

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Sefer HaSichos 5752

ספר השיחות · תשנ"ב

Parshas Yisro

פרשת יתרו

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Dig Out Your Gems! · Tu B'Shvat talks

Sicha 2: Torah from Above, Torah That's Yours · Shabbos Yisro, §§1-2

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.

Dig Out Your Gems!

כי תהיו אתם ארץ חפץ

Sefer HaSichos 5752 vol. 1: the short talks after Minchah and after Maariv on the eve of Tu B'Shvat, and the sicha of the night following Tu B'Shvat 5752 (1992). Sections as in the Sichos in English edition (vol. 51).

The point: *No Tachanun on Tu B'Shvat, because the seven spiritual powers that match the seven species are revealed in every Jew ("adam" = "adameh l'Elyon"). Tu B'Shvat is the full moon of the eleventh month and connects to Basi L'Gani, a garden of trees. As a "Rosh HaShanah" it gives life to the whole year. Every Jew is "a cherished land" with hidden gems that must be dug out ("I labored and found"); the work is a descent for an ascent. Then the seven species as seven avodos: wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives (bitterness, Miriam) and dates (pnimiyus haTorah, Devorah).*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Why was Tachanun skipped at Minchah on the eve of Tu B'Shvat? What brachah did the Rebbe give?

It is the beginning of the New Year of the Trees. May it bring great, immeasurable success to

every Jew everywhere, increased by tzedakah, which brings the Geulah. (After Minchah)

- ★★ Why is Tachanun omitted on such days, and why on Tu B'Shvat?

On these occasions the spiritual goals can mostly be reached without Tachanun. On Tu B'Shvat the

seven spiritual powers in every Jew, which parallel the seven species, are revealed. (After

Maariv)

- ★★ "Ki ha'adam eitz hasadeh": why does it say "adam"?

"Adam" refers to the Jewish people; it comes from "adameh l'Elyon", "I resemble the One Above."

(After Maariv)

- ★ What two sides does Tu B'Shvat have, and how is it connected to Yud Shvat?

It is the New Year of the Trees and the 15th, when the moon is full, in Shvat, the special

eleventh month. Shvat is linked to the Frierdiker Rebbe's maamar "Basi LeGani", "I came into My garden", and trees are the main part of a garden. (§1)

- ★★ What lesson is in the name "Rosh HaShanah"?

"Rosh" is the head: just as the head holds the life of the whole body, each "head of the year"

holds the life-force for all the days until it comes again. (§1)

6. ★★ If Tu B'Shvat is for trees, why is it linked with wheat and barley?

Most of the seven species are fruits, so the main blessing is for fruit; but since Tu B'Shvat

brings blessing to the species Eretz Yisrael is praised for, it also relates to wheat and barley.

(§1)

7. ★★ What did the Baal Shem Tov teach about "you shall be a cherished land"? What must a Jew do?

Every Jew is a "cherished land": just as the depths of the earth hold gems, every Jew has gems

inside. But gems aren't lying on the surface; they must be dug out ("I labored and I found"). To

grow spiritual fruit you need plowing, sowing and work, just as "the earth that brings out bread"

needs a person's labor. (§1)

8. ★★★ Why is the need to do this work a descent, and what is it for?

A Jew is like an only son to Hashem and should always be with his Father; the descent into galus

and toil isn't his true nature. But the descent is for the sake of an ascent, to lift him higher

than before. (The 39 melachos are "forty less one": "slightly less than G-d".) (§1)

9. ★★ What avodah do wheat and barley stand for?

Wheat, "food for humans": avodah of the G-dly soul, which must be absorbed like food. Barley,

"food for animals": refining the animal soul, which is harder, so it comes second. (§2)

10. ★★ What do grapes, figs and pomegranates teach?

Grapes make wine that "gladdens G-d and men", even the simplest. Figs made the first garments, and

"kosnos or" (garments of light) means spreading G-dly light through the world. A pomegranate is

"full of mitzvos like seeds": each mitzvah is unique, but its importance comes from the Torah.

(§2)

11. ★★★ What do olives and dates teach?

Olives are bitter: life should be sweet, but in a cheshbon hanefesh a Jew feels bitterness

(merirus) about his achievements, which isn't sadness. Merirus is linked to Miriam, who stood by

Moshe; she stands by the "Moshe" in every Jew and helps it grow. Dates ("honey") are pnimiyus

haTorah, which strengthens the soul's inner core; and Devorah judged "under the date palm", and

the land rested forty years, a number linked to the Geulah. (§2)

12. ★ What will bring us to Eretz Yisrael?

Developing an avodah that includes all seven qualities, and sharing them with others so they can

too. (§2)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Miracle Worker

A group of high-school students once came to see the Rebbe. Each had prepared a question, and toward the end of the audience one student asked: "I've heard that the Rebbe can work miracles. Is it true?"

The Rebbe replied: "The ability to work miracles is not limited to a select few. It is within reach of each and every one of us. Each of us has a soul that is a spark of G-dliness, so each of us has the power to rise above the limits of our physical nature, however strong they seem."

"To show you," said the Rebbe, "I will now perform a miracle."

Smiling at the startled faces around his desk, he went on: "Each and every one of you in this room will now resolve to improve himself in one specific area, something you know you need to fix but until now thought was beyond your power. And you will succeed, proving to yourselves that the soul really has the power to overcome the natural 'reality'."

Source: Yanki Tauber, "The Miracle Worker" (chabad.org)

Think: How is the Rebbe's "miracle" like digging the gems out of a "cherished land" (§1)?

The gems, the G-dly soul's powers, are already inside every Jew, but they come out only through

effort: choosing one hard area and working at it. That labor ("I labored and found") uncovers

strengths the person didn't know he had.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

You are a “cherished land” full of gems, but they don’t dig themselves out. Pick one of your “seven species” and work at it.

