1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

PARSHAS KI SISA – DEEPER THAN THE SEA

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

Moshe Rabbeinu descended from Har Sinai after forty days of learning the Torah with Hashem. The Ibn Ezra states that emptyheaded people wonder what Moshe was doing for forty days and nights. However, they do not realize that even if he had spent forty years – or double that – he could not know one thousandth of the ways of Hashem and the secrets of His Mitzvos. Indeed, Iyov declared, "The Torah is more vast than the earth and deeper than the sea" (Iyov 11:9). The Rambam understands that this pasuk refers to each word of the Torah (Commentary to Mishna Sanhedrin Chapter 10).

Rav Yaakov Galinsky demonstrates this concept with a historical perspective. The Gra stated that Rav Zalman Volozhin knew the entire written and oral Torah. However Rav Chaim, Rav Zalman's brother and Talmid Muvhak of the Gra, asserted that everything that Rav Zalman knew, the Gra knew before his Bar Mitzvah. When the Gra passed away, people were saying that he was as great as rabbis of the Talmudic era. However, Rav Chaim said that perhaps the Gra reached the level of the Rashba or Ramban who lived in the twelfth century.

Rav Yochanan, the greatest Amora, acknowledged that he knew only a fraction of what Rebbi Akiva knew (Eruvin 43a). Rebbi Akiva's knowledge was a miniscule amount compared to Rebbi Eliezer (Sanhedrin 68b) and Rebbi Eliezer acquired a mere fraction of Rebbi Yochanan ben Zackai's knowledge, who knew an infinitesimal amount of what Hillel, his Rebbi, knew. If we continue back in this manner to Moshe Rabbeinu, we cannot begin to imagine how little the Gra – the greatest Talmid Chacham since the era of the Rishonim – knew, in comparison to what Moshe learned in forty days.

So, what is the take-away? There are two: One, how careful we have to be when we dive into the vast sea of Torah that we don't drown due to our lack of appreciation of its depth and breadth. We must realize that what we understand barely touches the surface. Although we should use all of our faculties to try to understand its words, we must approach it with great humility.

Secondly, we must recognize the greatness and superiority of our predecessors. As Chazal caution, "If a great man makes a statement do not scoff at it" – no matter how incredible it may appear (Berachos 19b). How often do we come across statements or stories in the Gemara that appear to be very strange. We must be prepared to humbly admit our lack of understanding and not be tempted to question their veracity. How often do we learn the words of Rishonim or Achronim or the Halachic decisions of great Poskim which are very difficult to comprehend. When we ask the obvious questions, we must be careful that our tone of voice is respectful not deprecatory.

In our davening we say, *"Vesein chelkeinu besorasecha* – Grant us **our share** in Your Torah." We all have a share in Hashem's Torah, which may seem to be quite small from this perspective. However, if we do **our** best, its true value is far, far greater than anything that we can imagine.

שבת – Rabbi Ungar

QUESTION: May I go into a gift shop in my hotel on שבת and "buy" some Tylenol or a soda, if the owner will just ask me my room number and I will have to pay for it after שבת? Also, my 4 year old son lost his yarmulka on שבת and I couldn't find him a replacement. A neighbor of mine within our עירוב sells yarmulkas from her basement. May we go there on שבת and "buy" one?

ANSWER: מקח וממכר – business, is אסור on שבת because it might lead to writing. Many forms of business require and involve writing, and so, חז"ל prohibited it on שבת. However, there are times, that "buying" will be okay. In some cases of a מצוה one is allowed to "buy." However, one must not mention the word "sell," or how much "money" it costs. The "buyer," may come into a store when food is needed for שבת or יום טוב and "buy" food, and the owner of the store may observe what is being "bought," and then after שבת tell the buyer how much he owes. This is okay, because since you are not mentioning the prices and you need this item for שבת/יום טוב, the חז"ל were lenient. The same is true for other items that are really needed, like medicine or in a case where there is no alternative for a yarmulka. Food is always עונג שבת and will be allowed. Even though there is the issue of מראית עין – that it looks like you are buying something on שבת, חז"ל waived this worry in cases of צורך גדול. So only do so when you are in need of that item. If there is other alternatives, then avoid this "buying."

עי' סימן ש"ו סעי' ו ומ"ב ס"ק ל"ג. עי' סימן שכ"ג סעי' א-ד' ומ"ב ס"ק א' עי' סימן ת"ק סעי' א' ומ"ב ס"ק ז'.

