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 VAYEITZEI – THE GALUS PHENOMENON

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

When Yaakov went to Har Hamoriah, he had a vision of angels ascending and descending a ladder reaching heavenward. Hashem appeared to him and promised to give Eretz Canaan to him and his offspring. Additionally, he will beget a nation as plentiful as the dust of the earth and he will be a source of blessing to all of humanity. However, it's not all good news. Chazal (Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer 35) state that the angels that Yaakov saw represent the ministering angels of the four kingdoms that would someday subjugate Bnai Yisrael: Bavel, Madai, Yavan and Edom. Eventually they would descend from their dominion and then Bnai Yisrael would ascend.

It appears incongruous that Yaakov, upon paying a visit to the holiest site in the world and being granted favorite nation status, should be informed of these four tragic exiles. What is the connection between these tragedies and Hashem's bequest to Yaakov? Furthermore, this same phenomenon occurred to Avraham in the vision of the Bris Bein Habesarim. Hashem's covenant with Avraham included a discussion of the exile to Mitzrayim and a prophecy of the four exiles alluded to by the words, *"eimah, chasheicha, nofeles, alov* – fear, great darkness is falling upon him" (Bereishis 15:12). While we might understand the need to mention galus Mitzrayim to establish a time frame for the promise of Eretz Canaan, the other galuyos appear irrelevant.

These Medrashim inform us that galus is part of the destiny of Bnai Yisrael. It is an integral part of Hashem's covenant with our forefathers and with us. However, upon closer examination, we will discover that galus is part of human existence. Adam Harishon and Chava were exiled from Gan Eden. After killing his brother, Kayin was sent into exile. Noach and his family were stranded on a boat for a full year. Avraham arrived in Eretz Canaan and was immediately exiled to Mitzrayim. During a second famine, Yitzchok was exiled to the land of the Plishtim. Finally, Yaakov and his sons descended to Mitzrayim. Further down the road came the four national exiles, the last of which still exists to this very day. The question now is, "Why?"

The paradigm of galus is in the parsha of an unintentional murder (Bamidbar 35). The Torah permits a close relative of the victim to act as a *go'el hadam* and avenge his blood by killing the "murderer". To avoid such a fate, the "murderer" must exile himself to one of the cities of refuge. Thus, galus is an alternative to the death penalty. Indeed, that was the case with Kayin who murdered Hevel. Hashem suspended his penalty by sentencing him to galus. This may have been the case with Adam who was told that "on the day that you eat from [the *eitz hadaas*] you will die." Perhaps the exile from Gan Eden served as an alternative to his immediate death – granting him another 930 years.

Ever since that fateful sin of the *eitz hadaas*, the tendency to sin has become part of human nature. "There is no person who is a complete tzaddik who does only good and never sins" (Koheles 7:20). As man's sins accumulate, so to do their consequences. Ultimately, man meets his fate and perishes. This is what happened to the generation of the flood and the cities of Sodom and Amorah. However, when Hashem made a covenant with Avraham, he promised him that this fate would never befall the nation that would arise from him. But what would become of them when they sin? They will go into galus – galus Mitzrayim, galus Bavel, etc. The harshness and length of the galus would atone for their sins.

This principle is clearly spelled out in Maseches Avodah Zara (4a). The heretics cited a pasuk in Amos (3:2): "You alone do I love from among all the families of the earth; therefore, I will hold you to account for all your iniquities." They asked Rebbi Avahu, "Does one vent his hostility against the one he loves?" He answered that Hashem punishes Bnai Yisrael bit by bit thus allowing them to survive. Whereas He allows the sins of the other nations to accumulate until they must cease to exist.

Galus is the secret to our eternal existence. With the ultimate Redemption not only will this galus end, but the need for galus will end – *bimheira beyameinu!*

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 KIOSK POKER GAME

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Parsha Yaakov promises Hashem that if he returns home safe and complete he will give tzedakah, maaser to Hashem. The mitzvah of tzedakah leads us to the following interesting true story.

