

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
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PARSHAS CHUKAS – I JUST DON'T KNOW

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Sefer Hachinuch enumerates all 613 Mitzvos, offering a reason for the Mitzvah and listing some of its pertinent halachos. In Mitzvah 397 – Mitzvas Parah Adumah – he writes: “Although I have endeavored to write reasons according to Pshat for previous Mitzvos ...regarding this Mitzvah my hands are weak. I am afraid to open my mouth at all about it, for I see where Chazal spoke of the depth of its secret, asserting that Shlomo Hamelech understood the reason for all of the Mitzvos except this one – declaring, ‘I thought that I could be wise, but it is beyond me’ (Koheles 7,23).”

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky wonders why indeed did the Chinuch refrain from offering an explanation for Parah Adumah? Did the Chinuch think that the explanations he offered for all the other Mitzvos were actually the definitive reason? We know that the halachos for any Mitzvah are not determined by any rational explanation since their true purpose is sublime. The reasons given by the Chinuch or any other authority are merely to enhance our appreciation of the Mitzvos or to present an ethical message. If so, why not offer a reason or explanation for Parah Adumah?

Rav Yaakov answers that the Chinuch deduced from Chazal that Hashem wanted

the reason for Parah Adumah to remain esoteric. For us to offer explanations defeats the essential intention that Hashem had when He gave us this Mitzvah.

I believe there could be another message here. Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch wrote two letters to Rabbi Pinchos M. E. Wechsler who, ostensibly, was preoccupied with explaining difficult Aggadic passages. These letters were translated by Yehoshua Leiman and published in Light Magazine and republished by Neve Yerushalayim in 1994. The following is a quote from one of these letters:

I wish to add one more point – in my opinion an essential rule for every person who teaches our holy Torah, whether Tanach or Halachah or Aggadah. That is: Get into the habit of saying, “I don't know.”

When we admit that we do not know, our pupils learn to humble themselves before the wisdom of Chazal and all the more so before the statements of G-d and the expressions of His holy spirit.

Rav Hirsch points out that there are many disputes in Hashkafa between the Rambam and the Ramban. Who was right? Says Rav Hirsch, “I don't know.”

In his glosses on Maseches Berachos 25b, Rebbi Akiva Eiger enumerates all of the places in Shas where Rashi states, “I don't know.” Here too, we find the very same powerful lesson. Rashi, perhaps the greatest line by line commentator on Talmud Bavli, without whom every daf of Gemara would be a closed book to all of us, did not hesitate to say, “I don't know.” And like Rashi, Rebbi Akiva Eiger, one of the greatest Acharonim, did not hesitate to admit that he could not come up with an acceptable answer to many of the questions that he had.

Perhaps this is indeed what Shlomo Hamelech was teaching us: “I am the smartest of all men, but there are things which I don't know.” Likewise, the Chinuch restates this message. It is a message that all of us should absorb. A little humility and common sense will allow us lesser scholars to admit, “I don't know”. This might just be the message - not the reason - of the Parah Adumah. I don't know.

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 SWITCH

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's parsha we learn that when Aharon died, the ananei hakavod (Clouds of Glory) left. This is because it was only in the zechus (merit) of Aharon that the bnei yisrael got the ananei hakavod. The Sfas Emes points out that Aharon was ohev shalom verodef shalom, he loved peace and pursued peace, and that is why he merited to draw down the sucas shalom, the clouds of peace. The importance of pursuing peace leads us to the following true story.

Rav Cohn was a rosh yeshiva in a well-known yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. Rav Cohn had to make a fundraising trip to the US for his yeshiva. He called Rafi Rubin who was a well-known ba'al tzedakah and philanthropist. Rafi spoke to him on the phone and said, "I would be happy to help your yeshiva. I can give you \$10,000. I have to leave my office at 2PM. Can you come to my office at 1:45 and I will give you the check?"

Rav Cohn was extremely excited and gratified. He took a taxi to Rafi Rubin's plush office. At 1:43 a rosh yeshiva came to Rafi's office. Rafi greeted him warmly and handed

him a check. The Rosh yeshiva's eyes opened wide when he saw the sum on the check. He gave Rafi an effusive bracha and left the office.

