

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Emor

פרשת אמור

3 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.

Iyar: Every Day Counts!

חודש אייר: כל ימיו שווים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Emor, p. 263 (Hebrew edition pp. 251-252), sections 1-4. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Acharei 5719 (1959).

The point: *Iyar has something no other month has: every one of its days is tied to a mitzvah, Sefiras HaOmer. Only the second half of Nissan and the beginning of Sivan are counted, but all of Iyar is. Nissan and Tishrei are special because of the days themselves; Iyar is special because of a person's avodah. And the link is extra strong: matzah is a separate thing that just happens to fall on 15 Nissan, but the mitzvah of Sefira is counting the day itself. Each day's count also reaches back and forward to all the other days, together preparing us for Kabbalas HaTorah, and in this all the days are equal. Usually the first half of a month is higher than the second: the twelve months match the twelve combinations of Havayah, and the four letters match the four weeks; yud-hei is higher than vav-hei (this even affects when weddings are held). But in Iyar all the days are equal. How? The name אייר stands for Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Rachel, the legs of the "merkavah". A merkavah has nothing of its own: like a chariot that only does what the rider wants, all his limbs and even his ordinary matters ("bechol derachecha da'eihu") are given over to Hashem. Then every day is the same, because everything is G-dliness. That is how Iyar becomes the bridge from Nissan (Yetzias Mitzrayim, "taavdun", serving with kabbalas ol) to Sivan, the third month, when the Torah was given.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What makes the month of Iyar special compared to all the other months?

Every single day of Iyar is connected to a mitzvah, Sefiras HaOmer. In Nissan only the second half is counted, and in Sivan only the beginning. (§1)

- ★★ Nissan and Tishrei also have special days (no Tachanun; all of Nissan is like Rosh Chodesh). How is Iyar's specialness different?

The importance of Nissan and Tishrei comes from the days themselves. Iyar's importance depends on a person's avodah: the mitzvah of counting. (§1)

- ★★ Why is the connection between Sefira and its days stronger than the connection between matzah and 15 Nissan?

Eating matzah is a separate thing that only has to be done on that day. But the mitzvah of Sefira is to count the day itself, so the time itself is the mitzvah. (§1)

- ★★ How does each day's counting touch the other days too?

Each day's count is connected to the days before and after it (so that there are "seven complete weeks"), and all of them together prepare us for receiving the Torah. In this, every day of Sefira is equal. (§2)

5. ★★★ According to the Pardes, why is the first half of a month usually higher than the second half?

The twelve months match the twelve combinations of the letters of Havayah, and the four letters match the four weeks. The letters yud-hei are higher than vav-hei, so the first two weeks are higher. That is why there is even a difference about weddings between the first and second half of a month. (§3)

6. ★ What is hinted in the letters of the name אִיִּר?

Avraham, Yitzchak, Yaakov, Rachel: the four “legs” of the merkavah (chariot). This hint is even brought in halacha. (§4)

7. ★★ What is a “merkavah”, according to Tanya?

Someone whose limbs are all holy and separated from the matters of this world. Like a chariot that only does what its rider wants, he has nothing “of his own”; he is completely given over to Hashem. (§4)

8. ★★ How does serving Hashem like a merkavah make all the days equal?

When even a person’s physical matters are for Hashem (“bechol derachecha da’eihu”), everything he does is G-dliness, so every day is equally holy. (§4)

9. ★★★ Why is Iyar called a “bridge”? Between what and what?

It connects Nissan, Yetzias Mitzrayim (“taavdun es haElokim”: serving like a servant, with kabbalas ol), and Sivan, the third month, when the threefold Torah was given to the threefold people. The avodah of Iyar leads from one to the other. (§4)

10. ★★ Why do the days of Nissan get their importance “by themselves” while Iyar needs us?

In Nissan, Hashem gave the Geulah from Above. In Iyar we count, refine ourselves and prepare with our own avodah, so the holiness of the days comes through what we do. (§1)

11. ★ Your turn: name one ordinary part of your day that you can do “for Hashem” like a merkavah.

