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

PARSHAS SHEMOS – GET A GOOD JOB

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

"They embittered their lives with hard work…" (Shemos 1:14). The Gemara in Maseches Sotah interprets the hard work as forcing the men to do chores that women are accustomed to doing and forcing the women to do men's jobs. This was considered to be bitter and hard work. Rav Yaakov Galinsky notes that today's society has blurred any distinctions of gender under the banner of equal rights. We might add that today in 2026 there is no concept of gender at all.

However, Rav Galinsky suggests that regardless of gender distinctions, we can infer that doing any job that is not compatible with one's nature is also torturous.

It states in Koheles (3:11), "Es hakol asah yafeh b'ito – Hashem made everything appropriate in its time." Chazal (Berachos 43b) infer from this that Hashem wants a person to derive satisfaction from his profession regardless of what social status it conforms to. Hashem created a world with a wide variety of professions that will produce a society that can sustain itself. It goes far beyond the butcher, baker and the candlestick maker. There should be a whole class of people that provide food, another group of people providing clothing, another providing housing and so on. Each person should pursue a career that is appropriate for him or her. One who has a knack for agriculture should not decide to be a violinist, and vice versa. Indeed, this was the type of affliction which the Egyptians placed on Bnei Yisrael.

Rav Galinsky relates a story of a frum German physician. When he heard that there were great Yeshivos in Poland and Lithuania he decided to visit them and see for himself. After visiting a few yeshivos, he was totally overwhelmed by the vast knowledge and piety of the talmidei chachamim. He went to the Chofetz Chaim and poured out his heart to him. "I had thought that my profession as a competent doctor who is a Yarei Shamayim created a true kiddush Hashem and would certainly grant me a share in Olam Haba. Now I see that I am nothing compared to these great scholars."

The Chofetz Chaim cited the Gemara (Bava Basra 10b) about Rav Yosef the son of Rebi Yehoshua ben Levi who was ill. He lost consciousness and awoke, after having had a near death experience. His father asked him, "What did you witness in the Other World?" Rav Yosef replied, "I saw an inverted world. Those who were above (in this world) were below, and those who were below were above." His father responded, "Indeed, you saw the true world." Hashem does not judge people based on their outward appearance, but rather by how much effort they exerted.

The Chofetz Chaim consoled the doctor, "You did your best with the chinuch you got in Germany. However, Hashem put me in Lithuania. I studied in Vilna (the "Yerushalayim of Europe"). I met Rav Yisrael Salanter and it was he who advised me to write my classic sefer Chofetz Chaim. I did my best to promote Torah and even founded a yeshiva. If we both did our best, we will both end up in the same place in Gan Eden."

Hashem places each individual in a specific time, a specific locale, and grants him specific traits and characteristics. Our mission is to use them in the best possible way.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

QUESTION: A couple went to Florida on vacation. They arrived on an ערב שבת and went shopping for all their שבת needs. They bought food galore to really enjoy their שבת! At ten minutes to שבת they realized they forgot about getting candles or oil and wicks and they had nothing to light with. They quickly ran to a few neighbors but couldn't procure any candles. With no choice we missed out on the מצוה that שבת. Do we have to light an extra נר?

ANSWER: The מצוה of הדלקת נרות is so important and unique in that when one misses one week, חז"ל enacted a קנס in which one must add on an extra נר for the rest of their life. This shows us how important this מצוה is. One reason for הדלקת נרות is for שלום בית. A well-lit house helps keep the peace. In the dark things are gloomy. When against one's will one couldn't light, then there is no קנס. If one had a baby and spent שבת in the hospital where they do not let you light נרות, then you are an אונס and you do not have to light an extra נר. If you simply forget to purchase נרות that is not an אונס. All the other delicacies you remembered and only forgot the נרות. That means that you still need to work on yourself to recognize the importance of the מצוה of הדלקת נרות and you must light an extra נר forever.

עי' סימן רס"ג סעי' א' ברמ"א ומ"ב ס"ק ז'

SNAKE IN THE HOOD

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

Malky and Tova lived in a development, in a frum neighborhood quite similar to Lakewood. The development consisted of about twenty houses arranged around a central courtyard, with each house containing four apartments. Everyone who lived in the apartments was frum.

One day, Malky and Tova were standing and talking in front of their building when Malky suddenly noticed something in the courtyard, where children were constantly playing. She saw a venomous, dangerous snake. Both women were terrified. They knew that if they called government pest control, it could take a long time for help to arrive, and they felt there was immediate danger.

They decided to call an exterminator they knew. The exterminator came as soon as possible, identified the snake as extremely deadly, and successfully captured and removed it. Afterward, he gave Malky a bill for five hundred dollars, explaining that the price was higher because it was a dangerous job.

