obligation to remove the bushes around her new house because a neighbor asked her to.

On one hand she did the research and learned that it was a true concept that certain bushes are homes for rats. But on the other hand she did not know for sure that it was her bushes that were attracting the rats. Also, even if they were a home for the rats, Shira wasn't causing any damage directly. Shira wondered if she was obligated to pay the \$1000 to remove the bushes in his backyard. What do you think?

Regarding last week's question about the kidney, Rav Zilberstein writes that it would not be nivul hames for the man to request his kidney back. It would be permitted. It would also not be a problem of chavala to do the surgery to replace it.

## IT'S NOT THE BIRD'S FAULT

The fifth Gerer Rebbe, the Lev Simcha's sensitivity extended to all of Hashem's creatures.

On one occasion, an unpleasant odor that emanated from the water faucet greeted the Lev Simcha when he returned from a trip. An attendant climbed up on the roof to check the water tank, and discovered that its cover

had come off and a dead bird was floating in the water.

The attendant then emptied the tank on the roof, cleaned it, refilled it with fresh water and replaced the cover.

After hearing the attendants report, the Lev Simcha asked him to fill a dish with water, go to the roof, and to set it on the tank. "The birds should not be deprived

of their water," the Lev Simcha said. "They're not at fault. Please see that the dish remains full until they've found another source of water."

From The Summit, By Simcha Leib Grossbard, Published By Yeshurun Publications, 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)

**1st**  
*Seder*

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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!**