

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Tazria

פרשת תזריע

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: From Above or From Below? · p. 231, §§1–14

Sicha 2: Plant It in the Ground! · p. 236, §§15–18

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.

From Above or From Below?

איש מזריע · אשה מזרעת

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Tazria, p. 231ff, sections 1-14. Adapted from the maamar "HaChodesh Hazeh Lachem" 5717 (1957).

The point: Chazal's teaching on "isha ki sazria v'yaldah zachar" describes a limit in nature that will be lifted in the future ("v'l'Tziyon yei'amar ish v'ish yulad bah"). Even now simchah shel mitzvah breaks limits ("simchah poretztes geder"), like a king who, when joyous, goes beyond his own rules. Mitzvos are Hashem's unlimited will, higher than all of Olam Haba, so they bring joy. Bavli vs. Yerushalmi on whether a later tefillah helps. Spiritually: "ish" = Hashem, "ishah" = the Jewish people. Awakening from Above (isarusa dil'eila) brings a higher light, but it doesn't last ("nekeivah"); awakening from below brings a lower light that is absorbed inside and lasts ("zachar"). In the future: both. Tishrei = elevation from below, the new year of nature, rain, teshuvah; Nissan = drawing down from Above, the new year of miracles, dew. "Bachar", not "bara": 1 Tishrei (Adam, "zeh") is higher than 25 Elul ("koh"). Why "who took you out of Egypt" at Sinai. R' Eliezer: the Geulah in Tishrei (through teshuvah); R' Yehoshua (the halachah): in Nissan, from Above, yet absorbed inside.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ What do Chazal teach on "isha ki sazria", and how will it be different in the future?

Chazal describe a natural rule for when a boy or a girl is born. Now that rule has limits; in the future the limit falls away, as the Torah Ohr explains "ish v'ish yulad bah". (§1)

2. ★★ How can simchah shel mitzvah break even this limit now?

Joy below awakens joy Above, and "simchah poretztes geder", joy breaks fences, removing the limits of the order of creation. Like a king who, when joyous, goes beyond his rules and shows himself to everyone, small and great. (§2)

3. ★★★ Why should a mitzvah bring such joy?

Mitzvos are Hashem's will, which has no limit, while even all of Olam Haba is still created and limited. "One hour of teshuvah and good deeds in this world is better than all of Olam Haba." Thinking about this brings joy and "tuv leivav", from "rov kol". (§3)

4. ★★★ What do the Bavli and Yerushalmi argue about, and how does the Rebbe explain it?

The Bavli says that after forty days such a tefillah is in vain; the Yerushalmi says it can still help, even at the end. The Bavli is "darkness" (questions), while the Yerushalmi has a taste of the future revelation, where there are no limits. (§5)

5. ★★ In the spiritual meaning, who are the “ish” and the “ishah”?

Hashem and Knesses Yisroel. The “ish” starting = an awakening from Above (isarusa dil'eila); the “ishah” starting = an awakening from below (isarusa diltata). (§7)

6. ★★★ Why does an awakening from Above alone not last, and one from below does?

If it comes only from Above, the person didn't prepare a vessel, so it doesn't take hold (“nekeivah”). If it starts with the person, he is the vessel and absorbs it inside, so it lasts (“zachar”). (§7)

7. ★★ What is the advantage of each way, and what will the future bring?

From Above: a higher, unlimited light. From below: the light is absorbed inside. In the future, “ish v'ish”: both, a light above the worlds, absorbed inside. (§8)

8. ★★ How are Tishrei and Nissan like these two ways?

Tishrei: elevation from below (teshuvah, gevurah), the new year of nature (Adam created). Nissan: drawing down from Above (chessed), the new year of miracles (Yetzias Mitzrayim). So we pray for rain in Tishrei (it depends on us, so it can be held back) and for dew in Nissan (it comes from Above and is never held back). (§9)

9. ★★★ Why does the Midrash say “mishebachar”, not “mishebara”, and what is “koh” vs. “zeh”?

