

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Mishpatim

פרשת משפטים

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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.

Don't Be a Lost Sheep!

שה פזורה ישראל

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Mishpatim, p. 155ff, sections 1-8. From sichos of Simchas Torah and Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5715 (1954).

The point: *Every Jew is a shomer of Hashem's pikadon, the neshamah. The animal soul (ox, donkey, sheep, garment) can make him "lose" it until he calls "hu" "zeh". Our generation's kelipah is the "scattered sheep": a Jew who should lead his whole surroundings lets the neighbor be his posek, and even hides his child's Jewishness. The lost sheep is the hardest to return, but nothing stands before teshuvah: through Moshe of each generation he "pays double", and even the animal soul helps.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What case is the posuk "al kol dvar pesha... yeshalem shnayim lerei'ehu" about, according to the Gemara?

A watchman who claimed the deposit was lost: a shomer chinam claims theft or loss, a shomer sachar claims oness, and he swore to it. Then it came out that he had been negligent and had sworn falsely, and the halachah is "he shall pay double to his fellow." (§1)

- ★ Why do these halachos exist in ruchniyus too?

Everything in the revealed Torah also exists spiritually. In fact, it is because they exist in ruchniyus that they show up in nigleh. (§1)

- ★ What pikadon does every Jew hold, and what must he do with it?

The neshamah. He must guard it so it stays whole, and even raise it higher than it was before coming down, since the descent is for the sake of an ascent. (§2)

- ★★ What oath is connected with guarding the neshamah?

Before the neshamah comes down, "they make it swear: be a tzaddik and not a rasha" (Niddah 30b). (§2)

- ★★ How does a person come to "lose" the pikadon, according to the posuk?

Through "the ox, the donkey, the sheep and the garment", kinds of animal soul, which lead to "al kol aveidah", losing the G-dly soul, until "asher yomar ki hu zeh": about "hu" he says "zeh". (§2)

6. ★★★ Give the two reasons “zeh” can truly be said only about Hashem.

(1) “Zeh” = this itself: a creature’s existence isn’t its own but the G-dly life that creates it from nothing every moment (“there is nothing truly existing besides Him”). (2) “Hinei zeh”, here it is, at every time and place: only Hashem is everywhere (“there is no place empty of Him”). Because of the concealment of the animal soul, a person can swap and call “hu” “zeh”. (§2)

7. ★★ What does each animal mean, as the Tzemach Tzedek explains? Which one is our generation’s?

Shor = the goring ox; chamor = “in the heat of Tammuz it feels cold”; salmah = “uveged bogdim bagadu”, betrayal; seh = “seh pezurah Yisroel”, a scattered sheep. Every time has its own kelipah, and the “seh” is the one that concerns our generation most. (§3)

8. ★★ Why does the navi say “seh pezurah” and “Yisroel” together? What was Haman’s claim?

“Yisroel” is a title of greatness: one who rules over men and even angels. So how can he be dragged after everyone like a scattered sheep? That was Haman’s claim before Hashem: a people that is “echad” is “scattered and spread among the nations”, impressed by everyone, and so “they don’t keep the King’s laws”. (§4)

9. ★★ What should a Jew do wherever he goes, and what happens instead?

He should lead the whole city, surroundings and country spiritually. Instead he loses his bearings and is influenced, copying the foolishness of the country and the city; instead of the Shulchan Aruch, the surroundings and the neighbor become his “posek”. (§5)

10. ★★ How does the lack of firmness show itself in chinuch?

In Mitrayim, the worst galus, the Yidden stood out: they didn’t change their names, language and dress. Today people look for tricks so a child won’t look Jewish. A Jewish child walking in the street should be recognized from far away as a Jew. (§6)

11. ★★★ The Gemara asks why the Torah needs to mention a lost seh. Explain the answer in avodah.

Ox (goring), donkey (cold), garment (betrayal): it is a chiddush that even they can do teshuvah.

The "seh" is only scattered, so isn't it obvious? The answer: "a lost seh is hardest". Without the

base of all four parts of the Shulchan Aruch, "don't be embarrassed by those who mock", how will

he get to the Shulchan Aruch? The chiddush is that even such a loss can be returned: nothing

stands before teshuvah. (§7)

12. ★★ What are the psak and the remedy, "ad haElokim yavo... yeshalem shnayim"?

