

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Purim & Tzav

פורים · פרשת צו

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.

Above Nature!

מפני שנהנו מסעודתו

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Purim, p. 213ff, sections 1–6. From the sicha of Purim 5717 (1957).

The point: *By nature, the time of Purim was the safest in all of galus: Mordechai sat at the king's gate and Esther was queen. Yet then came the worst decree ever: the whole people, in one day, with nowhere to run. Why? "Because they enjoyed the feast of that rasha." Jews are not ruled by nature but by Torah and mitzvos. The salvation also wasn't natural: Esther's first step was "go gather all the Jews and fast", and she fasted too, though it might lessen her charm. Natural means are only a "garment"; the cause is Torah and mitzvos. The hora'ah: in a time of trouble, don't rely first on diplomacy; search your deeds and strengthen Torah, then natural efforts help. The same for each person: "ma'amin b'chai ha'olamim v'zorei'a", and in learning, success comes from siyata d'Shmaya, not talent.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ Why was the time of Purim, "by nature", the safest in galus?

Mordechai, head of the Sanhedrin, sat among the king's ministers, and Esther was the wife of the king who ruled the whole world, the only time in galus a Jewish woman was queen. (§1)

2. ★★★ Why was Haman's decree the worst ever?

Usually Jews are scattered, so one country's decree doesn't hit everyone, and Jews can flee. Even Pharaoh decreed only on the boys. Achashverosh ruled the whole world, the decree was for one day (no time to flee), and it was for all the Jews. (§1)

3. ★★ Why did the decree come, and what does it prove?

"Because they enjoyed the feast of that rasha." It proves the Jewish people and nature are different: what happens to Jews depends on Torah and mitzvos, not on natural laws. (§1)

4. ★★ What was Esther's first step, and why is it surprising?

Not a diplomatic delegation, but "go gather all the Jews in Shushan and fast for me three days". And she fasted too, though her whole importance to Achashverosh was her charm, and three days' fasting would naturally lessen it. (§2)

5. ★★★ How does the Rebbe answer: why could Esther fast?

The salvation, like the decree, wasn't natural: it came through teshuvah, and fasting is a way of teshuvah (and you may not separate from the community). Natural means are only "garments", not causes; when the cause (Torah and mitzvos) is strong enough, even a small garment brings the result. (§2)

6. ★★ What mistake do some people make about the Megillah?

They say the main way to keep the Jews safe in galus is diplomacy, and point to Esther's efforts with Achashverosh. That reads the Megillah against the truth, and denies what Jewish survival is: "even when the whole world totters, you stand." (§3)

7. ★ What should we do first in a time of trouble?

"Search your deeds": fill in what's missing and strengthen Torah and mitzvos. Only then do natural efforts help. Don't be frightened by how things look by nature. (§3)

8. ★★ How does this apply to each person's parnassah?

Everything depends on Hashem, who isn't limited by nature. You need "b'chol asher ta'aseh", a vessel for "v'veirachecha", but it's only a garment; the main thing is the brachah that comes from connecting to Hashem through Torah and mitzvos. (§4)

9. ★★★ Where is the emunah in "ma'amin b'chai ha'olamim v'zorei'a"? Even non-believers sow!

A Jew sees that everyone's fields grow by nature, yet he knows that for him it is different: like the Jewish people, he isn't bound by nature, and his sowing succeeds only in the merit of emunah and bitachon. (§5)

10. ★★ How does this apply to the "yoshvei ohel", those who learn?

Real success in Torah doesn't depend on great talent but on siyata d'Shmaya, from yiras Shamayim that leads to real toil. Then comes "u'matzasa", many times more than the effort, like a find. Without the main thing no talent helps, because it's Hashem's wisdom. (§6)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Miracle of the Wormy Seeds

In 1950 about thirty religious young men founded Moshav Komemiyut in the south of Eretz Yisroel, together with the gadol Rabbi Binyamin Mendelson. In 5711 (1950-51), the shemittah year, they were among the very few settlements that kept shemittah and didn't work the land.