“Chose” is higher than “created”. The world was created on 25 Elul (“koh”, G-dliness hidden); Hashem “chose” it on 1 Tishrei, when Adam was created, whose avodah makes the world a vessel, so we can point and say “zeh”, as Moshe prophesied with “zeh”. (§10)

10. ★★ If the slavery stopped in Tishrei, why was the Exodus in Nissan?

In Tishrei G-dliness shines as it is clothed in nature, so the slavery ended, but they were still in “Mitzrayim” (limits). Only in Nissan, when the unlimited G-dliness shines, did they leave all limits. (§10)

11. ★★ Why do the Aseres Hadibros begin “who took you out of Egypt” and not “who created heaven and earth”?

The newness of Matan Torah is that through Torah and mitzvos we connect with Hashem's essence

above the worlds: leaving all the limits of the world, like Yetzias Mitzrayim. (§11)

12. ★★★ When will the final Geulah be: Tishrei or Nissan? Explain both views.

R' Eliezer: Tishrei, because it comes through teshuvah, from below, and after Matan Torah

everything must be absorbed inside. R' Yehoshua (the halachah): Nissan, from Above, “not with

money (teshuvah)”, yet still absorbed inside, “ish v'ish yulad bah”. (§§12–14)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Music the Deaf Man Couldn't Hear

The Baal Shem Tov was once asked: “Why do chassidim burst into song and dance at the slightest reason? Is this how healthy, sane people act?”

The Baal Shem Tov answered with a story. Once a musician of great talent came to a town. He stood on a street corner and began to play. Whoever stopped to listen could not tear himself away. Soon a large crowd stood enthralled by the glorious music. Before long they were moving to its rhythm, and the whole street became a mass of dancing people.

A deaf man walked by and wondered: “Has the world gone mad? Why are all these people jumping up and down, waving their arms and turning in circles in the middle of the street?”

“Chassidim,” said the Baal Shem Tov, “are moved by the melody that comes from every creature in Hashem's world. If that makes them look mad to people with less sensitive ears, should they stop dancing?”

Source: Baruch S. Davidson and Naftali Silberberg, “Perpetual Joy: The Baal Shem Tov's Revolutionary Approach to Joy” (chabad.org)

Think: How does this show “simchah poretzes geder” (§2)?

Real simchah, from feeling Hashem's “music” (His will in every mitzvah), breaks through every

limit and makes a person dance even when others think it's strange.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't just wait for inspiration from Above. Make your own “awakening from below”, and do mitzvos with simchah, because joy breaks every limit.

For example: A Shabbaton gives you a big inspiration “from Above”, but it fades by Tuesday. Build a vessel: set your own small daily seder, and do it happily, singing a niggun before you start.

Plant It in the Ground!

אשה כי תזריע

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Tazria, p. 236ff (Hebrew edition p. 223), sections 15-18. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Shemini 5719 (1959).

The point: *The Ohr HaChaim: "ishah" = Knesses Yisroel. When she "sows" mitzvos and good deeds, "v'yaldah zachar", certainly: the future Geulah, which will last forever, unlike Yetzias Mitzrayim; "shir chadash" in the masculine. A Jew is called "ishah" because "she was taken from ish", from Hashem: nothing matters to him, not physical things and not even spiritual reward, only Hashem Himself. But then he must "sow", and sowing works only in the ground: not above ten tefachim (makifim), not even in the three tefachim near the ground (mind and feeling), but in actual deeds. Tzedakah means giving the coin, not only tears; tzitzis of real wool, tefillin of real parchment. Otherwise one could reach klos hanefesh like Nadav and Avihu. Avodah of "zachar": "ish darko lichbosh", conquer the world, "be strong as a lion, don't be ashamed of mockers". That brings "the eighth day", milah: removing the yetzer hara's seven names and Amalek, until "Hashem will circumcise your heart."*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ How does the Ohr HaChaim explain "isha ki sazria v'yaldah zachar"?

