

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Mikeitz & Chanukah

פרשת מקץ · חנוכה

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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.

Grab It Now!

חטוף ואכול חטוף ואישתי

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Mikeitz, p. 85ff, sections 1-7. From a sicha of Yud-Tes Kislev 5717 (1956).

The point: *The dreams of Yosef, the butler, the baker and Pharaoh led to Galus Mitzrayim, so galus is like a dream: opposites live together, and a person can love Hashem and his body's desires at the same time. But the good a Jew does is eternal, and the bad is only temporary. In galus the soul's "makifim", which have no limits, shine. So don't think you must climb one careful step at a time. Grab every mitzvah and every piece of Torah, nigleh and Chassidus, that comes your way: "chatof v'echol, chatof v'ishte". The added light wakes us from the sleep of galus.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ Which dreams are told in Vayeishev and Mikeitz? What did they cause?

Yosef's dreams, the dreams of the butler and the baker, and Pharaoh's dreams. They led to Galus

Mitzrayim, the root of all the galuyos. (§1)

2. ★★ Why must the galus resemble a dream?

Everything is hashgachah pratis, so the result (the galus) is connected to and resembles its cause

(the dream). (§1)

3. ★★ What does a dream do, according to Torah Ohr? How is galus similar?

A dream comes from the imagination, which joins opposites, even "an elephant through the eye of a

needle". In galus a person thinks he loves Hashem and his own body's desires at the same time,

though the two can't really go together. He can even sink into desires and go against Hashem's

will. (§2)

4. ★★ After davening a person may fall into the opposite mood. Does this prove his davening and learning were worth nothing?

No! The root of the "dream" is a very high level that shines specifically in galus. (§2)

5. ★★★ Why can't the bad ever really defeat the good in a Jew?

The G-dly soul is always whole. The Torah and mitzvos a Jew does are eternal, while his wrong

actions are only temporary (in the end every Jew will do teshuvah). Even while they happen they

aren't lasting, like "rivers that fail". (§3)

6. ★★★ What is the advantage of galus over the time of the Beis HaMikdash?

Then the soul's inner powers shone, and they have limits (so a tamei person could not enter the Mikdash). In galus the soul's "makifim" shine, and they have no limits: Hashem "dwells with them in the midst of their impurity". (§3)

7. ★★ What mistaken idea does the Rebbe reject about avodah?

That the only way is step by step, from easy to hard, and that until you finish one level you can't think about the next. That would be true if everything were orderly. But since "we were like dreamers", we can and must do every avodah that comes to hand: "chatof v'echol, chatof v'ishte". (§4)

8. ★★★ What about someone who, per Tanya ch. 17, "can't begin to serve Hashem without first doing teshuvah"?

The Alter Rebbe rules, in Tanya and in Shulchan Aruch, that he too must learn Torah and do mitzvos. He is sure that "no one will be cast away", and in the end his Torah and mitzvos will return with him. (§4)

9. ★★ What do "chatof v'echol" and "chatof v'ishte" stand for?

"Grab and eat" = nigleh, the revealed Torah, which is compared to bread. "Grab and drink" = Pnimityus HaTorah, which is compared to water. (§5)

10. ★★ Why may every Jew learn Chassidus today, without long preparations?

In our generations "it is a mitzvah to reveal this wisdom". Especially since the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe revealed Chassidus, it is like every other part of Torah, and every Jew must learn all parts of Torah. (§5)

11. ★ What happens when a Jew keeps adding Torah and mitzvos without asking whether he is "on the level"?

The extra light chases away the sleep of galus and brings the light of the Geulah, just as light wakes a sleeping person. (§6)

12. ★★ What lesson does the Rebbe learn from Galus Mitzrayim?

*Mitzrayim was the hardest galus (all galuyos are named after it), yet only through it did we leave
“with great wealth”. So too now: precisely because galus is like a dream, we can jump higher,
until “as in the days you left Mitzrayim I will show you wonders”. (§7)*

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“And What About Tomorrow?”

