

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Chayei Sarah

פרשת חיי שרה

4 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.

Listen to Sarah!

כל אשר תאמר אליך שרה שמע בקולה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Chayei Sarah, p. 31ff, sections 1–4. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah 5711 (1950).

The point: *The Zohar says Sarah is the body and Avraham the neshamah. So why must Avraham “listen to Sarah”? Because the main purpose is the body: mitzvos are done with physical things to refine the body, and in the future the body’s greatness will be revealed.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ According to the Zohar, what do “Sarah” and “Avraham” stand for?

Sarah is the body (guf); Avraham is the neshamah. (§1)

2. ★★ How does the Zohar explain “Vatamas Sarah b’Kiryas Arba” and Avraham crying for her?

When the body dies, which is made of four elements (“Kiryas Arba,” joined together, “Chevron”), the neshamah (Avraham) comes to eulogize and cry, because even after death it stays connected to the body. (§1)

3. ★★ What is the question the sicha asks on the Zohar?

If Sarah is the body and Avraham the neshamah, how can the Torah say “Kol asher tomar eilecha Sarah, shma b’kolah”? Should the neshamah listen to the body? (§1)

4. ★★ Explain the Baal Shem Tov’s teaching on “ki sir’eh chamor son’acha.” What is the “burden”?

“When you look at your chomer (body) and see it hates you”: at the start, body and neshamah hate each other. It “lies under its burden”: the burden is Torah and mitzvos. Though it is really “its” burden (mitzvos were given to refine the body), the body feels it as a load it doesn’t want. (§§2–3)

5. ★★ Mitzvos of the heart, like loving Hashem, are also meant to be felt in the body. Give the example the sicha brings from the Gemara.

“A good report fattens the bones”: good news can change the body. So love of Hashem should leave its mark on the body, so one feels “kirvas Elokim li tov,” and fear of Hashem should be felt even physically. (§3)

6. ★ What happened to the Alter Rebbe when he reached “U’vchein ten pachdecha”?

He fell to the floor saying “pach, pach...” and from great fear could not finish the word; only after a while did he finish “pachdecha.” (§3)

7. ★★ Why didn’t the strong drink affect the Tzemach Tzedek at the farbrengen?

He thought about Hashem’s greatness and great fear fell on him, and “fear cancels strong wine.” The fear was felt in his body so much that it cancelled the effect of the drink. (§3)

8. ★★ What does the sicha say about Reb Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl?

His body grew heavy from saying “Amen yehei shmei rabba”: thinking how Hashem’s great Name is drawn into all worlds, even this physical one, gave him such love and pleasure that it showed in his body. (§3)

9. ★★★ What mistake does “azov ta’azov imo” come to prevent?

One might think: since the body only drags, I’ll serve Hashem only with the neshamah and break the body with fasts. The Torah says: help it, refine and raise the body. (§4)

10. ★★★ Compare: someone who has all the kavanos of tefillin but doesn’t put them on, and someone who puts them on without kavanah.

The first loses the mitzvah and even transgresses (he is “mevatel” tefillin). The second will answer for missing the kavanah, but he did the mitzvah. (§4)

11. ★★ At a bris for one of the Tzemach Tzedek’s grandsons, which mohel did he choose, and why?

The young, expert but simple mohel, not the older one who knew the Arizal’s kavanos, because “you have to do the milah simply, physically.” (§4)

12. ★★★ So why did Hashem tell Avraham to listen to Sarah? What will happen in the future?

The main purpose is the body. Now it is hidden, but in the future the body’s greatness will be so revealed that the neshamah will get its life from the body. Hashem let the Avos taste the World to Come in this world, so Avraham was told “shma b’kolah.” (§4)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Tie

Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum, a shliach in Australia, puts tefillin on Jews everywhere: in offices, at a bris, on the street. Sometimes he wonders: if a man does it just once, with no plan to change, what good is it?

A Jew who was not yet frum once asked the Rebbe exactly this. The Rebbe had compared adding mitzvos to wearing a tie, which makes the whole outfit look beautiful. The man had a clever answer: "A tie looks good on someone who is already dressed. But a man with no clothes wearing a tie just looks ridiculous!" In other words: what is one mitzvah worth for someone who keeps nothing else?

