

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Bechukosai

פרשת בחוקותי · ל"ג בעומר

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Hashem Begs, Hashem Promises! · Bechukosai, p. 281, §§1-8

Sicha 2: Lag BaOmer: When Everything Comes Together · Bechukosai, p. 285, §§9-18

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.

Hashem Begs, Hashem Promises!

אם בחוקותי תלכו

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Bechukosai, p. 281 (Hebrew edition pp. 268–271), sections 1–8. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5716 (1956).

The point: *“Im bechukosai telechu”*: the Gemara says *“im”* here means pleading. Hashem, so to speak, begs the Jews: please toil in Torah! A request and command from Hashem also gives the strength, and is a promise that every Jew will do it (*“no one will be pushed away”*). The same is true of *“v’ahavta”*: the Alter Rebbe explains it as both *“you must love”* and *“you will come to love”*; and since love of Hashem is the root of all 248 positive mitzvos (and fear, the root of the 365 negative ones, comes from it), the promise covers all 613. *“Chukim”* hints that even mishpatim and eidus, which make sense, should be kept with kabbalas ol, like a chok. Kabbalas ol still brings pleasure, even more: the faithful servant’s pleasure is his master’s pleasure. That is hinted in *“telechu”*: real walking has no limits, which comes from the pleasure and life above the inner powers. And the promise covers the way, too: every Jew will keep mitzvos with both life and kabbalas ol. The reward: *“I will give your rains in their time”*, spiritual rain (Torah, up to Moshiach’s Torah), and as a result physical rain too, which will help our avodah. Likkutei Torah explains that the curses of the tochacha are really very high blessings, too high to be revealed, so they look like curses. The Tzemach Tzedek says this is why Rashbi’s son got blessings from two sages that sounded like curses, and Rashbi explained them. How could Rashbi reveal them? Tanya: suffering is good from the hidden world; whoever accepts it with joy will see it as revealed good in the future. Souls of pnimiyus haTorah already see the future light, so Rashbi saw the blessings. Tanya gives three pieces of advice for suffering: accept it with joy (wait for the future); look into your deeds and see it as a cleansing from Hashem’s great love (needs thought and love); see it as a test, and once you stand it, it stops. Pnimiyus haTorah shows the good right away.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What does the Gemara say *“im”* means in *“Im bechukosai telechu”*? What does Hashem ask?

“Im” means pleading: Hashem, so to speak, begs the Jews, *“Please toil in Torah!”* (§1)

- ★★ Why is Hashem’s request also a promise?

A request and command from Hashem gives the strength to do it, and promises that every Jew will

keep it: “no one will be pushed away”. (§1)

- ★★ What two explanations does the Alter Rebbe give for *“V’ahavta”*, and how does this connect to all 613 mitzvos?

“You must love” and *“you will come to love”* (command and promise). Love of Hashem is the root of

all 248 positive mitzvos, and of fear of Hashem, the root of the 365 negative ones, so the promise

covers all 613. (§2)

4. ★ What are mishpatim, eidus and chukim?

Mishpatim: mitzvos our mind would demand even without the Torah. Eidus: our mind wouldn't demand them, but once commanded they make sense. Chukim: they have no place in the mind at all, like shaatnez and the parah adumah. (§3)

5. ★★ Why does the posuk say "bechukosai" when it means all the mitzvos?

To hint that even mishpatim and eidus, which make sense, should be kept with kabbalas ol, just like chukim ("I decreed a decree"). (§3)

6. ★★★ If we keep mitzvos with kabbalas ol, is there still pleasure in them? How is this hinted in "telechu"?

Yes, even more: the faithful servant's pleasure is his master's pleasure. Real walking has no limits, which can't come from limited inner powers, only from pleasure and life above them. And the promise covers the way too: every Jew will keep mitzvos with both life and kabbalas ol. (§3)

7. ★★ What is the reward of "I will give your rains in their time", spiritually and physically?

Spiritual rain: "my teaching shall drop like rain", the light of Torah, up to the Torah Moshiach will teach. As a result, physical rain too, in a way that helps our avodah, so we serve Hashem with peace of mind. (§4)

8. ★★ What does Likkutei Torah say about the curses of the tochacha? Give the example.

They are really very high blessings, too high to be revealed, so they are said like curses. "Ten women will bake your bread in one oven" = your ten soul powers will be "baked" warm with love of Hashem. (§5)

9. ★★ What happened when Rashbi sent his son to Rabbi Yonasan ben Amsai and Rabbi Yehuda ben Gerim, and how does the Tzemach Tzedek explain it?

Their blessings sounded like curses, and the son complained; Rashbi explained they were really blessings. The Tzemach Tzedek says they were simply such high blessings that they could only come out this way. (§5)

10. ★★★ If the blessings were so high, how could Rashbi reveal them?

