

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Shemini

פרשת שמני

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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.

Split Hooves and Chewing the Cud!

מפרסת פרסה ומעלת גרה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Shemini, p. 222ff, sections 1-9. Compiled from the sichos of Shabbos Parshas Re'eh 5710 (1950) and Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5716 (1956).

The point: *A kosher animal chews its cud and has split hooves. Are these signs the cause of its purity, or only signs that show it? (Born from a kosher animal it is kosher even without signs; playing with kosher food; the Livyasan; the marsh hen, which grows from the earth.) Either way they're connected to purity, since everything is hashgachah pratis. Forbidden foods would become "blood and flesh" in us, so the signs teach how a person must act. The test is only for the "animal", the nefesh habehamis, in physical matters (Torah and mitzvos are done even shelo lishmah). Even within Torah one can be a "naval birshus haTorah". Only the feet touch the ground: the head must not be in "galoshes" (the Rebbe Rashab). A hoof separates you from earthiness, but it must be split, so Hashem shines through even in worldly things. Split in two: the right hand draws close, the left pushes away; bring people to Torah, never change Torah for them (a lost man in the forest strays a hair at a time). Chewing the cud: think it over before acting. Birds need a mesorah: don't rely on your own mind; be connected to a Rebbe.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What are the two signs of a kosher animal?

It chews its cud (ma'aleh geirah) and has split hooves (mafris parsah). (§1)

- ★★★ What is the question about the signs, and what halachic difference does it make?

Are they the cause of purity, or only signs that show it? If only signs, then "what comes from a kosher animal is kosher" (even without signs) makes sense; if they're the cause, that rule is a gezeiras hakasuv. The difference: you may not play with kosher food, but one whose purity is a gezeiras hakasuv (like the Livyasan, "to play with it") you may. (§1)

- ★★★ What proof does the marsh hen (tarnegol d'agma) give?

It is forbidden despite coming from a kosher bird, because the chick "grows from the earth", so it has its own signs of tumah. That shows the signs cause purity, and the rule "comes from the kosher" is a gezeiras hakasuv. (§2)

- ★★ Why does the Torah forbid certain foods, and what does that teach about the signs?

Food becomes "blood and flesh like his own flesh", so the Torah forbids foods whose bad qualities would pass into us. So the signs of a kosher animal show how a person must behave: "split hooves and chew the cud". (§3)

5. ★★ Why does the “test” apply only to the nefesh habehamis and physical things, not to Torah and mitzvos?

One must learn and do mitzvos even shelo lishmah, because “from shelo lishmah comes lishmah.” The test of purity is only for the “animal” in a person: his physical matters. (§4)

6. ★★ What does “naval birshus haTorah” mean?

The Ramban: a person can seem to be within the Torah’s permission and still be disgusting, because he really transgresses “kedoshim tihyu”. So even a life “by Torah” can be an “unkosher animal”. (§4)

7. ★★ What did the Rebbe Rashab say to the talented chassid in the galoshes business?

“Feet stuck in galoshes I have already seen, but a head in galoshes...!” Only the feet, the power of action, should touch the earth, and only as much as needed; never the head. (§5)

8. ★★★ Why must the hoof be split all the way down?

The hoof separates the feet from earthiness, but that barrier must be split so that G-dliness shines even in worldly matters (“even in earthly matters they will not be separated from the One”), all the way down. (“Beheimah” = “basar hayored min haShamayim”.) (§6)

9. ★★★ What does the two-part hoof teach, and what mistake does it correct?

“The right hand draws close, the left pushes away.” Some say: to draw Jews near, make Torah easier or change it to fit the times. True, we must bring every Jew to Torah, but “umekarvan laTorah” means bring them to Torah, not drag the Torah to them. One may not change even a small detail, and in the end the mekarvim themselves get pulled away. (§7)

10. ★★ What was the Frierdiker Rebbe’s mashal of the man lost in the forest?

He didn’t walk straight into the forest. He left the King’s road by a hair’s breadth, then another hair, and another, until he was deep in the forest among wild animals. (§7)

11. ★ What does “chewing the cud” teach?

