

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Bereishis

פרשת בראשית

2 sichas in this booklet

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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.

Shabbos Bereishis Sets Up Your Whole Year!

לעולם הוי' דברך נצב בשמים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Bereishis, p. 1 (Hebrew edition pp. 1-2), sections 1-4. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5716 (1955).

The point: *The Rebbeim said that Shabbos Bereishis affects the whole year: the way a person sets himself up on this Shabbos is how he behaves all year. But why Shabbos Bereishis, and not Matan Torah or the parshiyos full of mitzvos? Because Hashem created the world from absolute nothing, and that means creation must continue at every moment. The huge chiddush of the six days of creation, “yesh” from absolute nothing, happens again every second. As Tanya explains on “Forever, Hashem, Your word stands in the heavens”, a creation is really nothing on its own; it exists only because Hashem keeps creating it, so all of its existence is G-dliness. Remembering “Bereishis bara” is the foundation of avodah for the whole year. When it seems hard, or impossible, to make your physical business a vessel for G-dliness, remember that the world exists only because of the Ten Sayings of the Torah (“Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”). Then the world cannot get in the way of the mitzvos, since that very Torah says “I am Hashem your G-d” and all 613 mitzvos. Someone who knows the world is Torah will review a saying of Chazal, a kapitel Tehillim, a Mishnah or Tanya even while walking in the street or at work, and each good deed tips the whole world to the side of merit. And it helps in physical matters too: Tanya says worry about children, health and parnassah comes from forgetting that everything comes from Hashem. Someone who always remembers that everything comes from Hashem at every moment won't worry, because no bad comes from Him; and when this is set firmly in his soul, he will see the good with his own eyes.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What did the Rebbeim say about Shabbos Bereishis?

It affects the whole year: the way a person sets himself up on Shabbos Bereishis is how he behaves

all year. (§1)

2. ★★ What is the question on this saying?

Why does it depend specifically on Shabbos Bereishis, and not on Matan Torah, or on the parshiyos

with many mitzvos that also apply all year? (§1)

3. ★★ Why does “Bereishis bara”, creation from absolute nothing, mean that creation continues every moment?

Since the world was created from absolute nothing, it has no existence of its own. The chiddush of

the six days, “yesh” from nothing, has to happen again every second. (§2)

4. ★★ What does Tanya explain on “Forever, Hashem, Your word stands in the heavens”?

The creation, on its own, is still nothing. It exists only because Hashem keeps creating it all

the time, so all of its existence is G-dliness. (§2)

5. ★ So why does Shabbos Bereishis affect the whole year?

Because remembering "Bereishis bara" is the foundation of serving Hashem for the whole year. (§3)

6. ★★★ How does remembering this help someone who feels his physical business can't be a vessel for G-dliness?

He remembers that the world really has no existence; it exists only through the Ten Sayings of the

Torah ("Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world"). So the world can't stand in the way

of mitzvos, since that same Torah says "I am Hashem your G-d" and all 613 mitzvos. (§3)

7. ★★ How does a person act once he knows "the world is Torah"?

Even while walking in the street or at his business he reviews a saying of Chazal, a kapitel

Tehillim, a Mishnah or a perek of Tanya; and every good deed he does tips the whole world to the

side of merit. (§3)

8. ★★★ How does knowing this affect "the heavens and the earth and all their hosts"?

His deep understanding of the inner meaning of "Bereishis bara" influences the whole creation,

because each good deed tips the whole world to merit. (§3)

9. ★★ Does Shabbos Bereishis affect only spiritual matters?

No, physical ones too: knowing "Your word stands in the heavens" also helps remove worries about

physical matters. (§4)

10. ★★ Where does worry come from, according to Tanya, and what is the cure?

Worry about children, health and parnassah comes from forgetting that everything comes from

Hashem. Someone who always remembers that everything comes from Hashem at every moment won't

worry, because no bad comes from Him, only good. (§4)

11. ★★★ What happens when this awareness is "set firmly in his soul"?

