

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Vayeishev

פרשת וישב

3 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Settle Down to Lift Up! · p. 76, §§1-4

Sicha 2: Make the "Other" a Son! · p. 78, §§5-8

Sicha 3: Pure Oil, No Shortcuts! · p. 81, §§9-16

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.

Settle Down to Lift Up!

ישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayeishev, p. 76ff, sections 1-4. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev, 20 Kislev (the year is not clear in the print we used).

The point: *The Maggid explains "Vayeishev Yaakov b'ereitz megurei aviv": Yaakov settled into the physical world to gather the sparks of kedushah in it and raise them to his Father in Heaven. "Canaan" means business: first you invest, then you profit. So a Jew should not chase only lofty things. His job is simple work with physical things, done with kabbalas ol and joy, all for Hashem and not for a reward. Yaakov went to Charan without asking "why me?", and the "going down" brought him great profit, both spiritual and physical.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ How does the Maggid of Mezritch explain "Vayeishev Yaakov b'ereitz"?

Yaakov "settled" (made his home) "in the land", meaning in earthly, physical things. (§1)

- ★★ What does the word "megurei" hint at? What was Yaakov gathering, and for whom?

"Megurei" is like "oger bakayitz", gathering. Yaakov gathered the sparks of kedushah hidden in

physical things, to raise them up to "aviv", his Father in Heaven. (§1)

- ★★ What does "Canaan" mean here? How does a businessman show the idea?

"Canaan" means commerce. A businessman first puts money in and only later earns a profit, like the

posuk "yesh mefazer v'nosaf od" (one scatters, and gains more). (§1)

- ★ What is the lesson: what should a Jew not run after, and what is his job?

He should not run only after lofty things. His job is to refine and raise the sparks of kedushah

in physical things. (§2)

- ★★ Why are the Jewish people compared to a bee?

Whatever a bee makes is for its owner. So too, whatever a Jew does is for his Father in Heaven,

not to get a reward, physical or spiritual. (§2)

- ★★★ Why is it specifically simple work in simple matters that keeps a person free of "pniyos" (self-interest)?

When a person is busy with lofty understanding, self-interest (pride) can easily creep in. Simple

work in simple matters keeps the avodah clean. As the Frierdiker Rebbe said, the simplicity of

simple people connects with the simplicity of Hashem's Essence. (§2)

7. ★★ Why are the Jewish people called "Tzivos Hashem", Hashem's army?

Because of kabbalas ol: a soldier's whole job is to accept his orders. (§2)

8. ★ How hard did Yaakov work for Lavan? Which posuk shows it?

Very hard: "By day the heat consumed me, and the frost by night, and my sleep fled from my eyes."

Besides the effort, his body also suffered. (§3)

9. ★★★ What halachah does the Alter Rebbe learn from Yaakov's hard work?

A person may not hurt his own body, since it belongs to Hashem and not to him. But "for a need"

(to earn money, which in avodah means the work of refining the world) it is allowed. (§3)

10. ★★ What question could Yaakov have asked before going to Charan? What did he do instead?

"Why me? Send Esav to Charan and let me stay in the yeshivah of Shem and Ever." He asked no

questions and went with kabbalas ol, and still with life and joy: "Vayisa Yaakov raglav." (§3)

11. ★★★ Was going to Charan really a "yeridah" (a going down) for Yaakov? What did he gain?

It was only for a while, and it led to an aliyah. All his children were tzaddikim and he took

everything with him. He refined all the sparks at Lavan and Esav, until Esav kissed him with all

his heart. He also became very rich. Avodah like this brings the "private Moshiach" within a

person and prepares for the coming of Moshiach. (§§2-3)

12. ★ What is the final lesson for every Jew in §4?

Through "Vayeishev b'erezt megurei aviv" he comes to "b'erezt Canaan": by spreading out and going

down, he earns his livelihood both in ruchniyus and in gashmiyus. (§4)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

One for Purim and One for Pesach

Shraga was a simple wagon driver. When things went well he was happy, and when they didn't, he looked for something to be happy about. One stormy day he picked up a traveler stuck in the mud and brought him home. It was the holy Rebbe Reb Moshe Leib of Sassov. "What do you own?" asked the Rebbe. "Only my two horses." "Nu," said the Rebbe, "one will be for Purim and one for Pesach."

Just before Purim one horse died. The money from its hide and meat paid for a beautiful Purim. Before Pesach the second horse died, and Shraga had a Pesach fit for a king. But now he had no horses and no living.

Shraga didn't give up. He packed his tallis and tefillin and a loaf of bread and set off on the road. At an inn he overheard two tenants complaining that their poritz kept firing every manager. Shraga offered himself, and the poritz took a liking to him. He succeeded beyond his dreams, grew wealthy, and gave a living to hundreds of families.

Source: Tuvia Bolton, "The Death of Shraga's Two Horses" (chabad.org)

Think: How is Shraga's story like "yesh mefazer v'nosaf od" and Yaakov going down to Charan (§§1, 3)?

