

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 BALAK – WHATEVER IT TAKES

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Chazal contrast the personality of Bilam with the personality of Avraham. The Mishnah (Avos 5:19) states, "One who has a good eye, a humble spirit and a pure soul is among the students of Avraham. One who has an evil eye, an arrogant spirit and a lustful soul is among the students of the wicked Bilam...The students of Avraham Avinu enjoy the fruits of their Mitzvos in this world and inherit Olam Haba. The students of Bilam inherit Gehinnom."

We find another such contrast in Rashi on the pasuk (Bamidbar 22:21) that states that Bilam saddled his donkey by himself. "From here we see that hatred overrides the protocols of distinguished people. Said Hakadosh Baruch Hu, 'Avraham their forefather preceded (and preempted) you' as it says, 'Avraham arose early and saddled his donkey (on his way to perform the Akeidah).'"

I would like to suggest another remarkable contrast. The Medrash

Rabba (Bereishis 56:4) relates that the angel Samael came to Avraham on his way to the Akeidah and said, "Saba, Saba, have you lost your mind? Are you going to slaughter the son who was granted to you when you were one hundred years old?" He replied, "Nevertheless." The Satan responded, "Tomorrow [Hashem] will tell you that you are a murderer – you killed your own son!" Avraham replied, "Nevertheless!" The Medrash Tanchuma relates that the Satan created a raging river to block Avraham, however he proceeded on his mission undeterred.

In contrast, Rashi states that an angel of Mercy came to prevent Bilam from sinning as the pasuk (Bamidbar 22:22) states, "An angel of Hashem stood on the road to deter him." The angel blocked Bilam's donkey three times. Then Hashem opened the mouth of the donkey and it spoke, castigating Bilam for beating him. Finally, he saw the angel standing before him with a

threatening sword. And despite all these attempts to stop him, Bilam continued with his plan to curse Bnai Yisrael.

Avraham was not only tested with a daunting *nisayon*, but also had all forms of obstacles placed in his way. Yet he was not deterred and persevered – demonstrating his total dedication to fulfilling Hashem's command. Bilam manifested the opposite extreme. He set out to do precisely what Hashem told him not to do. Despite an uncooperative donkey who called him on the carpet and an angel brandishing a sword, he persisted with his agenda.

The students of Bilam do as they please even when there are clear signs that they should stop. However, the students of Avraham Avinu will do whatever Hashem commands them, regardless of all the attempts of the yetzer hara to deter them.

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 BUNNY

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Parsha we have a reference to the mitzvah of tzar baalei chaim, not causing animals any needless pain. We find that the angel asked Bilam, "Why did you beat your donkey?" (Bamidbar 22,32) The Sefer Chasidim 666 writes that this request is a reference to the Torah prohibition of causing an animal needless suffering. There is also a mitzvah in the Torah that

says if the animal of your fellow is lost, and you find it, you have a mitzvah to return it to the owner. (Shmos 23,4) But what happens when these two mandates are in conflict with each other? This comes up in the following true story:

Eli was a neighbor of the Klein family. The Klein's bought their children a pet rabbit. They kept the rabbit in a cage outside. To Eli's great dismay, he

saw the Klein children purposely hurting the rabbit by poking it with sticks, and throwing rocks at it. The kids laughed as the rabbit reacted to their mean taunts and torment. Eli would often exhort the neighbors that it was forbidden to do this and it was tzar baalei chaim, but they simply ignored him or laughed.

One day the Klein children left the rabbit's cage open, and the rabbit seized the opportunity and escaped the cage to freedom. Eli saw the rabbit escape and he watched it walk around outside his property. Eli felt very conflicted. On one hand he knew that there was a mitzvah of hashavas aveida, to return a fellow's lost animal. Perhaps he had an obligation to try to retrieve the rabbit and return it to the Kleins. But on the other hand, if he would return the

animal, it would cause the animal to endure more pain. He would be facilitating the violation of tzar baalei chaim.

What was Eli's obligation? Should he return the rabbit to do the mitzvah of returning lost objects, or should he let it free to fulfill the mitzvah of preventing tzar baalei chaim? What do you think? See Upiryo Matok Bereishis 218

Regarding last week's question about the large check that was given to a second Rosh Yeshiva, and not the Rosh Yeshiva who received the commitment, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the second Rosh Yeshiva needs to return the check to the one who first received the commitment. This is because that pledge is like a Neder, a vow

HE IS HERE FOR YOU TO CREATE A KIDDUSH HASHEM

Rav Manis Mandel was the beloved principal of Yeshva of Brooklyn (YOB) and was known as a special tzadik. A student of Rav Mandel related the following story.

When I came to the school, the black janitor, Teddy, was an old man and did very little other than mop up an occasional spill. But Rav Mandel refused to let him go. Rabbi Mandel

warned us, "If anyone does anything or says anything that upsets Teddy, she will be in very big trouble".

One day, Rabbi Mandel came into our classroom, picked up some papers off the floor, and said, "If necessary, I will be the one to pick up the papers on the floor so that our mikdash me'at will be clean." And then he added, "You think that Teddy is here to clean

up after you? The truth is Teddy is here for you to create a kiddush Hashem before him by cleaning up after yourselves to make it easier for him to do his job." (From Rabbi Manis Mandel, A Legendary Mechanech and Tzadik. By Rabbi Shimon Finkelman, Published By Artscroll Mesorah. Preprinted 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 rabbisilver.firstseder@gmail.com or Rabbi Greenspan.

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Shabbat Shalom!