Open answer. For example: eating with a brachah and to have strength to learn, going to sleep on

time so you can daven well, playing ball nicely without fighting. (§4)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“A G-dly Sweetness”

In the winter of 1913 the Frierdiker Rebbe went to visit his father, the Rebbe Rashab, who was staying in Menton, France. Every day they walked for hours along the seashore, and his father told him things he had never told anyone.

For several days the Rebbe Rashab spoke about “thinking Chassidus”: thinking deeply about an idea of Chassidus in tallis and tefillin before davening. It refines the body, opens the mind and heart to G-dliness, pushes away the animal soul and even changes a person’s nature. “When a Jew thinks Chassidus before davening,” he said, “the world becomes brighter.”

Then he described the level of a tzaddik, and his holy face began to shine: “one feels a G-dly sweetness!” The Frierdiker Rebbe later wrote that at that moment he truly understood what the Alter Rebbe means by a merkavah: those who “all their days do not stop for even one moment” from being bound to Hashem. Here was his father, walking by the beautiful sea, completely filled with G-dliness.

For a long time they walked in silence. Then, as if waking up, the Rebbe Rashab said: “Yosef Yitzchak! All the advantages of thinking Chassidus are nothing compared to one great gift: when Hashem gives a person a talent and a delight for doing a favor for another Jew.”

Source: *Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch, in Yanki Tauber, “An Aptitude, a Delight”, Once Upon a Chassid (Kehot / chabad.org)*

Think: How was the Rebbe Rashab a “merkavah” even while taking a walk by the sea?

Even during an ordinary walk his mind and heart never stopped being bound to Hashem; nothing was

“his own” time. That is how all days become equal: everything is G-dliness, even “bechol

derachecha”.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Make every day count, not only the special ones. When what you do, even eating, playing and resting, is for Hashem, every day becomes holy and a step toward Kabbalas HaTorah.

For example: During Sefira, pick one middah each week (kindness the first week) and do one act of it every day. Before a ball game, think: “I’m keeping my body strong so I can serve Hashem.”

Pull Me, and We'll Run!

משכני אחריו נרוצה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Emor, p. 265 (Hebrew edition pp. 252-257), sections 5-16. Compiled from the maamarim "U'sfartem" 5711 (1951) and "L'havin Inyan Matan Torah" 5713 (1953).

The point: *The Torah says to count "mimochoras haShabbos", and the Baitusim mistakenly said it means Sunday. Why not simply write "the day after Pesach"? The goal of Yetzias Mitzrayim is Matan Torah, and Sefira is the bridge between them; that is why Nissan, Iyar and Sivan are each mentioned with Yetzias Mitzrayim: they are three stages of one Geulah. Pesach has matzah, the Omer comes from barley (animal food) and Shavuot has two loaves of chametz. Why barley? And if chametz is ego and yetzer hara, why is it allowed all year and even a mitzvah on Shavuot? "Mashcheini, acharecha narutza, heviani hamelech chadarav": at Yetzias Mitzrayim the Jews were sunk in 49 gates of impurity, and Hashem Himself pulled them out. Like a kinyan of meshichah, the object moves but doesn't change: the light touched only the G-dly soul; the evil was still strong, so "the people fled". The G-dly soul came down to refine the animal soul, whose wants are much stronger. When the animal soul wants G-dliness, it runs, and pulls the G-dly soul higher too: "narutza", running, from below, plural (both souls). The Omer of barley is this refining. The way is hisbonenus, thinking about G-dliness until love and fear are awakened, possible once you are out of "Mitzrayim". Then comes Matan Torah: total bittul. So chametz: at the start, push away the intellect; during Sefira you can handle it; after refinement your mind is a vessel for G-dliness. Daily davening has all three: Modeh Ani; Pesukei D'zimrah and Shema; Shemoneh Esrei. And refining the animal soul needs a power above time: higher than Shabbos, "mimochoras haShabbos".*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★★ What is the question on the words "mimochoras haShabbos"?

The Baitusim mistook it for Sunday, and Chazal had to prove that "Shabbos" here means the Yom Tov.