The case comes to the judge, Moshe and the Moshe of every generation, who gives the strength for

proper teshuvah. "Lerei'ehu" is Hashem: he pays double ("if he used to learn one page, let him

learn two"). Then his sins become merits, and even the animal soul helps: the ox ("rav tevuos

b'koach shor"), the donkey (Yissachar's kabbalas ol), the sheep ("mashcheini acharecha") and the

garment ("rei'ach salmosayich"): "with both your yetzers". (§8)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“Imitate the Hippies”

In the 1960s, Yosef Krupnik was a young yeshivah student who wanted to start growing a beard, according to established Jewish custom. But he hesitated, because in his non-Chassidic community it wasn't accepted.

The Rebbe pointed him to an unexpected place: the hippies. “The Jewish slaves in Egypt had sunk to the forty-ninth level of impurity,” the Rebbe said, “but because they kept their own language, their Hebrew names and their distinctive way of dress, they didn't sink all the way down to the fiftieth level.”

Then he went on: “What about the leaders of the hippies, aren't they all Jewish? Don't they all have Jewish names? And don't they wear distinctive dress? When you see a hippie walking down the street you know who he is because of the way he dresses, which is exactly how the Egyptians identified the Jews back then. And don't they have their own special jargon? So who says they are unworthy of imitation in this one thing, their beards?”

“Throughout this,” Krupnik recalls, “the Rebbe had a big smile on his face, and he was even chuckling. He was having fun, but I was getting the point.” He has worn an unshorn beard ever since.

Source: Yosef Krupnik, in JEM's My Story, as collected in “5 Surprising Answers From the Rebbe” (chabad.org)

Think: How did the Rebbe use “they didn't change their names, language and dress” (§6)? What was the bochur's “seh pezurah”?

Even people far from Torah aren't embarrassed to look different. The bochur was letting his

community's style be his “posek”; the Rebbe showed him that standing out as what you are is

exactly what kept the Yidden in Mitzrayim.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't be a scattered sheep pulled after everyone. You are “Yisroel”: lead your surroundings, don't follow them, and be recognizable as a Jew from far away.

For example: On a family trip to a ballgame you're tempted to tuck in your tzitzis and swap your kippah for a cap, so you won't stand out. Keep them on proudly. People can see who you are, and that's a good thing.

Hashem's Loan to You!

אם כסף תלוה את עמי

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Mishpatim, p. 158ff, sections 9–14. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim 5712 (1952).

The point: *"Im kesef talveh" is an obligation, and what Hashem commands He does Himself. He lends every Jew powers to use for his shlichus and "return" through Torah and mitzvos. It is a loan, not a borrowed object: "a loan is given to be spent", so it is fully ours, even for lower matters. So even someone far from perfect, even on a day he stumbled, must not skip his shiur in Chassidus, the jewel in the King's crown. The power comes from Hashem's essential love ("ami kodem", "kesef" = longing), so it reaches everyone, even the broken "poor man", and Hashem doesn't press like a creditor.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ Is "im kesef talveh" optional, since it says "if"?

No. Chazal (Mechilta, brought by Rashi) say that although it says "if", it is a mitzvah and an obligation. (§9)

2. ★★ How do we know that Hashem Himself also "lends"?

"Magid devarav l'Yaakov, chukav umishpatav l'Yisroel": Chazal say that what Hashem commands Yisroel to do, He does. "His chukim and mishpatim" are the ones He Himself keeps. (§9)

3. ★ What is a loan, and how does Hashem "lend" to a Jew?

Money is given to someone who isn't owed it and gives nothing back now, but it isn't a gift; he must return it later. So Hashem gives a Jew abilities and powers, and asks that they be used to complete his shlichus, "returning" them through His chukim and mishpatim. (§10)

4. ★★ What is the difference between she'eilah (borrowing an object) and halva'ah (a loan)? Why is Hashem's gift called a loan?

A borrowed object must be returned itself and never becomes the borrower's. A loan "is given to be spent": it becomes fully his, to use for all his needs. Hashem's gift is called a loan because Jews can take the power and use it in their own matters, even low ones. (§11)

5. ★★ What do some people think about learning Chassidus?