He will see the good with his own eyes, as visible, revealed good. (§4)

12. ★ Your turn: what “Shabbos Bereishis kabbalah” can you take on to set up your year?

Open answer. For example: saying Modeh Ani slowly, remembering Hashem made me new this morning;

a

Mishnah or Tanya I know by heart to review on the way to school. (§3)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“Baruch Hashem!”

Every day an old water carrier named Berel walked past the Baal Shem Tov’s shul with his heavy pails. Whenever the Baal Shem Tov saw him, he would ask, “Berel, how are you today?” And Berel would answer, “Baruch Hashem!” and keep walking.

One day Berel looked miserable. “Rebbe, how should I be? Day after day I carry these heavy pails. My back hurts, my boots are torn, my children need food and clothes, and those new houses up the hill want more and more water...” He sighed and dragged himself away.

A few days later the Baal Shem Tov asked again. This time Berel beamed. “Baruch Hashem, Rebbe! I have work, so I can feed my family. I have so many sweet children! And those new houses up the hill need lots of water: extra parnassah for me! Hashem is good to me!”

The talmidim were puzzled. Same boots, same heavy pails, so why the change? The Baal Shem Tov explained: “A few days ago he forgot that everything comes from Hashem, so he was sad. Today he remembers. His pails are just as heavy, but now he sees Who gives him everything, and he is happy.”

Source: Shoshannah Brombacher, “Baruch Hashem” (chabad.org), a traditional story of the Baal Shem Tov

Think: How does Berel show what Tanya says about worry?

When he forgot that everything comes from Hashem, he was full of worry and sadness. When he

remembered that Hashem gives him everything every moment, the worry went away and he saw the good.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Hashem is creating you and the whole world right now, every second. Remember that and you won’t worry; and you can turn everything, even walking down the street, into Torah and mitzvos.

For example: Before a test or a tryout, instead of worrying, remember: “Hashem is making me right now, and He only gives good.” On the bus, review a Mishnah or a line of Tanya by heart.

Go Up! An Aliyah, a New Shiur, and Winter Rain

עליה לתורה · מרחשון

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Bereishis, p. 2 (Hebrew edition pp. 2-4), sections 5-7. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5716 (1955), also Shabbos Mevarchim Mar-Cheshvan.

The point: *On Shabbos Bereishis, Jews have the custom to “sell” the aliyos to the Torah for the whole year. The Frierdiker Rebbe said that an aliyah to the Torah raises the person in the second and third lower levels and higher, an ascent of nefesh, ruach, neshamah, chayah and yechidah, up to the essence of the soul connecting with Hashem’s Essence. That is why, although one doesn’t say a brachah on learning Torah she’b’al peh he doesn’t understand, even a simple Jew who doesn’t know what he’s saying makes the brachah at an aliyah: down here he doesn’t understand, but his soul, raised above, understands, and it is drawn down (“mikra: reading draws down”). And since the world is bound up with Torah (“Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world”), an aliyah helps physically too. Just as the aliyos of the year begin on Shabbos Bereishis, so does learning: on Shabbos Bereishis everyone can take on more, beyond the extra times for Torah he took on in Tishrei: an added daily shiur, in nigleh and in Chassidus, including some of the weekly parsha in Torah Or and Likkutei Torah, each according to his real ability and the root of his soul. Taking it on now helps you keep it all year without too much effort, and brings blessing in children, health and parnassah. This Shabbos blesses Mar-Cheshvan, named for the rainy season. Chassidus explains: rain depends on the avodah of the creations (we daven for it), while dew comes from Above and is never held back, so rain is harder. Summer is like dew, from Above; winter is like rain, from below, so winter is harder. In summer the spiritual light shines strongly (“Hashem is a sun and a shield”), so the physical sun is strong too; winter is a time of avodah from below. The Frierdiker Rebbe said avodah is easier in summer than in winter. Shabbos Mevarchim Mar-Cheshvan falls in Tishrei, the “satiated” seventh month, and gives strength for the winter’s avodah, and through it blesses the whole year.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What custom do Jews have on Shabbos Bereishis?