Why didn't the Torah simply write "the day after Pesach", so that no one could make that mistake?

(§5)

- ★ What is the goal of Yetzias Mitzrayim, and where does Sefiras HaOmer fit in?

The goal is Matan Torah ("you will serve Hashem on this mountain"). Sefiras HaOmer is the bridge

between the start of the Geulah and its completion at Matan Torah. (§6)

- ★★ Each Yom Tov has its own food: Pesach matzah, the Omer barley, Shavuot two loaves of chametz. What two questions does this raise?

(1) Why does the Omer come from barley, unlike other menachos? (The mishnah gives a reason only

for the minchah of a sotah: animal food.) (2) If chametz stands for ego and the yetzer hara, why

is it allowed all year, and on Shavuot even a mitzvah? (§7)

4. ★★ How does “Mashcheini, acharecha narutza, heviani hamelech chadarav” hint to the three stages? What are the three differences between “mashcheini” and “narutza”?

Mashcheini = Yetzias Mitzrayim, narutza = Sefira, heviani hamelech chadarav = Matan Torah.

Differences: pulling vs. running; Hashem pulls from Above vs. we run on our own from below;

singular vs. plural. (§8)

5. ★★ What was the state of the Jews at Yetzias Mitzrayim, and why didn't the Geulah change them inside?

They were in 49 gates of impurity and were not “vessels”. Hashem revealed Himself and took them

out, but since it didn't come from their avodah, the light reached only the G-dly soul. The animal

soul was still strong; that is why “the people fled” (the Alter Rebbe). (§9)

6. ★★★ Explain the three points of “mashcheini” (pull me).

(1) Meshichah: in this kinyan the object doesn't change; it only moves to the buyer's domain. So

the Jews moved from Mitzrayim to holiness without changing inside. (2) From Above: there was no

avodah of theirs. (3) Singular: only the G-dly soul was affected. (§10)

7. ★★ Why does the G-dly soul come down to this world, and how does it gain from the animal soul?

It doesn't need fixing itself; it came to refine the animal soul (“bechol levavcha”, with both

inclinations). The animal soul's wants are very strong, so when it is turned to Hashem, the G-dly

soul also gets a powerful desire: “rav tevuos bechoach shor”. That is why the Omer is barley,

animal food. (§11)

8. ★★ How do we refine our middos, and why can't we do it at the very beginning?

Through hisbonenus, thinking about G-dliness until love and fear of Hashem are awakened. At the

beginning, when a person could still do something forbidden, there is no time for thinking: he

must run away from evil. Only once he's out of “Mitzrayim” can he work on changing himself inside.

(§12)

9. ★★★ Explain the three points of “narutza” (we will run).

(1) Running: the animal soul’s wants are strong, so when it wants G-dliness it runs. (2) From below: it comes through our own avodah. (3) Plural: both souls run, and the G-dly soul is lifted higher by the animal soul’s running. (§13)

10. ★★ So why is chametz forbidden on Pesach, allowed during Sefira and a mitzvah on Shavuot?

At the start, when evil is strong, the intellect must be pushed aside (“wise to do evil”). During Sefira a person can handle it. After all the evil is refined and there is total bittul (like at Matan Torah, “their souls flew out”), the mind itself becomes a vessel for G-dliness, so it is a mitzvah. (§14)

11. ★★ How do the three stages show up in our davening every day?

Modeh Ani and Hodu = thanking and giving ourselves over (like Nissan). Pesukei D’zimrah, the brachos of Shema and Shema = thinking deeply and changing the middos, up to “bechol me’odecha” (like Iyar). Shemoneh Esrei = standing like a servant before his master, total bittul (like Sivan). (§15)

12. ★★★ Now answer: why does the Torah say “mimochoras haShabbos”?

To refine even the animal soul, you need a very high power (the higher it is, the lower it can reach), just as only Hashem Himself could take us out of the 49 gates. Shabbos is the highest level, but still part of time and the seven days. “The day after Shabbos” is above time, above hishtalshelus, and that power is what makes “u’sfartem” (refining and brightening the middos) possible. (§16)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

No Room Left

Once, in the city of Slutzk, the Baal Shem Tov walked past a big beis midrash. The room was packed with scholars learning Gemara with great energy and excitement.

