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 BECHUKOSAI – THE GREATEST MIRACLE

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Many historians and philosophers have marveled at the enduring existence of the Jewish people throughout the centuries. Despite the disappearance of mighty empires, this constantly persecuted and slaughtered tiny nation has survived and even flourished. How did it happen? The obvious answer is found in the *Haggadah*: "In every generation they rise up to destroy us, but *Hakadosh Boruch Hu* saves us from them."

Rav Yaakov Emden put it this way: "By my life, when I contemplate these wonders (of our existence), to me they are greater than all the miracles and wonders that *Hashem* performed for our ancestors in *Mitzrayim*, in the desert and in *Eretz Yisrael*."

The miracle is not merely our physical survival, but also – and primarily – our spiritual survival. Throughout the centuries, no matter how many pogroms and religious persecutions, we have clung steadfastly to our heritage. And today, millions of Jews are keeping *Torah* and *Mitzvos*, the religious communities across the globe are flourishing and *Yeshivos* and *Kollelim* continue to grow in both quantity and quality. How do we explain this?

Rav Yaakov Yisrael Beifus in *Yalkut Lekach Tov* cites the *Gemara* (Megilla 11a) which explains the following *pasuk* in our *parsha*: "Despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have despised them nor will I have rejected them, to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them – for I am *Hashem* their G-d" (*Vayikra* 26:44).

> *I will not have despised them* – in the days of the Chaldeans when I provided for them Daniel, Chanania, Mishael and Azaria.
>
> *I did not reject them* – in the days of the Greeks when I provided for them Shimon *HaTzaddik*, the Chasmonaim and Mattisyahu *Kohen Gadol*.
>
> *To destroy them* – in the days of Haman when I provided for them Mordechai and Esther.
>
> *To annul My covenant with them* – in the days of the Persians – when I provided for them the House of Rebbi and the *Chachamim* of future generations.

In every generation, *Klal Yisrael* was able to restore *Torah* learning and *Mitzvah* observance by *Hashem* providing us with great *Torah* leaders. One of the greatest and well-known cases of this type of providence was the fate of four great *Chachamim* who set sail to raise money for the Babylonian *Yeshivos* in the tenth century. They were captured by pirates and sold for enormous ransoms. Rav Moshe ben Chanoch ended up in Cordova, Spain, Rav Chushiel ben Yehuda, the father of Rabbeinu Chananel, was sold to the Jews in Tunisia and Rav Shmarya ben Elchanan was sold in Egypt. Each of them started great *Yeshivos* which were responsible for the flourishing of *Torah* after the decline of the *Yeshivos* in Babylonia. (The name and the fate of the fourth *Chacham* is not known.)

In our own generation we have witnessed an unbelievable resurgence of *Torah* scholarship and *Mitzvah* observance after the Holocaust due to the great Torah giants of the twentieth century. *Hashem* has kept the promise found in this week's *parsha*, and Jewry has always continued to experience a rebirth in both *gashmius* and *ruchnius* throughout this long *galus*.

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 SIDDUR

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha discusses the importance of Teshuva. We know that there is a prohibition against stealing and there is a mitzvah to return something that one stole. This leads us to the following true story.

Avi went out to Maariv. Since he was planning to come a few minutes early he brought a sefer with him to learn before davening started. After davening maariv a friend began to chat with him. Avi spoke with his friend for a few minutes and left the shul and went home, holding the sefer he brought.

When Avi arrived home he realized that he was holding two sefarim in his hand. One was the sefer that he took with him, and the other was the siddur that he used in shul. He realized that because he was busy talking with his friend, he accidentally picked up the siddur to bring home in addition to his own sefer.

On the inside of the cover of the siddur it was written clearly: This siddur may not be brought outside the premises of the shul."

Avi realized that he had accidentally stolen the siddur. He knew that he had a responsibility to return the siddur that he accidentally took. But he was tired and it was late, and he didn't feel up to going back to the shul that night. He wondered if it would be permitted to keep the siddur with him overnight and return the siddur the next day? Or perhaps because he took it without permission, did he have an obligation to return the siddur as soon as he realized it? On one hand, the members of the shul likely did not mind for him to keep it overnight. But on the other hand, perhaps the mitzva to return what he stole requires him to return it as soon as possible? What do you think?