Chanukah 5728 (1967), six months after the Six Day War. The Rebbe had launched the tefillin campaign. Rabbi Moshe Feller, the Rebbe’s shliach in Minnesota, was a keynote speaker at a B’nai Brith youth convention, and he arranged tefillin before the convention on the first day and an official tefillin session on the second. Friends rushed in 139 pairs of tefillin from New York, and in half an hour two hundred boys put on tefillin.

Thrilled, he phoned the Rebbe’s office to report. Suddenly he heard another voice softly on the line: “Un vos vet zein morgen?” “And what will be tomorrow?” It was the Rebbe himself.

“I don’t want to pull the string too tight,” said Rabbi Feller. He didn’t want to overdo it. “In this,” the Rebbe answered firmly, “there is no such thing as pulling the string too tight.” The Rebbe asked for tefillin again the next day, tefillin at half price, and a menorah lighting. The director agreed happily: “It worked so well today, we should do it again tomorrow!”

Source: Moshe Feller, “What About Tomorrow?” (chabad.org)

Think: How does the Rebbe’s answer show “chatof v’echol” (§4)?

Don’t think “one step at a time, don’t overdo it.” Grab every chance for a mitzvah that comes your way. With mitzvos there is no “too much”.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don’t wait until you’re “on the level” for a mitzvah, a shiur, or a maamar of Chassidus. Grab every chance that comes your way. Your good deeds last forever, and your slips are only temporary.

For example: Your friend is going to a Tanya shiur and you think, “That’s for older bochurim, I’ll start in a few years.” No! Chatof v’ishte: go tonight. And when you see a chance to help a Jew put on tefillin, grab it, even if you did one yesterday.

Growing in the Land of Hardship

כי הפרני אלקים בארץ עניי

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Mikeitz, p. 88f, sections 8-10. From a sicha of Shavuos 5713 (1953).

The point: *Yosef named his son Ephraim: "Hashem made me fruitful in the land of my affliction." Even Yosef, a tzaddik so great that he could rule Mitzrayim while staying in total dveikus, grew only through "the land of affliction". So the neshamah's descent into the body, especially in galus, is not a punishment. It brings a great advantage. Before Galus Mitzrayim the Torah could not be given. Only the "iron furnace" made us vessels. "V'anochi tirgalti l'Ephraim": through kabbalas ol (the "regel", the foot) we reach the highest level, "Anochi".*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ Why did Yosef name his son Ephraim?

"Ki hifrani Elokim b'ereztz onyi": Hashem made me fruitful (gave me extra light) in the land of my affliction. (§8)

2. ★★★ Why was Yosef punished for asking the butler to help him, when Yaakov also used natural means with Esav?

Yaakov's level was within the order of the worlds, so he worried that a sin might cause harm and needed natural "vessels". Yosef was a "tzaddik elyon" who did not need to rely on nature. (§8)

3. ★★ Why were the Avos and the Shevatim shepherds?

To stay far from the world, so that the world would not disturb them. (§8)

4. ★★★ How was Yosef's level higher than theirs?

He could be inside the world as ruler of Mitzrayim (literally every Egyptian needed his permission to carry weapons), and at the same time be in total dveikus with Hashem. (§8)

5. ★★ Even with all his greatness, how did Yosef reach "hifrani"?

Only through "b'ereztz onyi", the land of his affliction. (§8)

6. ★ What is the lesson for every Jew about the neshamah coming down into a body?

Its descent into a body in this world, especially in galus, is not ch"v to make it suffer. It holds a great advantage. (§9)

7. ★★ Why is this lowest world the purpose of all creation (Tanya ch. 36)?

For the higher worlds, creation is a step down from Hashem's light. The purpose is this lowest world, because Hashem's very Essence shows itself here. (§9)

8. ★★ Could the Torah have been given before Galus Mitzrayim? What did Chazal say?

No. Only through the "iron furnace" of Mitzrayim did the Jews become vessels for the Torah. Chazal say we merited the Torah because "you went down to Mitzrayim". (§9)

9. ★★★ How does "600,000 raglei, the people that Anochi is among" hint at the importance of the "feet"?

If even one of the 600,000 had been missing, the Torah would not have been given, even to Moshe. Because all 600,000 were there, including the "feet" (kabbalas ol), the Torah that begins with "Anochi" was given. (§10)

10. ★★ Explain "V'anochi tirkalti l'Ephraim".