Meanwhile Rav Cohn arrived in a taxi at Mr. Rubin's office. As he walked into the office waiting room, he saw another well-known rosh yeshiva leave the office, with a big smile on his face. Rav Cohn approached Rafi and said, "Shalom aleichem, I'm here for our 1:45 appointment."

Rafi looked at him with shock. "Oh I thought the Rav before you was the Rosh Yeshiva. Yikes, both of you are Roshei Yeshiva of very worthy institutions and I didn't realize that he was a different person than you. I already gave him a check of \$10,000. I'll be honest, I don't have any more money in my tzedaka account. Please come back next year and I will give to you very generously."

But Rav Cohn replied, "To be totally honest, I feel really bad. I thought I had a commitment from you today. How can I go back with such a big budget shortfall?"

Rafi replied, "You are right. Both of you are running very exemplary organizations. I'm terribly sorry but I have to run now. Please work out what to do with the money between yourselves."

Rafi left the office and Rav Cohn quickly caught up to the other rosh yeshiva, named Rav Siegal and explained the error. The two Roshei Yeshiva wanted to know what the halacha is with regard to dealing with the check. Should the entire amount go to the second Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Siegal, since he is the one to whom Rafi gave the check? Or should the entire amount go to Rav Cohn, as he was the one to whom Rafi thought he was giving? Or should they split it between themselves? What do you think? See Upriryo Matok Bereishis 380

Regarding last week's question about repaying the theft, Rav Zilberstein wrote that the boy and the parents are not obligated to pay the neighbor.

THE BLUE LIGHT

The Lev Simcha, the Gerer Rebbe, once stayed in a rented room in Teveria. During the first days of his stay the television antenna of the adjacent building fell and landed on the roof above his room. The Lev Simcha's attendants did not pay any attention to the matter, as it did not seem to disturb anyone. The next morning during his walk, the Lev Simcha mentioned to his accompanying attendant that mosquitoes had bothered him the entire night. The attendant later mentioned the incident to another attendant, who suggested buying a blue electrical light that keeps flying insects away. "I brought one with me from Yerushalayim," remarked the first attendant, "but when I tried to set it up, the Rebbe told me not to, without giving any explanation."

On the next morning's walk, the Lev Simcha again complained about the mosquitoes. "We have the apparatus with the blue light..." said the attendant. "Yes, I know," the Lev Simcha answered. "But, no, it's not necessary."

Again, no explanation was given. The Lev Simcha did not complain again during the days that followed, but it was obvious that the mosquitoes were causing him discomfort at night, and his refusal to use the anti-insect light remained a mystery.

One morning the Lev Simcha pointed out to the attendant that there was a "foreign object," which belonged to their neighbor, on the roof. "Why does it have to be on our roof?" he asked. "Perhaps someone should speak to him about removing it." The neighbor was spoken to, and he promised to call a technician and have the antenna restored to its proper place. When time passed and nothing was done, the attendants returned to the owner and offered to move the antenna themselves. "No," the owner objected. "Only a technician should handle it. Don't worry, I'll call one." Once again the owner did not keep his word, and the antenna remained where it had fallen, above the Lev Simcha's room. The attendants decided that

the antenna had to be removed from the Rebbe's roof, and that afternoon they climbed up on the roof and moved it back to the neighbor's section of the roof. When they returned with their mission accomplished, the Lev Simcha greeted them cheerfully and asked, "Now, where is that blue light you brought? Let's set it up."

Only then did the solution to the mystery dawn on the attendants. With the antenna on the roof above his room, the Lev Simcha was concerned that people would think that the blue light was the light of a television screen. The Lev Simcha, therefore, chose to suffer from the mosquitoes (and not trouble his attendants by asking them to move the antenna) rather than risk the possibility that someone might deduce from his actions that it is permitted to have a television set! 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 rabbisilver.firstseder@gmail.com or Rabbi Greenspan.

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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

GOOD SHABBOS!