

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Vayeira

פרשת וירא

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: A Little Boy's Tears · p. 23, §§1-7

Sicha 2: Keep Digging! · p. 27, §§8-16

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.

A Little Boy's Tears

וִירָא אֱלֹהֵי ה'

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayeira, p. 23ff, sections 1-7. From a sicha of 20 Marcheshvan 5713 (1952), the Rebbe Rashab's birthday.

The point: *The Rebbe Rashab cried as a little boy because Hashem doesn't appear to him as He did to Avraham. This teaches that every Jew, even a spiritual "baby," may demand that Hashem reveal Himself; but first he must know that he needs to "give himself a bris," to fix and improve himself.*

Q U E S T I O N S ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ On which day, and why that day, did the Rebbe tell this story?

On 20 Marcheshvan, the birthday of the Rebbe Rashab, the father of the Frierdiker Rebbe. (§1)

2. ★ What did the Rebbe Rashab do every year on his birthday when he was a child?

He went in to his grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek, to ask for a brachah. (§1)

3. ★ How old was the Rebbe Rashab when he cried, and why did he cry?

About four or five. He had learned (or heard) that Hashem appeared to Avraham Avinu, and he cried

because Hashem does not appear to him. (§1)

4. ★ What did the Tzemach Tzedek answer him?

"When a Jew (a tzaddik) of ninety-nine decides that he must give himself a bris, he deserves that

Hashem should appear to him." This calmed the child and he stopped crying. (§1)

5. ★★ The story happened before the Rebbe Rashab was even old enough for chinuch. How do we know it is a lesson for us too?

The Rebbe Rashab told it to his only son, the Frierdiker Rebbe, and the Frierdiker Rebbe told it

again on purpose to publicize it in the world. (§2)

6. ★★ What is the first lesson we learn from the child's crying? Who is included, even?

Every Jew, in any state, may long for Hashem to appear to him and demand it with tears. Even

someone who is spiritually like a baby "who hasn't reached chinuch," even if his passport says he

is old. (§3)

7. ★★★ Why does the sicha speak of tears specifically? What do tears show?

Tears come from something higher than understanding; when the mind cannot hold it, tears come

("mosarei mochin"). So the longing for Hashem is above reason. (§3)

8. ★★ Hashem appeared to Avraham before the milah too. What changed after the milah? What does the added letter hei in his name teach?

After the milah the revelation was much higher. He became "Avraham" with a hei, which the Gemara

says means he now ruled even over five limbs (eyes, ears, etc.) that by nature a person cannot

control. Before, as "Avram," he ruled only over what can be controlled naturally. (§4)

9. ★★ What is the second lesson, from the Tzemach Tzedek's answer?

Every Jew may demand that Hashem reveal Himself, but this needs a preparation: knowing that he

must give himself a bris, that despite all his good qualities he still needs to fix himself. (§5)

10. ★★ What story does the sicha tell about the Rebbe Rashab's ear? What does it prove?

Once he had trouble hearing in one ear. It turned out that while he said a maamar on Shabbos,

people talked in the next room and disturbed him, so he "removed" his hearing from that ear.

Tzaddikim rule even over senses that by nature can't be controlled, and even they must know they

need to "give themselves a bris." (§6)

11. ★★★ Why must even a tzaddik know he needs a bris? Why does the answer say "ninety-nine" and not "a hundred"?

Even the finest "orlah" in ruchniyus can, after many steps down, show up in lower things. "A

hundred" means someone who has refined all ten powers of his soul, each made of ten ("ben meah

k'ilu meis": no connection to worldly things, nothing to fear). Whoever is still "ninety-nine"

must give himself a bris. (§7)

12. ★★★ What does a person gain when he feels he must still change?

That bittul prepares him to rise to "Vayeira eilav Hashem," like Avraham after the milah. He rules

over all his senses and even over his portion of the world: children, life and parnassah, all in

plenty ("revichi"). (§7)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Boy Who Gave Hashem His Siddur

One Erev Yom Kippur the Baal Shem Tov came to shul looking sad. After Kol Nidrei, suddenly he was filled with joy and davened Maariv with great song. Later he told his talmidim what had happened.

In a village lived a Jewish boy whose parents had died when he was a baby. The poritz (landowner) raised him and told him only that his parents had been Jews. All he had of them was his mother's old siddur and a Chumash.

One fall the boy saw Jews riding to the city and asked why. "Yom Kippur is coming," they said, "the holiest day of the year." That night his parents came to him in a dream and begged him to come back to Yiddishkeit. On Erev Yom Kippur he grabbed his mother's siddur and ran to the city.

In shul everyone was in white, davening with tears. The boy cried too, but he didn't know how to daven. Finally he said, "Hashem, I don't know what to say. Here, I give You the whole siddur!" He laid the siddur on the shtender, put his head on it and cried. His tears broke through in Heaven, and that is when the Baal Shem Tov's sadness turned to joy.

Source: Blumah Wineberg, "The Boy Who Did Not Know How to Pray," chabad.org, from Rabbi S. Y. Zevin, *Sippurei Chassidim on the Festivals #78* (told by the Bnei Yissachar)

Think: The boy knew almost nothing. Why were his tears so precious?

Like the Rebbe Rashab's tears, they came from a longing for Hashem higher than

understanding; any Jew, even a spiritual "baby," may cry out to Hashem.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

You are allowed to want Hashem, a lot, and to ask Him to show Himself to you, no matter where you're holding. Just remember the Tzemach Tzedek's answer: wanting goes together with knowing "I still have something to fix."

For example: In Shemoneh Esrei you get to "Es tzemach David" and really mean it: "Hashem, I want to see You, I want Moshiach!" Then after davening you pick one small thing to fix today, like not talking during krias haTorah.

