

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Pesach

חג הפסח

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.

Why Does Matbilin Come First?

מה נשתנה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Chag HaPesach, p. 244ff, sections 1–4. From the sicha of Pesach 5716 (1956).

The point: *The Chabad order of the four questions is matbilin, matzah, maror, mesubin. It doesn't follow importance (matzah d'Oraisa, maror d'Rabbanan nowadays, mesubin = freedom, matbilin only a minhag), nor the order the child sees things (heseibah comes already at Kiddush). Some say: d'Oraisa needs mesirus nefesh, d'Rabbanan too ("lo sasur"), but minhagim are optional, and in chinuch we may sometimes drop them to focus on the basics. The order of the questions answers them: the first thing a child notices and is impressed by is a minhag! If a child behaves just like his non-Jewish surroundings, then even if he learns and keeps mitzvos, the kedushah won't be felt, and in time even his mitzvos can weaken. Minhag Yisroel is Torah (even women's customs), so don't weigh "which is more important". And it is chinuch's first foundation: the child must know he is different, a Jew, "Atah bechartanu", which leads to "v'keiravtanu... la'avodasecha". Then "avadim hayinu", and Hashem will take us out to the complete Geulah, "shir chadash".*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What is the order of the four questions by Chabad custom?

Matbilin, matzah, maror, mesubin. (§1)

2. ★★ Why doesn't the order fit the importance of the things?

By importance it should be: matzah (d'Oraisa), maror (d'Rabbanan nowadays), mesubin (freedom), and only last matbilin, which is just a minhag. (§1)

3. ★★ Why doesn't it fit the order the child sees things?

Matbilin should come last (the main dipping is the second), or at least after mesubin, since we already lean at Kiddush before the first dipping. (§1)

4. ★★ What do "some people" say about minhagim and chinuch?

D'Oraisa needs full strength, even mesirus nefesh; d'Rabbanan too ("lo sasur"); but minhagim are only "if it's easy". In chinuch, where success is hard, it's worth sometimes ignoring minhagim to focus on the main things. (§2)

5. ★★★ How does the order of the questions answer them?

The first thing a child asks about, notices, and is impressed by is not d'Oraisa or d'Rabbanan but a minhag Yisroel. That is what catches his eye and influences him most. (§2)

6. ★★★ What happens if a child acts just like his non-Jewish surroundings, even if he learns and keeps mitzvos?

Since you can't tell he's a Jew and the difference between Yisroel and the nations isn't felt, the kedushah of his Torah and mitzvos won't be felt either; and when the foundation is damaged, his actual mitzvos may weaken over time. (§2)

7. ★★ Why shouldn't we weigh which minhag is "more important"?

"Minhag Yisroel Torah hu", even a custom of women. As it says, "orach chaim pen tefaleis": don't weigh the paths of life. (§3)

8. ★★ Why are minhagim the first foundation of chinuch?

The child must know he is different, a Jew. Minhagim stand out and plant "Atah bechartanu mikol ha'amim", which leads to "v'keiravtanu Malkeinu la'avodasecha", the basis of all Torah. ("Shimushah gadol mi'limudah.") (§3)

9. ★★ What do we say when children are raised properly, with mesirus nefesh even for minhagim?

"Avadim hayinu... vayotzi'einu", and now too, despite the double darkness of galus, He will take us out to great light, and we'll sing "shir chadash": the complete Geulah. (§4)

10. ★★★ Why "shir chadash" (masculine) and not "shirah chadashah"?

Songs in the feminine are for redemptions followed by galus. "Shir" in the masculine is the complete and true Geulah with no galus after it. (§4)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

My Son's Badge of Honor

Mindy Rubenstein and her husband grew up in Florida, in a place where a kipah in public was almost unheard of. As young parents they discovered Torah-observant Judaism, and slowly changed their whole lives, to the surprise of family and friends.

Their five-year-old son, who doesn't know any other life, almost always wears his black velvet kipah, and sometimes tzitzis. At first his parents had him take it off when they weren't going somewhere "Jewish". But now it's a given, and "his little head looks naked without it."

