

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Vayechi

פרשת ויחי

2 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.

Oil on Your Foot!

וטובל בשמן רגלו

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayechi, p. 102ff, sections 1-14. Compiled from sichos of Simchas Beis HaShoeivah and Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5719 (1958), a shmitah year.

The point: Asher “dips his foot in oil”: the foot (*kabbalas ol*) uses the oil (*chochmah*), because *kabbalas ol* is unlimited and is the foundation of all avodah. Machaneh Dan walked last and returned everyone’s lost things: one who gives himself to ahavas Yisroel stays whole and returns the lost “mah” of others. Asher, the inside of the foot, brought the brachah of shmitah to all Yidden.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What brachah did Yaakov give Asher, and what did Moshe Rabbeinu add? Why must these words also have a spiritual meaning?

Yaakov: “Me’Asher shemeinah lachmo”, his portion will be rich in oil (olives). Moshe: “v’tovel bashemen raglo”, he dips his foot in oil. Everything physical comes down from the spiritual, and every word of Torah has pshat, remez, drush and sod, so besides the many olives in Asher’s land there is a spiritual meaning too. (§1)

- ★ What does “oil” hint to, and what does the “foot” stand for? So what does “dipping his foot in oil” mean?

Oil = *chochmah*, the highest part of a person; the foot = the lowest part. The foot uses the oil: outwardly the foot is lowest, but it has a great advantage that even *chochmah* doesn’t reach. So too about Moshiach: “his feet will stand on Har HaZeisim”, higher than the olives and the oil. (§2)

- ★★ In avodas Hashem, what is “oil” and what is “foot”?

“Oil” is serving Hashem with understanding and enjoyment (*taam vadaas*). “Foot” is serving Hashem with *kabbalas ol*, accepting His yoke without feeling it. Even in the body the foot has an advantage: it completes the head (Likkutei Torah, Nitzavim). (§2)

- ★ What was the job of Machaneh Dan in the midbar?

It was “me’asef lechol hamachanos”, the gatherer for all the camps. It walked last, so it could find everything the other camps lost and return it to the owners. Though walking last shows a lower level (a “foot”), because of that it returned the losses of all the others. (§3)

5. ★★ What is a spiritual “lost object”, and who can lose one? Who returns it?

“Who is a fool? One who loses what he is given.” Every Yid is given “mah”, the power of bittul to Hashem, but the yetzer hara, the “old foolish king”, can make him lose it. Even in the camps near the Mishkan, even Levi and Kehas, it could be lost. Only in Machaneh Dan, the “foot”, was the “mah” whole, and they returned it to all Yidden. (§4)

6. ★★ The Gemara says a man who always said “dunu dini” (judge my case) must come from Dan. What does it mean to behave this way, and where does it come from?

For every little thing he checks the Shulchan Aruch, knowing the world isn’t hefker and Torah has a ruling even on small things. That comes only from kabbalas ol. By understanding there is big and small (“kalah shebekalos”, “chamurah shebachamuros”), but with kabbalas ol they are equal, since all are Hashem’s commands. (§5)

7. ★★★ Give the two ways kabbalas ol is higher than understanding.

(a) Understanding is limited, so it grasps Hashem only as far as one’s mind reaches; kabbalas ol is giving yourself to Hashem without limit, the way He is. (b) Kabbalas ol is the foundation of all avodah, even avodah of understanding: as Tanya ch. 41 brings from the Zohar, “if this is not found in him, kedushah doesn’t rest on him”. (§5)

8. ★★ Give the three reasons why Machaneh Dan walked at the end.

(a) Their avodah was kabbalas ol, outwardly a lower level (“foot”), so their physical place was at the end too. (b) The bittul of kabbalas ol: they gave themselves to gather all the camps, even the stragglers, though it meant being far from the Mishkan. Such a person isn’t a “self”; only Hashem’s will matters to him. (c) Kabbalas ol holds up all avodah, like the feet and foundation that hold the head. (§6)

9. ★★★ What is the hora'ah for a person who learns and does mitzvos at the very highest level, "right next to the Mishkan and the Aron"? Who is sure to stay whole?

If he cares only about his own good, even his spiritual good, and lacks devotion to doing good for another Yid, then "v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha", the foundation of the whole Torah, is missing, and he can lose his own "mah". Only one who gives himself with mesirus nefesh to ahavas Yisroel is sure to stay whole, and he is the one who returns the spiritual "lost objects" to others. (§7)

10. ★★ Naftali (at the very end of Machaneh Dan) was blessed "yam vadarom yerashah". What are the three levels? How is inheritance different from buying or a gift?

