

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 CHAYEI SARAH – AGE BEFORE BEAUTY

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Rav Shimshon Pincus notes that we live today in a society that glamorizes youth – the beauty of youth, the vitality of youth. People idolize young celebrities, and they will do whatever they can to hold on to their own youth. From cosmetics to cosmetic surgery, they spend all kinds of money to look young. Old age, wrinkles and gray hair represent a stale, declining part of life.

In contrast, we Yidden look up to our elders, especially people of stature. Thus, the great spiritual leaders of the citadels of Torah in Europe were called, “Der Alter - The Old One”: Der Alter from Novardhok, Der Alter from Kelm, Der Alter from Slabodka. Our value system places greater emphasis on experience, wisdom and piety.

However, Rav Pincus asserts that there is another reason for this dichotomy of views. One of the fantasies of youth is looking forward to a beautiful future filled with endless possibilities, while for old people the future appears very limited. But in

reality this is a skewed way of looking at life. On the contrary, everyone’s future is totally unknown and is never guaranteed, while the past can be filled with a very meaningful life. Whatever one invested in his days and years gone by creates a past brimming with growth and accomplishment.

“V’Avraham zakein ba bayamim” is usually translated as “Avraham was old and advanced in years” (Bereishis 24:1). However, a more literal translation would be, “Avraham was old, he came with his days.” Avraham brought all his days and years with him. At the age of 137, when he sent Eliezer to find a wife for Yitzchak, Avraham had a past filled with exceptional growth and accomplishments. He passed the ten tests that Hashem gave him. He became a “father of nations” and a “prince of G-d” in the Land of Canaan. He taught countless people about Hashem and monotheism. These are the accomplishments which filled the years that he brought with him.

Rav Pincus goes on to explain that as brilliant as one’s past may be, what is more important is the present. We have no control over our past nor our future. The present is the only part of our existence that we can control. However, it is the past that defines the present. The Avodas Hashem of Avraham on his last day of life was built and predicated on 175 years of profound commitment and toil. Every Mitzvah that he performed then was imbued with the greatness acquired during his lifetime.

While none of us brings with us a past that resembles anything like the life of Avraham Avinu, we all have a past upon which to build our today. No matter how great or sordid our past may have been, by building on our accomplishments or learning from our mistakes, we can craft each moment of the present. And bear in mind that each moment of the present will become the past of the present that lies ahead.

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 ZOOM HESPED

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha opens with the death of Sarah and the eulogy that Avraham gave about her. This leads us to the following true story that happened recently.

Dovid was living in the US and his sister lived in Eretz Yisrael. Sadly Dovid's sister passed away in Yerushalayim. The custom in Yerushalayim is to do the levaya and burial right away, even at night. The funeral was going to be on a Thursday night; due to the COVID-19 restrictions, Dovid was unable to travel to Israel in time for the funeral. He was asked to give one of the eulogies. Since he was unable to be there in person, he

was asked to deliver his eulogy at the funeral over Zoom.

Dovid faced the following dilemma. The halacha states that we don't give a eulogy on Rosh Chodesh. Rosh Chodesh is a holiday and we are unable to eulogize on it because it will diminish the joy of the holiday. Dovid was in the US and Thursday was Rosh Chodesh. But in Eretz Yisrael, which was 7 hours ahead, it was already night and Rosh Chodesh was over.

Dovid wondered if he was allowed to give the eulogy to the crowd gathered in Eretz Yisrael. It was no longer Rosh Chodesh for them, and perhaps it was permitted. But on the other hand, for him it was still

Rosh Chodesh. Was he, the brother of the deceased, allowed to give a eulogy if it was Rosh Chodesh for him but not for the crowd which was attending the funeral?

Does the halacha prohibiting a eulogy on Rosh Chodesh revolve on the listener of the eulogy, or on the giver of the eulogy? This question was asked to Rav Yosef Berger. What do you think?

Regarding last week's questions about the kitchen cabinet that collapsed, Rav Zilberstein answered that the kitchen remodeler would have to pay to replace them because he gave the impression that one can stand and jump on them.

THE ARTILLERY SHELLING

During the War of Independence the city of Jerusalem was under siege, and all its residents terror-stricken as the Jordanian legion bombarded the city mercilessly, causing many casualties and damage. One day during this traumatic period, those around the Brisker Rav witnessed behavior that seemed to defy logic: When the shelling was somewhat far away, the Brisker Rav paced around the house restlessly like a caged lion. But, strangely enough, when the shelling came closer, just outside his own home, his face changed. Suddenly, he became relaxed and the tension melted away from his countenance, as if he were not

threatened by the barrage. Everyone wondered about this: What was the logic behind his behavior? When the danger was far away, he exhibited anxiety, yet when it was nearer, he became calm!

Later, the Brisker Rav explained: As long as the danger was distant, he was concerned that he was transgressing the prohibition of "Do not stand by regarding your brother's blood" and his conscience was bothering him as he thought he might not be fulfilling his obligation. Perhaps he should run out and help his fellow Jews in distress?

But when the shelling had come closer, he was required by halachah to remain indoors because of the danger. Knowing he was no longer at risk of transgressing the prohibition, he relaxed.

R. Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, who related this story, pointed out how the Brisker Rav's tension and agitation were due only to his pure yiras cheit and constant concern for keeping every last detail of a mitzvah.

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New Shiur on Sefer Tehillim

Last week, a new shiur "Tehillim – Life Lessons" became available to both men and women. Every Sunday, participants receive a new shiur via WhatsApp®. The shiur will also be available via podcast. For more information or any questions, please contact Rabbi Greenspan.

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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!