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ANITA MINYAN

By Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

This week's Parsha discusses how the Jewish people were counted. One daily mitzvah in which we need to count the number of participants is the obligation of davening with a minyan of ten men. This leads us to the following real story:

In 2009, 47,000 people came to the Major League Baseball All-Star Game in Busch Stadium in St. Louis, Missouri. Dovi and his family had been season ticket holders for the St. Louis Cardinals for decades. Sadly, Dovi's father had passed away only months earlier. Ever devoted, Dovi always made sure to say Kaddish three times each day. Between his hectic work schedule and his reliance on finding an evening minyan, Dovi found himself giving away most of his Cardinals game tickets that summer. But the All-Star Game was a unique event. He and his boys did not want to miss that. Dovi had heard much about a minyan for Maariv that always gathered at a designated place in Busch Stadium during the seventh-inning stretch. He felt confident that he would be able to find a minyan and say Kaddish there.

Dovi and his sons enjoyed the game. When the top of the seventh rolled around, he and two of his sons headed to that vending area, hoping to assemble a group of ten men. Unfortunately, many of the regular attendees of this minyan were no-shows that evening. Many had sold their tickets to that game because they could get such a high price for them. Only six were on hand to be counted by the middle of the seventh inning. The men stood waiting for almost 15 minutes. They found a seventh, but not the required ten.

Dovi looked at the players on the field. Amazingly, he counted three Jewish players. More for the minyan! Jason Marquis who was a pitcher from the Colorado Rockies, Ryan Braun (who would go on to become the National League MVP in 2011), and Kevin Youkilis who was from the Boston Red Sox.

Seeing three Jewish men on the playing field below inspired Dovi. He headed to the lost and found and told the stadium personnel by the security window that he was looking for his missing sister. Her name: Anita Minyan. Once the bottom of the seventh inning had been completed, an announcement went out over the stadium PA system: "Anita Minyan, please report to the lost and found on Level Two. Anita Minyan." It wasn't long before the group of seven became ten, and then 14. The men hurriedly huddled next to a concession stand and recited the evening prayer. Dovi managed to fulfill his Kaddish requirement for the night in grand family tradition — with a bit of improvisation and ingenuity. Anita Minyan was happily discovered.

Later Dovi wondered if what he did was really permitted. Was he allowed to tell the lost and found people that he was looking for his sister Anita Minyan? Was that small fib permitted for the sake of gathering the minyan for him to say Kaddish for his deceased father? Presumably the lost and found didn't mind because they were helping so many people.

Or perhaps it was wrong. Perhaps he was tricking them, and if they found out, they would be very upset and it might cause a Chilul Hashem. If it was not permitted, should he perhaps go back to the lost and found and apologize?

What do you think?

Regarding last week's question about returning the laptop bag, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein (Upiryo Matok Vayikra 75) wrote that the person does not have to schlep all the way to return the laptop back to the owner. This is because when he saw his friend holding the laptop, he had every right to assume that it was really his friend's. Therefore, when it looked like his friend left the laptop behind, he had a mitzvah of hashavas aveida to bring it back to his friend. **Since** he was doing a mitzvah by taking it, he can**not** be punished or have to schlep to return it because he was "anus al pi hadibur," forced by the Torah to take it to return it to his friend.

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THERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN GOING TO STAND BY HIM

Reb Leizer Geltzhaler, a grandson of Rav Eliyahu Dessler, was a Rosh Yeshiva who tragically passed away very young.

Once his Yeshiva was in Canarsie, New York, an area that was sparsely populated with Jews. Reb Leizer was in the middle of delivering his shiur to his students when the terrible sounds of screeching brakes and shattered glass filled the room. Reb Leizer looked out the window for a moment and then excused himself leaving the room for a long period of time.

The talmidim looked out and saw that it was a relatively minor fender bender involving a Jew and a non-Jew, and they wondered why Reb Leizer felt it necessary to remain outside, waiting for the police to arrive and chatting with both parties. Why did he have to leave the shiur for that?

Forty-five minutes later, Reb Leizer came back into the room. A talmid asked Reb Leizer about the ostensible bitul Torah for a matter that did not seem very serious.

Reb Leizer looked around at the hoys and then delivered an extremely memorable shiur: "If ever you see a Yid standing alone in an unfamiliar neighborhood, there is nothing more important than going to stand by him, making sure that he has a friendly face next to him. It wasn't the accident that was serious - it was the thought of leaving a Yid by himself."

(From Reb Leizer, By R' Yisroel Besser, Published by Judaica Press)

1st Seder

A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

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