For Ephraim, who reached the highest level only through "Mitzrayim", the posuk says "tirkalti", from "regel": through avodah of kabbalas ol we reach "Anochi mi she'Anochi", Hashem Himself. (§10)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Tefillin on the Train

Yigael Yadin was a famous Israeli archaeologist and former IDF chief of staff. After the Six Day War he acquired for the Israel Museum the oldest tefillin in the world, from the time of the Second Beis HaMikdash. One day he was riding the train from Yerushalayim to Tel Aviv, with photocopies of the ancient tefillin scrolls in his pocket.

At Kfar Chabad some young chassidim boarded and went from person to person offering tefillin. Yadin politely refused, but he noticed the young man's accent. "Where are you from?" "From the Soviet Union." "And did you put on tefillin there?" "Every day since my bar mitzvah." Yadin reconsidered. "If you did this mitzvah in the Soviet Union, I won't be the one to refuse you now."

Before Tel Aviv a woman came over. Her son, a Chabad paratrooper, had been mortally wounded near the Suez Canal, and his last request was that his friends put on tefillin. "When you put on tefillin today, you joined in fulfilling my son's last request." Fighting back tears, Yadin took out the photocopies of the oldest tefillin in the world and showed them to her.

Source: Yigael Yadin, "Tefillin on the Train" (chabad.org), from his book *Chavayotav Shel Archeolog Yehudi*

Think: How does the young man from the Soviet Union show "hifrani b'eretzi onyi" (§8)?

He kept his tefillin every day in the land of hardship, and that very strength is what moved even

a famous general and professor to put them on.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Hard times aren't a punishment. They are where you grow most, like Ephraim in the land of affliction and the Jews in the iron furnace before Matan Torah. Kabbalas ol, doing what Hashem wants even when it's hard, takes you all the way up to "Anochi".

For example: You're at camp or visiting relatives where nobody else davens with a minyan or says brachos out loud. That's your "eretzi onyi". Keeping your mitzvos there, quietly and proudly, makes you stronger than any easy day in yeshiva. And someone may be watching and learning from you.

Light Up the Street!

מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Chanukah, p. 89ff, sections 11–14. From a sicha of 21 Kislev 5713 (1952).

The point: *To make light you take something physical, like oil, and heat it until it shines. The Chanukah lights come from the Menorah of the Beis HaMikdash, but they are different. We add one each night, light after sunset, and put them outside at the door. The Mikdash lights belonged to times of plenty and peace, while Chanukah came in a dark, hard time that called for mesirus nefesh. So when it is dark outside, don't be impressed. Light up the street with mesirus nefesh, add a little more every day, and don't mind those who look on with an "evil eye". Every Jew is Hashem's "ambassador", sent to warm his part of the world until it shines.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ How is light made? What does the Chanukah mitzvah teach about it?

You take something physical (oil, wood) and heat it until it stops being just physical and lights up everything around it. (§11)

2. ★★ Name the four differences between the Mikdash lights and the Chanukah lights.

1) The Mikdash always had the same number of lights; on Chanukah we add one each night. 2) The Mikdash was lit while it was still light; Chanukah lights "after sunset". 3) The Mikdash lights were inside; Chanukah lights go "at the door of the house, outside". 4) The Mikdash lights came in times of plenty; Chanukah came in a hard time. (§11)

3. ★★ What was life like in the times of the Mishkan and of Shlomo HaMelech?

In the midbar they had everything: mann from Heaven, water from Miriam's well, and clothes that grew with them and stayed clean. In Shlomo's days there was peace, "each man under his vine and fig tree". (§11)

4. ★★ And what was the situation at the time of Chanukah?

The land was under Greek rule and the Jewish army was small. In ruchniyus there wasn't pure oil even for one night, and there were Hellenist Jews who wanted to assimilate. (§§11–12)

5. ★★★ How are all the differences connected?

When things are good, no war or mesirus nefesh is needed: the same light every day is enough, and the street isn't dark, since the light spreads by itself. In a dark time, mesirus nefesh is needed. The darkness outside can creep into the house, so you must make an effort to light up the street, and add more every day. (§12)

6. ★★ Why isn't it enough to light on your table and open the door?