The Rebbe agreed that such a person might look silly, but said that the very act of putting on the tie will probably wake him up to the fact that he needs to get dressed.

Rabbi Greenbaum writes that besides the value each mitzvah has on its own, mitzvos are contagious. Thousands of Jews changed their lives for good just because they agreed to try a mitzvah once.

Source: Rabbi Elisha Greenbaum, "What's the Point of a One-Time Mitzvah?" chabad.org

Think: How does the Rebbe's answer about the tie match "shma b'kolah": the actual doing comes first?

The physical act of the mitzvah has value even without understanding or feeling, and the doing

itself wakes up the person inside.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't wait to "feel it." Hashem wants the mitzvah done with your body, here and now. Kavanah is important and we work on it, but the action comes first and is never wasted. Your body itself becomes holy.

For example: It's Friday afternoon, you're tired, and you don't feel like going on mitvtzoim or helping set up for Shabbos. Go anyway. And when the chazzan says Kaddish, answer "Amen, yehei shmei rabba" out loud, with your mouth, even if your head is somewhere else.

Not One Extra Moment!

ואבא היום אל העין

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Chayei Sarah, p. 34ff, sections 5-7. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah 5713 (1952).

The point: *Eliezer's road "jumped" ("Hayom yatzasi v'hayom basi"). Simply, so Avraham's gift deed would be exactly right; in Chassidus, so Rivkah, a rose among thorns, wouldn't stay there one extra moment. So too Hashem will not leave us in galus one extra moment; we only need to finish the "small jugs."*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Which is the first shidduch and wedding the Torah describes at length?

Yitzchak's, in this parshah (Adam and Chavah's is only hinted at in a few words). (§5)

- ★ Eliezer said "Va'avo hayom." What does Rashi learn from this?

"Today I left and today I arrived": the road jumped for him (kefitzas haderech). (§5)

- ★ What two questions does the sicha ask about the road jumping?

Why was the road jumping needed? And why did Eliezer tell it to Lavan and Besuel? (§5)

- ★★ What did Avraham write for Yitzchak when he sent Eliezer?

A shtar matanah (gift deed) giving Yitzchak all his property. (§6)

- ★★★ What was the problem with dating the deed early (the day Eliezer left), and with dating it later (17 days on)?

An early date would give away Avraham's property 17 days before it was needed, and "a person

should care for his property." A later date makes it a "post-dated document": kosher, but not

clean and clear. (§6)

- ★★ So what did Avraham do, and why did the road jump? Why did Eliezer say "hayom" to Lavan and Besuel?

He wrote the real date, and the road jumped so the property wouldn't leave Avraham before its

time. Eliezer feared they would ask why the deed was dated the day he arrived (which would look

like a lie for Avraham), so he said right away: don't ask; today I left and today I came. (§6)

7. ★★ In the second, chassidishe explanation, what was Rivkah compared to? Why don't "the thorns" let her go?

"A rose among thorns." The whole field is watered because of the rose, so the thorns get their life from it and won't let it be taken away. (§6)

8. ★★ When did Avraham send Eliezer, and why did the road have to jump?

The moment Rivkah reached three years and a day and could be betrothed, Avraham felt it and sent Eliezer. Without the jump she would have stayed with Lavan and Besuel extra time. (§6)

9. ★★★ What did Lavan and Besuel ask for, and how did "hayom" answer them?

"Let the girl stay with us a while, or ten (months)." Eliezer said "Today!": this depends on moments, every moment is precious, and the proof is that the road jumped. (§6)

10. ★★ What is the lesson for us from "ma'aseh avos siman labanim"?

Don't despair because of the darkness of galus. Just as the road jumped so Rivkah wouldn't stay one extra moment, Hashem will hurry the Geulah so we don't stay in galus one extra moment. (§7)

11. ★★ What happened at Yetzias Mitzrayim that shows this, and why is that relevant now?

"B'etzem hayom hazeh yatzu": Hashem didn't hold them back even for the blink of an eye. Mitzrayim is the root of all galuyos, and "as in the days you left Mitzrayim I will show you wonders." (§7)

12. ★★★ What is left for us to do before the Geulah?