Regarding last week's question about the boy who got a burn on his leg on shabbos, Rav Tzvi Berkowitz answered that the mother should call hatzola, or call a doctor, and follow exactly what they advise them to do.

"HIS IDEOLOGY WAS SPAWNED AFTER BEING SPURNED FROM YOUR SCHOOL. HOW MANY COUNTLESS SOULS HAVE SUFFERED DUE TO THIS DANGEROUS IDEOLOGY?"

A well-respected man, a leader, an overseer of a large and thriving Jewish community once came to visit the Chofetz Chaim. Expecting to be welcomed with honor and respect befitting an important man, he was shocked when the Chofetz Chaim took one look at him turned away and had him escorted from his presence. Such a thing was rare, especially for a community leader who was widely recognized and respected.

More than being insulted, the man was frightened at the reaction of the Chofetz Chaim to his presence. What had he done to bring up such a reaction to incur the wrath of the great man? He searched his memory for any sort of incident but he came up empty-handed. Trembling, he decided that he could not leave Radin without finding out the source of the Chofetz Chaim's displeasure with him. With faltering steps, he knocked on the door and begged to be given one more chance to talk with the Chofetz Chaim. He finally managed to make his way inside and once again came face to face with the Chofetz Chaim.

Rebbe, he cried what have I done? What was my sin that you pushed me away and removed me from your home? The Chofetz Chaim's eyes turned steely and spoke to the man. "You should just know that it is all your fault! All your responsibility! The fact that more than 3 million of our Jewish brothers are suffocating under the oppression of the Communist regime. All the depression, all the death, all the pain and suffering. It's all your fault! All your fault. All your fault!

The Chofetz Chaim's words hit him with the force of a locomotive train. The fate of millions of suffering Jews was on his soldiers. How can that be? What had he done? "But Rabbi", he began a stifled sob came from his lips. But the Chofetz Chaim cut him off. "Now? Now you cry? Of course, now you lead a large congregation, you oversee the workings of your community and surely you wouldn't want any harm to come to it. But what about then? What all those years ago?

The man was unable to open his mouth? He truly had no idea what the Chofetz Chaim was talking about. "Surely you remember" continued the Chofetz Chaim, many years ago when you worked as administrator of the local school. There was a young boy in your school. He was an orphan. He had just lost his father and lived with his struggling mother. With those unfortunate circumstances, it was no wonder that the boy tended to act out and make trouble. He was wild, with a sharp tongue and difficult to control. In the end you lost your patience with him and had this orphan thrown out.

The man thought long and hard. Then he asked cautiously, what was the boy's name? "Laibel" said the Chofetz Chaim. His name was Laibel Davidovich Bronstein. Since the school refused to keep him his mother had no choice but to put him in a non-Jewish school. But the boy was smart, brilliant perhaps. He may even have become a great Rosh Yeshiva given the proper guidance. Instead his sharp mind absorbed secular knowledge and grew to become a leader among the Gentiles. This young Jewish boy Laibel, also known as Leon Trotsky, became one of the founders of communism and a supreme commander of the Red Army during the Bolshevik Revolution. His ideology was spawned after being spurned from your school. How many countless souls have suffered due to this dangerous ideology? Now I ask you, who is to blame? On whose shoulders is the enormous weight of history's unforgiving irony, if not yours?

From: Heroes of Spirit, 100 Rabbinic Tales of the Holocaust. By Rabbi Dovid Hoffman, Published By Israel Book Shop, Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.

Tehillim – Life Lessons

We are learning Mizmor 12 "למנצח על השמינית מזמור לדוד". How does Dovid Hamelech deal with the lashon hara that people speak about him?

Kli Yakar Chabura

The Kli Yakar Chabura will meet Shabbos afternoon at 5:15 PM in Rabbi Greenspan's home, 113 Grassmere Road, Bala Cynwyd.

1st Seder

A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

NOW IN OUR 10TH YEAR!

To sponsor the 1st Seder Weekly, please contact office@firstseder.org. For more information or to register for First Seder, contact Rabbi Uri Greenspan at RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org or 732-407-3178.

Good Shabbos!