

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Sefer HaSichos 5752

ספר השיחות · תשנ"ב

Parshas Vayakhel

פרשת ויקהל

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Half a Shekel, a Whole Jew! · Eve of 24 Adar I

Sicha 2: Two Halves Make a Whole! · Shabbos Vayakhel

TEACHER'S EDITION

Answers are printed in italics on the answer lines, with the section (§) of the sicha.

★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

Each sicha has questions, a true chassidishe story, and a lesson for you.

Half a Shekel, a Whole Jew!

מחצית השקל

Sefer HaSichos 5752 vol. 1, talk of the eve of 24 Adar I 5752 (1992), week of Parshas Vayakhel and Parshas Shekalim (Sichos in English vol. 51; the page heading there reads "25th Day of Adar I"). One section.

The point: *The greatest blessing is the ingathering of the exiles hinted in Vayakhel, already tasted in the aliyah of Jews from many lands, "with mercy and kindness", openly, not by fleeing. Every concept in the world is also inside each Jew: gathering his ten soul-powers into one holy whole. Parshas Shekalim: atonement through "ten gerah", half of a holy shekel; even the rich may not give more. Why? Your ten powers are only half, and you become whole by joining another Jew: "v'ahavta l're'acha kamocha". The census shows each person's value, and that his true existence is bound with others. That's why the Alter Rebbe put "hareini mekabel" at the start of davening. The shekalim bought the communal korbanos, which had to be perfect. Today: tzedakah, and three half-shekalim before Purim; even a bar mitzvah boy and children, from their own money. Then "the heads of Israel will be lifted" and every Jew's face will shine like Moshe's.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What is "the greatest blessing", and where is it hinted this week?

The ingathering of all Jews from the four corners of the world, hinted in Vayakhel ("Moshe gathered"). (Eve of 24 Adar I)

- ★★ How is today's aliyah "with mercy and kindness", and how does it help Jews still in danger?

Jews leave openly with permission instead of fleeing in secret. The peaceful aliyah creates spiritual influences that will also free those whose way out is still dangerous, and the newcomers have found more prosperity and peace of mind. (Eve of 24 Adar I)

- ★★ What is the "ingathering of exiles" inside each Jew?

Gathering and uniting his ten soul-powers into one holy entity. (Eve of 24 Adar I)

- ★ How much was given for the shekalim, and could a rich man give more?

Half a shekel, ten gerah. "The rich may not give more." (Eve of 24 Adar I)

- ★★★ Why only half a shekel?

To teach that your ten powers are only half a shekel; to be a complete entity you must join together with another Jew, "love your fellow as yourself". (Eve of 24 Adar I)

6. ★★ What two lessons does a census teach?

Each individual has unique importance, and also that each Jew's true existence is bound up with his fellow; only through ahavas Yisroel does he reach his own completion. (Eve of 24 Adar I)

7. ★ Where did the Alter Rebbe put "hareini mekabel alai...", and why?

At the very beginning of davening, to show how basic ahavas Yisroel is. (Eve of 24 Adar I)

8. ★★ What were the half-shekalim used for, and what does that hint to?

The communal korbanos, which had to be "perfect and complete": a hint to the coming time when we will again bring them in the perfect, complete Beis HaMikdash. (Eve of 24 Adar I)

9. ★★ How can we do "machatzis hashekel" in galus, and who should do it?

Tzedakah, especially the custom of three half-shekalim before Purim: those over 20, also those just bar mitzvah, and children should be trained to give from their own money (with parents helping so it's not a strain). (Eve of 24 Adar I)

10. ★★★ How do the start and end of Ki Sisa connect to the Geulah?

The start: "ki sisa es rosh", the heads of Israel will be lifted. The end: Moshe's face shone.

Since there's a spark of Moshe in every Jew, in the Geulah every man, woman and child's face will shine, with no need for a veil. (Eve of 24 Adar I)

11. ★ Why was it a fitting time to give tzedakah?

It was Friday, a day especially fit for tzedakah, and the sixth day hints to the sixth millennium in which the Geulah comes. (Eve of 24 Adar I)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“See You Soon, Grandfather”

Rabbi Moshe Vishedsky was sent by the Frierdiker Rebbe to strengthen Yiddishkeit in Soviet Russia. He was arrested for helping young Jews try to escape and sentenced to five years of hard labor, where he still kept kosher and Shabbos. After his release in 1955 he wrote to the Rebbe in coded notes addressed to “Grandfather”, smuggled through Eretz Yisroel.

Entire families were rarely allowed to leave Russia. So he asked: should he apply to leave only with his wife and the two youngest children, and send for the older ones later?

The Rebbe answered that he should request exit permits for the whole family together, and signed: “Dasvedanya, Dyedushka”, “See you soon, Grandfather.”

They applied, and the whole family received exit permits! On 3 December 1965 they arrived in Eretz Yisroel. Soon after, the father went to visit the Rebbe in New York, and the next year the Rebbe invited two of the sons to be his guests for Tishrei, and paid for their aliyos himself.

Source: *Bentzion Vishedsky, “A Letter from Dyedushka”, Here’s My Story (JEM / chabad.org)*

Think: How does this story show “kibbutz galuyos with mercy and kindness”?

The whole family left together, openly, with permits, not split up and not by fleeing: a taste of

the ingathering where “a great congregation”, young and old, returns together.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

On your own you’re only half a shekel. You become whole by joining another Jew. And give tzedakah from your own money, especially machatzis hashekel before Purim.

For example: Take three coins from your own pocket money for machatzis hashekel. And this week, do something for a boy in your class you don’t usually talk to: lend him your notes, or save him a seat.

Two Halves Make a Whole!