To complete the "pachim ketanim," the small jugs; when they are finished the full Geulah will come through Moshiach. (§7)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Pack Your Bags, and Build the Mishkan

Someone once came to the Frierdiker Rebbe with a question: "You say you expect Moshiach to come immediately. Yet at the same time you make long-term plans, as if galus will go on for a long time. How does that fit?"

The Frierdiker Rebbe answered from the Torah. When the Jews traveled through the desert, they carried the Mishkan with them, and at every place they camped they set it up again with all its parts. Some camps lasted many years, and some lasted less than a day. Still, at every stop they put up the whole Mishkan, even though they might leave that very same day.

The Rebbe told this on 15 Shevat 5741 (1981) and explained: we expect to leave galus today. But every moment we are still here, we must work with complete enthusiasm and full strength to make our "camp" a home for Hashem.

Source: *The Rebbe, sicha of 15 Shevat 5741, retelling the Frierdiker Rebbe; JEM "Living Torah," Disc 13, Program 51, "Expecting Moshiach Today" (chabad.org)*

Think: How is setting up the Mishkan at every stop like finishing the "small jugs"?

Even if Moshiach comes this minute, every mitzvah we do now, with full energy, finishes the job;

we wait for Moshiach and keep building.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Hashem is rushing to bring the Geulah; He won't leave us in galus one extra moment. Our job is to finish the "small jugs," the little details of mitzvos we tend to skip, with full energy, as if Moshiach is coming today.

For example: You usually rush birchas hamazon or skip the last few lines. This week say it slowly from a bentcher, every word. That's one small jug, and maybe the last one.

Engraved, Not Written

יפה שיחתן של עבדי בתי אבות מתורתן של בנינים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Chayei Sarah, p. 36ff, sections 8-11. From a sicha of the second day of Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5713 (1952).

The point: *Eliezer's story is told at length, twice, while big halachos come from one extra letter. A Jewish home is an eternal building on Torah and mitzvos with kabbalas ol, like Eliezer's gifts: the beka (tzedakah, all the mitzvos) and two bracelets of ten (the Luchos, all the Torah). And the Torah must become one with you, like letters engraved in stone.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What do Chazal say about the talk of the servants of the Avos?

“Yafeh sichasan shel avdei avos mi'Torasan shel banim”: the conversation of the Avos' servants is more beautiful than the Torah of the children. (§8)

2. ★★ How does the Torah tell “the Torah of the children” compared to Eliezer's story?

Many big halachos are learned from one extra letter, short and hinted, while Eliezer's story is told at length and in detail, and even repeated: first as it happened, then as Eliezer retold it. (§8)

3. ★★ Why is it important that this long story is about a shidduch? Why is a Jewish home a “binyan adei ad”?

Because a Jew who builds a home builds it on Toras Chaim from the living G-d, so he is “davek” (attached) to life itself, and the home he builds is an eternal building; only that is true life. (§9)

4. ★ What gifts did Eliezer give Rivkah, and what were they for?

A gold nose ring weighing a beka and two bracelets weighing ten (gold); they were for kiddushin. (§9)

5. ★★ What does each gift hint at?

*The beka = the half-shekel per head, i.e. tzedakah, which is “klalus hamitzvos” (all the mitzvos).
The two bracelets of ten = the two Luchos and Ten Commandments, “klalus haTorah” (all the Torah). (§9)*

6. ★★ How did the Jews accept the Torah and mitzvos, and what does this teach about a Jewish home?

With kabbalas ol, saying “na’aseh” before “nishma.” The foundations of a Jewish home are Torah and mitzvos with kabbalas ol. (§9)

7. ★★★ How are the letters of a Sefer Torah different from the letters on the Luchos?

In a Sefer Torah the ink and parchment are two separate things put together. The letters of the Luchos were engraved, made out of the stone itself, so the stone and the letters were one. (§10)

8. ★★★ What are “engraved letters” in avodah? What does “u’v’Toraso” teach?

When a person toils, the Torah is called “his Torah”; he and the Torah become one thing. Not just keeping the Torah while he and it stay separate, but making Torah out of himself. (§10)

9. ★★ Why did Eliezer give bracelets, which hint at the Luchos specifically?