You have to put real effort into lighting up the street, so the candles must be at the door itself. (§12)

7. ★★ Why isn't yesterday's number of lights enough?

A person can't be satisfied with just not going down and staying where he was yesterday. He must keep going higher and higher. (§12)

8. ★ In one sentence, what should we do when the darkness is great?

Don't be impressed by the darkness in the street. With mesirus nefesh, light it up and add more light every day, until more pure oil is found. (§13)

9. ★★ Why not start with many lights at once? How should we grow?

"If you grab too much, you grab nothing." Start with one light, but be ready to light two tomorrow, three the next day, and so on. (§13)

10. ★★★ What if people look at you with an "evil eye"? What is promised?

Don't be impressed. Do the shlichus Hashem gave you with mesirus nefesh, above nature like a miracle, and know what you did yesterday so you know how much to add today. Then the street really begins to shine, and the light grows until pure oil is found for the Beis HaMikdash. (§13)

11. ★★ What must every Jew know about himself?

That he is Hashem's "ambassador", sent to warm the physical things in his part of the world until they shine, in himself and around him. (§14)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

A Wooden Menorah at the Liberty Bell

On a freezing Motzaei Shabbos, Chanukah 1974, Rabbi Avraham Shemtov, the Rebbe's shliach in Philadelphia, had an unusual idea: light a menorah right in front of Independence Hall, home of the Liberty Bell. The menorah was crude, four feet tall, made of wood with the help of some yeshivah bochurim. Almost no one was there to see it.

The next year he came back with a bigger menorah and the proper permits. In San Francisco and New York, other shluchim lit menorahs too. In 1979 a menorah stood on the White House lawn.

But in the 1980s, some Jewish organizations protested: why make a public display? The Rebbe answered in letters: experience has shown that the public menorah inspires many, many Jews, gives them pride in their Yiddishkeit, and shows that in this free country there is no reason to hide it.

The menorahs kept spreading. In 1991 a giant menorah was lit inside the Kremlin, and today some 15,000 public menorahs light up streets around the world.

Source: Menachem Posner, "How the Chanukah Menorah Made Its Way to the Public Sphere" (chabad.org)

Think: Which points of §§12–13 can you see in this story?

Lighting up the street, not just the house. Starting small (one wooden menorah) and adding every

year. Not being impressed by opposition (the "evil eye"). And the street really did start to

shine.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

When it's dark outside, don't hide your light. You are Hashem's ambassador: shine outside your own home, and add a little more each day, starting small but never standing still.

For example: This Chanukah, don't just light at home. Go with your friends to light with a lonely Jew in the neighborhood, or help at the public menorah. And each day of Chanukah, add one more good thing, like one more mitzvah, one more kind word, or one more page of learning.

Mehadrin Min HaMehadrin!

מהדרין מן המהדרין

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Chanukah, p. 92ff, sections 15–18. From a sicha of the night of the fifth Chanukah candle, 5713 (1952). (§19, which continues on the next page, was not in the text we used.)

The point: *Ner Chanukah is different from every other mitzvah: it has the mitzvah, hiddur, and "mehadrin min hamehadrin", and all Jews do the highest level. That comes from the miracle of the oil. Hashem acts in three ways: natural, miraculous (the victory, "the mighty in the hands of the weak"), and above miracles (the pure oil, which wasn't needed at all, only to show His love). They come from three kinds of avodah: keeping mitzvos, hiddur mitzvah, and mesirus nefesh. Hiddur means doing it with love and joy, but the person is still "there". Mesirus nefesh means he has no "self" at all, and he doesn't care who gets it done, as long as it gets done.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ In what two ways is Ner Chanukah different from all other mitzvos?

1) Other mitzvos have the mitzvah and hiddur; Chanukah also has "mehadrin min hamehadrin". 2) In other mitzvos most people do only the basic mitzvah; on Chanukah all Jews keep even the mehadrin min hamehadrin. (§15)

2. ★★ How do we know that other mitzvos have no "hiddur of hiddur"?