For him, she writes, the kipah is a badge of honor. Adults glance at it; children turn their heads to look. His father explains to anyone who asks: it reminds us that Hashem is everywhere, who we are as Jews, and to be good people.

And the boy is leading the family: "My husband also wears a kipah more and more, in large part because of our son." His mother feels they must look and act their best when he wears it, "an example for Jews everywhere".

Source: Mindy Rubenstein, "My Son's Badge of Honor" (chabad.org, *The Jewish Woman*)

Think: How does this story show that a minhag is the first thing that shapes a child (§§2-3)?

The kipah, a minhag Yisroel, is what makes the boy feel and look different, "Atah bechartanu". It

shapes how he acts, and even brings his parents closer to Torah.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Never treat a minhag as "just a minhag". Chassidishe customs are what make you visibly a Jew, and that's the foundation for all your Torah and mitzvos.

For example: Wear your yarmulke and tzitzis proudly on a family trip, and keep the minhagim of the seder (like not dipping matzah) carefully, even ones your friends skip.

Like Seventy Years Old!

הרי אני כבן שבעים שנה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Chag HaPesach, p. 246ff (Hebrew edition p. 233), sections 5–8. From the sicha of the second night of Pesach 5718 (1958).

The point: *“Harei ani k’veen shivim shanah”*: the Gemara says R’ Elazar ben Azaryah was really much younger, but eighteen rows of white hair grew and he looked old, hence “like”. Then why “v’lo zachisi”, since being 70 would be a reason the halachah should follow him, but he only looked old? Because a mashal comes from its nimshal: he looked old because spiritually he was 70, counting his previous gilgul (Siddur Arizal). His spiritual “age” was connected to Torah, and Torah rules even over the physical, so it showed even in his hair. The lesson: most souls today have been here before. When a task seems beyond your strength, know that the good of your earlier gilgul can be revealed and help you, in thought, speech and action too. What about the bad from before? Good is eternal (a mitzvah lasts forever); bad isn’t real, just concealment, wiped out by punishment or teshuvah, and with teshuvah out of love it becomes merit. That’s why our generation, carrying the good of all past generations, will merit Moshiach.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ Why does R’ Elazar ben Azaryah say “like” seventy years old?

He was really much younger, but eighteen rows of white hair grew on him and he looked like an old man. (§5)

2. ★★★ What is the question on “v’lo zachisi”?

His surprise that the halachah wasn’t like him seems based on his being old (70 years of effort). But if he only looked old, the argument falls apart! (§5)

3. ★★★ How does the Rebbe answer?

A mashal comes from its nimshal: he looked old because spiritually he really was 70, counting the years of his first gilgul (Siddur Arizal). So he should have merited that the halachah follow him. (§6)

4. ★★ Why did his spiritual age show even in his hair?

His spiritual “old age” was connected with Torah (the halachah following him), and Torah rules over the physical too. As the Yerushalmi says, the world’s reality changes according to the Torah’s ruling. (§6)

5. ★ What is true about most souls in our generation?

They aren't new souls; most have been in the world before in a gilgul. (§6)

6. ★★ What should you think when a job seems beyond your strength?

The good from your previous gilgul can be revealed in you and help, not only in mind and feelings but also in thought, speech and action in daily life. (§6)

7. ★★★ But won't the bad from the previous gilgul join too?

No. Good is eternal: a mitzvah lasts forever ("this unity Above is eternal"). Bad isn't a real existence, only concealment; once punished or repented, it's gone, and teshuvah out of love turns sins into merits. (§7)

8. ★★ How can our generation merit Moshiach when earlier, greater generations didn't?

Our generation contains the good of all the earlier generations, so precisely now we will merit Moshiach. (§8)

9. ★★ Which parts of a person are compared to the "hair", and why?

The outer powers (thought, speech and action), as opposed to the inner powers of mind and feeling. Hair is "secondary to the flesh", external. (§§6–7)

10. ★ In one line: why should you never say "this is too hard for me"?