They “sell” the aliyos to the Torah for the whole year. (§5)

- ★★ What did the Frierdiker Rebbe say happens to a person at an aliyah?

He goes up, even in the “second and third lower levels” and above: an ascent of nefesh, ruach,

neshamah, chayah and yechidah, until the essence of the soul connects with Hashem’s Essence. (§5)

- ★★★ Why does even a simple Jew who doesn’t understand make a brachah at an aliyah, when one may not bless on Torah she’b’al peh he doesn’t understand?

Down here he doesn’t understand, but his soul, raised up above, does understand, and that

understanding is drawn down (“mikra: reading draws down”). (§5)

4. ★★ Why does an aliyah also help in physical matters?

Because the world is bound up with the Torah: "Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world", and the Torah is called the world's "blueprints". (§5)

5. ★★ What should everyone take on, on Shabbos Bereishis, in learning Torah?

More than the extra times he took on in Tishrei: an added daily shiur, both in nigleh and in Chassidus, including some of the weekly parsha in Torah Or and Likkutei Torah. (§6)

6. ★★ How much should each person take on, and what does taking it on now accomplish?

According to his real ability and the root of his soul. Taking it on on Shabbos Bereishis helps him really keep it all year without too much effort, and brings blessing in children, health and parnassah. (§6)

7. ★ Why is the month called Mar-Cheshvan?

Because it is connected with the rainy season. (§7)

8. ★★ What is the difference between rain and dew, according to Chassidus?

Rain depends on the avodah of the creations, so we must daven for it; dew comes from Above (isarusa d'l'eila) and is never held back. So rain is harder. (§7)

9. ★★★ How are summer and winter like dew and rain? What else is different?

Summer is like dew, from Above; winter is like rain, from below (isarusa d'l'sata), so it is harder. In summer the spiritual light shines strongly, so the physical sun shines strongly too, especially in Tammuz; winter is the time of avodah from below. (§7)

10. ★★ What did the Frierdiker Rebbe once say about summer and winter?

That avodas Hashem is easier in summer than in winter. (§7)

11. ★★★ How does Shabbos Mevarchim Mar-Cheshvan help the winter's avodah?

It falls in Tishrei, the "satiated" seventh month, so it gives strength for the winter, the month of rains. Even though winter avodah is from below, this strength rests in it, and through it blesses the whole year, physically and spiritually. (§7)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Drop by Drop

Akiva was a shepherd who had never learned Torah, not even the alef-beis. At forty years old he was still an am ha'aretz.

One day, standing by a well, he noticed a stone with a deep hollow worn into it. "Who carved this stone?" he asked. They told him, "The water. Drop after drop falls on it every day, and little by little it wore the stone away."

Akiva thought: "If soft water can carve hard stone, surely the words of Torah, which are strong like iron, can carve into my heart, which is only flesh and blood!" He decided right then to start learning, even at forty.

He went with his little son to a melamed and said, "Rebbi, teach me Torah." Akiva held one end of the tablet and his son held the other, and the teacher wrote alef-beis. Akiva learned the letters, then Chumash, then the whole Torah, a little more every day.

The shepherd who started with the alef-beis became Rabbi Akiva, the greatest teacher of his generation, with 24,000 students.

Source: *Avos d'Rabbi Nosson ch. 6; retold in "Rabbi Akiba: A Drop of Water" (chabad.org)*

Think: What does Rabbi Akiva teach us about taking on a new daily shiur, and about "rain" (avodah from below)?

A little Torah every day, like drops of water, adds up to something huge. It takes our own steady

effort from below, like rain; and it's never too late to start.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Shabbos Bereishis is the time to "go up": take on a new daily shiur in nigleh and Chassidus, a size you can really keep, and keep it through the hard winter, drop by drop.

For example: Take on two Mishnayos and a few lines of Tanya every day, or the daily Chumash with Rashi. Even on a cold, dark winter morning, do your "drop" before school.