At first, Malky and Tova thought they would split the cost between themselves, each paying $250. But then they reconsidered. They said, “Why should we have to pay for this ourselves? We live in a shared building, and everyone benefited from removing the snake.”

They approached their neighbors and asked if they would agree to split the fee four ways. The neighbors responded that they were willing to participate, but questioned why it should be split only four ways. They pointed out that there was an entire row of houses around the courtyard, with dozens of families. Since everyone benefited, they felt the cost should be divided among all the residents, with each person paying only a small amount.

As a result, instead of splitting the fee four ways, Malky and Tova began going door to door to ask people to share the cost. However, some residents objected. One person said, “We never saw the snake, we were never afraid of it, and we don’t want to get involved. Why should we have to pay?”

The question was then brought to Rav Zilberstein: Who is obligated to pay for the cost of removing the snake? Only the people who saw it and were afraid? Only the one who called the exterminator? Only those who lived closest to the courtyard? Or everyone who lived around the courtyard? What do you think? See Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 338

Regarding last week’s question about the person who gave the free full-page ad: Rabbi Zilberstein (Chashukei Chemed Bava Kama Page 324) answered that this person is completely exempt from damages. It is not even considered a grama for which he would be obligated to pay midinei Shamayim, because he did nothing wrong at all. Rather, the business owner did something wrong by not paying his taxes.

I AM ALWAYS CONCERNED THAT MONEY WOULD NOT BE ‘KOSHER MONEY’

Rav Meir Tzvi Bergman named his first child Ben Tzion. Before the pidyon haben, he went to the Chazon Ish to buy coins from him to give to the kohen, since it was well known that the Chazon Ish had such coins. When Rav Meir Tzvi bought the coins, the Chazon Ish hinted that after the pidyon haben, he should buy the coins back and return them to him.

Rav Meir Tzvi said that he would. "Do not tell that to the kohen ahead of time," the Chazon Ish pointed out, "because if you say that, it will be a matanah al menas l'hachzir, and the pidyon haben must be a proper kinyan. Only after the pidyon haben has been performed should you go over to the kohen and buy back the coins."

The day of the pidyon haben dawned. Rav Avraham Mordechai Cohen, father of Rav Aharon Cohen of Chevron, was asked to serve as the kohen. Rav Avraham Mordechai, a tzaddik who worked as a rebbe of young children, also happened to be Rav Shach's neighbor.

All the gedolim of Yerushalayim, as well as roshei yeshivah and talmidei chachamim, attended the pidyon haben. The house was too small for all the guests, and it was very crowded.

Immediately after the pidyon haben, Rav Meir Tzvi intended to approach the kohen to tell him that he wanted to buy back the coins, but the kohen disappeared in the commotion. Only after they sat down for the seudah did Rav Meir Tzvi see him returning, and he hurried over.

"I'd like to buy the coins back from you," he said. The kohen looked at him and felt bad. "It's a pity you didn't tell me earlier that you wanted them back. I went home and divided the coins among the pushkas that I have, and now the money is locked in there."

Puzzled, Rav Meir Tzvi asked, "Why did you hurry to put the coins into the pushkas?"

"I'm a rebbe, and I get paid for my work, but I cannot give tzedakah from that money because I am always concerned that I am not doing my job properly and that money would not be ‘kosher money’. I am afraid that after one hundred and twenty years I will be asked in Shamayim, ‘You gave tzedakah from that money!?’ But the money from the pidyon haben is definitely kosher money. Therefore, every time I get money from a pidyon haben, I hurry to give it to tzedakah."

Rav Meir Tzvi returned to the Chazon Ish without the coins, explaining why he had not brought them back. The Chazon Ish heard the story and said, "He's an ehrlicher Yid."

Since that incident, Rav Meir Tzvi took on the habit of giving to tzedakah any money that he finds on the street without simanim, saying that such money is certainly kosher and suitable for tzedakah.

From At His Table, Published By Tfutza Publications. Reprinted With Permission from Table Talk.

Have you ever wanted to learn and understand the Aggadatta Gemaras? You can join Rabbi Moshe Ungar every Tuesday and Thursday 12:30 PM – 1:15 PM at the 1st Seder Bais Medrash.

Please join us for any of the 30+ First Seder weekly shiurim – Mishnayos, Gemara, Halacha, Tefilla, Parsha, Tehillim, Mussar and more! M-F 9:20 AM. - 1:15 PM. If you have any questions, or to register, sponsor or donate, please contact Rosh Bais Medrash Rabbi Uri Greenspan at rabbigreenspan@firstseder.org 732-407-3178

Good Shabbos!