To show that a Jewish home built on Torah and mitzvos must be one with the Torah, like engraved letters, not just “matching” it. (§10)

10. ★★★ So why is the servants’ talk told at length and repeated, while the children’s Torah is short?

The servants stand for kabbalas ol, the foundation. The foundation must come at length and be repeated again and again; once it is in place, the details of halachah can come short and hinted. (§11)

11. ★★ What do we learn from “Kudsha Brich Hu istakel b’Oraisa u’vara alma”?

Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world, and a person who looks into the Torah keeps the world standing. So too his own private world: built on Torah with kabbalas ol, his home becomes eternal. (§11)

12. ★ What brachah closes the sicha about such a home?

That the Torah will not be forgotten from his children and grandchildren forever; a generation of upright people will be blessed. (§11)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

A Cheder in Siberia

Reb Mendel Futerfas spent years in Soviet labor camps for teaching Torah. Someone once asked him what it was like there. "They were days of light," he said, "the most inspiring days of my life. In the camps there was no battle: all I had to do was learn Torah and daven."

The work was crushing. In one camp he had to care for a herd of pigs from 4 a.m. until 6 p.m. It was so cold that once the straps of his tefillin froze and cracked when he unwound them.

"Did you have books?" he was asked. "Books? The Russians would let me have seforim?" So how did he learn? "I would picture the cheder I went to as a child. I sat in the third row. Berl on my right, Zalman on my left, Yossel in front. And the melamed: tall, with stern eyes but a warm smile. The picture was so clear I could hear him: 'Shnayim ochazin b'tallis...' I listened, and he taught me a blatt Gemara. Then I closed the picture and reviewed it until I knew it by heart."

This way, Reb Mendel learned many perakim of Gemara and a good part of Tanya, with no books at all.

Source: "A Cheder in Siberia: A conversation with Reb Mendel Futerfas," recorded by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, originally published in Kfar Chabad Magazine (chabad.org)

Think: Why could Reb Mendel learn without any seforim?

The Torah he learned as a child was "engraved" in him, part of him; no one could take it away.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Build your life on kabbalas ol: do it because Hashem said so, "na'aseh" first. And work on your learning until it's engraved, part of you, not just ink on a page.

For example: Choose one Mishnah (or a few lines of Tanya) and learn it by heart this week. Say it on the bus or before bed. Ink can be erased; what's engraved stays with you forever.

It's ALL His!

שים נא ידך תחת ירכי

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Chayei Sarah, p. 38ff, sections 12-20. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Chayei Sarah 5716 (1955).

The point: *From Avraham's oath on his milah we learn that an oath is made holding a Sefer Torah (or, b'dieved, tefillin). A shevuah (from "sova," being filled) brings power from Above through a mitzvah. Before Matan Torah only milah made the physical itself holy. The oath helps a Jew admit that everything he has is Hashem's, not "mine."*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What did Avraham tell Eliezer when he made him swear? What does the Gemara learn from it?

"Sim na yadcha tachas yerechi" (put your hand under my thigh, on the milah). The Gemara learns

that an oath must be made holding a holy object (nekitas cheftetz). (§12)

- ★ What is the halachah about which object to hold?

L'chatchilah a Sefer Torah; b'dieved tefillin is enough. A talmid chacham, for his honor, may

swear with tefillin even l'chatchilah. (§12)

- ★★ What two questions does the sicha ask?

(1) Tosafos: the halachah is learned for "modeh b'miktzas" (one who admits part of a claim), but

Avraham's case had nothing to do with that; why only modeh b'miktzas? (2) Avraham had no Sefer

Torah or tefillin, only a different mitzvah; how do we learn that we need a Sefer Torah or

tefillin? (§12)

- ★★ What does "shevuah" come from? Why may a person swear to keep a mitzvah he is already sworn to from Sinai?

From "sova," being filled: an oath gives power from Above. Through the oath he gets a higher power

to keep it ("they make him swear: be a tzaddik"). (§13)

- ★★★ Why must one hold an object of a mitzvah when swearing?

To connect the power from Above to the person, there must be a connector, and that is a mitzvah:

mitzvos are Hashem's messengers, and "a person's messenger is like himself." Holding a mitzvah

object links him to the power from Above. (§13)

6. ★★ Why a Sefer Torah specifically?