"Yam" (west): the Shechinah is in the west, Hashem as He dwells within place. "Darom" (south, the strong sun): "Shemesh... Havayah", Hashem above time and place. "Yerashah": buying depends on the price paid; a gift depends on how much pleasure you gave the giver; an inheritance comes by itself, even to the smallest. Every Yid is an heir ("banim Atem"), above any limit, and kabbalas ol and mesirus nefesh for ahavas Yisroel bring it out into the open. (§§8–9)

11. ★★ Asher was the middle of Machaneh Dan. How did he feed all Yidden, and what is strange about the posuk "and if you will say, what will we eat"?

Asher is the "inner part of the foot", and Chazal say he supplied food to all Yidden in shmitah ("yehi retzui echav"). Strange: why does the Torah raise a question at all? Because the chiddush of shmitah is that there is a strong question, and still a Yid stops working because Hashem commanded. The brachah is not like Moshe (no food), Eliyahu (40 days on one meal) or the mon (no waste), but plain bread in the fields of Eretz Yisroel, and the shmitah days are ordinary weekdays. (§§11–12)

12. ★★★ So why was the blessing of shmitah drawn out specifically through Asher? How does that explain “shemeinah lachmo” and “tovel bashemen raglo”?

To make “Shabbos laHashem” inside ordinary physical things, in hidden places full of questions, you need kabbalas ol, which can walk even into darkness. It is revealed from its inner root by Asher, the inner part of the foot, and as part of the me’asef he spread it to all Israel. In Asher the quality of kabbalas ol shone from its root, a taste of the future “maaseh gadol”: the foot uses the oil. Through the avodah of shmitah we will merit the Geulah. (§§13–14)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

An Envelope Under the Door

Rabbi Leibel Groner, one of the Rebbe’s secretaries, told this story.

One Erev Pesach a respected woman in Crown Heights called him. “Reb Leib, I don’t know what to do. I don’t smell any cooking in my neighbor’s kitchen.” She had gone next door pretending she needed to borrow an onion, and she saw that the oven was empty: the family had no food for Pesach. She offered the neighbor money, but the neighbor refused.

Rabbi Groner went into the Rebbe’s room and told him. The Rebbe opened his drawer, took out \$500, and handed it to him. “But they already refused money,” Rabbi Groner said. The Rebbe told him to put the money in a plain envelope, slip it under their door, and run away.

A little later the same woman called again. Now, she said, the smell of Yom Tov cooking was coming from the neighbor’s kitchen.

Erev Pesach, with a world of things on his mind, the Rebbe made sure one family had a Yom Tov, and that they would never even have to feel embarrassed about it.

Source: Rabbi Yehuda Leib Groner, “Money for Pesach”, in *To Love a Fellow Jew*, ch. 11, “Seven Stories” (*Sichos in English*; also on chabad.org)

Think: Who in this story acted like Machaneh Dan, noticing what someone else had “lost” and bringing it back (§§3–4, 7)?

The neighbor noticed what was missing when no one else did, and the Rebbe, busy with the whole world, made sure it was returned, quietly, so no one was shamed. That’s “v’ahavta l’reiacha kamocho”: caring for another Yid beyond your own avodah.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Serve Hashem with kabbalas ol, not only when you understand and enjoy it: that is the “foot” that holds up the “head”. And don’t only take care of your own avodah: be like Machaneh Dan and bring back what another Yid lost.

For example: A boy in your class has stopped coming to minyan, and you’re busy with your own learning goals. Walk “at the back”: call him the night before, wait for him at the door, and save him a seat. That is returning a lost object.

Our Children Are Our Guarantors!

ברוך מבנים אשר

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayechi, p. 109ff, sections 15–17. From a sicha of Simchas Torah 5719 (1958).

The point: *Asher's daughters married Kohanim Gedolim and he was "blessed with children" in quality, not number: living with kabbalas ol according to Shulchan Aruch ("dunu dina") brings children who are one with the Torah. Children are the "foot" of klal Yisroel, and that is why Hashem accepted only them as guarantors for the Torah.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ How does the Midrash explain "Me'Asher shemeinah lachmo", and how does Rashi explain "yehi retzui echav"?

"He raises garments of eight": Asher's daughters were beautiful and married Kohanim Gedolim, who wear eight garments. (§15)

- ★★ What does being "beautiful" have to do with Kohanim Gedolim? What is a wife's part in her husband's avodah?

It must be a spiritual beauty that belongs to Kehunah Gedolah. A wife is "ezer kenegdo", a help in her husband's avodas Hashem. The Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur atoned "for himself and his house, that is his wife", and without a wife he could not do the avodah. (§15)

- ★ What is the true beauty of a Jewish woman?