That first a person must be completely careful in every small detail of divrei sofrim and hiddur mitzvah. As long as he fears he isn't there, and especially if he knows he sometimes stumbles, even in a d'Rabbanan or a d'Oraisa, in a "do" or a "don't", he isn't fit to learn Chassidus, work on davening, or any lofty matters. (§12)

6. ★★★ How does "a loan is given to be spent" answer them?

Chassidus is very precious: the Alter Rebbe compared it to the jewel in the King's crown, without which the crown isn't a crown. Still, every Jew is allowed to take the King's crown and use it. However low his level, he may not miss a single day of his shiur in Chassidus, even on a day he stumbled in a d'Oraisa, and not only the avodah parts but even the deepest intellectual parts. (§12)

7. ★★ Why does Hashem give this power, "es ami"? What does "ami venochri, ami kodem" show?

Since Chazal need to say "My people come first", there is room to think otherwise. So the power comes from a level where the service of creations doesn't matter ("I don't know which He desires, the deeds of tzaddikim or of resha'im"), and only Hashem's essential choice of Jewish souls makes "ami kodem". (§13)

8. ★★★ Explain "Halo ach Esav l'Yaakov... va'ohav es Yaakov" at that level.

There the deeds of those below don't count, so they are "brothers", equal. Still, because of Hashem's essential choice and love, "I love Yaakov." (§13)

9. ★★ What does "kesef" hint at here?

Love and longing, as in "nichsof nichsafta": the loan of power isn't because of our avodah, but because of Hashem's essential love for the Jewish people. (§13)

10. ★★ Who receives this power? What does “es he’ani imach” teach?

Every Jew, because at its source a lack of avodah did no damage. Even the “poor man”, who looks at his state and is crushed, with good reason, must know that he too was given power from Above. The essential love reaches everyone, and Hashem dwells especially in a broken heart. (§14)

11. ★★ What does “lo sihyeh lo kinosheh” mean, here and Above?

If the borrower can’t pay, demanding only distresses him, so it is forbidden; you may not even pass in front of him in a way that weighs on him. So Above: when the “left line” and suffering don’t help (“why be struck more?”), Hashem starts with the right line, closeness with kindness, mercy and open, revealed good. (§14)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Strength in a Box

Yossi Ben Hanan was a general in the IDF who had decided it was time to move on. He planned to retire and look for a career in the private sector, but the chief of staff wanted him to stay and become commander of the armored corps. When he met the Rebbe, he asked whether the time had come for him to leave the army.

“I remember his answer to this very day,” he relates. The Rebbe said: “You should fulfill your obligation in defending the Land, by protecting the integrity of the Land of Israel, the integrity of the Nation of Israel and the integrity of the Torah.”

“Rebbe,” he answered, “I hope G-d will give me the strength to defend all three.”

The Rebbe replied: “Strength, you already have. But when strength is locked in a box, it is the opposite of strength. I certainly need not explain this to a general.”

Yossi Ben Hanan went back and served in the IDF, fulfilling his duty with great devotion and skill.

Source: Yossi Ben Hanan, in JEM’s My Story, as collected in “5 Surprising Answers From the Rebbe” (chabad.org)

Think: How is “strength, you already have” the idea of “im kesef talveh” (§§10–11)?

Hashem has already lent every Jew real powers, and they are fully his to use (“a loan is given to be spent”). Power locked in a box isn’t used for the shlichus; the loan is “returned” only by using it.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Hashem lent you real kochos, and they're yours to use. The "crown jewel" of Chassidus is yours too, even on a bad day.

For example: You lost your temper with your brother this morning and think, "I'm not the type to learn Tanya today." Learn your daily shiur anyway. That is exactly when the King's crown is lent to you.

Lend to Hashem!

מלוה ה' חונן דל

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Mishpatim, p. 160f, section 15. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Mishpatim, Parshas Shekalim 5718 (1958).