Keep Digging!

ויחפרו עבדי יצחק בנחל וימצאו שם באר מים חיים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayeira, p. 27ff, sections 8-16. From a sicha of 12 Tammuz 5714 (1954).

The point: *Avraham's avodah is like water, drawing Hashem's light down into the world (hachnasas orchim). Yitzchak's is like fire, raising the world up, like digging wells to uncover the living water already inside. Every Jew needs both, and must keep "digging" in every Jew no matter how many times it seems to fail.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What could Avraham do only after the milah? From what kind of "drop" did Yitzchak need to be born?

Have Yitzchak. Yitzchak had to be born from a holy drop ("asher kidesh yedid mi'beten"), only

after Avraham reached "v'heyey samim" through the milah. (§8)

- ★★ What does this teach about Yitzchak compared to Avraham?

Avraham's own birth did not depend on such a condition, but Yitzchak could not be born, with all

of Avraham's greatness, until Avraham reached "samim." That shows an advantage of Yitzchak. (§8)

- ★ What is the main difference between Avraham's avodah and Yitzchak's?

Avraham's is hamshachah, drawing down from above to below; Yitzchak's is ha'ala'ah, raising up

from below to above. (§9)

- ★★ Which element is each one compared to, and why?

Avraham = love like water ("Zechor av nimshach acharecha kamayim"), and water flows downward.

Yitzchak = love like flames of fire, and fire rises upward. (§9)

- ★★ How far down did Avraham draw G-dliness? Explain the Arabs who bowed to the dust of their feet.

To Canaan, to Egypt, and even to the Arabs who bowed to the dust of their feet, the very lowest

level: their "head" (mind) was lower than the dust under their feet. Still Avraham brought them to

call in the name of "Kel Olam" ("vayikra" read as "vayakri"). (§10)

6. ★ How did Avraham spread knowledge of Hashem?

Through hachnasas orchim. He gave guests everything they needed, even in the desert, and when they wanted to thank him he said: thank and bless the One whose food you ate, Who spoke and the world came to be. (§10)

7. ★★ Why didn't Yitzchak ever leave Eretz Yisrael?

Because he was an "olah temimah" (an offering that may not leave the holy place); his avodah was going up, above the world. (§11)

8. ★★ When Yitzchak dug wells, did he bring water in from somewhere else? What does this teach about avodah?

No. The living water was already in the wells, covered by dirt, mud and stones; he only removed them. So our avodah is to remove what hides G-dliness and make the world a "kli" for it. (§12)

9. ★★ What did Yitzchak do when Avimelech's shepherds stopped up the wells or took them?

He wasn't impressed and kept digging: a second well, then a third, until "Rechovos": "ki atah hirschiv Hashem lanu." (§13)

10. ★★★ Logically, Yitzchak had every reason to stop. Why didn't he? Where does this avodah reach?

He paid no attention to calculations of sechel; he felt his job was to uncover living water and did it with mesirus nefesh. Making the world a kli for G-dliness reaches the true infinite, Ein Sof, because it completes Hashem's purpose ("tzchok asah li Elokim"). (§14)

11. ★★★ What is "Avraham's avodah" in our lives, and why isn't it enough?

Learning, davening and doing mitzvos in our "daled amos of light": even when using physical things for a mitzvah we are busy with Hashem's will and don't meet opposition. But that is not yet the purpose; we also need Yitzchak's avodah. (§16)

12. ★★★ What is "Yitzchak's avodah" with other Jews? What is the answer to "I already tried once or twice and it didn't help"?

To dig even in Jews whose outside shows only "stones and mud," even those who seem to oppose

G-dliness, until we reach their inner living water. To "I tried" the answer is: Yitzchak's avodah

does not depend on calculations; the failures so far are Hashem's accounts ("b'hadei kavshei

d'Rachmana"). Our job is to keep digging until "hirschiv Hashem lanu." (§16)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Tefillin After 72 Years

Rabbi Gutman Locks helps people put on tefillin at the Kosel. One day he asked an elderly man, who refused strongly. "When was the last time you put on tefillin?" Rabbi Locks asked.

"Seventy-two years ago," the man said, and showed the numbers tattooed on his arm. "On Kristallnacht they burned down our shul, and my tefillin burned with it. I never put them on again."

Rabbi Locks didn't give up. He told him about his friend Laibel, also a survivor. At thirteen and a half, when the Nazis grabbed him, Laibel stuffed his tefillin into one boot and his siddur into the other. In the camp he got them back, and he put on tefillin by sticking his head out a window so the guards wouldn't see. He even put tefillin on other men there.

The old man listened. Then Rabbi Locks gently slid the tefillin onto his arm. The man said the brachah and began to cry. They said Shema together and he davened for his family, smiling through his tears. A crowd gathered to wish him mazal tov.

Rabbi Locks wrote: "You do not always succeed, but you always have to try."

Source: Gutman Locks, "Tefillin After 72 Years," chabad.org

Think: What were the "stones and mud" covering this man's well? How did Rabbi Locks keep digging?

His pain from Kristallnacht and 72 years without tefillin. He didn't accept the

first no; he found another way in (Laibel's story) until the living water came out.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Be Avraham and be Yitzchak: bring Hashem into everything you touch, and also dig. Every Jew has living water inside, even if all you see is "mud." If it didn't work the first or second time, that's Hashem's business; yours is to keep digging.

For example: There's a kid in your class who rolls his eyes at everything Yiddishkeit. You invited him to your Shabbos table twice and he said no. Ask a third time, or find another way in: play ball with him at recess. The living water is in there.