"Kol kevudah bas melech penimah": tznius, which brings Kehunah Gedolah (Yoma 47a). (§15)

- ★★ How does a family merit children who are "Kohanim Gedolim"? What is special about the Luchos in the Kodesh HaKodashim?

Through the avodah of "dunu dina": living with kabbalas ol according to Shulchan Aruch, including tznius. Then the children are busy with Torah and mitzvos, "Kohanim Gedolim" who enter the Kodesh HaKodashim, where the Luchos were engraved, not written in ink, so that the person and the Torah are one. (§15)

- ★ On "baruch mibanim Asher", the Sifri says no tribe was blessed with children like Asher. Why does Rashi say "I don't know how"?

Because when the Yidden were counted, Asher didn't have more people than the other shevatim. (§16)

6. ★★ How do we explain the Sifri?

"This one is equal to...": Asher equaled all the other shevatim in his special quality, which is the great nachas from his children. Kabbalas ol in chinuch brings children who walk in the ways of Torah, and much more nachas than from many children. (§16)

7. ★★ What did the Rebbe Rashab ask on "I multiplied his seed and gave him Yitzchak", and what is the answer?

It says "multiplied" and then names only one son? Because one child can bring more nachas than many, even one who equals 600,000, like Moshe Rabbeinu, and "there is no generation without someone like Moshe". Such a child comes through kabbalas ol. (§16)

8. ★ Before Matan Torah, Hashem asked for guarantors. Which did He accept?

He refused all the guarantors the Yidden offered until they said, "Our children are our guarantors." (§17)

9. ★★★ Why specifically the children? Explain with "foot" and "head".

There are stages in life (Avos ch. 5; ages 6, 13, 20), and young schoolchildren are the "foot". All Yidden are one complete body; just as in each person the foot holds up the head and kabbalas ol holds up understanding, so in klal Yisroel the "feet" help the "head", like Machaneh Dan helped all the camps. So the Torah could be given only through the guarantee of the children, the foundation of the whole people: "Mipi olelim v'yonkim yisadta oz." (§17)

10. ★★ So what is the connection between kabbalas ol and good children?

Both are "foot". That's why living with kabbalas ol brings children and grandchildren busy with Torah and mitzvos. (§17)

11. ★★★ You are 13, still a "foot" on the way to being a "head". According to this sicha, why does your Torah and kabbalas ol matter to the whole Jewish people?

The children are the guarantors that the whole people keeps the Torah, and the "foot" holds up the "head". A boy's kabbalas ol strengthens the whole body of klal Yisroel, like Dan returning the lost "mah" to everyone (§17, with §§3–7). (§17)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Only Kid with a Kippah

Michael Kanterovitz grew up in a secular home in Tel Aviv, but even as a child, Chassidic teachings captured his imagination. As a teenager his widowed mother sent him to an agricultural school in Kfar Silver, near Ashkelon. Out of 400 students, he was the only one who wore a kippah.

That didn't stop him. Every Friday night he stood up in the dining hall, sang Lecha Dodi, and made Kiddush for everyone. He convinced an American visitor to donate a Sefer Torah, and arranged a real Hachnasas Sefer Torah with a parade. The school gave him a room for an aron kodesh, and on Shabbos mornings he went around waking up the boys from traditional homes, so they could have a minyan with krias haTorah.

In 1958, when he was fifteen, he wrote to the Rebbe: "I live in a place where Torah is not kept, and I myself know little. How should I behave?" To his shock, the Rebbe answered: what you are doing is a great mitzvah; keep spreading Yiddishkeit among your friends. Years later, in yechidus, the Rebbe still remembered and asked him about Kfar Silver. Rabbi Kanterovitz went on to serve as a rabbi in Canada and England.

Source: Rabbi Michael Kanterovitz, *"The Only Kid with a Kippah"*, JEM Here's My Story (2021)

Think: How was this fifteen-year-old a "foot" that held up the "head" (§17)?

He was young and knew little, but with kabbalas ol he kept Shabbos, Kiddush and minyan alive for a whole school, and gathered the others like Machaneh Dan. The child became the guarantor for Torah in his place.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

You are not "just a kid": the children are the guarantors of the whole Torah. Your kabbalas ol, doing what the Shulchan Aruch says even in small things, holds up your family and klal Yisroel, and brings real nachas.

For example: At camp, you're the youngest in the bunk and the others skip bentching. You bentch out loud anyway, every meal, with a smile, and after a week two older boys start joining you.