

# 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 PINCHAS – THE MAGICIANS

*Rabbi Shlomo Caplan*

Most of us living in a secular society are challenged with the proposition of earning a living while interacting with a society whose moral standards are quite contrary to those of the Torah. How do we engage in our daily pursuits without being influenced by the society around us?

Rav Yosef Sorotzkin (Meged Yosef) observes that only two people mentioned in Tanach are referred to by the appellation Tzaddik: Yosef HaTzaddik and Mordechai HaTzaddik. Not coincidentally both were heavily involved in their respective gentile governments – both were viceroys. Both lived in decadent societies, and both mastered the technique of serving their king and their citizens without being influenced by them. Both merited the title Tzaddik.

What was the secret of their success? Rav Sorotzkin suggests that the answer is hidden in what appears to be an obscure *pasuk* in this week's Parsha. In the census of Bnai Yisrael discussed in the Parsha, the Torah cites the names of the heads of the prominent families. One such head was Shefufam from the tribe of Binyamin. Binyamin, son of Yaakov, named all his

sons in tribute to his older maternal brother Yosef. Rashi explains that Shefufam was so named because Yosef was "*shafuf*" in the midst of gentiles. What is *shafuf*? The Sifsei Chachamim states that *shafuf* means "hovering" and Rashi in Parshas Haazinu (12:11) describes hovering as "in contact but not in contact." Thus, the quality of Yosef was to be engaged and disengaged. To recognize that his involvement in public life is his job and responsibility but that he is not in his milieu. To be involved as need be, but no more.

The Dubno Maggid once remarked to the Vilna Gaon that it was much easier for the Gaon to retain his piety cloistered in his bais hamedrash all day and all night. However, if he were to venture out into the streets of Vilna (no Times Square!), how would he fare? The Vilna Gaon answered, "You have a good point, but I am not expected to be a magician. If this environment is more secure, why should I go to a place that is not as safe and be forced to employ all kinds of tricks to maintain my spiritual level."

The Vilna Gaon was a giant, gifted with an extremely brilliant mind and a sublimely

pure soul. He reached the pinnacle of what was humanly possible for him to achieve in Torah scholarship and personal piety. This could only have happened under the "ideal conditions" of his bais hamedrash. Indeed, even today there are those who are able to spend their days immersed in Torah study and have the luxury of dwelling within the "four cubits" of the bais hamedrash. But what about the rest of us who are not capable of constantly "dwelling in the House of Hashem" and must go out into a world whose environment is virtually hostile to our way of life?

We must learn to be magicians. But how? We say in Havdalah, "Who separates between holy and secular, between light and darkness, between Yisrael and the nations." This distinction is the bedrock of our identity which must accompany us wherever we go. Rather than acting like chameleons, adapting to our surroundings, we must be faithful to our true identity. In this way we can emulate Yosef and Mordechai who mastered the technique of hovering – engaging in whatever it is that we must do in their "real world" while keeping our hearts and minds focused on our real world – the world of Hashem.

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.

## SLEEPING IN THE TAXI

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

In this week's Parsha we find that Hashem gives Pinchas his reward for standing up against Zimri. The Torah says, "Behold I give you My covenant of Peace". (Bamidbar 25,12) The Midrash comments about this gift, that if peace was the gift that Hashem gave to Pinchas, then this must mean that peace is an extremely great gift. Peace, shalom, is extremely great. The importance of Shalom leads us to this interesting true story.

Akiva was a teenage student who was learning in Yerushalayim. He flagged down a taxi and hopped in. "To Petach Tikva please", he told the driver. The driver nodded and went on his way. As Akiva sat back in the comfortable air-conditioned seat of the taxi, he was suddenly overcome with fatigue. He was up late the night before learning with his chavrusa, and he didn't get much sleep. Akiva quickly fell into a deep, deep sleep. Akiva's sleep was disturbed by the driver's voice.

"Which street in Petach Tikva do you need?", the driver asked. Akiva was startled awake. He looked around and saw that he was way out of Yerushalayim. "Uh, sir, where are we? I asked to go to Petach Tikvah Street in Yerushalayim! You know, the street right near Kiryat Matisdorf. The driver looked at him with a narrowed glance. "Yerushalayim? You said to Petach Tikva, "We are now in front of the city of Petach Tikva, an hour out of Yerushalayim." "Please take me back as fast as you can", Akiva said. "I have to be somewhere in Yerushalayim". The driver said, "Not a problem, but I expect you to pay me for the drive to Petach Tikva, and the ride back to Yerushalayim. That will cost around 400 shekels."

"What?", Akiva said. I wanted you to go to Petach Tikva street which was a ten-minute drive from where you picked me up." I can pay you for a ten-minute drive, but I never

intended to go to the city of Petach Tikva, and I can't afford that."

Later, Akiva sent this question to Rav Zilberstein. He wanted to know if according to the Torah he had an obligation to pay for the round trip ride to the city of Petach Tikva. On one hand, he never intended to drive all the way there, and perhaps the driver should have clarified it before he made that trip. But on the other hand, Akiva should have been clearer about what he meant. Also, it was his fault that he went to sleep in the car. What do you think? See Upiryo Matok Bereishis page 132

Regarding last week's question about returning the escaping rabbit, Rav Zilberstein answered that in this case the neighbor should not return it. This is because he would be mesayea ledvar aveira, assisting someone to do an aveira of tzaar balei chayim..

## YOU'RE DOING US THE FAVOR

During the summer, Rav Dovid Trenk would go to Camp Munk. The learning group he led was his chance to work with students who may not have gotten the help they needed during the school year.

One summer, he had a boy in his learning group who stuttered severely. He called on the young man to answer a question and the boy slowly, determinedly, pushed through, articulating each word and saying the entire answer. "That was mamesh amazing, you're amazing," Rabbi Trenk exclaimed, and reached into his pocket. He took out a dollar bill and told the boy to go buy a soda as a treat.

The boy left, and as soon as the door swung shut behind him, Rabbi Trenk turned to the other talmidim. "He's a hero, but you guys are also heroes: you waited, patiently, no one laughed, no one snickered, no one got impatient. We have a great opportunity this summer, and together, we're going to help our dear friend. Okay, gentlemen?"

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One year in the Adelpia Yeshiva, just before an off-Shabbos, a talmid asked Rabbi Trenk permission to take the public bus back home to New York, rather than the private charter bus arranged by the yeshivah. He didn't explain why he was asking, but Rabbi Trenk

understood that it was because of the cheaper price, and money was tight. Rabbi Trenk turned down the request.

Later in the day, he called over this bachur and appointed him as monitor on the yeshivah bus, responsible for collecting the money from the other students. "And of course," Rabbi Trenk added, "you know the bus monitor doesn't have to pay, you're doing us the favor."

(From Just Love Them, The Life and Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Trenk, by Rabbi Yisroel Besser, published by Artscroll Mesorah, reprinted with permission from Table Talk.)

### First Seder Bais Medrash's Mishnayos Shel Chesed Program

When a Jew passes away, they can no longer perform mitzvos or get closer to Hashem. By arranging learning for the soul of a departed family member or friend, their soul can be elevated. As their loved ones, it is within our power to help their neshamos (souls) ascend ever higher.

To join the over 200 learners or bring an Eternal Merit to a loved one, please contact [rabbisilver.firstseder@gmail.com](mailto:rabbisilver.firstseder@gmail.com) or Rabbi Greenspan.

**1st**  
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For more information or to register for First Seder, contact Rabbi Uri Greenspan at 732-407-3178 or [RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org](mailto:RabbiGreenspan@FirstSeder.org)

**Good Shabbos!**