When the year ended they needed seed from the sixth year, but nobody had any, except some old, wormy seed rotting in a shed at a nearby kibbutz. The kibbutzniks burst out laughing: "If you really want it, take it, free!" Rabbi Mendelson said: "Take it. The One who tells wheat to sprout from good seed can also order it to grow from inferior, wormy, leftover seed."

Because of shemittah they could only plant in Cheshvan, months after everyone else. That year the rains were late. The day after they finished planting, the sky opened up. The fields planted early grew weak and small, while theirs, from the wormy seed, was covered with an unusually large, healthy crop. Farmers came from all over the south to see "the miracle of Komemiyut".

Source: Dov Weiss, as told by Yerachmiel Tilles, "Rotten Seeds" (chabad.org)

Think: How is this "ma'amin b'chai ha'olamim v'zorei'a" (§5)?

They did their part, sowing (the "garment"), but trusted that the growth comes from Hashem and not from good seed or good timing. Because they kept the Torah, even a poor "garment" brought a great brachah.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

You're not ruled by nature. Do your hishtadlus, but know that success comes from Hashem through Torah and mitzvos. In learning, toil with yiras Shamayim and you'll "find" more than you worked for.

For example: Before a hard test: study properly, and also say a perek of Tehillim and give a coin to tzedakah. Don't say "I'm just not smart enough"; "yagata u'matzasa".

Keep the Fire Burning!

אש תמיד תוקד

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Tzav, p. 217ff, sections 7-11. §7 from the sicha of Purim 5714 (1954); §§8-11 from Shabbos Parshas Tzav 5717 (1957).

The point: *“Eish tamid tukad al hamizbeach lo sichbeh”*: the Yerushalmi says “tamid”, even on Shabbos, even in tumah. The mizbeach is your heart, and the outer mizbeach is open enthusiasm. Even on “Shabbos”, when you’re deep in understanding and think you’re above excitement, don’t let it go out; and even in “tumah”, when you feel far, keep the fire. The Maggid: “lo sichbeh”: the “no’s”, the bad things, will be extinguished. The fire must be constant, because one moment of coldness lets Amalek in. The fire below brings the fire from Above: on the eighth day of the miluim, when the fire below was complete and erased the eigel, fire came out from before Hashem. Creations are limited; only the fire from Above makes things eternal (the Mishkan stood and wasn’t taken down). So: Torah, avodah and gemilus chassadim with chayus, and then Hashem’s brachah shows even in nature.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What does the Yerushalmi learn from “tamid”?

“Tamid, even on Shabbos; tamid, even in tumah.” (§7)

2. ★★ What is the “mizbeach” in a person, and which one must always have fire?

The heart. Like the outer and inner mizbeach, there is the outside and the inside of the heart.

The command is about the outer mizbeach: open enthusiasm, a heart that burns for Hashem. (§7)

3. ★★★ Who might think “Shabbos” lets him put out the fire, and what is he told?

One busy with deep understanding of G-dliness (like Shabbos, rest and rising above the world) may

think he is above emotion and doesn’t need “fire”. He is told: “lo sichbeh, even on Shabbos.” (§7)

4. ★★ What is “even in tumah” telling someone who feels far away?

Don’t look at your situation; don’t let the eternal fire go out, work to raise the G-dly fire

inside you. And then, as the Maggid explains, “lo sichbeh”: all the “lo’s”, the bad things, will

be put out. (§7)

5. ★★ Why must the enthusiasm be constant, “tamid”?

Enthusiasm from the past, even a minute ago, isn’t enough; one moment of coldness lets the “lo”

in. That’s also why we remember Amalek every day: never let his coldness in, even for a moment.

(§8)

6. ★★ What is the connection between the fire below and the fire from Above?

Even though fire came down from Heaven, it was a mitzvah to bring fire from below: the fire below is the preparation that draws down the fire from Above, but only when it is complete. (§9)

7. ★★★ Why didn't the Shechinah rest during the seven days of the miluim?