Tanya: suffering is good from the hidden world; whoever accepts it with joy will see it as

revealed good in the future. Rashbi, whose work was revealing pnimiyus haTorah, already lived with

that future light, so for him the blessings were already revealed. (§6)

11. ★★★ What three pieces of advice does Tanya give about suffering, and what is special about each?

(1) Accept it with joy, and in the future you will see the good, but you must wait. (2) Look into

your deeds and see it as a cleansing from Hashem's great love (like a king washing his only son);

this brings revealed good now, but needs thought and love. (3) See it as a test; once you stand

it, it stops right away, but you must stand the test. (§8)

12. ★ What is the advantage of pnimiyus haTorah over all three pieces of advice?

You don't need to wait, arouse love, or stand a test: pnimiyus haTorah explains and shows the good

in everything right away. (§8)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“This Too Is for the Good!”

In the days of the Romans there was a great Tanna named Nachum. Whatever happened to him, he would say, “Gam zu l’tovah, this too is for the good!” So people called him Nachum Ish Gamzu.

Once the Jews needed to send a gift to the emperor, and they chose Nachum, because miracles happened to him. They gave him a chest full of jewels and pearls. On the way he slept at an inn, and during the night the innkeepers stole the jewels and filled the chest with dirt. In the morning Nachum saw it and said, “Gam zu l’tovah.”

At the palace they opened the chest: dirt! “The Jews are mocking me!” the emperor roared, and he wanted to punish all the Jews. Again Nachum said, “Gam zu l’tovah.”

Then Eliyahu HaNavi came, looking like one of the emperor’s advisers. “Maybe this is the dirt of their father Avraham,” he said. “When he threw it, it turned into swords and arrows.” The emperor had a city he could not conquer. They tried the dirt there, and it worked: the city was conquered.

The emperor took Nachum into his treasury, filled the chest with jewels, and sent him home with great honor. “Gam zu l’tovah” had been true all along.

Source: *Talmud, Taanis 21a; retold in Nissan Mindel, “Nachum Ish Gamzu and Rabbi Akiba”, Gallery of Our Great (Kehot; chabad.org)*

Think: How is Nachum Ish Gamzu like Rashbi, who saw the blessings hidden in what looked like curses?

Even when things looked terrible (dirt instead of jewels, a death sentence), he saw right away

that it was for the good, and in the end the good was revealed for everyone to see.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Hashem promises that you will succeed in Torah and mitzvos. And when something looks bad, remember: there is a hidden blessing inside. Say “gam zu l’tovah” and look for it.

For example: You didn’t get into the group you wanted, or your trip was canceled. Instead of sulking, say “gam zu l’tovah” and look for the good: maybe a new friend, or time to finish that masechta.

Lag BaOmer: When Everything Comes Together

בקעה בקעה התמלאי דינרי זהב

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Bechukosai and Lag BaOmer, p. 285 (Hebrew edition pp. 271-275), sections 9-18. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5716 (1956), the Shabbos after Lag BaOmer.

The point: *"Whoever toils on Erev Shabbos eats on Shabbos": Erev Shabbos means the whole week, from Sunday on ("today is the first day toward Shabbos", the Ramban's way of "remember Shabbos"), and all the week's tefillos go up on Shabbos. So Lag BaOmer, Rashbi's hilula and day of joy, goes up into this Shabbos. On the day of passing, all the avodah of a lifetime is gathered and goes up, and more: like letters joining into a word with a new meaning, or ten Jews making a minyan where the Shechinah rests, a new "light above them all" comes. So Lag BaOmer is even greater than Rashbi's life. Moshe got the 50th gate of understanding only at his passing (Har Nevo = "nun bo"). That is why tzaddikim "see" in their death what even the chayos don't see. R' Avraham HaLevi, a talmid of the Arizal, said "Nachem" on Lag BaOmer in Meron and Rashbi was upset with him: for Rashbi the churban had no effect, because his work was drawing pnimiyus haTorah into the open Torah and into the world, the way things will be when Moshiach comes. When Rashbi's students were jealous of a student who got rich, he brought them to a valley (opposite Meron) and said, "Valley, fill with gold dinars!", but whatever they took would come from their share in the World to Come, so they refused. R' Shimon ben Chalafta, very poor, davened and got a jewel from Above; his wife objected and he davened again and it was taken back, and Chazal say the second miracle was greater. Why isn't that said about Rashbi? Because Torah brings blessing even physically ("in her left hand wealth and honor", "I will give your rains"), as in Beis HaMikdash times and in the future; Rashbi drew that down, even for students still feeling galus, even in a low valley. His point was drawing the future down, not taking from Heaven. Every Lag BaOmer this shines again, revealed through Chassidus, especially in our generation, the generation of Moshiach.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★★ What does "Erev Shabbos" mean in "whoever toils on Erev Shabbos eats on Shabbos"? How do we see this?