The Baal Shem Tov stopped at the door. "This room is so full of Torah," he said, "that I can't go in. There's no room left for me to squeeze inside!"

His students were puzzled. A room full of Torah — isn't that wonderful?

Later the Baal Shem Tov explained: "The Zohar teaches that love of Hashem and awe of Hashem are the two wings of a mitzvah. They are what let our good deeds 'fly' up to Hashem. A person can do a mitzvah perfectly, with every detail just right, so that its 'body' is complete. But if it isn't filled with love and awe of Hashem, it has no wings to carry it up. So it stays down here, stuck in the person's own world." And that is why the room was so full.

Source: Yanki Tauber, "Grounded", *Once Upon a Chassid* (Kehot / chabad.org)

Think: What gives our learning and mitzvos "wings", and how does the sicha say we get them?

Love and fear of Hashem. The sicha says we awaken them through hisbonenus (in Pesukei D'zimrah and Shema). Then even the animal soul's energy is turned upward, "narutza", and our mitzvos fly up.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

First Hashem pulls you: an inspiring Shabbos, a farbrengen, a great Yom Tov. Then it's your job to run: think about what you learned, and turn your own strong wants (energy, drive, excitement) toward Hashem.

For example: You love to win? Use that drive in a mishnayos "race" with a friend. Before davening, think for one minute about one idea from Chassidus, so that your Shema really means something to you.

Missed a Day? Keep Counting!

וספרתם לכם · אחכה לו בכל יום

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Emor, p. 270 (Hebrew edition pp. 257-259), sections 17-20. From the sicha of Acharon shel Pesach 5713 (1953).

The point: *The halacha: someone who missed a day of Sefira counts the rest without a brachah. One opinion holds each of the 49 days is its own mitzvah; another holds all 49 are one mitzvah ("temimos"), so missing a day ruins it. But if it is one mitzvah, why do we make 49 brachos, and why don't we wait until the last day (so earlier brachos won't become levatalah)? The Rebbe explains: they are 49 separate mitzvos, but each night's mitzvah is to count "the first count", "the second count" and so on. You can't have a third count without a second, so missing a day harms only the days after it, not the ones before. Another question: is counting a real "thing" on its own, which the Torah made a mitzvah, or is a number nothing until the mitzvah makes it real ("mitzvoseha achshevei")? The difference: a slave freed during Sefira who had been counting. If counting is real, he continues with a brachah; if only the mitzvah makes it real, his earlier counting didn't exist. (A convert is a new person, so there is no question.) The Minchas Chinuch asked also about a boy who becomes bar mitzvah during Sefira; but according to this explanation, even a rabbinic mitzvah (chinuch) makes the count real, so he may continue. Practically: "I await him every day": Moshiach can come tonight or tomorrow morning, during Sefira, and as the Tzemach Tzedek said, when he comes he will answer all the questions. Then, even if Sefira today is only rabbinic, we will continue with a brachah. Our mitzvos now are only "signposts" for the mitzvos of the future, but the cause is higher than the result: one hour of teshuvah and good deeds in this world is better than all of Olam Haba.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What is the halacha if someone missed a day of counting Sefira?

He counts the rest of the days without a brachah. (§17)

- ★★ Which two opinions is this halacha based on?

One: each of the 49 days is a separate mitzvah, so missing one doesn't affect the others. Two: all

49 days are one mitzvah, "seven complete weeks", so missing one day ruins the whole mitzvah. In

practice we count, but without a brachah. (§17)

- ★★★ What two difficulties are there with the opinion that all 49 days are one mitzvah?

(1) Then why do we make 49 brachos, instead of one at the beginning or the end? (2) Missing a day

would affect even the days before it, so the earlier brachos would become levatalah; we should

wait to make a brachah until the last day. (§17)

4. ★★ How does the Rebbe explain it?

