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 SHOFTIM – YOU BE THE JUDGE

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Life is made up of a succession of decisions. From the cradle to the grave. From daybreak until nightfall. From home to work. From store to store. What to eat, what to say, what to do, what to buy. Whom to trust, whom to believe, whom to vote for, whom to marry. When to get up, when to go to sleep, when to buy, when to sell. When to talk, when to listen.

Many decisions are made without any forethought. They may be the result of habit or subconscious calculations. They may arise from a desire for self-indulgence or self-aggrandizement. However, a decision that is premeditated is based on contemplation and evaluation. Chazal refer to the mental process which leads to our decisions as judgments. The Gemara in Berachos (60a) explains why Leah called her daughter Dina. "When Leah judged herself she said, 'Twelve tribes are destined to emanate from Yaakov. I have already borne six, two were borne by each of the handmaidens. That makes ten. If [the child that I am carrying] is a male, my sister Rachel will not even have as many children as each of the handmaidens.'" Leah prayed that the fetus should miraculously become a female whom she named Dina, derived from the word *din,* alluding to her 'judgment.' Leah made a difficult decision. It was based on her remarkable judgment. All decisions arise from some form of judgment: a subconscious judgment, a snap judgment or thoughtful deliberation. The more aware we are that our decisions are the result of our judgment, the more control we will have over them and the better the outcome.

It is from this perspective that Rav Moshe Feinstein interprets the following pasuk: "Judges and officers shall you appoint for yourself in all your cities..."(Devarim 16:18) Although the obvious meaning of the verse is to appoint judges to govern all the cities, the term "**for yourself"** implies a different connotation. You must make yourself a judge and an officer over yourself. You must view all your decisions as judgments – judgments which must be in conformity with the Torah's laws and values. In this context, the Torah states: "Do not pervert justice" - to do what is obviously wrong. "Do not show preference" - to consider yourself an exception to the law. "Do not take a bribe" - to be bribed by your desire for pleasure or honor. "Righteousness, righteousness shall you pursue."

The Mesillas Yesharim states that there are two steps necessary for one to oversee his conduct: "He must first determine what is the true good that one should choose and the real evil from which one should flee. Second, he should discern if his actions are good or evil… and he should not perform any action without weighing it on the scale of this determination."

Hashem has appointed us to be judges of ourselves. This does not refer to judging ourselves as a person. Leave that to the Ribono Shel Olam; only He can make such an evaluation. This refers to the decisions that we make regarding the way we behave. We must constantly judge all our actions and words. Not merely our conscious actions, but also our subconscious and habitual actions must also be brought under our scrutiny. If we will fulfill our responsibilities of judgeship, we can be much more confident about how Hashem will judge us.

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 AQUARIUM

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha opens with the mitzvah to establish Torah courts in every Jewish city. This leads us to the following true story.

It was the summer and the Stein family was excited to go on a summer trip. The Bergers, a kind family in another large Jewish community, were going to the mountains for the summer, and their home was going to be empty. The Bergers graciously allowed the Steins to stay in their home for a few days.

The Steins had a great time staying at the Bergers house. The Bergers had a large aquarium with eleven large exotic fish. Mr. Stein fed the fish exactly as he was told.

During their vacation, Mr. Stein noticed that one of the large fish had died. Mr. Stein was confident that it was not his fault, but he felt bad for the owners to come home to a dead fish. Mr. Stein went to a nearby pet store that sold pretty and exotic fish and purchased a large fish the same size and color as the one that died. It was not cheap, but Mr. Stein felt it was the least he could do. He placed the new fish in the tank. After staying for a few days, the Steins left the house. The Bergers returned home shortly after the Steins left.

Mr. Stein got a call from Mr. Berger shortly after they returned home. "Do you have any idea what happened to our fish?", Mr. Berger asked. "No, what do you mean?" "Well, we had 11 fish when we left, but now there is just one big one left, and we can't understand what happened to the rest of them." In a flash, it was clear to Mr. Stein what had happened. The fish he bought must have eaten all the rest!

Mr. Stein wondered if he had an obligation to offer to pay for all of the lost fish. On one hand, they were lost because of the choice he made to buy a new fish and put it in the aquarium. But on the other hand, he was only trying to help. And the damage was not caused by him directly. He bought a fish and gave it to the Bergers. The fish that belonged to the Bergers did the damage. What do you think? See Upiryo Matok Shemos 103

Regarding last week's question about the man who screamed "terrorist" in the restaurant, Rav Zilberstien wrote that he was not obligated to pay for the meals or the damage. See Upiryo Matok Shemos page 54.

QUALITY DOES NOT COME FROM QUANTITY BUT QUANTITY DOES GROW FROM QUALITY

A few years after Reb Avrohom Wolff, zt"l had established the Bais Yaakov in Bnei Brak, he was approached by a small group of parents whose daughters had just graduated from elementary school in Rechovot. The parents were hopeful that they would be accepted into the Bais Yaakov of Bnei Brak. This presented a problem, however, since both of the existing classes were already full and Rabbi Wolff was committed to keeping classes small. The fact that the girls came from Rechovot added a further difficulty because the Bnei Brak municipality would not allow an additional class to be created for non-residents. The parents were at a loss as to what to do. If there had been more girls, the problem could have been solved by creating a Bais Yaakov in Rechovot, but the small number of girls was discouraging the parents from this option. Because the two sides could not find a solution, it was agreed to go to Jerusalem and ask the Brisker Rav's advice.

Rabbi Wolff went on behalf of the seminary along with the parents' representatives. The Brisker Rav opposed expanding the existing classes in Bnei Brak, advising instead that a Bais Yaakov be set up in Rechovot after all. He shared the principle: "Quality does not come from quantity; but quantity does grow from quality." And indeed, with Rabbi Wolff's assistance, the parents established a school in Rechovot with only a few students. Over the years, it grew in size, and as a result, thousands of girls received a proper Torah education in their hometown.

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This month's learning has been dedicated by the Matityahu family in memory of Mordecai ben Natan and Dorit Rivkah bas Menachem Mendel a"h.

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Mesillas Yesharim and Halichos Olam Mishna Berura shiurim are now being uploaded from the beginning! For complete podcast information go to https://jewishpodcasts.fm/rabbiurigreenspan

First Seder Bais Medrash's Mishnayos Shel Chesed Program

Thank you to all the learners who are currently learning for Shmuel Zavel ben Yisrael a"h (Yona Zaslow's father).

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NOW IN OUR 10TH YEAR!

For more information or to register for First Seder, contact Rabbi Uri Greenspan at 732-407-3178 or RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org

Good Shabbos!