The Gemara says hiddur mitzvah is "up to a third" from one's own money, and beyond that Hashem repays. So you can beautify without limit, but it all still counts as hiddur. (§15)

3. ★★ What two miracles happened on Chanukah, and what was set up for each?

1) The victory in the war: Hallel and thanks. 2) The jar of oil: lighting the candles. Mehadrin min hamehadrin is only in the lighting, which is connected to the oil. (§16)

4. ★★ What are the three ways Hashem runs the world?

1) Natural: it can be successful, but still natural. 2) Miraculous, above nature. 3) Above even miracles. (§16)

5. ★★ Why was the victory a miracle and not just a success?

It was "the mighty in the hands of the weak, the many in the hands of the few". Mighty against mighty would be a success, but not a miracle. (§16)

6. ★★★ Why is the miracle of the oil “above miracles”?

It wasn't needed for the body or even for the soul, since halachah allowed impure oil when the community is impure. It was a “hiddur”, only to show Hashem's love for the Jews. (§16)

7. ★★ Which kind of avodah brings each of the three ways?

Keeping Torah and mitzvos brings natural blessing (“Im bechukosai... v'nasati gishmeichem”). Hiddur mitzvah brings miracles, measure for measure. Mesirus nefesh brings what is above miracles. (§17)

8. ★★ What does hiddur mitzvah mean? Give the Rebbe's mashal.

He doesn't do the mitzvah only because he must. He enjoys it and does it with desire and life, so he looks to make it nicer. A servant who has no feeling for the king's order does just what he must, but if it is dear to him, he beautifies it. (§18)

9. ★★★ What is still “missing” in hiddur that mesirus nefesh has?

With hiddur, the person is still there as himself: there is enjoyment and a “me” who wants. With mesirus nefesh he has no self at all. His whole being is only to do Hashem's will. (§18)

10. ★★ How does a person with mesirus nefesh feel about who does the job?

He doesn't care whether he is the one who thinks, speaks or does. He only wants it done, by him or by someone else. (§18)

11. ★★★ Why does Chanukah specifically have mehadrin min hamehadrin? Who has mesirus nefesh?

On Chanukah the Jews stood with mesirus nefesh, and Hashem answered with a miracle that has nothing to do with “reality”, only His love. That in turn woke mesirus nefesh in the Jews, which every Jew has, even the “lightest of the light”, when it is aroused. Mehadrin min hamehadrin means total self-nullification. (§18)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

How the Gulag Judge Lit the Menorah

Reb Mordechai Chanzin spent 21 years in Soviet prisons and camps for keeping Yiddishkeit alive. One Chanukah in Siberia, 18 Jewish prisoners secretly made a menorah: margarine for oil, threads from their prison clothes for wicks. As the oldest, Reb Mordechai lit the first candle in a garden shed, with tears in his eyes.

Suddenly guards burst in. At the trial the prosecutor declared: "You lit candles to signal the enemy. The penalty is death." "Just me, or all of us?" asked Reb Mordechai. "All of you." He broke down sobbing, over his friends.

The judge called him closer. "What do you have to say?" "We are Jews, and we lit candles for Chanukah." "Chanukah candles?" the judge repeated, shaken. He sent the guards out. "Let me show you how to light Chanukah candles." One by one he burned all the papers of the case in a small lamp. "You see? This is how you light Chanukah candles." Then, trembling, he whispered: "I too am a Jew. Make sure future generations know to light Chanukah candles."

Source: Asharon Baltazar, "How the Gulag Judge Lit the Menorah" (chabad.org), from *Sichat HaShavua* 1248 and *Sippur Shel Chag*

Think: How does the story show the mesirus nefesh of §§17-18, and the spark in "every Jew"?

The prisoners lit at the risk of their lives, with no thought for themselves. And their mesirus

nefesh woke the hidden Jewish spark even in a Soviet judge, who risked himself to save them.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't just do mitzvos, and don't only do them nicely. Give yourself over completely, like Chanukah's mehadrin min hamehadrin. And care only that the good thing gets done, not who gets the credit.

For example: Your class is putting on a Chanukah program for the elderly. Someone else gets to speak, and your job is carrying chairs and setting up the menorah. Do it with your whole heart. What matters is that the old people have a beautiful Chanukah, not whose name is on it.