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

PARSHAS PARAH – WE GO BY THE BOOK

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The Medrash (Bamidbar Rabba 19:8) asks why all [communal] sacrifices are male animals except for the Parah Adumah which is female. To answer, the Medrash presents a mashal. The child of one of the king's maids had made a mess in the palace. Accordingly the king said, "Let the child's mother come and clean up after him." Thus, Hashem said, "Let a full grown female cow atone for the sin of the golden calf."

This Medrash is perplexing. Firstly, what is the relationship between the Mitzvah of Parah Adumah and the sin of the golden calf? The mashal notwithstanding, how can the Mitzvah of Parah Adumah atone for the sin of the eigel? Additionally, if the law of the Parah Adumah is the consummate chok – a Mitzvah which cannot be logically explained, why is the Medrash offering an explanation?

The Bais Halevy answers by describing the nature of the sin of the golden calf. As many Meforshim assert, it was not really a sin of idolatry. What Bnai Yisrael were attempting to do was create a channel between Hashem and themselves. Since Moshe, who was their human conduit to Hashem, had not returned as expected, they wished to create an abode for the Shechina in their midst to provide them with the spiritual support system which they had lost. They sought to create their own version of a Mishkan. Since they realized that such an undertaking required a deep knowledge of the mystical realm, they turned to Aharon HaKohen to oversee the endeavor.

The Bais Halevy explains that while their intentions were noble, the way that they pursued them was a terrible mistake. One can connect to Hashem and bring the Shechina down into our physical world only in a manner that was prescribed and dictated by Hashem. All the other approaches are not only doomed to failure, but also border on Avodah Zara – literally a foreign form of worship. The building of the Mishkan served to rectify this sin by following Hashem's directions for its construction to a tee. In that manner they would succeed in bringing down the Shechina and thereby enable a closer connection with Hashem. Thus, in Parshas Pekudei, the description of everything done for the Mishkan is followed by the phrase, "as Hashem commanded Moshe." This expression appears in the Parsha no less than twenty three times.

Addressing the original questions about the Parah Adumah, the Bais Halevy explains that the Medrash is not offering a reason for the Parah Adumah. Indeed the reason for the Parah Adumah could not have been to serve as an atonement for the sin of the golden calf since this Mitzvah was given at Marah, preceding the sin. The Medrash is merely explaining why the Parah Adumah serves as an appropriate antidote to the eigel. The Parah Adumah, whose reason is incomprehensible, teaches us not to seek to accomplish our spiritual goals based on our own reasoning. In truth the ultimate reason for all Mitzvos is only known by Hashem. We must merely follow his instructions. Although we are permitted and even encouraged to study reliable sources which provide explanations for the Mitzvos, this is only after we have made a firm commitment to observe them regardless of any rationale.

The message of the Bais Halevy serves as a warning to break-away groups who ostensibly seek to provide a more "meaningful religious experience" by means of various innovations. Not only are their efforts doomed to failure, but these innovations have nothing to do with Torah and Mitzvos; they are merely another golden calf. However there is also a specific lesson for all Torah observant Jews. At times we may pay more attention to the spirit of the law than the letter of the law. While it is very important to perform Mitzvos with joy and passion, they are totally meaningless if they do not meet all the halachic requirements. An exquisite mezuzah could be a wonderful hiddur mitzvah, but it is completely worthless if even one letter is not written properly. A passionate recital of the Shema may feel great, but if it is said at the wrong time, you are not yotzei. In the final analysis, what matters most is that the Mitzvah be performed exactly "as Hashem commanded Moshe."

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGER

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: May I allow my cleaning lady to cook food for me?

ANSWER: When a גוי cooks food, there are times that it will מותר to eat and times that it will be אסור. There is an איסור called בישול עכו"ם which applies to certain foods. Which foods become אסור to eat if a גוי cooks them? Foods that are inedible when raw and are חשוב, in as much, that they would be served at a kings table. If a גוי makes you a vegetable soup that consists of carrots, celery, onions, and mushrooms, that soup will be מותר to eat since all those items are edible raw. If the גוי adds in, for example, zucchini, parsnip or potatoes, then it will be אסור to eat that soup since those foods are inedible raw. One must also be certain that the גוי did not add in any non-kosher ingredients or use the wrong pots. If one leaves a cleaning lady at home alone with free reign in the kitchen, then one is asking for trouble. If she feels free and in control in your kitchen she might mess up in many ways. There are so many ways to mess up and I will not even attempt to list them. You cannot trust a גוי to keep kashrus in any way. Chicken soup is also a problem of בישול עכו"ם since chicken is inedible and would be served at a kings table. The simple way to allow a גוי to cook (at least according to the Ashkenazim) is for a Yid to turn on the fire. All restaurants work this way. Since fires tend to go out, one must supervise to assure the גוי doesn't reignite the flame.

עי' יו"ד סימן קי"ג סעי' א' וסעי' ז'.

You can bring a zechus refua shelaima for Sandy Bruck - Shalom ben Tila Leah – and for all who need a refuah sheleima 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

TAXI THEFT

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Avi was a taxi driver in Israel. One day, at the dispatch center, he got a call for a pickup about an hour away. The fare would earn him a lot of money. His friend Yoni, also a taxi driver, overheard the call. Things were slow for him, so Yoni decided to try to get the job first. He took down the address and raced there before Avi.

When Yoni arrived at the address, he asked the waiting family, "Are you looking for a taxi?" They said yes, and got into his cab.