Because your soul carries eternal good from before, and Hashem gives you the strength. (§§6–8)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Baby Who Was a Grandfather

Before he was known to the world, the Baal Shem Tov earned a meager living hauling clay. When his old horse was dying, he went to Baruch, a generous man near Uman who gave poor people fresh horses and hosted travelers lavishly. Baruch invited him for Shabbos.

On Motzei Shabbos Baruch saw a strange light in the guest room. Peeking in, he saw his guest saying Tikkun Chatzos in tears, and beside him a tall man in white, glowing. Baruch fainted.

Reviving him, the Baal Shem Tov told him that he and his wife would have a son, a tzaddik and leader. Who was the man in white? "Your holy ancestor, the Maharal of Prague. His soul is coming into the world again. That will be your son. Name him Aryeh Leib."

At the bris, dressed as a simple peasant, the Baal Shem Tov gave a blessing: "I remember my father explained 'Avraham was zaken': Avraham was the grandfather of all of us. May this child be a grandfather to the Jewish people!" Everyone laughed, but the name stuck. He became known as the Shpoler Zeide, the "grandfather".

Source: Zalman Ruderman, "The Story of the Baby Who Was a Grandfather" (chabad.org, from Kfar Chabad magazine)

Think: How is the Shpoler Zeide like R' Elazar ben Azaryah (§6)?

Both were "old" from birth spiritually, because their souls came from an earlier life (the Maharal in a new gilgul), and that "age" showed outwardly, in the Zeide's very name.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Your soul isn't new; it carries eternal good. When something seems too hard, know you have hidden strengths, and use them.

For example: You're asked to lead the class siyum or speak at a farbrengen and think "I can't". You can. Prepare, daven, and you'll be surprised what comes out.

The Wise Son Next to the Wicked Son!

אחד חכם ואחד רשע

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Chag HaPesach, p. 247ff (Hebrew edition p. 235), sections 9–21. Compiled from the sichos of Pesach 5712–5717 (1952–1957).

The point: *Why is the rasha listed right next to the chacham (and with a “vav”)? Why discuss the rasha at all, if “had he been there he wouldn’t have been redeemed”? Why is the main Haggadah said over the second cup (the rasha’s)? Why “begin with disgrace”, before Avraham? “Though he sinned, he is Yisrael.” The Frierdiker Rebbe: the “echad” is in every Jew, even the rasha, connected to chochmah of the soul. The duty to raise the rasha equals the duty to the others: each word of Torah affects all of it (Yisrael = yesh shishim ribo osiyos laTorah). Only the chacham can reveal the rasha’s “echad”: the highest goes lowest. So the Frierdiker Rebbe asked his closest chassidim to teach simple Jews aleph-beis. To the rasha: don’t despair, Hashem will send a chacham; be the “addition”. To the chacham: don’t say “let him perish”; make sure he influences the rasha and not the reverse; and guard against the rasha inside himself. “Bless us, our Father, all of us as one.” “Had he been there”: only in Egypt; by Torah he too will be redeemed; show him the sweetness of Torah. Over the second cup and starting with “disgrace”: the effort goes where it’s hardest, even the fifth son.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ What are the four questions on the passage of the four sons?

(1) Why is the rasha next to the chacham, with a “vav”? (2) If he wouldn’t have been redeemed, why discuss him? (3) Why is the main Haggadah said over the second cup, the rasha’s? (4) Why “begin with disgrace”, with things before Avraham? (§9)

2. ★★ What did the Frierdiker Rebbe say about “echad chacham v’echad rasha”?

The “echad”, the oneness and Jewishness, is in every Jew, even the rasha; in him it’s covered and must be revealed. It is connected to the chochmah of the soul, so the rasha is listed next to the chacham. (§10)

3. ★★ Why is the duty to raise the rasha no smaller than the duty to the chacham?

“The Torah spoke about four sons”: each word of Torah is connected to all of Torah, like a Sefer Torah missing one letter, whichever letter it is. (§11)

4. ★★★ Why does it say “though he sinned, he is Yisrael”, and not “a Jew”?