The Mishkan, Moshe, Aharon and korbanos were all there, but the mark of the eigel remained. Only on the eighth day, when the fire below was complete and cancelled the eigel, did fire come out from before Hashem and the Shechinah rested. (§9)

8. ★★★ Why was the Mishkan put up and taken down each of the seven days, but not on the eighth?

Creations and their avodah are limited and can't be eternal on their own. Only the fire from Above, unlimited, makes it truly last. Seven = the levels of the worlds; eight = above them. (§9)

9. ★★ How can limited people receive the unlimited fire?

When a person does everything he can, even though it's limited, Hashem gives him the unlimited fire from Above. "Tamid" hints to it: the unlimited is drawn into time, and time itself becomes eternal; in nature, success above nature appears. (§10)

10. ★ What happens if a person has Torah and mitzvos but no "fire"?

Even with everything the Mishkan had, the Shechinah is missing, because it has no life, and the mark of the eigel may still be there. (§11)

11. ★★ How does the fire look in Torah, avodah and gemilus chassadim?

Torah: not one perek morning and evening to be yotzei, not mumbled, but "lo yamush", with all 248 limbs. Avodah: tefillah not as a fixed chore but as pleading for mercy. Mitzvos: not just to be yotzei, but b'hiddur, from chayus. (§11)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Fire That Didn't Go Out

A pious, learned Jew was away from home when a fire broke out late at night. By morning his house had burned to the ground.

The next day he stood at the pile of ashes and smoking embers, all that was left of everything he owned. He lifted his eyes to Heaven and began: "Baruch Atah Hashem..." Everyone around him expected him to finish with "Dayan ha'emes", the brachah a Jew says over bad news.

Instead he said one of the morning brachos: "...shelo asani goy", who did not make me a gentile. Seeing their astonished faces, he explained: "If I had been born an idol worshipper, my god would have gone up in smoke together with my house. But since Hashem, in His great kindness, made me a Jew, the G-d I serve is alive and well!"

Source: Yanki Tauber, "The Fire", From the Chassidic Masters (chabad.org)

Think: How does this Jew show "lo sichbeh, even in tumah"?

Even at the worst moment, when everything he owned was gone, his inner fire, his connection and joy in Hashem, stayed alive. That fire is what puts out every "lo".

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Keep your fire burning every day, not just at the farbrengen. Learn, daven and do mitzvos with chayus, and Hashem will add His fire from Above.

For example: After a great Shabbaton you feel on fire, and by Wednesday it's gone. Keep one "coal" burning: five minutes of Chassidus every morning before Shacharis, no matter what.

The Moon Comes Back!

החדש הזה לכם

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Tzav section, p. 219ff (Hebrew edition p. 207), sections 12-18. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas HaChodesh 5716 (1956).

The point: *The four parshiyos: Shekalim and Zachor belong to the Geulah of Purim (not complete, "we are still Achashverosh's servants"); Parah and HaChodesh to the Geulah of Pesach (complete). But Purim too is joined to Pesach, "joining geulah to geulah". Shekalim comes before Zachor because the half-shekel defeated Haman's 10,000 talents. HaChodesh should come first (1 Nissan, before the parah on 2 Nissan), but Parah, purity, comes first. Why does Rosh Chodesh need purity? Because the moon's rebirth after concealment is the Jews' renewal after galus, the Geulah, beginning on Rosh Chodesh Nissan ("hazeh" = Matan Torah = cheirus). Purity comes before Geulah. Order: Parah (purity in potential), HaChodesh (Geulah in potential), 2 Nissan (actual purity), 15 Nissan to Matan Torah (actual Geulah). Hora'ah: don't just rely on Moshiach; purify now as much as you can.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ Name the four parshiyos and which Geulah each pair belongs to.

Shekalim and Zachor belong to the Geulah of Purim; Parah and HaChodesh to the Geulah of Pesach.

(§12)

2. ★★ Why isn't Purim a complete Geulah, and how is it still connected to Pesach?

"We are still servants of Achashverosh." But "we join geulah to geulah": Purim leads to Pesach.