Before any physical action, “chew it over”: check once and twice whether to do it and how. Only then is the “animal” kosher. (§8)

12. ★★★ Why does a bird need a mesorah, and what does it teach?

Don't rely on your own mind: one can learn Shulchan Aruch, even go beyond the letter of the law by his own reasoning, and still be in the depths. You need "mesorah", giving yourself over and being connected to a Rebbe, a "tzayad" who knows the yetzer hara's tricks. (§9)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

One Small Favor

Rabbi Chaim Gutnick was a famous speaker in Australia. In 1965 he told the Rebbe that after thousands of speeches he didn't feel he was changing anyone's life.

The Rebbe said: "If you speak sincerely and with passion, your words will enter people's hearts, whether you know it or not. But if you want to see results, speak about practical things. Don't just talk about Shabbos or kashrus in general; ask the audience to actually do something, even one little thing."

Rabbi Gutnick started at once. Speaking about Shabbos, he asked those who weren't observant to give up one thing, smoking on Shabbos: "Do me a personal favor."

Soon after, a Holocaust survivor he knew, not observant, came to shul three Shabbosim in a row. Rabbi Gutnick asked what brought him. "I decided to do you the favor and not smoke on Shabbos at work. Then I thought: if I'm giving up cigarettes because it's Shabbos, what am I doing sitting in my office? So I came here. Maybe I'll even make Kiddush."

Source: Mordechai Gutnick, "The Main Thing is Action", *Here's My Story* (JEM / chabad.org)

Think: How is this "umekarvan laTorah" (§7), bringing them to Torah and not the Torah to them?

Rabbi Gutnick didn't water down Shabbos. He gave a real piece of the Torah, one practical mitzvah, and that small step brought the man closer, step by step, to the whole Torah.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Keep your head out of the "galoshes": in worldly things, see Hashem. Think twice before you act. Never bend the Torah to fit in, and stay connected to a Rebbe and a mashpia.

For example: Your friends say the shiur is "too frum", so let's skip it this week. Don't lower the bar. Bring them along: "Come for ten minutes, I'll get pizza after."

Kabbalas Ol — Even When You're Flying High!

מפוז ומכרכר לפני ה'

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Shemini, p. 227ff (Hebrew edition pp. 214-217), sections 10-16. §10 from the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5710 (1950); §§11-16 from Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5715 (1955).

The point: §10: *Shemini moves from the eighth day of the miluim (the Mishkan put up and not taken down; fire from Heaven), to the death of Nadav and Avihu ("ratzo" without "shov"), to the laws of sheratzim, which disgust even the mind. Why together? Even at the highest level we need kabbalas ol ("to accept My mitzvos"), because the body is still there; and the body's root is higher than understanding. Anything done by Torah's command is eternal (a "keshet shel kayama", even tefillin tied daily). §§11-16: the haftorah. On the road David "danced with all his might, girded in an eiphod bad"; in Ir David "the king leaped and danced." The linen eiphod was worn by those fit for ruach hakodesh; outside the city was for preparing for prophecy, so joy with a purpose, limited. In Ir David: joy without a goal, without limits, so leaping. Michal couldn't understand it. "Who chose me over your father": Shaul followed reason (sparing Amalek's sheep); David served with kabbalas ol and humility. So chassidim dance even on Shabbos and Yom Tov: as Moshiach nears, "David My servant".*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ What was special about the eighth day of the miluim?

"He set up the Mishkan and did not take it down", a true lasting setup, and fire came down from Heaven. (§10)

2. ★★★ Why is a knot tied by the Torah's command a "keshet shel kayama" even if it will be untied?

A command of the Torah makes a thing eternal; below it lasts only for its time, but in itself it's eternal. Even the untying, if by Torah, is eternal in its time. So even tefillin knots tied anew each day (by some opinions) are a lasting knot. (§10)

3. ★★ What was the inner meaning of the death of Nadav and Avihu?

"Ratzo" (running up toward Hashem) without "shov" (returning): a level so high that the Jews needed to be careful about their soul actually expiring. (§10)

4. ★★★ Why does the same parsha go on to forbid eating sheratzim?