Benny was a fundraiser for a medical Gemach in Eretz Yisrael. The organization that he worked with provided medical equipment to needy people, and the organization had broad appeal among all Israelis. One month the organization was in great need of a fundraising push. Benny decided that he was going to distribute tzedakah boxes to as many stores as possible.

One day he came to a kiosk in a busy commercial square. The kiosk sold drinks and snacks. Benny approached the owner of the kiosk. "Would it be ok if we put this Tzedaka box near the window of your kiosk?" Benny asked the proprietor. The owner, named Avi, said "Of course, I will call you when it gets filled up." Benny was grateful and went on his way.

Three days later Benny gets a call. "Hi, it's Avi from the kiosk. I think you should pick up your Pushka box. It's filled to the brim". "Really", Benny replied with apparent joyful surprise in his voice. "Why did it get filled up so quickly? Most tzedakah boxes of ours take more than a month to fill."

"Well", said Avi, "Every Friday night I organize a large poker game outside my kiosk. We get a big crowd and serve drinks. Last Friday when the crowd was really having fun with the poker game, I made an announcement that the organization that you work for does great work, and passed the pushka around. Many of the players gave very generously, and that is why it's full. I'm sure it is filled with some big bills as well".

Benny was extremely grateful for Avi's help. But he felt conflicted. The organization needed the money, but could he take money from a gambling game played on Shabbos? On one hand, the organization could really benefit from the money. In addition, most pushka boxes take money from the "whole world" and there is no way to determine when the money was donated or how it was earned. Perhaps it was fine to keep the money. But on the other hand, if he knew that it came from gambling, and he knew that it was earned on Shabbos, was he allowed to keep it? And if he could not keep it, how would he return it? Benny's question was brought to Rav Zilberstein. What do you think? See Upiryo Matok Shemos 407

Regarding last week's question about the worker who won a lot of money, but who wanted to continue to get up early to daven and work, Rav Chaim Kanievsky answered that he should daven at the right zman, and if he does so he should not be concerned about ayin hara or other negative consequences.

HE WOULD BE TERRIBLY EMBARRASSED IF HE KNEW THAT HE HAD KICKED THE RAV

In the frigid winter nights of Eastern Europe, it was the job of the shammas to tend to the shul's oven in the pre-dawn hours before others arrived. This way, when people began filing in at dawn to learn or recite Tehillim, the shul would already be warm. The shammas in Baranovich was a bit lazy and he would rely on wandering beggars who arrived in shul during the night to heat the oven. The problem was that often beggars would not arrive during the night, and when people came to shul in the morning the room was frigid. Many complained about this, and it looked as if the shammas might lose his job. Then suddenly; all complaints stopped. The shul was comfortably warm every morning.

Everyone assumed that the shammas had taken their complaints seriously and was finally doing his job. The shammas assumed that the beggars were doing the job for him. No one suspected the truth - that the Rav, Reb Yisrael Yaakov Lubchansky, was arising extra early so that the shul would be warm, thus satisfying everyone.

One morning, the firewood was wet and R' Yisrael Yaakov had to blow on it so that it would burn well. While his head was in the oven door as he continued to blow the fire, the shammas walked in. Certain that it was a beggar who was tending the fire, the shammas, in a joking manner, gave the man a kick in his pants.

Reb Yisrael Yaakov knew that the shammas would be terribly embarrassed if he knew that he had kicked the Rav, so he pushed his face deeper into the oven until the shammas left the room. The smoke was burning his eyes and choking his lungs but he would not remove his head until the shammas had left. By the time the shammas walked away, a portion of Reb Yisrael Yaakov's beard had burnt off.

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Tehillim – Life Lessons

Join the hundreds of people from all over the world and learn the meaning, depth and historical context of each Perek of Tehillim. The 10-15 minute audio shiur is sent out every Sunday via WhatsApp. Please contact R' Greenspan to join.

Besura Tova!

The Kli Yakar Chabura resumes Friday night at 8:30 PM in Rabbi Greenspan's home, 113 Grassmere Road, Bala Cynwyd.

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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!