

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Metzora & Shabbos HaGadol

פרשת מצורע · שבת הגדול

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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.

Redeemed in the Merit of Emunah!

בזכות האמונה נגאלו

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Metzora, p. 239ff, sections 1-6. From the sichos of Shabbos Parshas Metzora ("Taharah") 5717 (1957).

The point: *The Frierdiker Rebbe avoided saying this parsha's name; books call it "Parshas Taharah". It is read in Nissan by hashgachah pratis. "In the merit of emunah our fathers were redeemed": emunah, not intellectual recognition. Righteous gentiles recognize a Creator by reasoning from the world, so they accept only G-dliness as it fits nature ("Elokim" = "hateva"). A Jew is bound to Hashem by nature, so his emunah is in Havayah, above nature. A gentile looks for nature even in a miracle; a Jew looks for G-dliness even in nature, "stiff-necked": this is no nature! Sowing a seed takes emunah. The splitting of the sea split all waters, leaving room to err, so there can be free choice. Two "Mitzrayims": of holiness (G-dliness limited by reason) and of klipah. Emunah took us out of both. Nega'im: the Rambam says they were a sign and wonder to warn against lashon hara, in stages; and when the house was taken down, hidden gold was found. So too, everything is from Above, for a purpose, and truly good.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What did the Frierdiker Rebbe do about this parsha's name, and what do some books call it?

He avoided saying its name, and usually wrote the date instead. Books call it "Parshas Taharah".

(§1)

- ★★ Why does it say "in the merit of emunah" and not "recognition"? What's the difference?

Righteous gentiles recognize a Creator through reasoning from the world, so they accept only as much G-dliness as the world demands, as it's clothed in nature. A Jew is bound to G-dliness by his very nature, so his emunah has no limit and includes what is above nature. (§2)

- ★★★ What do the names Havayah and Elokim teach about the two kinds of belief?

Jews believe in Havayah, "was, is and will be" as one, above nature. The nations' belief is in "Elokim", which equals "hateva" (nature) in gematria, like Pharaoh ("I don't know Havayah") and his magicians ("it is the finger of Elokim"). (§2)

- ★★ How does a gentile look at a miracle, and how does a Jew look at nature?

A gentile searches for nature in everything, and even in an open miracle tries to clothe it in nature. A Jew searches for G-dliness in everything, and even in what looks completely natural he declares, "stiff-necked": this is not nature, it's G-dliness! (§3)

5. ★★ Why does sowing a seed show emunah?

Natural laws promising growth aren't enough reason to destroy something with your own hands (burying the seed). He sows only because he believes in the Life of the worlds and trusts Him to make it grow. (§3)

6. ★★★ Why did all the waters in the world split at Krias Yam Suf, and what does it teach?

It made the nations ask and hear of the miracle ("fear and dread fell upon them"), but it also left room to say it was natural. Hashem leaves room for error so there is free choice: "whoever wants to err may err." (§4)

7. ★★★ What are the two kinds of "Mitzrayim", and how did emunah take us out?

Mitzrayim of holiness: recognizing G-dliness, but limited by reason (like "Elokim"). Mitzrayim of klipah: forgetting G-dliness entirely, down to 49 gates of impurity. Emunah, ignoring the world's ways even in physical matters, revealed Havayah above nature and took them out of both. (§5)

8. ★★ According to the Rambam, what were nega'im on clothes and houses?

Not part of nature, but "a sign and wonder in Israel to warn them against lashon hara", in stages: first the walls of the house changed, then the leather items, and so on. (§6)

9. ★★ What good came from taking down a house with a nega?

The Midrash says hidden treasures of gold, buried by the Canaanites, were found. (§6)

10. ★★ What should a Jew learn from nega'im about everything that happens?

Just as nega'im clearly came from Above, everything is from Above with hashgachah pratis, with a special purpose (like warning from sin), and in truth it is good: hidden good, or even revealed good. (§6)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Saved by Leeches

In Poland there once lived a Jewish couple. The wife was a woman of simple emunah and a great admirer of Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin. Her husband was a skeptic: he didn't believe Hashem plays an active role in people's lives.

The husband fell deep into debt to the local squire. As the due date came near, the wife begged to go to the Ruzhiner, and finally he agreed. In the crowded court, the Rebbe sent his answers through his assistants. She was told her husband should be treated with leeches and hot cups, painful folk remedies. It seemed like a mix-up, the advice meant for a sick man! But she brushed aside her doubts. Her husband laughed bitterly: "How will leeches pay our debt?"

On the morning the debt was due, with no choice left, he let her put the leeches on him. As he lay in bed, blood oozing from the sores, the squire's agent arrived, took pity, and advised forgiving the debt. The suspicious squire came to see for himself, found the man looking even worse, and wiped out the whole debt.

The Ruzhiner told his son that the miracle came entirely from the wife's pure emunah.