Even at the highest levels one needs kabbalas ol ("I brought you up... so you accept My mitzvos"), because the body still exists. Also, the body's root is higher than understanding, so it connects with things beyond reason. (§10)

5. ★ What is the practical lesson of §10?

Always keep kabbalas ol, even when you're on a high level. Without it, over time, one can fall as low as eating sheratzim, chas v'shalom. (§10)

6. ★★ What two differences are there between David on the road and David in Ir David?

On the road: "girded in an eiphod bad" and "dancing" (mecharkeir). In Ir David: no eiphod mentioned, and "leaping and dancing" (mefazeiz umecharkeir). (§11)

7. ★★★ Who wore an "eiphod bad", according to the Rambam?

It isn't one of the priestly garments. The "sons of the prophets", those fit for ruach hakodesh, wore it, to show they had reached the level of a Kohen Gadol who speaks with ruach hakodesh. (Yerushalmi: 85 kohanim in Nov wore it, since all were fit to be Kohen Gadol.) (§12)

8. ★★ Why did David wear the eiphod and dance on the road?

Prophecy is prepared in solitude, usually outside the city. The Shechinah rests only through joy, and "dancing" also means singing praise to awaken prophecy. (§13)

9. ★★★ Why only in Ir David is "leaping" mentioned?

Dancing comes when joy fills a person all the way down to his feet. Outside, the joy had a goal (prophecy), so it was limited. In Ir David it was joy with no goal, without limits, so his whole body leaped. (§13)

10. ★★ Why couldn't Michal understand David?

Joy with a purpose fits reason (even though a king usually shouldn't lower his dignity). But leaping beyond any limit, above reason, can't be grasped by reason. (§14)

11. ★★★ Why did David answer "before Hashem who chose me over your father"?

Shaul served by reason, so he spared Amalek's best sheep "to offer to Hashem", and lost the kingdom. David's avodah was kabbalas ol ("David My servant"), "I will be lowlier still", without the limits of reason. A lasting kingdom needs kabbalas ol. (§15)

12. ★★ How does this explain the chassidic custom to dance even on Shabbos and Yom Tov?

Though in nigleh it needs a special explanation, the inner reason is: as we come closer and closer to Moshiach ("David My servant will be king over them"), we follow David's way, "leaping and dancing before Hashem", as the Rambam rules. (§16)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

"For a Jew, the Torah Is Never Too Heavy"

Chaim Cohen was a famous Israeli judge. He grew up religious and learned in yeshiva, but he left it all and called himself an "apikores".

On Simchas Torah 1975 he came to 770 for the Rebbe's hakafos. Some people were upset that he had come. Someone asked the Rebbe whether they could give him a Sefer Torah. The Rebbe answered: "A Jew wants to accept upon himself the yoke of Torah, and you want to stop him?!"

The Rebbe gave him a pasuk of Atah Hareisa to say, and a Sefer Torah for a hakafah. It was heavy, and he was 65. Someone said, "It's too heavy for him!" The Rebbe replied: "For a Jew, the Torah is never too heavy."

He held that Torah the whole hakafah, which went on for forty-five minutes, dancing and dancing, while the Rebbe stood waving his hands, encouraging him on. He never became observant, but afterwards he asked his friend to make sure he would be buried according to Torah law, and so he was, in 2002.

Source: Rabbi YY Jacobson, "Simchas Torah 5770: Elisha Ben Avuyah in 770" (TheYeshiva.net)

Think: How is this dancing like David's "leaping and dancing before Hashem"?

It was beyond reason: by logic this man had nothing to celebrate with the Torah, yet his soul, through kabbalas ol ("accepting the yoke of Torah"), danced without limits. The Rebbe saw the soul above his reasoning.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Even when you feel "high", keep kabbalas ol. Do mitzvos because Hashem said so, not only when you understand or feel like it. And serve Hashem with joy that goes beyond reason.

For example: After a great farbrengen you feel above it all, so you "don't need" the boring parts like Krias Shema al hamitah. That's exactly when kabbalas ol counts. And at the next simcha, really dance, even if it's "not cool".