

# 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 KORACH – MACHLOKES: A LOSING BATTLE

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

“And Moshe arose and went to Dasan and Aviram” (Bamidbar 16:25). The Gemara (Sanhedrin 110a) states, “From here we learn that one may not be *machazik bemachlokes* – maintain a quarrel. Whoever persists to quarrel violates a negative commandment as it says, ‘And there shall not be [anyone] like Korach” (Bamidbar 17:5). The Ramban (Sefer Hamitzvos Shores 8), the Smag (*lo saaseh* 157) and Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuva 3:58) all pasken this *halacha lema’aseh*.

To this end, Moshe attempted to mollify Dasan and Aviram. First he reached out to them at the very onset of the *machlokes*: “Moshe sent forth to call upon Dasan and Aviram” (ibid 16:12). Rashi explains that Moshe sought to make peace with them with conciliatory words. Later on, even after Hashem issued a warning of the imminent perishing of Dasan and Aviram, Moshe attempted to encourage them to repent.

Why does the Torah only prohibit maintaining a quarrel that has already started, but does not seem to prohibit starting one? There are many reasons why a person may initiate an argument; some are valid and some are not, some are *lesheim Shamayim* and some are not. If one presents an argument for a valid

reason, he has done nothing wrong. On the other hand, if his reason is not valid, then the *aveirah* is not *machlokes*; rather it is the *aveirah* which motivated him to begin with, such as disrespect for *talmidei chachamim*, jealousy, arrogance, seeking revenge, etc.

To be *machazik bemachlokes* is an *aveirah* regardless of whether one is right or wrong. Moshe is the paradigm of this *halacha*, and although he was one hundred percent right, he was still forbidden to maintain the *machlokes*. This *aveirah* derives from a very egotistical compulsion: “I must have my way” or “I need to be right.” People are entitled to disagree, but not to insist that their opinion prevail.

This prohibition manifests itself in two primary scenarios. The first is when people are quarreling over a principle or a privilege. Each party declares, “I am right,” or “I have a right.” Even when there appears to be an impasse, the fight continues. If there are legitimate issues that must be addressed, they can only be resolved by a third party, a Bais Din or arbitration. Continuing to fight outside such a venue has no justification.

The other scenario is an argument over a past incident: “You mistreated or insulted or stole from me. I can’t forgive you!” “No, you

started it and you deserved what you got.” This type of *machlokes* may continue ad infinitum. Each party refuses to let go. While often the pain suffered by one party might be very significant, at the end of the day it boils down to one’s ego. Somehow there is a feeling that if I let you think that I was the one who was wrong, then I am “chopped liver” – a nobody. Or if I let you “get away with it” then I will be totally vanquished. However, the whole exercise is futile because nothing at all is gained by continuing to fight. Yet so much can be lost: *shalom bayis*, friendships, family unity, one’s own tranquility, to name a few examples.

Perhaps the reason that Moshe Rabbeinu is the ultimate paradigm of this Mitzvah is because he was the most humble person. He had no need to go on ego trips. A humble person’s perception of his self-worth is not dependent on others. He is never threatened or crushed by others’ disapproval or denigration. Thus, the key to observing this Mitzvah which forbids maintaining *machlokes* is to work on our humility. While this level of humility may seem like a daunting goal, nevertheless every step taken in that direction will grant us more of the tenacity required to resist *machlokes* and provide us with a larger measure of tranquility.

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.

## ROBBING THE NEIGHBOR

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion talks about the damage caused by machlokes, by arguments. Sometimes, however, machlokes between two Jews can be very beautiful. The following is a true story.

Natan lived in an apartment building in a wealthy Jewish area in Mexico City. As we know, Mexico City has some very wealthy people, but it is also the home of very dangerous underworld figures.

One day Natan was coming home from school and paused in front of his apartment building. As he was about to push the bell to his apartment to be "buzzed" in, he heard the sound of a man behind him. He turned around and saw a man pointing a gun at him. "Easy, my friend", the man said. I want you to push the bell to your apartment and let me into the apartment building. Then I am going to follow you up to your apartments and pay your parents a friendly little visit."

Natan immediately understood that this was a robbery and that he was in great danger. Trembling, he pushed the bell to his apartment. His parents saw him on the video monitor and buzzed him in. Natan, followed by the robber, took the elevator to the floor of his apartment.

When Natan came near his apartment he made a quick decision. His mother was expecting a baby. His father was not very healthy and had a heart condition. If they would be confronted by this gun-wielding robber, Natan was afraid that the stress and trauma of the robbery might put his fragile parents in mortal danger.

Natan decided that instead of entering his own apartment he was going to knock on the door of his neighbor's apartment, Mr. Itzkowitz, from down the hall. Natan assumed that the robber did not know which apartment was his. Natan, followed by the dangerous robber, knocked on his neighbor's door. When Mr. Itzkowitz saw Natan's face in the peephole, he gladly opened the door. But when Mr. Itzkowitz opened the door to greet Natan, the robber pulled out his gun and demanded that Mr. Itzkowitz give him all the money that was in his apartment.

This was not the first time Mr. Itzkowitz was confronted by a thief, and calmly, Mr. Itzkowitz took the robber to a drawer and handed him \$10,000 dollars in cash. The robber took the money, left Natan and Mr. Itzkowitz alone, and quickly took off.

After the police were called and the dust settled, Natan's father gratefully approached Mr. Itzkowitz. I'm really sorry for the loss that the robbery caused you. I'm really sorry that my son knocked on your apartment door instead of ours. He did it to protect us. Here is a check of \$10,000 to cover your loss.

Mr. Itzkowitz turned to Natan's father. "You have a wise and fast thinking son. It is very nice of you to offer this but I cannot accept the money. You weren't robbed, I was. But Natan's father insisted. Finally, Mr. Itzkowitz said, "I do not want the money, I want the mitzvah". I will only accept the money from you if halacha requires that you pay me.

This question was brought to Rav Zilberstein. What do you think? Was Natan's father responsible to pay Mr. Itzkowitz for the loss of the money, because Natan chose to knock on the neighbor's door? See Upiryo Matok Bereisheis page 433

Regarding last week's question about distributing the CDs with the audio of a student misbehaving and the teacher rebuking, Rav Zilberstein wrote that it would not be permitted to distribute such CDs.

### HE IS A TZELEM ELOKIM

Once, Rav Avigdor Miller was walking with someone down the street. They passed a drunken man sleeping on the sidewalk, with his head on the hard pavement. When Rav Miller saw the man, he quickly found some rolled up newspapers and put them under the man's head like a pillow. Rav Miller then explained his behavior to the person with

him. "He is a Tzelem Elokim (created in G-d's image)."

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A grandson once asked Rabbi Miller how he could tolerate living on Ocean Parkway, with emergency vehicles always driving by, their sirens blaring and lights flashing. Rav Miller replied, "To the

contrary, these 'disturbances' are really a great opportunity. Each time an ambulance drives by, I say a small tefilla for the ill person inside it. I even trained myself to do it during my sleep". (From Rav Avigdor Miller, His Life and Revolution, By Yaakov Y. Hamburger, Published By Judaica Press, 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 Rabbi Greenspan or [rabbisilver.firstseder@gmail.com](mailto:rabbisilver.firstseder@gmail.com)



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!**