The "ishah" is Knesses Yisroel. When she sows mitzvos and good deeds, she will surely "give birth to a male": the future Geulah. That's why it says "v'yaldah", certainly, and not "if she gives birth". (§15)

2. ★★ How is the future Geulah "male" compared to Yetzias Mitzrayim?

Yetzias Mitzrayim didn't last; galus came after it. The future Geulah will be complete and eternal, like "shir chadash", the only song in the masculine. (§15)

3. ★★★ Why are the Jews called "ishah", and what does it say about them?

"She was taken from ish", and "ish" is Hashem ("Hashem ish milchamah"). A Jew's whole existence is from Hashem: physical things don't matter to him, not even spiritual reward or the highest Gan Eden; only Hashem Himself. (§16)

4. ★★ Where must a seed be planted to grow, and what does that teach about mitzvos?

Only in the ground: not above ten tefachim, not even within three tefachim of the ground. Mitzvos too must be "sown" in the ground, in actual deeds, not only in the makifim, and not only in mind and feeling. (§16)

5. ★★ What do we answer someone who says “Rachmana liba ba’i”, Hashem wants the heart?
No! Actual deeds are necessary. A warm heart and a clear mind aren’t enough to be yotzei. (§16)

6. ★ How does tzedakah show this?
It isn’t enough to pity the poor man and cry while the coin stays in your pocket. You must give him the coin. (§16)

7. ★★ What can happen to someone who feels only the “ish”, Hashem, without action?
He could reach klos hanefesh, like Nadav and Avihu, who were very holy and “in their coming close to Hashem” died. So there must be sowing in the ground. (§16)

8. ★★ What is avodah in the way of “zachar”?
“Ish darko lichbosh”: a man’s way is to conquer. Conquer the world and all its matters, with strength, as the start of the Shulchan Aruch says: “be strong as a lion, and don’t be embarrassed by those who mock.” (§17)

9. ★★★ How does “on the eighth day he shall be circumcised” hint to the Geulah?
Through “male” avodah we reach the “eighth day”: the yetzer hara’s seven names, including “areil”, are cancelled; “milah” = “mal Kah”, removing what hides the name Kah, the klipah of Amalek, until Moshiach, when “Hashem will circumcise your heart”. (§18)

10. ★ Give two examples of mitzvot that must be done with physical things.
Tzitzis of real wool, tefillin of real parchment (and tzedakah with a real coin). (§16)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Caught with Tzitzis

Hillel Zaltzman grew up in Samarkand under the Communists and had to attend a Soviet school. He kept his Uzbek cap on in class, and when the teacher told him to take it off, he would put his hand on his head as if scratching it, so he wouldn't sit bareheaded. Under his shirt he wore tzitzis.

One day the teacher announced that a nurse would come to give the class vaccinations in the back. Hillel was terrified: how would he hide his tzitzis? If he took them off, the whole class would see. At the last minute he lifted his own shirt, trying to hide the strings underneath.

It didn't work. The nurse, a Bucharian Jewish woman, saw the strings sticking out. She leaned over and whispered to him in Russian: "You are a good boy, a chachamtchik, a little rabbi!"

After that he was afraid to wear tzitzis in class. So each day he wore them all the way to school, took them off in the bathroom and hid them in his briefcase, and put them back on before going home.

Source: Hillel Zaltzman, "Caught with Tzitzis", from his book *Samarkand* (chabad.org)

Think: How does Hillel "sow in the ground" (§16) even when it was dangerous?

He didn't keep Yiddishkeit only in his heart. He kept the actual mitzvah, real tzitzis and a

covered head, with action, in a place where it took real courage.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Feeling is not enough: put the mitzvah into action. Give the coin, wear the tzitzis, and don't be embarrassed by anyone who laughs.

For example: On a trip, the other kids laugh when you stop to daven Mincha. Daven anyway, calmly and proudly. "Be strong as a lion."