

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 TAZRIA-METZORA – MEI HADAAS

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Metzora, like all other people who become *tamei*, requires a process of purification which includes immersing in a mikvah. The Rambam (Hilchos Mikvos 11:12) discusses the concepts of spiritual impurity and immersion in a mikvah:

It is clear that the laws of Tumah and Taharah are Divine decrees which do not conform with human logic; they are *chukim*. Similarly, that which Tevilah (immersion in a mikvah) is able to remove Tumah is also a *chok*. Tumah is not a physical dirt or filth which can be washed away with water. Nevertheless, the matter contains an allusion: Just as one who immerses himself becomes *tahor* although no physical change took place to his body, so too one who prepares his heart to purify his soul from its impurities – evil thoughts and false illusions, resolves to distance himself from those ideas and immerses his soul in the '*mei hadaas* – waters of wisdom' – is purified.

What are these *mei hadaas* that the Rambam refers to and how do they purify the soul? Since the Torah is the infinite wisdom of the Creator, it is reasonable to assume that the Rambam is referring to the vast knowledge and deep wisdom of the

Torah. The Rambam is teaching us that the purification attained by learning Torah is not accomplished by merely studying it. One must actually immerse himself in it. This is an osmotic process whereby one who totally immerses himself in Torah study gradually develops a whole new weltanschauung. It is this understanding of Hashem's perception of the world and everything in it which cleanses him of the types of illusions and fantasies which are entertained by those who are immersed in a world of self-gratification and materialistic pursuits.

Thus, Chazal (Kiddushin 30b) state, "If this despicable one (the yetzer hara) confronts you, drag it into the Bais Hamedrash. If it is like a stone, it will melt; if it is like iron it will burst." Do not merely open a sefer, bring the yetzer hara and its false enticements into a fortress of Torah and plunge yourself into the purifying waters of Torah. The more complete the immersion in Torah is, the clearer the spiritual perception is, and the less tainted it is by personal bias and worldly illusions. That is why we consult a Torah giant – who is

totally immersed in Torah - to ascertain Daas Torah.

In the Bircas Hatorah that we recite each morning before learning Torah, we say, "May we and our offspring and the offspring of Your people Bais Yisrael know Your name and study Your Torah *lishma*." The Meforshim explain that to "know Your name" refers to knowledge of the deepest mysteries of the Torah. Since "Hashem and the Torah are one" knowing the Torah is knowing Hashem's names. We are seeking to acquire knowledge of Hashem in a most profound manner.

The Rambam (Melachim 12:5) in describing the Messianic Era concludes: The entire world will be engaged only in knowing Hashem. Therefore they will be great scholars who know mysterious and deep things. They will know their Creator to the extent that is possible for Man as it states (Yeshaya 11:9), "For the world will be filled with knowledge of Hashem as the water covers the sea bed." The entire world will be immersed in the Mei Hadaas!

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 TORAH IN THE KOVNO GHETTO

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

During the Holocaust, Jews demonstrated their incredible mesiras nefesh and devotion, to Hashem, and to the observance of Torah and halacha. One small example of this can be found in the shailos, questions that Jews in the Kovno ghetto during the holocaust, asked Rav Ephraim Oshry. Rather than do what was most expedient under their horrific conditions, they wanted to do what was most proper according to the Torah. Here is one such fascinating question.

The Jews in the ghetto had a Sefer Torah that they secretly used but sadly, it became pasul. The Jews in the ghetto did not have the required supplies to fix it

and make it kosher. One day a Jew in the ghetto made an incredible discovery. He found a Sefer Torah that was sadly discarded in mud. The Sefer Torah was covered in slime and filth. After he cleaned up the Torah and brought it to a more respectable state he noticed that the mud caused the parchment to transfer the words from one side to the back of the parchment opposite it. A kosher Torah cannot have words written on the back. And then the Jew noticed that Hashem's name had transferred to the back of the parchment numerous times.

Was he allowed to erase Hashem's names in order to fix the Torah? Erasing

Hashem's name is a Torah prohibition. Reading from the Torah is just a rabbinical mitzvah. Was he allowed to erase Hashem's name in order to fulfill a Rabbinical prohibition? Is it perhaps better to use a pasul (not kosher) Torah in order not to erase Hashem's name? This was the question this holy Jew asked Rav Oshry during the Holocaust. What do you think?

Regarding last week's question about the person who died in the remote village, Rav Zilbestein does not come to a firm conclusion. But he writes that it seems that perhaps the family of the deceased would not have the power from court to obligate the businessman to pay.

I THINK YOUR BROTHER IS STILL ALIVE AND I CAN TAKE YOU TO HIM RIGHT NOW

Terel Howard was an American Jew. He joined the US army and was stationed in postwar Germany. The Germans didn't know that he was Jewish and Terel would often hear anti-Semitic remarks from the Germans. This made Terel realize that things had not changed for the Jews and he decided to move to Israel. Terel joined a secular kibbutz. At the kibbutz he developed a friendship with David, the carpenter of the kibbutz. David had bulging muscles, but he also had a tattoo on his arm from the holocaust. Terel remembered the number because it was the last four digits of his social security number, 7401.

One day as they were working together Terel gathered the courage to ask David the story of how he got the number. Painfully, David said that he and his family were all lined up and sequentially got a number. Sadly the rest

of his family later was killed. Terel never spoke to David about the numbers again.

Later Terel got into a bad accident at the kibbutz and lost his leg. After a while he got a job as a tour guide in Israel, and he was famous as the one legged tour guide. One day he was asked to pick up a client at the airport and take him to the hotel. The customer had a heavy European accent, wore heavy gold cufflinks, smoked a Cuban cigar, and kept talking about all of his wealth.

Terel's discomfort at the ostentation must have become apparent. The man said "I know you don't like me, but I've paid my dues. I deserve to live a comfortable life now". He rolled up his sleeve showing the number 7402.

After seeing the number Terel was in shock. "Did you happen to have a brother named

David"? The man said he did but he was killed in the war.

Terel said "I think your brother is still alive and I can take you to him right now". Terel drove straight to his old kibbutz. Terel got out of the car and told David the carpenter about his passenger and what he saw. David ran to the car and the two brothers tearfully reunited.

Terel was so inspired by this incident and the hashgacha that he became a baal teshuva. He then founded the Jerusalem Institute for Rehabilitation to provide support for more than 25,000 amputees in Israel.

From Visions of Greatness Volume Two, By Rabbi Yosef Weiss, Published By CIS, 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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RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org

Good Shabbos!