(§12)

3. ★★ Why are Shekalim and Zachor read when they are?

Shekalim before Rosh Chodesh Adar, when the shekalim were announced for the new year's korbanos.

Zachor before Purim, because Haman came from Amalek, and "they are remembered and done": first remembering (Zachor), then doing (Purim). (§13)

4. ★★ Why does Shekalim come before Zachor in content too?

The Gemara says that because the Jews gave the half-shekel, Haman (who offered 10,000 talents of silver) fell. Giving the shekalim early brought the miracle of Purim. (§14)

5. ★★★ Why should HaChodesh really come before Parah, and why doesn't it?

HaChodesh is about 1 Nissan, and the parah was burned on 2 Nissan, after the Mishkan was set up on 1 Nissan. But Parah is read first because it is the purification of the Jews. (§15)

6. ★★★ What does the moon's birth have to do with the Geulah?

The moon is hidden and then reborn. The Jews are compared to the moon: after all the concealment of galus they are reborn and renewed, which is the Geulah. It begins on Rosh Chodesh Nissan, "hachodesh hazeh". (§16)

7. ★★ How does "hazeh" connect HaChodesh to Matan Torah?

The same word appears at Matan Torah, "bayom hazeh ba'u midbar Sinai", and Matan Torah is Geulah too: "cheirus", freedom from the yetzer hara, the angel of death and the kingdoms. So Rosh Chodesh Nissan already has the start of the Geulah. (§16)

8. ★★ Why must purity come before the Geulah?

As the navi says, "I will sprinkle pure water upon you", and Chazal: "purity brings to... Eliyahu Hanavi." (§16)

9. ★★★ Lay out the order of purity and Geulah, in potential and in action.

Parshas Parah: purity in potential; Parshas HaChodesh / Rosh Chodesh Nissan: Geulah in potential; 2 Nissan: actual purity; 15 Nissan until Matan Torah: actual Geulah (the full moon, then its completion at Sinai). (§17)

10. ★★ Complete purity will come only with Moshiach. So why work on purity now?

Even Moshiach will have to "compel" Jews and remove the spirit of tumah. One might think we should just wait for him, so Parshas Parah teaches: prepare now, purify as much as you can ("whoever learns the laws of the chatas is as if he brought it"), and that brings the actual purity and Geulah. (§18)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Clouds Parted

One cloudy winter night in the first years of the Rebbe's leadership, a group of chassidim stood outside 770 to say Kiddush Levanah with the Rebbe. It was the fourteenth night of the month, but the sky was covered with clouds.

As they waited, the Rebbe told them a story. Reb Meir of Premishlan and his chassidim were once in the same situation: the last night to bless the moon, and clouds everywhere. Reb Meir asked: "How did the Jews say Kiddush Levanah in the midbar? Their camp was covered by the Clouds of Glory!" His chassidim were silent. "Moshe Rabbeinu took a handkerchief, waved it toward the place of the moon, and the clouds parted." Then Reb Meir took out his own handkerchief, waved it at the clouds, and they moved apart, revealing the full moon.

"Perhaps it can happen again," the Rebbe said. "Can somebody here do the same thing?" One elder chassid boldly answered that the Rebbe should do it. The Rebbe quietly went into his room. Seconds later the clouds parted and the bright moon shone out. As the Rebbe came out to say the brachah, the chassidim whispered that he must have waved a handkerchief from his room.

Source: Eli & Malka Touger, "The Rebbe's Kiddush Levanah", *To Know and to Care (Sichos in English / chabad.org)*

Think: How is the moon coming out from behind the clouds like what §16 teaches about the Jewish people?

Just as the moon is hidden and then renewed, the Jews, after all the concealment of galus, are

renewed in the Geulah. And the clouds part when Jews do their part to bring the light.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't just wait for Moshiach: get ready now. Purify yourself and your surroundings as much as you can, and the "moon" will shine.

For example: Clean up one thing that doesn't belong in a Jewish boy's life (a game, an app, a way of talking), and replace it with something that brings light, like learning the laws of Pesach.