“Yisrael” = “yesh shishim ribo osiyos laTorah”, 600,000 letters. Just as the whole Torah depends on each letter, the whole Jewish people (and, kaviyachol, our Father in Heaven) depends on each Jew. (§12)

5. ★★ Who alone can reveal the “echad” in the rasha, and why?

Only the chacham: the tam and the one who doesn't know how to ask can't. “Whoever is highest goes down lowest.” (§13)

6. ★★ Why did the Frierdiker Rebbe ask his closest, greatest chassidim to teach simple Jews aleph-beis?

Because raising the “lowest” is possible only through the “highest”, the chacham. (§15)

7. ★★ What is the double lesson for the rasha and for the chacham?

Rasha: don't despair, Hashem will send a chacham; just see yourself as the “addition” (the vav) to him. Chacham: don't say “let him perish”; “all Jews are responsible for each other”. But make sure the rasha is influenced by you, not the reverse. (§16)

8. ★★★ What further warning does the chacham need?

The “rasha” is his neighbor: “the greater the person, the greater his yetzer”. He must be extra careful and ask for mercy. And by raising the rasha outside, he will overcome the rasha inside. (§17)

9. ★★ When does “Barcheinu Avinu” come, and what does it have to do with Matan Torah?

“When all of us are as one”, like at Sinai, “vayichan sham Yisrael” in the singular. Matan Torah is the purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim. (§18)

10. ★★ What do the four times “Baruch” before the four sons hint to?

Drawing down (“baruch” = hamshachah) the “echad” into each of the four sons, including the chacham, who also needs mercy. (§19)

11. ★★★ How is “had he been there he wouldn't have been redeemed” not a rejection?

Only there, in Egypt before Matan Torah, he wouldn't have been. After Sinai, “Anochi Havayah Elokecha” is engraved in every Jew, and by Torah he too will be redeemed. So we must show him the sweetness of Torah, since influence comes mainly through closeness. (§20)

12. ★★★ Why is the main Haggadah over the second cup, and why “begin with disgrace”?

The Geulah comes through “all of us as one”, so the main effort goes where it’s hardest: the

rasha’s cup. And “at first our fathers were idol worshippers” hints to the fifth son, who doesn’t

even come to the seder. Through all of them we’ll merit “shir chadash”. (§21)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“A Jew in Brooklyn Cannot Sleep”

Rabbi Chaim Tzvi Schwartz, a Holocaust survivor, was sent by the Rebbe to Brazil, where he built a Jewish school. One day parents came to him in tears: their older daughter planned to marry a non-Jew, and nothing they said helped. He spoke with her for hours, but felt it did nothing. So he called the Rebbe’s office.

Rabbi Hodakov called back: “The Rebbe says to tell the young woman that there is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because she intends to marry a non-Jew.” “Who is this Jew?” Rabbi Schwartz asked. Then he heard the Rebbe’s own voice on the line: “His name is Mendel Schneerson.”

The next morning he went to her door. “Please go away,” she said. “Just one more thing: there is a Jew in Brooklyn who cannot sleep at night because of you.” She began closing the door, then stopped. “Who is he? Do you have a picture?”

He ran home, found a photo and brought it. She turned pale. “It’s him. All week this man has been appearing in my dreams, begging me not to abandon my people. I’ve never seen him before in my life.”

Source: Aaron Dov Halprin, “A Jew in Brooklyn” (chabad.org, from Kfar Chabad magazine, translated by Yanki Tauber)

Think: How does the Rebbe show “the chacham next to the rasha” (§§13, 20)?

The “highest” went down to the one who was furthest away. Not rejecting her, but caring so deeply

that he couldn’t sleep, and through that closeness her “echad” was awakened.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

You’re not allowed to give up on any Jew. The more you know, the more you’re responsible to bring others close, with warmth, while guarding yourself.

For example: There’s a boy in your neighborhood who stopped coming to shul. Invite him to your Shabbos table, or to play ball and then learn ten minutes. Don’t lecture him: show him the sweetness.