Two minutes later, Avi pulled up and saw Yoni taking the passengers that were supposed to be his fare. Avi realized Yoni had stolen his customers!

He tried arguing with Yoni, but Yoni ignored him and sped off. Yoni would likely earn $300 or $400 for that long trip, while Avi wasted his time driving there for nothing. Feeling angry, Avi headed home. But on the highway, he saw a taxi parked on the shoulder with its hazard lights flashing. To his surprise, it was Yoni's cab! Yoni was stranded with the customers still inside, needing a jump start.

A dilemma flashed in Avi's mind. As a fellow Jew, he felt obligated to help Yoni who was in need. It was a fulfillment of the mitzvah of azov taazov imo.

But by jump-starting Yoni's car, he would be enabling Yoni to complete the theft of his customers. Should Avi stop and jump start Yoni, even though Yoni had "stolen" from him? On one hand, leaving someone stranded was dangerous. On the other hand, helping Yoni meant facilitating the theft he had committed against Avi. What do you think? See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 311

Regarding last week's question about the clerk who made the bully wait a long time in line, Rav Zilberstein ("Upiryo Matok Vayikra," page 297) answered that if there was no manager available to deal with the bully, the clerk had the right to do what he did, even though it caused the people behind the bully to wait longer. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to do their part to hold bullies accountable and bring them to justice, and therefore, the clerk was allowed to make those people wait.

I DO NOT WANT MY RABBI TO SEE ME IN A CAR ON SHABBOS

Sam Margolin, a very successful lawyer in Memphis, was a proud Jew. Under the influence of Reb Nota Greenblat and Sy Kutner, Sam and his wife Rose sent their little girl, Gerry, to the Memphis Hebrew Academy.

One Shabbos morning, as the Margolin's were driving to shul with second grader Gerry in the back seat, they noticed one of the Rabbis from the Academy. He was on his way to shul as well. Naturally, he was walking. When Gerry noticed that they were quickly approaching her Rabbi she jumped down from her seat and crouched down below window level. Her mother looked at the back seat and told her daughter to sit on the seat. (This was before seat belts.) Gerry said that she was not going to sit on the seat until her Rabbi was out of sight. "I do not want my Rabbi to see me in a car on Shabbos."

When they arrived at shul and parked the car, Sam shut his door, looked over the hood to his wife. "Rose, I cannot drive on Shabbos if our daughter is going to be ashamed because of this. We will not be driving on Shabbos anymore." That Shabbos the Margolin family stayed on that side of town. That decision changed their lives.

True to his word, Sam never drove on Shabbos after that. They bought a Shabbos home near the shul. Sam who was a very well spoken businessman became a spokesman for Torah U'mesorah and promoted Torah observance in Memphis and around the country.

He would say "From where will come the future leaders of our people... if not from our children who have been properly trained in the ideals of Judaism... Jewish laymen must come to know the beauty and sincerity of traditional Judaism through actual practice and knowledge. Only in such an institution as the Memphis Hebrew Academy can such training be attained."

As told by Gerry Fink to Paysach Diskind. Reprinted With Permission From Table Talk.

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Weekly Schedule

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
Morning Track 1: Shiurim					
6:20 AM – 6:50 M, Th 6:55 Tu, W, F	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)
9:20 AM – 9:55 AM	Mishnayos Sheviis (R' Chesky Weiss)	Mishnayos Sheviis (R' Chesky Weiss)	Mishnayos Sheviis (R' Chesky Weiss)	Mishnayos Sheviis (R' Chesky Weiss)	Parsha HaShevuah (R' Yehoshua Levy)
10:00 AM – 10:40 AM	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Baltuch)	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Baltuch)	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Baltuch)	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Baltuch)	Gemara Bava Basra (R' Daniel Baltuch)
10:45 AM – 11:15 AM	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Mishna Berurah (R' Uri Greenspan)
11:15 AM – 11:50 PM	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)	Dirshu Amud Yomi Gemara (R' Uri Greenspan)
12:00 PM – 12:40 PM	Practical Timely Halacha (R' Mordechai Shain)	The Life and Torah of our Leaders (R' Dovid Gross)	Biur Tefilla (R' Yoel Zeffren)	Sefer Tehillim (R' Uri Greenspan)	Pele Yoetz followed by Shemiras Haloshon from the Chofetz Chaim Hashkafa -Parsha (R' Uri Greenspan)
12:45 PM – 1:15 PM	Navi Shiur Sefer Yirmiyahu (R' Baruch Lichtenstein)	Pele Yoetz followed by Shemiras Haloshon from the Chofetz Chaim Hashkafa -Parsha (R' Uri Greenspan)	Navi Shiur Sefer Yirmiyahu (R' Baruch Lichtenstein)	Pele Yoetz followed by Shemiras Haloshon from the Chofetz Chaim Hashkafa -Parsha (R' Uri Greenspan)	

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rabbigreenspan@firstseder.org

Navi Shiur

Join us for an interactive Navi Shiur on Seder Yirmiyahu Monday and Wednesday 12:45 PM - 1:15PM given by Rabbi Baruch Lichtenstein.

Do you have a flexible schedule?

Join us at the 1st Seder Bais Medrash any time between 9:20 AM and 1:15 PM. Come for one shiur or all of the shiurim. May your participation serve as a zechus for Acheinu Bnai Yisroel!

To register for these shiurim or any of the learning opportunities, please contact Rabbigreenspan@firstseder.org or 732-407-3178. To sponsor the 1st Seder Weekly, please contact office@firstseder.org.

Good Shabbos!