Source: Menachem Posner, "Saved by Leeches (and Faith)" (chabad.org), from Siach Sarfei Kodesh vol. 3 p. 97

Think: How does this story show the difference between emunah and "recognition" (§2)?

By reason, the advice made no sense and the husband mocked it. The wife's emunah went above reason

and nature, and "in the merit of emunah" they were saved, just as our fathers were redeemed from

Mitzrayim.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Look for Hashem in everything, even in what seems "just natural". And trust that whatever He sends has a purpose, and is good.

For example: You didn't make the team, or your trip got cancelled. Instead of "just bad luck", say "gam zu l'tovah" and look for the hidden gold. Often it shows up later.

The Piece That's Missing!

רוח צפונית אינה מסובבת

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Metzora, p. 242ff (Hebrew edition p. 229), sections 7–9. From the sicha of Acharon shel Pesach 5717 (1957).

The point: Chazal: *"the north side is not enclosed" (the world is walled on three sides), to prove the wonder of creation: anyone who denies it is told, try to close the north side. How could anyone think creation isn't a wonder? So as not to harm free choice, the yetzer hara is allowed to persuade, and it can push even absurd ideas. Yet even with such great concealment, Hashem leaves one detail incomplete that no creation can finish, and from it we learn that the whole is "in the Creator's lap". The same in how the world is run: if someone credits his success to nature or "my strength", he meets one detail he can't complete. So when a person sees something in his life that just can't be fixed, he should strengthen his emunah and bitachon, and Hashem will complete it; the same for the community: no tricks, but more bitachon. Then Hashem will close the "north" ("from the north the evil opens"), and the closed mem ("I'marbeh hamisrah") hints to the Geulah, without needing the kindness of the nations.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ What do Chazal say about the north side of the world, and why?

"The north side is not enclosed." To prove the wonder of creation: tell whoever denies it, show

your strength and close the north side; then he must admit it's the Creator's wonder. (§7)

2. ★★ How could anyone think creation is not a wonder?

So as not to harm free choice, the yetzer hara is allowed to persuade and mislead. He's a great

craftsman and can plant the most ridiculous ideas, even that there's no wonder in creation. (§7)

3. ★★★ What does Hashem leave in every matter despite the great concealment?

One detail left incomplete, which creatures can't complete by themselves. From it they must learn

that the whole is "in the lap of the Creator". (§8)

4. ★★ How does this apply to someone who thinks his success is from "kochi v'otzem yadi"?

The concealment leaves room for that, but he runs into one detail that his strength can't

complete. Thinking about it shows that the whole thing comes from Hashem's brachah. (§8)

5. ★ What should a person do when something in his life just can't be fixed?

Strengthen his emunah and bitachon in Hashem, and then Hashem will complete it. (§9)

6. ★★ What should the community do when it meets a problem with no way out?
Not turn to all sorts of tricks and schemes, but increase emunah and bitachon in Hashem. (§9)

7. ★★★ How is the “north wind” connected to evil, and what will happen to it?
“From the north the evil will open.” When we strengthen bitachon, Hashem will complete the “north side”, closing the opening for evil. (§9)

8. ★★★ What does the closed mem hint to?
In “l’marbeh hamisrah” a final (closed) mem is written in the middle of a word: a hint to the Geulah, closed on all sides. (§9)

9. ★★ Why won’t we need the kindness of the nations in the Geulah?
“The kindness of the nations is a sin”, since they do it for themselves. Hashem Himself will bring us to the good and spacious land through Moshiach. (§9)

10. ★ In one sentence: what is the lesson of the “incomplete north side”?
What you can’t complete shows you that everything is from Hashem, so trust Him to complete it. (§§8–9)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Gate of Trust

A young man, who later shared his story anonymously (his rabbi and doctor confirmed the details), suffered from a serious mental illness, bipolar disorder. As a teenager he was hospitalized for weeks, and he was hospitalized again several times in his yeshivah years.

Once, desperate in the hospital, he called the Rebbe's office and refused to hang up until the Rebbe assured him all would be well. The secretary, Rabbi Binyomin Klein, told him: "The Rebbe already gave you an assurance: 'Es vet zain gut', it will be good." He hung up and walked out calm.

After another hard time he wrote to the Rebbe for advice. The Rebbe told him four things: take your mind off the nervousness; check your tzitzis; check your tefillin; and learn Shaar HaBitachon, the "Gate of Trust" in Chovos HaLevavos.

He did all of it. A problem was found in his tefillin and fixed. And learning that Hashem runs every detail of life, he felt "like someone parched in a desert who was suddenly given cold, refreshing water. My worries just melted away."

Source: Mr. B. (anonymous, details verified by his rabbi and doctor), "Unlocking the Gate of Trust", Here's My Story (JEM / chabad.org)

Think: How did the Rebbe's advice match §9?