Hashem made nothing for no purpose, so wherever a Jew is he must turn everything to holiness. The connection of the power from Above with the whole world comes through the Torah, the connector between Hashem and the world ("He looked into the Torah and created the world"). (§14)

7. ★★ Why do tefillin also work (b'dieved)? Which Midrash shows it?

The Jews said: we want to toil in Torah day and night but have no time. Hashem said: keep tefillin and I will count it as if you toiled in Torah day and night. Tefillin, like Torah, draw the mind into the heart. (§14)

8. ★★★ Why may a talmid chacham use tefillin even l'chatchilah, but he still needs tefillin?

A talmid chacham is called "Shabbos": like Shabbos he is separate from the physical world, so he doesn't need the Sefer Torah's job of connecting the power with the world. He still needs tefillin, which connect the power with the person himself (subduing mind and heart). (§15)

9. ★★★ Avraham kept the whole Torah before it was given. Why did he wait to do milah until he was commanded? And why did he swear on the milah?

Before Matan Torah, mitzvos done with physical things did not make the physical holy. Milah was the one mitzvah given to the Avos like the mitzvos after Matan Torah: commanded from Above, it made the physical itself holy, and the holiness stayed. So it needed Hashem's command, and it was then like the Sefer Torah, the whole Torah. (§16)

10. ★★★ What is "modeh b'miktzas" in avodah?

Every power we have is lent to us by Hashem to be returned through avodah. A Jew can never deny it all (his neshamah always stands "before its Creditor"), but the yetzer makes him admit only part: "I davened and learned, I paid my debt; the rest is 'kochi v'otzem yadi,' mine." The truth is that everything is Hashem's. (§17)

11. ★★ What practical lesson does the sicha give for when we go out into the world?

The foundation is “holding a Sefer Torah”: toiling in Torah as much as time allows, and the rest of the day at least living with the subduing of mind and heart from tefillin at the start of the day. That gives the power to make all physical matters keilim for G-dliness. (§§18–19)

12. ★★ How is buying Me'aras HaMachpelah the start of the Geulah? What did each Jew get?

After “v’haKna’ani az ba’aretz” (galus), Avraham bought a field in Eretz Yisrael in front of all of Bnei Ches, who admitted it was his. According to the Pa’ane’ach Raza, for the 400 shekels every one of the 600,000 Jews got an amah by an amah of Eretz Yisrael. (§20)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“I Have to Ask My Partner”

Joe Davidovitz, an architect from South Africa, went to see the Rebbe when his business was in trouble. While he waited for his turn, a man came out of the Rebbe’s room looking stunned, and told Joe his story.

He was not frum. He brokered deals between insurance companies, and he wanted to buy a small company himself, but the big companies didn’t want the competition. A friend talked him into seeing the Rebbe.

The Rebbe told him, “I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We will become partners, and you will give me ten percent, which will go to tzedakah.” He agreed, a little doubtful.

Soon his big client offered to buy the small company through him, at double his usual fee. He wanted to jump at it, but he said: “I have to consult my partner.” He came back to the Rebbe, who said: “No, we’re not selling, unless they pay eight times that.” And they did! Even after giving ten percent to tzedakah, he earned far more than ever before.

Source: Joe Davidovitz, “When a Man from South Africa Asked the Rebbe Business Advice,” JEM “Here’s My Story” / My Encounter with the Rebbe (chabad.org). Joe tells it as he heard it from the man.

Think: How is “I have to consult my partner” the opposite of “kochi v’otzem yadi”?

He stopped acting as if the business were all his and treated it as shared with Hashem’s purpose (tzedakah); that is admitting “it’s not all mine.”

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Everything you have, your time, your talents, your money, is Hashem's, lent to you. Don't "pay" Hashem with davening and learning and then say "the rest is mine." Start the day with Torah and tefillah, and let it run the rest of the day too.

For example: After school you have two free hours. Before grabbing the game, ask: "How can this be for Hashem too?" Learn ten minutes with your younger brother first, or make a brachah out loud on your snack. And with your allowance, put a part in the pushka before you spend the rest.