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

PARSHAS VAYEIRA – DO IT HASHEM'S WAY

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

"For I have loved [Avraham] because he commands his children and his household after him that they keep the Derech Hashem – way of Hashem, doing justice and charity" (Bereishis 18:19). Hashem's love for Avraham was predicated on the fact that the way of justice and charity which he promoted was Derech Hashem.

This pasuk emphasizes that there is a Derech Hashem to administer justice and to perform Tzedaka. All nations have some form of legal system and judicial structure. However they do not contain absolute dictums. They are merely based on the human values that the people ascribe to. More often than not, people change their minds – frequently on not much more than a whim – as to what is considered appropriate and what is not.

Similarly, when it comes to performance of Tzedaka, and acts of chesed in general, nations and societies each have their perception of what is appropriate. These protocols are merely human based ethics, predicated on social norms and individual preferences. They vary from place to place and from time to time. However, for us the "children" of Avraham, there is only one immutable way of performing Tzedaka and chesed: the Derech Hashem.

Although we may perceive various societies or certain people as maintaining a very sensitive and appropriate standard of chesed, they are really fraught with inconsistencies and hypocrisy. Take Lot as an example. He possessed a very keen sense of the need to help others. His hachnasas orchim rated five stars. However, at what cost? He was ready to offer his two daughters to the angry and bestial mob in order to protect his guests.

Let us consider Avimelech, the Philistine king. He professed to have performed chesed with Avraham (see Bereishis 21:23), yet he might very well have killed Avraham, had he known that Sarah was indeed his wife and not his sister. Avraham makes this point very clearly to Avimelech. "(I told you that Sarah is my sister) because I said, 'There is no fear of G-d in this place and they will kill me because of my wife'" (Bereishis 20:11). When civility and concern for others is based on man-made laws and mores, the whole system can be compromised at the drop of a hat.

When a society creates a legal system or an ethical standard of behavior that is not based on Derech Hashem, its values are not absolute. In truth, they are, for the most part, self-serving. The laws and social etiquette merely help to advance a self-centered agenda or to serve as a way to mollify their collective conscience. They ultimately will turn to accommodate what is practical or convenient for the government or its people. This said, it is not too difficult to comprehend how a highly cultured nation like Germany or a well-mannered nation like Japan could commit acts of bestiality and cruelty without even a prick of their conscience.

Unfortunately, however, we have witnessed the same type of hypocrisy within the ranks of the Jewish people. Jewish movements, which claim to be protecting and conserving Torah laws and values and even some who actually profess to be Orthodox, have jettisoned not only many Halachos in the Shulchan Aruch, but have also renounced whole sections of the written Torah. Ultimately, like all the other counterfeit movements, they will self-destruct due to their myriad of inconsistencies.

The only true and viable system is the absolute and never changing Derech Hashem which Avraham Avinu transmitted to his progeny and which we are commanded to teach to ours.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

QUESTION: If I have to give my child some liquid medicine on שבת, may I measure out the exact amount using a measuring cup?

ANSWER: Measuring on שבת for a מצוה is מותר. Measuring that is not for a מצוה is not allowed as it is עובדין דחול – a weekday act. For a sick person, one is allowed to measure medicine if needed, since it is a מצוה to heal oneself. Since measuring is a lower level איסור דרבנן, they allow it to be done for a מצוה. Using a manual thermometer to measure one's temperature is מותר. One is allowed to measure the size of a cup to see if it holds a רביעית to use it for kiddush. One is allowed to measure (with a manual scale) מצה on פסח to see if it is a כזית. Measuring food for one that is eating only שיעורים on יום כיפור is allowed. One is allowed to measure the height of a wall to see if it is 10 טפחים high to know if it is considered a halachic wall. One is allowed to measure food to see if it has ששים to know if an איסור that fell in is בטל. Measuring food for one that is on a diet is not allowed, as it is not necessary since one can approximate or take less. One may not measure the space of a room to try and figure out how many tables could fit in for a future occasion.

You can bring a zechus refuah sheleima 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 Chafetz Chaim.