ויקהל

Sefer HaSichos 5752 vol. 1, the talks of Shabbos Parshas Vayakhel (also Shabbos Shekalim), 25 Adar I 5752 (1992), the Rebbe's last Shabbos farbrengen before 27 Adar I (Sichos in English vol. 51, "Fulfillment: The Fusion of Two Half-Entities", with the editors' adaptation "Togetherness"). No numbered sections.

The point: *Vayakhel* = gathering everything into holiness; *Pekudei* = counting; each one's unique value. This year *Vayakhel* stands alone. Gather with every Jew, even far away, even one less observant: focus on what joins you. For yourself: "sur meira va'asei tov"; toward others: only "asei tov". Before rebuking, ask if you're the one to do it, say it gently and rarely; "chosech shivto" needs a father's love and a father's distance. The ingathering won't wait for the census. Puzzle: none of the *nesi'im* made *aliyah*. Half-shekel: ten *gerah* each, two Jews make twenty, a whole holy shekel. Unity inside yourself first: "betzibbur" (Rav Yosef Yitzchak to his nephew Rav Zalman Aharon). The *Maggid*: "shtei chatzotzros" = "shnei chatzi tzuros", a Jew and Hashem are two halves. *Modeh Ani*: on waking, gather your whole self and give it to Hashem, no meditation needed, since the bond is constant. *Tzedakah* "from you": *ma'aser*, *chomesh*, and beyond, and always increasing.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★★ What do "Vayakhel" and "Pekudei" each stand for in our avodah?

Vayakhel, gathering: uniting all the diverse things in the world within holiness. Pekudei,

counting: every creation has its own unique importance and way to serve Hashem. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

- ★★ Why must we unite even with a Jew far away, or less observant?

All Jews share one essence, "a part of G-d Above". How we show it differs, but the feeling of

oneness is universal. Focus on what connects you, not on the differences. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

- ★★ What is the difference between how you treat yourself and how you treat others?

With yourself: "sur meira va'asei tov", both turn from bad and do good. With others: only "asei

tov", do good. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

- ★★★ If someone needs rebuke, what three things must you keep in mind?

First ask whether you are fit to give it; say it gently, so it can be accepted; and only on select

occasions. "Chosech shivto" works only between father and son: a father's love, and a difference

as great as a father's. Usually people are equals. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

- ★★ What lesson comes from Vayakhel being read separately this year?

No need to wait for Pekudei (the census) before Vayakhel (the gathering): the Jews will first

gather in Eretz Yisroel, and afterwards there will be a census. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

6. ★★★ What “puzzle” about the nesi'im did the Rebbe point out?

Some Rebbeim (like Rav Mendel of Horodok) settled in Eretz Yisroel, but none of the nesi'im from the Baal Shem Tov to the Frierdiker Rebbe moved there, and only the Frierdiker Rebbe visited, as a substitute for visiting the graves of the Rebbeim in Lubavitch and Rostov. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

7. ★★ Why does the Torah tell us a shekel is twenty gerah, if we give only ten?

Each Jew is ten gerah, half; only by joining another Jew do they reach twenty, a complete “holy shekel”. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

8. ★★ What did Rav Yosef Yitzchak answer his nephew Rav Zalman Aharon (the Rebbe Maharash's older son) when asked if he davened “betzibbur”?

He davened long after any minyan was done, and explained: “Betzibbur means with the collective. After I gather together the ten parts of my soul, I daven.” Unity inside yourself makes unity with others possible. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

9. ★★★ How does the Maggid read “shtei chatzotzros”, and what does it teach about the half-shekel?

“Shnei chatzi tzuros”, two half-forms: a Jew and Hashem are each “half” until they unite. A Jew's other half comes from Above. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

10. ★★★ Why can we say Modeh Ani right when we wake, without first meditating on Hashem's greatness?

Our bond with Hashem is inborn and constant, even in sleep (maybe more, since the essence surfaces). The moment you feel yourself, you give your whole self to Hashem, and then you see “rabbah emunasecha” in everything. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

11. ★★ What are the levels of tzedakah, and why should it keep growing?

Ma'aser (a tenth), chomesh (a fifth, the choicest), and beyond: “all a man has he will give for his soul”, because the other is your other half. The world is renewed every moment, so our giving should keep growing. (Shabbos Vayakhel)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Boy Who Smelled of Smoke

Rabbi Berel Baumgarten taught in a yeshiva in Brooklyn before he moved to Buenos Aires. Every Shabbos afternoon he learned with his students, and one boy always walked in smelling of cigarette smoke. Clearly, he was smoking on Shabbos.

Rabbi Baumgarten was worried that the boy would influence his friends to stop keeping Shabbos, so he wrote to the Rebbe: must he expel him, even without clear proof?

The Rebbe's whole answer was one line: "See Avos d'Rabbi Nosson, chapter 12."

In that chapter the Sages describe how Aharon HaKohen brought many sinners back. He greeted every person warmly, even a great sinner, with love and respect. The next day, when that person wanted to sin, he would say to himself: "How will I look Aharon in the eyes? He thinks so highly of me!" And he would hold back.

That was the Rebbe's answer: don't push the boy away. Love him even more.

Source: Rabbi YY Jacobson, "The Rebbe's advice for the boy who smoked on Shabbos" (Israel National News, 2023), about a letter from Rabbi Berel Baumgarten to the Rebbe

Think: Which part of the sicha does the Rebbe's answer show?

Toward another Jew, only "asei tov": not harsh rebuke or pushing away, but warmth and love,

focusing on what connects you. That brings him closer.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Start your day with Modeh Ani and "hareini mekabel", and mean it. Toward other Jews, only do good: look for what joins you, not what separates you.

For example: A boy in your shiur isn't so careful with brachos. Instead of calling him out in front of everyone, sit next to him at lunch and say a loud, happy brachah together, and be his friend.