For example: You’ve always said “I just can’t get up for minyan.” This Tu B’Shvat, decide that this is your “miracle”: set the alarm, get there for Barchu, and watch the gem come out.

Torah from Above, Torah That's Yours

אנכי ה' אלקיך

Sefer HaSichos 5752 vol. 1, sicha of Shabbos Parshas Yisro, 20 Shvat 5752 (1992), two days before the yahrzeit of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka. Sections as in the Sichos in English edition (vol. 51).

The point: *The Ten Commandments appear twice: in Yisro, Hashem's own words; in Va'eschanan, Moshe's retelling. Torah is Hashem's will and wisdom, above us, learned with bittul ("my tongue repeats Your word"); yet it was given to people in bodies, to grasp with their own minds until it is "theirs". Yisro is the direct connection that leaves no room for the self; Va'eschanan is a Jew becoming a medium for Hashem's word. The goal joins both: Hashem's essence revealed in the world and absorbed by us. On the 10th day after Yud Shvat in the 11th month, each person should bring Torah and mitzvos to at least ten Jews.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Where are the Ten Commandments written, and why does the repetition matter?

In Parshas Yisro and in Parshas Va'eschanan. They are the foundation and include the whole Torah, so the repetition teaches approaches needed in all our Torah study. (§1)

- ★★ What is the basic difference between the two?

In Yisro they are given by Hashem Himself; in Va'eschanan they are Moshe's description, "the words of Moshe". (§1)

- ★★ What two sides of Torah does this show?

(1) Torah is Hashem's will and wisdom, one with Him, a "hidden treasure" above man, which came down through all the worlds. (2) At Matan Torah it was given to Jews in this world: "it is not in heaven". It is studied by souls in bodies, halachah is decided by their understanding, and through mitzvos the world becomes Hashem's dwelling. (§1)

- ★★ How should the first side show in how we learn?

With bittul: "my tongue repeats Your words", like one repeating what another said, so that "the Shechinah speaks from his throat", with awe and trembling as at Sinai. (The brachos before learning express this bittul.) (§1)

5. ★★ And the second side?

Torah was given to people in bodies, so we must understand it with our own minds, until the Torah is "his". That is why a teacher may forgo the honor due to him: the honor is for his Torah, which is his. (§1)

6. ★★ What are the two sides of "a dwelling in the lower worlds"?

It must be a dwelling where Hashem reveals Himself completely, as the Torah is one with Him; yet since Torah came down into the material world, the dwelling must be part of the lower world itself: "one who enters a country follows its customs". (§1)

7. ★★★ Why does Hashem say "leimor" at Matan Torah when everyone was present?

"Leimor" usually means "to tell others", but all Jews, even future souls, were there. So it means: Hashem gave us the power to say words of Torah just as He said them, so our words of Torah are "G-d's word". (§1)

8. ★★★ What is the advantage of each version?

Yisro: Hashem spoke directly, the deepest connection, but it left no room for the person (their souls flew out). Va'eschanan: a descent, through Moshe, but it shows a Jew as a channel for Hashem's speech, so the world becomes His dwelling in its own terms; still, the dwelling is separate from Him, like a person and his house. (§1)

9. ★★ What is the ultimate goal?

To join both: Hashem's essence revealed in the material world without limits, and also absorbed by the Jewish people, not cancelling them. Yisro gives the potential; Va'eschanan brings it into us: two stages of one process. (§1)

10. ★★ How is 20 Shvat connected?

It is ten days after Yud Shvat in Shvat, the eleventh month. "Anochi" is "One, not in number", beyond ten; the tenth day of the eleventh month shows the transcendent drawn into the ten, which is the goal of Matan Torah, repeated every day in our Torah learning. (§2)

11. ★ What practical directive did the Rebbe give?

As at Sinai, "like one man with one heart": each person should bring Torah and mitzvos (all included in the Ten Commandments) to at least ten other Jews. This hastens the time when the shuls and batei midrash of galus are brought to Eretz Yisrael. (§2)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

New Siddurim Every Year

Standing in front of a classroom year after year, teachers are challenged to bring new excitement to their students. Rabbi Yechiel Malov, the general inspector of the Oholei Yosef Yitzchak Lubavitch schools in Eretz Yisrael, often struggled with this.

He asked the Rebbe how to excite and energize the students. "Which siddurim are the children davening from?" the Rebbe asked. "Old ones or new ones?"

When Rabbi Malov explained that the students used the siddurim from the year before, the Rebbe told him to buy new siddurim for all the students every year. "This will fill the students with enthusiasm," the Rebbe explained. "According to human nature, which G-d gave us, new things bring happiness and lead to new motivation."

The Rebbe also told Rabbi Malov to cover the teachers' desks with white tablecloths and to give out treats on special days of the Jewish calendar. "In schools that serve lunch," the Rebbe added, "there should be a special meal, and if possible, candles should be lit in the lunchroom."

Source: Dovid Zaklikowski, "Prayerbooks and Scholastic Enthusiasm" (chabad.org)

Think: Chazal say we should see the Torah every day as if it were given today (note to §1). How does the Rebbe's advice help make Torah feel "new", and our own?

Hashem made people so that new things bring joy and drive. New siddurim, white tablecloths and treats bring that freshness into learning and davening, so the student meets Torah each day as if at Sinai, with excitement, and makes it his own.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Learn with bittul, as Hashem's own word, and also work to understand it until it's yours. Then share it: reach ten Jews with Torah and mitzvos.

For example: Make a list of ten Jews you can reach this month: your younger brother (teach him a Mishnah), a neighbor (Shabbos candles for his daughter), a cousin (a mezuzah check).