

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 VAYECHI – THE BRACHA THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Torah relates the *bracha* which Yaakov gave to Yosef's two sons: "By you shall Yisrael bless [their children] saying, 'May G-d make you like Ephraim and Menashe'" (Bereishis 48,20). Rashi explains that one who wishes to bless his son will give him this blessing: "May Hashem make you like Ephraim and Menashe." It is difficult to understand why Yaakov made Yosef's two sons role models for every Jewish child. Yaakov had serious doubts about the character of Ephraim and Menashe. When Yaakov saw Yosef's two sons, who had accompanied their father on his visit to Yaakov, he asked, "Who are they?" Rashi, noting that Yaakov had been in Mitzrayim for seventeen years and knew full well who they were, explains that when Yaakov wished to bless them, the Shechina left him. So he asked who they were, since they did not appear to be worthy of a blessing.

Additionally, Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky observes that Yosef's sons were born in the decadent land of Mitzrayim and

did not grow up in the holy environment of Yaakov's home as did Yaakov's other grandchildren. Rav Yaakov goes as far as to suggest that Ephraim was an Egyptian name. He notes the similarity to Paroh's name. In the ancient Egyptian tongue, the *pei*, *reish* and *ayin* are dominant. Thus, he asserts that the names Shifra and Puah – which were alternate names for Yocheved and Miriam – were Egyptian names given to them by Paroh. Since the *pei* and *reish* are both present in Ephraim's name it might well have been a gentile name.

Given these concerns about Ephraim and Menashe, why would Yaakov make them role models and institute that every Jewish boy be blessed to be like them? I would like to suggest that it was precisely these fears which caused Yaakov to craft their blessing in this manner. In essence he was charging them to be worthy of this blessing. "Live your lives with the constant awareness that forever Klal

Yisrael will bless their children to be like you."

Perhaps this is the very blessing that we give our children, "Be like Ephraim and Menashe!" Live as they did with this ever-present concern: "Am I being a good role model for others who observe me? When all is said and done will I leave a legacy to be proud of?"

This may be the intent of Rebbi in the Mishna (Avos 2,1): "What is the proper path that a man should choose for himself? That which is honorable for himself and earns him the esteem of his fellow men." The Mishna is not referring to the motive for choosing this path but rather to the benefit of such a choice: to ask yourself, "Is my behavior worthy of my own self-respect and the esteem of others?"

It is a powerful message for all of us. Let us be like Ephraim and Menashe and strive to live our lives as role models. If we do, we will have achieved the ultimate blessing.

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 FORGERY

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha talks about the relationship between Yisachar and Zevulun. Our Sages teach that the tribe of Zevulun would engage in commerce and support the tribe of Yisachar who were Torah scholars. They made an arrangement so that they would divide the rewards of Torah study equally between themselves. This leads us to the following true story.

Chaim was a fundraiser for a well known yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael. The Yeshiva was headed by a very well respected and renowned Rosh Yeshiva. For the purpose of our story let's call this Rosh Yeshiva Rav Avraham Katz. One day Chaim traveled to the United States for a fundraising trip for the Yeshiva. Chaim made an appointment with Mr. Zucherman who was a renowned and respected philanthropist, and well known supporter of Torah institutions. Mr. Zucherman was fabulously wealthy and used his money very well to support Torah causes. Mr. Zucherman met Chaim in his palatial home office. Chaim introduced himself and told him that he was collecting money for the Yeshiva of the gaon, Rav Katz.

Mr. Zucherman listened politely but replied as follows: "Reb Chaim, it's an honor to meet you and I wish you only success. But unfortunately I have already had a loss of a quarter of a million dollars because of Rav Katz and I'm afraid I'm unable to donate any more. Please let me explain. About a year ago, Mr. Siegal, who is a real estate investor, came to me for a business loan for an exciting proposal about a real estate development project. Mr. Siegal described his idea and needed a loan of \$250,000 dollars for the project. He took out a letter from your Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Katz. The letter described Mr. Siegal in glowing terms as a Torah scholar and a successful businessman. The letter said that anyone who assists Mr. Siegal on his real

estate project will be blessed in every way. The letter further promised that the Rosh Yeshiva would personally be a guarantor for the loan in the case of any unforeseen developments. After seeing the Rosh Yeshiva's letter I gladly wrote out a check to Mr. Siegal for \$250,000.