SELLING THE EXTRA BUS SEATS

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Dovid was newly engaged and planning a beautiful wedding in Yerushalayim. He was studying at a yeshiva in Haifa, in northern Israel, and wanted to make sure his friends had transportation to attend the wedding. So, Dovid gave money to his friend Meir and asked him to rent a 50-seat bus to bring everyone down on the day of the wedding.

Meir did as promised—he ordered the bus and spread the word around the yeshiva that he was reserving seats for the trip. However, when the day of the wedding arrived, only about 35 of the 50 seats were reserved. It turned out there was another event that conflicted with the wedding, so not everyone could make it.

With only 35 out of 50 seats filled, Meir and his friends set out for Yerushalayim. Along the way, they saw a large group of yeshiva students waiting at a bus stop. Meir had their bus stop and asked the students what they were waiting for. They replied that they were waiting for a regular bus to take them to a wedding in Yerushalayim. When he asked which wedding hall, they mentioned a location near the hall where they were headed.

Meir said, "I'll be honest with you—we have 15 extra seats. If each of you pays 50 shekels, you can have a spot on our bus." The students agreed, and 12 of them joined, collectively paying Meir 600 shekels.

The trip was uneventful, and they arrived in Yerushalayim, with everyone heading to their respective wedding halls. A couple of days after the wedding, Meir went over to Dovid and handed him the 600 shekels, saying, "This belongs to you. We had 15 extra seats, and we were able to sell most of them, so since you rented the bus, the money should go to you."

But Dovid replied, "Thank you so much, I don't think it belongs to me. I was fine with having 15 empty seats. You took the initiative to sell those extra seats, so the money should go to you." Meir insisted, "No, I think it belongs to you. You rented the bus, and anyway, you could use the money."

Each of them thought the other deserved the money. So, they agreed to bring the question to a rabbi: Who is entitled to the money? Is it Dovid, who rented and paid for the bus, or Meir, who took the initiative to sell the extra seats? What do you think? See Upiryo Matok Devarim Page 445

Regarding last week's question about the person who sold the free sefarim, Rav Zilberstein (in Upiryo Matok, Devarim, page 437) answered that, according to the strict letter of the law (m'ikar hadin), he may keep the money because the sefarim were considered ownerless (hefker). However, it would be a form of hashavas aveida (returning lost property) to use the money to purchase new sefarim and distribute them for free to those who will study from them.

HIS SENSE OF HUMOR SHONE THROUGH IN HIS INTERACTIONS

Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky was the Rosh Yeshiva of Ner Yisrael. Rav Kulefsky's methods were far from conventional, and his sense of humor shone through in his interactions with his children. One morning, he walked into his son's room holding a newspaper and exclaimed, "Oh, my! Mickey Mantle [a famous baseball player for the Yankees] died!" His son jumped out of bed in shock, only to find out that Mickey Mantle was actually very much alive. Rav Kulefsky smirked and said, "Okay, now that you're out of bed, you can go to minyan."

During a time when his eyesight was severely compromised, Rav Kulefsky attended a bar mitzvah where someone passed him the serving plate. Because his vision was so impaired, he mistook it for his personal plate and started eating straight from the platter. When someone pointed out the mix-up, he immediately stopped. Instead of becoming upset or embarrassed, he chuckled. Later that night, Rav Kulefsky shared the story with his family, saying, "You have to hear this—the funniest thing happened to me today." This was more than just an amusing anecdote; he was using his remarkable sense of humor to keep himself from becoming disheartened by his difficult circumstances.

From Rav Kulefsky, by Rabbi Yechiel Spero, published by ArtScroll Mesorah, reprinted with permission from Table Talk.

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Mishnayos, Gemara, Halacha, Tefilla, Parsha, Tehillim, Mussar and more! M-F 9:20 a.m. - 1:15 p.m. To register or if you have any questions please contact

Rabbi Uri Greenspan - Rosh Bais Medrash at rabbigreenspan@firstseder.org 732-407-3178

Please Daven

For Mr. Drew Dorman (Avrohom Gedaliah ben Sarah Sofia), who is in need of refuah sheleima.

GOOD SHABBOS!

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