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 NITZAVIM – LET'S TALK

"For this Mitzvah that I command you today is not hidden from you and it is not distant…rather the matter is very near to you… it is in your mouth and in your heart to do it" (Devarim 30:11,14). Most Meforshim understand that this pasuk refers to the Mitzvah to do Teshuva since the previous pesukims discuss Teshuva.

The Torah is saying that Teshuva is accomplished by the means of "your mouth and your heart". It would seem that the process of Teshuva begins in the **heart** with feelings of remorse and a desire to change, and thereafter one turns to Hashem and confesses his sins with his **mouth.** Why does the Torah place the mouth before the heart?

By placing the mouth first, the Torah teaches us a profound insight and a valuable approach to the process of Teshuva. Generally speaking, most of us find it extremely difficult to make lasting changes. We have clung to a certain behavior for various emotional reasons. We can't seem to make realistic commitments to change, since our hearts are filled with misconceptions about what we need or what satisfies us. How can we change what is in our hearts? We must talk to ourselves. Thinking alone to change, even wanting to change is not enough. We must speak with our mouths – to ourselves – why we want to change, how we can change, why our present actions are not only wrong, they are self-defeating.

Indeed, this idea is very much in line with the principle advocated by the Mesillas Yesharim: "The external (actions) arouse the internal feelings." By speaking aloud, we give a new more concrete expression to those ideas that we maintain to be meaningful and true. These words are far more potent than the thoughts that seem to float around in our minds. Rav Yisrael Salanter took this idea even further. He advocated repeating various sayings of Chazal over and over again. Truth be told, we often practice this idea when we want to remember something, such as a name we just heard or a task that we must remember to do. We **say** it over again and again. And we do this even in a situation when there is no push back from our internal feelings or thoughts.

In the emotional state of members our modern-day society this concept takes on even greater significance. Allow me to share the following observation with you. People in general are uncomfortable being alone with themselves. When they are alone they will turn on the radio (or TV) to listen to the news, music, sports, or drama. Today we have wireless phones that go everywhere, so we can call or text almost anyone at any time. For all too many it has become a kneejerk reaction to turn to their phone or the internet. How often have we noticed someone taking out their phone the instant that they have left the premises where others were present. Why can't we be alone with ourselves? Because too much static is going on in our minds and most of it is negative and painful. As long as we entertain these negative thoughts, we cannot build the confidence that is necessary for us to change.

To alter these thought patterns, we need to do something that is more real and powerful than merely thinking positive thoughts, we need to talk to ourselves. It is essential that we verbally contradict and refute all the negative thoughts that have wreaked havoc on the courage that we need to change. We need to reason with ourselves. Or we can repeat adages from Tanach, Chazal or even popular expressions. The words of Shlomo Hamelech in Mishlei (24:16) should resonate with all of us: "Although the Tzaddik may fall seven times, nevertheless he arises." A Tzaddik is not one who never fails, he is one who perseveres!

If words of determination emerge from our mouths, we will discover that sincere thoughts of Teshuva will fill our hearts.

KESIVA VACHASIMA TOVA

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.

FORGOT MY BULLETS

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Torah portion says, "And you shall choose life so that you will live" (Devarim, 19). The Talmud Yerushalmi (Kidushin 1,7) writes that included in the mitzvah to choose life, is the mandate to earn a parnasah, a livelihood, to sustainyour life. All that you do to sustain your life is a mitzvah. The mitzvah to earn a parnasah leads us to the following interesting true story:

Avi lived in the United States and he and his wife wanted to plan a family trip to celebrate his son's bar mitzvah on the bo bayom (the day of his birthday) in Eretz Yisrael at the Kosel. After davening at the Kosel, Avi wanted to take his family on a trip to the Old City in Yerushalayim. The problem was that this was in 2016 and it was a time when Jews were being stabbed frequently by our enemies. Avi decided that he was going to hire an armed guard to escort his family on their tour of the Old City. Avi did a bit of research and it was recommended that he hire Ronen, who was a former special forces soldier and was very experienced as a bodyguard. Avi reached out to Ronen and they agreed that Ronen would be their bodyguard for the trip.