The whole week, from Sunday on. Every day we say "today is the first (second...) day toward

Shabbos", which, the Ramban says, is "remember Shabbos to keep it holy"; and the tefillos of all

six days go up on Shabbos. (§9)

- ★ Why is this Shabbos connected to Lag BaOmer?

The weekdays go up into the next Shabbos, so Lag BaOmer, Rashbi's hilula and day of joy, goes up

into the Shabbos after it. (§9)

- ★★ What happens on the day of a tzaddik's passing?

All the avodah and toil of his whole life is gathered together and goes up, since his work in this

body is finished. (§10)

4. ★★★ What is the “light above them all”? Give the two examples.

When everything is gathered, something new comes that is greater than all the parts. Letters, each with its own meaning, join into a word with a completely new meaning; ten Jews, each with a G-dly soul, join into a minyan and the Shechinah rests there. (§10)

5. ★★ How does this explain Lag BaOmer and Moshe's 50th gate?

Rashbi's avodah in his life was very great, but what came on the day of his passing is greater: everything gathered plus the light above it all. Moshe got the 50th gate of understanding only at his passing: Har Nevo = “nun bo”, the fifty is in it. (§11)

6. ★★★ If even the holy chayos can't “see”, how can tzaddikim see in their death?

At the time of passing they have the gathering of all their avodah and the light above it all. (§12)

7. ★★ Why was Rashbi upset with R' Avraham HaLevi for saying “Nachem” on Lag BaOmer in Meron?

For special souls like Rashbi, the churban has no spiritual effect. On Lag BaOmer, when all of Rashbi's avodah is gathered, a talmid of the Arizal should not have felt the churban. (§13)

8. ★★★ Why was there no galus for Rashbi?

His work was drawing pnimiyus haTorah into the revealed Torah and through it into the world, and that is the way things will be when Moshiach comes. (§14)

9. ★ Tell what happened in the valley of gold dinars.

A student of Rashbi went abroad and got rich, and the other students felt bad. Rashbi brought them to a valley (opposite Meron) and said, “Valley, valley, fill with gold dinars!” He told them they could take, but it would come from their share in the World to Come, so they refused. (§15)

10. ★★ What happened to R' Shimon ben Chalafta, and what did Chazal say about it?

He was very poor and davened, and got a jewel from Heaven. His wife said his table in the future would be missing something, so he davened again and it was taken back. Chazal said the second miracle was greater, because Heaven gives but doesn't take back. (§15)

11. ★★★ Why don't Chazal praise Rashbi for the gold being "taken back"?

Rashbi's point wasn't taking from Heaven but drawing down, through pnimiyus haTorah, the way things will be in the future: Torah brings blessing even physically ("I will give your rains"). He did it even for students who still felt galus, and even in a low valley. (§§16–17)

12. ★★ What happens every year on Lag BaOmer, and how is it revealed today?

Every year Rashbi's light, and the future way of life he gave over, shines again. It was revealed for us to understand through Chassidus Chabad, especially in our generation, the generation of Moshiach. (§18)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Miracle in Meron

Lag BaOmer, 1923. Thousands came to Meron, and three-year-old boys had their first haircut by Rashbi's tziyun. Many stayed in Meron for Shabbos.

On Shabbos morning, in the middle of the joy, a terrible cry was heard. A little boy who had come with his mother for his upsherin had suddenly become sick and stopped breathing. Nothing helped. The singing stopped. British police locked the gates, saying the illness might be catching.

The mother carried her son to Rashbi's tziyun and laid him down. "Tzaddik!" she cried. "Four years ago I promised here that if I had a son, I would bring him to you. Yesterday we cut his hair with joy. How can I go home without him? Rebbe Shimon, please give me back my son!" Then she walked out, everyone followed her, and they closed the door.

A few minutes passed. From inside came a weak voice: "Mommy! Water! I'm so thirsty!" The mother ran in and hugged her son. Everyone cried out, "Baruch mechaye hameisim!" The doctors said it was no natural event. The gates were opened, and all of Meron sang "Bar Yochai".

Source: Yerachmiel Tilles, "Miracle in Meron", KabbalaOnline (chabad.org), adapted from Sichat HaShavua #281

Think: How does this story show that Rashbi's power is even greater after his passing?

On his day, Lag BaOmer, everything Rashbi did is gathered and shines, and he still helps and protects Jews: a mother's prayer at his tziyun brought her son back.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Every ending gathers everything that came before it, and adds something new. Finish strong! And on Lag BaOmer, celebrate Rashbi with joy and learn some pnimiyus haTorah (Chassidus).

For example: At the end of a zman or a masechta, don't coast: put in your best effort and make a real siyum. On Lag BaOmer, join the parade with joy and learn a few lines of Tanya.