Faced with something he couldn't fix by his own strength, the Rebbe sent him to strengthen his

bitachon (Shaar HaBitachon) and his connection to Hashem (tzitzis, tefillin), rather than only

worrying, and then Hashem helped complete what was missing.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

When you hit something you just can't fix, don't look for tricks. Strengthen your bitachon, and Hashem will complete the missing piece.

For example: You've tried everything to understand a Gemara and still can't. Do your part, then say a kapitel Tehillim and trust Hashem. Often it "clicks" the next day.

Send Shmurah Matzah!

מיכלא דמהימנותא

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Shabbos HaGadol, p. 243, section 10. From the sicha of Shabbos Mevarchim Nissan 5714 (1954).

The point: *Nissan has mitzvos d'Oraisa, d'Rabbanan and minhagim, and Pesach above all ("1 Nissan is Rosh Hashanah for the regalim"). There was once a custom that rabbanim sent shmurah matzah to their balebatim before Pesach. The simple reason was income for the rav, but it also made sure everyone fulfilled the mitzvah properly, since the halachos of matzah are many. The custom lapsed in many places. The Rebbe asks, and if he could he would command: renew it! Not only rabbanim: anyone with influence (a shochet, a shamash) should send matzos: round, hand-baked, shmurah. Organizers of communal sedorim (hotels) should do so too. Then hundreds, maybe thousands of Jews will eat matzah properly, b'hiddur. Matzah is "the food of healing and the food of faith", and emunah is the foundation of all the mitzvos, so doing it properly gives life to Torah and mitzvos all year: a healthy year spiritually, and so physically too.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What three kinds of things are found in Nissan, especially on Pesach?

Things d'Oraisa, d'Rabbanan, and minhagim. (§10)

- ★★ What old custom did the Rebbe want to renew?

Rabbanim sending shmurah matzah before Pesach to their balebatim: a set of six matzos for the two sedorim, or at least two, for the k'zayis of the middle matzah. (§10)

- ★★ What was the simple reason for the custom, and what did it really accomplish?

Simply, it gave the rav an income. But it made sure everyone fulfilled the mitzvah of matzah properly, since there are many halachos and details that not everyone knows or can keep. (§10)

- ★★ How strongly did the Rebbe ask for this?

"I request, and if only I had the strength, I would command" that the custom be renewed. (§10)

- ★★ Who besides rabbanim should send matzos?

Anyone with influence (a rav, a shochet, a shamash) who has someone who will use his matzos at the seder. Organizers of communal sedorim, like in hotels, should provide them too. (§10)

- ★ What three qualities should the matzos have?

Round, hand-baked, and shmurah. (§10)

7. ★★ What will come from this effort?

Hundreds, maybe thousands of Jews will fulfill the mitzvah of eating matzah properly and b'hiddur.

(§10)

8. ★★★ What does the Zohar call matzah, and why is that so important?

"Michla d'asvasa umichla d'meheimnusa", the food of healing and the food of faith. Emunah is the

foundation of all the mitzvos and of life, so keeping this mitzvah properly gives life to Torah

and mitzvos all year. (§10)

9. ★★ What kind of year does proper matzah bring?

A year of health in spirit, and as a result, a year of health in body. (§10)

10. ★★★ Why is 1 Nissan called "Rosh Hashanah for the regalim" (plural) if it's about Pesach?

The Gemara explains it refers to the festival in it, Pesach, the main thing of Nissan. (The

Rebbe's note: just as a head includes the life of all the limbs.) (§10)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Extra Matzah

In March 1945, at the end of the war, the Skulener Rebbe, Rabbi Eliezer Zusha Portugal, was in Czernowitz with other Holocaust survivors. Pesach was weeks away. Despite the terrible poverty, he managed to get wheat and bake a small number of shmurah matzos, and he sent word to other Rebbes in the region offering each of them three.

A week before Pesach, Rabbi Moshe Hager, son of the Seret-Vizhnitzer Rebbe, came for his father's matzos. After receiving three, he said: "My father says he must have six." Reluctantly, the Skulener Rebbe gave him six.

On Erev Pesach Rabbi Moshe came back: "I want to return three matzos. My father asked: did you save any shmurah matzah for yourself?" Embarrassed, the Skulener Rebbe answered, "How could I, when so many others needed it?" "My father thought so," said Rabbi Moshe. "These three matzos are for you!"

Source: Dr. Yisroel Susskind, "The Extra Matzah" (chabad.org)

Think: How does the Skulener Rebbe live the Rebbe's request in §10?

He made sure other Jews had proper shmurah matzah for the seder, even at his own expense, just as

the Rebbe asked everyone with influence to send matzos to others.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Make sure other Jews have shmurah matzah! Matzah is the food of emunah and gives life to the whole year.

For example: Before Pesach, join the bochurim giving out shmurah matzah, or bring a box to a Jewish neighbor or the grocer, and show him how much is a k'zayis.