The bar mitzvah day came and the bar mitzvah boy read the Torah beautifully at the Kosel. The family ate breakfast, and then a tour guide took them on a detailed extensive trip of all of the sites at the Old City. Ronen, the bodyguard, was with them with a very large, very visible semi-automatic rifle swung over his chest.

The family saw all of the sites and had a great time. As the day came to a close, Avi paid Ronen $500 for his services, and thanked him profusely. Before Ronen left, Avi said, "By the way, can I see your rifle? I used to be in the military myself and I'm a bit of an expert about guns. "Sure,'' Ronen said, and he handed his rifle to Avi. As Avi examined the rifle closely he realized that there was no magazine in the gun and the gun actually had no bullets.

"Where is the magazine?", Avi asked. Ronen looked at Avi sheepishly. "In the middle of our trip, I realized that I forgot my magazines and my bullets at home. But I figured if I brandished my weapon openly, then no one would give us any trouble. And sure enough, I was right, we had a great day and no one caused us any trouble."

Avi felt annoyed. "If I would have known that you would have been guarding us with no bullets, I never would have hired you. I would have hired your competitor. I think I'd like my money back."

Ronen looked at him a bit offended. "But what difference does it make? We finished the trip and I watched you the whole day. I did my job and I guarded you, and everyone was safe. Avi responded, "You actually put all of our lives at risk. We knowingly went to an area that had a potential risk. I wanted an armed guard to protect my family. If something would have happened you would not have been able to stop them. We were just lucky that nothing happened. I think you should refund the money."

Eventually, they agreed to bring this question to a Rav and this question was sent to Rav Zilberstein. Did Ronen have to refund the money because he guarded them with no bullets? On one hand he did guard them and they were safe, and perhaps showing his gun did something. But on the other hand, going without any bullets was negligent on Ronen's part, and had Avi known that he would not have brought the proper "tools" for the job, he never would have hired him. What do you think? See Upiryo Matok Shemos Page 269

Regarding last week's question about the price matching, Rav Zilberstein wrote that based on the halacha in Even Haezer 114, 1, the price the seller meant was the normal price, and not a price based on a special promotion. Therefore the buyer would have to return the money.

THAT IS A KIDDUSH HASHEM!

A bachur named Chatzkel was once invited to attend the dedication of a public educational facility. Only a select group of people were invited, and he thought it would be a Kiddush HaShem if a yeshiva bachur was present. He asked his Mashgiach, Rabbi Avigdor Miller, if he should go and explained his rationale. The Mashgiach thought for a while as he always did before answering, and said he would leave it up to Chatzkel's discretion. Chatzkel went and it turned out to be a frivolous waste of time; he was sorely disappointed. He later told Rabbi Miller what had happened. The Mashgiach replied, "If you want to make a Kiddush Hashem, you should know that someone who sits in the corner of the Beis Medrash learning — even if nobody knows about it — that is a Kiddush Hashem!"

During Rav Avigdor Miller's early years in his shul, before the full schedule of shiurim that he had later, he was once talking to two close talmidim and told them with great excitement, "I am going on a vacation."

From the gleam in his eye they were sure that he was traveling to a resort for the first time, and they were truly happy for him. But he then explained his itinerary: "My family is going up to the country while I will stay behind. I will close the shades, take the phone off the hook, spread out the seforim all over the dining room table and learn for ten hours straight. That's a vacation!

(From Rav Avigdor Miller, His Life and Revolution, By Yaakov Y. Hamburger, Published By Judaica Press, Reprinted With Permission From Table Talk.)

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.

Mishnayos Shel Chesed

We are currently learning for:

Zelda Rivka bas Zecharye, Zach Weiser's mother
Sima bas Dovid, Ron Goldberg's mother
Menka bas Moshe, Levi Ochen's wife's aunt

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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!

Kesiva Vachasima Tova