The point: *Giving to the poor is a loan to Hashem, and He repays by His measure: without limit. Creations can't be actually infinite, yet a giving that never weakens over time is "the unlimited drawn into the limited". Gemilus chassadim is greater than tzedakah because it is for rich and poor alike, so it needs no poor man. So everyone should lend money to the Gemilus Chassadim fund, for as long as possible, like the half shekel in which all of Israel took part.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What does the Midrash Tanchuma say about "im kesef talveh es ami, es he'ani imach"?

It is a loan to Hashem: "malveh Hashem chonen dal". By being kind to the poor with tzedakah, a person lends to Hashem. (§15)

2. ★ How does Hashem repay?

By His own measure. Hashem is without limit, so He repays without limit. (§15)

3. ★★ What does the Tzemach Tzedek explain at the start of Sefer HaChakirah (mentioned at the Yud Shvat farbrengen)?

Actual infinity doesn't exist in creations: however much you add, it stays limited in the end. But that is only in actuality; in potential, Hashem can give more and more, generation after generation, without end. (§15)

4. ★★★ What is the deeper point about time, and what is "drawing the unlimited into the limited"?

Something limited in time begins its end, change or weakness, long before ("creations from the day they were created keep drying up"). So a flow that goes on for a long time with no weakening at all is beyond limits, actual infinity. That is drawing the unlimited into the limited. (§15)

5. ★ How important is tzedakah?

"Tzedakah is equal to all the mitzvos." (§15)

6. ★★ Why is gemilus chassadim greater than tzedakah?

Chazal say: tzedakah is for the poor; gemilus chassadim is for both the poor and the rich. (§15)

7. ★★★ Why must there be rich and poor for tzedakah, but not for gemilus chassadim?

If everyone were rich, who would receive tzedakah (“chesed ve’emes man yintzeruhu”, “the needy will not cease”)? Gemilus chassadim doesn’t need a poor man, since it is for the rich too, so it fits “there will be no needy among you”. (§15)

8. ★★ What meeting was held that night, and what did the Rebbe say about its name?

The meeting of the “Chevra Gemilus Chassadim Shomrei Shabbos”. The name “Shomrei Shabbos” isn’t really precise: just as gemilus chassadim makes no difference between poor and rich, there shouldn’t be other differences either. Apparently it describes the goal. (§15)

9. ★★ What did the Rebbe ask everyone to do?

Everyone should take part and lend money to the fund for the longest time possible, so the fund can lend larger sums, and all the participants will do the mitzvah of gemilus chassadim. Just as there are no limits on who borrows, there are none on who takes part. (§15)

10. ★★ How does this connect to Parshas Shekalim, read that day?

The Alter Rebbe said to “live with the times”, with the Torah reading of the time; in the half shekel, all of Israel took part. (§15)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“The Gemach Grants You Time”

Rabbi Shneur Zalman Gorelik was one of the first students of Tomchei Temimim, the yeshivah the Rebbe Rashab founded in the village of Lubavitch in 1897. Later he became the first rav of Kfar Chabad, taking the position at the age of 70. From his own salary he set up and ran a gemach, a free-loan fund, which helped many struggling immigrant families build the Lubavitch center in Eretz Yisroel.

“Besides the mitzvah of free loans,” he once told a friend, “the gemach helps me do my work as a rav. I am not young, and it is hard for me to visit homes as an active rav should. When people come for a loan, I can help them with guidance about their families, their finances and their spiritual growth.”

But at his first yechidus, when he was already eighty years old, he mentioned that the gemach took up too much of his time.

The Rebbe replied: “To the contrary. The gemach grants you additional time.”

And Rabbi Gorelik was indeed granted much time, living well into his nineties.

Source: *Eli & Malka Touger, “The gemach grants you additional time”, To Know and to Care (Sichos in English / chabad.org)*

Think: How was Rabbi Gorelik’s long life “Hashem repays by His measure” (§15)?

By lending to people he was lending to Hashem, and Hashem repaid beyond any limit, even in the very thing the gemach seemed to take from him: time.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Lending is gemilus chassadim, even greater than tzedakah, because anyone can do it for anyone. When you lend, you lend to Hashem, and He repays without limit.

For example: A classmate was out sick for a week. Lend him your notes and spend recess going over them with him, even though he isn’t “poor”. Or start a class gemach of pens, chargers and siddurim.