Unfortunately the real estate project that Mr. Siegal was overseeing went south. About a month later, Mr. Siegal came to me and said the money was lost and he didn't see a way to recover it. Mr. Siegal is a respectable businessman, and I understood. These things happen in business. I told him the money was forgiven. I then remembered the letter he had shown me saying that Rabbi Avraham Katz was going to guarantee the loan. It crossed my mind to ask Rav Katz for the money, but I decided that out of respect for the Rav, I would forgive him the money as well, and write off the loss. So back to our matter at hand. I trusted Rav Katz's recommendation about investing with Mr. Siegal, but sadly my quarter of a million was lost. I'm afraid I'm unable to make another donation at this time." Reb Chaim the fundraiser understood and parted ways with Mr. Zucherman, the philanthropist.

A few days later, Reb Chaim related Mr. Zucherman's story to Rav Katz, the Rosh Yeshiva. When Rav Katz heard the story, he was silently stunned. Rav Katz knew Mr. Siegal but he never wrote a letter of recommendation to invest in his business. He certainly never guaranteed a loan to him. Without knowing any further details, it seemed that Mr. Siegal might not be the respected businessman people thought he was. It seemed that he was also a cheat and a liar. From the story it seemed that Mr. Siegal had forged a document with Rav Katz's name. Because of Mr. Siegal's forgery, Mr. Zucherman now lost trust in Rav Katz.

Silently to himself, Rav Katz considered picking up the phone and calling Mr. Zucherman immediately to tell him that Mr. Siegal forged his name and that he might be a liar and a cheat. But then he hesitated. What would be the purpose of telling that to Mr. Zucherman? Mr. Zucherman currently had a congenial relationship with Mr. Siegal. Mr. Zucherman already forgave the loan, and was not expecting the money back from Mr. Siegal or Rav Katz. Would there be a purpose in telling Mr. Zucherman that he never wrote the letter? On one hand it would clear his name and perhaps gain Mr. Zucherman's trust in Rav Katz. But on the other hand, it would destroy Mr. Siegal's reputation. Perhaps instead he should call Mr. Siegal and make sure that he never again writes a letter in his name. Perhaps he should leave Mr. Zucherman out of it, and not let others know what Mr. Siegal did. In short, can Rav Katz share the truth about what Mr. Siegal did and destroy his reputation, in order to clear his own name? This question was asked to Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein. What do you think?

Regarding last week's question about the man who innocently said Kadish for his dog, Rav Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman answered that the members of the shul should not stop the man, and they should continue to say amen to his Kadish. The Kadish is still a praise to Hashem, and the man's mistaken intention that it is for his dog, does not take away from the Kadish. The members of the shul should offer to teach him the true meaning of Kadish and be mekarev him to return to Hashem. That will have the effect of truly making a Kidush Hashem and a Kadish for Hashem's name. (See Upiryo Matok Bereishis Page 43).

THIS PROJECT WOULD DIRECTLY BENEFIT THE ORPHANAGE

In 1878 Reb Yehoshua Leib Diskind moved from Brisk and became the Rov of Yerushalayim. Due to persecution and disease there were a number of homeless children whom Reb Yehoshua Leib brought into his home. As the need increased he established an orphan home, today known as the Diskind Orphanage. His second wife brought much money into their marriage which he used for the benefit of his orphanage.

During his tenure as Rov he recognized that the people were not checking their mezuzos and

started a campaign to do so. Unfortunately, most of the residents of Yerushalayim were greatly impoverished and they simply could not afford the cost to check their mezuzos.

Rav Yehoshua Leib decided to use the funds of the orphanage to cover this cost. The directors of the orphanage, however, were not agreeable to use funds that were dedicated for the orphanage for this other project.

Reb Yehoshua Leib told them that this project would directly benefit the orphanage and would

actually save the orphanage lots of money. The Torah states that if we keep the mitzvah of mezuzah carefully it will extend our lives. "Let us check the people's mezuzos and lower the need for bringing more children into the orphanage." Reb Yehoshua Leib prevailed.

This story was retold by Rav Moshe Heinemann to Paysach Diskind who kindly gave permission to publish it.

Tehillim – Life Lessons

Join more than **950** people around the world and learn the meaning, depth and historical context of each Perek of Tehillim. This week we continue with Perek dalet pasuk vov "Zivchu zivchai tzedek". Who is Dovid Hamelech telling to bring a zevach? What is a zevach? How does Dovid Hamelech respond to the success of *rischo'im*? The 10-15 minute audio shiur is sent out every Sunday via WhatsApp. Please contact R' Greenspan to join.

Kli Yakar Chabura

The Kli Yakar Chabura will meet 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!