There really are 49 separate mitzvos, one each night. But the mitzvah each night is to count that night's number: the first count, the second count, and so on. You can't have a "third" without a "second", so missing a day spoils only the following days, not the earlier ones. (§17)

5. ★★ What is the "chakirah" (deep question) about counting?

Is counting a real "thing" by itself, which the Torah made into a mitzvah? Or is a number not a "thing" at all, and only the mitzvah makes it real ("mitzvoseha achshevei")? (§18)

6. ★★★ What is the practical difference for a slave freed during Sefira? Why is there no question about a convert?

If counting is real by itself, the slave, who counted before, may continue with a brachah. If only the mitzvah makes it real, his earlier counting (not a mitzvah for him) "didn't exist", so he can't make a brachah. A convert becomes a new person, "like a newborn baby". (§18)

7. ★★★ The Minchas Chinuch also asks about a boy who becomes bar mitzvah during Sefira. Why, according to the sicha, is there no question about him?

His earlier counting was a mitzvah of chinuch (d'rabanen). The problem was only whether the earlier days were real, not whether they were a mitzvah, and even a rabbinic mitzvah makes the counting real ("mitzvoseha achshevei"). So he continues with a brachah. (§18)

8. ★ What is the practical conclusion about Moshiach?

"I await him every day that he will come": Moshiach can come tonight or tomorrow morning, in the middle of Sefira. (§19)

9. ★★ What did the Tzemach Tzedek answer someone who asked how Moshiach could come at a time when we were told he wouldn't?

"Let him come! When he comes and answers all the questions, he will answer this question too."
(§19)

10. ★★★ How does this connect to the freed slave?

Even according to the opinion that Sefira nowadays is only d'rabanan, when Moshiach comes (and it becomes d'oraisa) we will be able to continue counting with a brachah, because our earlier counting was real, as explained. (§19)

11. ★★ If our mitzvos now are only “signposts” for the mitzvos of the future, why are they so precious?

Only in the future will they be “kemitzvas retzonecha”, complete. But the cause is greater than the result: through our mitzvos now we reach the future ones. Sefira especially: only by counting now can we count with a brachah then. “One hour of teshuvah and good deeds in this world is better than all of Olam Haba.” (§20)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Rebbe's Tefillin

In 1959 Shelly (Sholom) Baer was drafted into the U.S. Army and sent to Korea. Before he left, the Rebbe called him in and gave him a pair of tefillin. "Promise me you'll put these on every day and say Shema," the Rebbe said. "It will be hard over there. Very hard. And if for some reason you can't put them on, you must still say Shema."

On the way, at a stop in Hawaii, he was taken off his plane to make room for a colonel. That plane was never heard from again.

In Korea his sergeant hated Jews and made trouble every time he saw the tefillin. Sholom got scared, stopped putting them on and only said Shema. Then a letter came from his mother: "Chabad called. The Rebbe says you are not keeping your promise." How did the Rebbe know?! Sholom transferred to another unit.

Later, during the Cuban Missile Crisis, his unit was dug in at the border, in a freezing, muddy foxhole under heavy shelling. A frightened soldier begged him: "We need G-d! Put on those boxes and pray!" The tefillin fell into the mud. Sholom put them on anyway, looked up and said Shema, and suddenly the shelling stopped.

Years later the Rebbe told him: "Just put on your tefillin, and tell all your friends to do the same."

Source: Shelly (Sholom) Baer, *Here's My Story (JEM)*, "The Rebbe's Tefillin Saved My Life in a Korean Foxhole" (anash.org; also the chabad.org video "Faith in a Foxhole")

Think: Sholom stopped for a while. What did he do then, and how is that like Sefira after missing a day?

He didn't give up: he kept saying Shema and went back to tefillin, even in the mud. Missing days

doesn't end the mitzvah; you keep counting, and every mitzvah done now, in the hardest times of

galus, is more precious than all of Olam Haba.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Messed up? Missed a day? Don't quit; keep counting. Each day's mitzvah stands on its own, every mitzvah now in galus is precious, and Moshiach can come any day.

For example: Missed your daily Chitas for three days? Don't say "my streak is broken, why bother?" Start again today, and add a little extra to make up.