First he lost everything, then he went out on the road with trust and without complaining. The

"going down" led to much more, for himself and for hundreds of others, just as Yaakov's descent to

Charan brought him great profit.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't wait for "big, lofty" jobs. Hashem sends you into simple, physical things, so do them for Him, with kabbalas ol and with joy, without asking "why me?". The going down is where the profit is.

For example: The mashgiach asks you to stay after seder to stack the chairs and sweep the zal for the farbrengen while your friends go learn a deep maamar. Don't argue "why me?". Do it happily, for Hashem. Simple avodah like that is exactly what connects you to Him.

Make the “Other” a Son!

יוסף הוי' לי בן אחר

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayeishev, p. 78ff, sections 5–8. From a sicha of Yud-Tes Kislev 5718 (1957).

The point: *Yosef's avodah was to turn the “acher”, the stranger, into a “ben”, a son: making baalei teshuvah. He could do it because he himself was “yefeh to'ar” (perfect in positive mitzvos) and “yefeh mar'eh” (perfect in negative mitzvos). So: work on others now, without waiting, but fix yourself too, because your faults hold back the person you want to help. Potiphar's wife meant it l'shem Shamayim. This teaches that something which looks like the opposite of kedushah is, deep inside, meant to help kedushah. When you know that truth firmly, the obstacles fall away and bring more light.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ Into which two parts does the Rebbe divide the story of Yosef in Mitzrayim?

1) Yosef, who was “yefeh to'ar v'efeh mar'eh”. 2) Potiphar's wife. Like everything in Torah, both are lessons for every day. (§5)

2. ★★ How does the Tzemach Tzedek explain “Yosef, Hashem li ben acher”?

Yosef's avodah was to make the “acher” (the other, the stranger) into a “ben” (a son), meaning to make baalei teshuvah. (§6)

3. ★★ What do “to'ar” and “mar'eh” stand for? Why could Yosef influence others?

“To'ar” stands for the positive mitzvos and “mar'eh” for the negative ones. Yosef was beautiful in both, so he had the strength to influence others. (§6)

4. ★ What is the rule “Kashet atzmecha v'achar kach kashet acherim”?

First beautify (fix) yourself, then beautify others. (§6)

5. ★★ Does this mean you should wait until you are perfect before helping others?

No! You must work with others now and may not push it off. But at the same time you must fix your own faults. (§6)

6. ★★★ Why does fixing your own faults matter for the other person too?

If you have faults you are not fixing, the other person feels them, and you can't influence him as much as needed. Not fixing yourself harms others. So you must put in great effort, because it is about the public, not just one person. (§6)

7. ★★ What do Chazal say Potiphar's wife intended? What was her mistake?

She meant it l'shem Shamayim: she saw that children would come from her and Yosef. But she was wrong. They would come from her daughter, not from her. (§7)

8. ★★ What is the lesson from Potiphar's wife?

Something can look on the outside like the total opposite of kedushah, but inside, its purpose is to help and add to kedushah. (§7)

9. ★★★ What does the Alter Rebbe say about a non-Jew who disturbs a Jew while he davens? How does the Rebbe explain it?

It should wake him to daven with more kavanah, from deep in his heart. Deep inside, at his root (which is in kedushah), the non-Jew knows he must add holiness. But because it passes through someone opposite to kedushah, it comes out in an opposite form. (§7)

10. ★★ What did the Maggid of Mezritch say about Lavan chasing Yaakov?

It happened only because more letters were needed in the Torah. Lavan chased Yaakov, the story was written in the Torah, and a whole parsha was added. (§§7–8)

11. ★★ What are the two ways to deal with a "he'lem" (concealment)?

1) Treat it as a real concealment and fight it with all your strength. 2) The more pleasant way: know that deep inside it is a help for kedushah. (§8)

12. ★★★ What happens when a person firmly decides that every obstacle is really a help?

Before the truth, all the concealments and obstacles fall away. Since he knows every thing has a G-dly spark and helps kedushah, he wakes up and reveals the spark in the concealing thing itself. Then the true purpose shows openly, and the obstacle brings more light and holiness. (§8)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Go Even Further!

The Alter Rebbe spread the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov more openly than anyone, so that every Jew could understand them. Some people were sure he was going too far.

In the fall of 1798 he was arrested on false charges and locked in the fortress prison in Petersburg. There he had to explain the basics of Yiddishkeit and of Chassidus to the czar's ministers.

In prison he had two visitors from the World of Truth: his Rebbe, the Maggid of Mezritch, and the Maggid's Rebbe, the Baal Shem Tov. The Alter Rebbe asked them: "Why has this happened to me? What did I do wrong?"

"In Heaven there was a complaint," they told him, "that you are revealing the secrets of the Torah to everyone."

"When I get out," asked the Alter Rebbe, "should I stop teaching this way?"

"When you leave here, you must continue as before. On the contrary, you must go even further!"

After 53 days he was freed, on Yud-Tes Kislev. From then on his teachings became even more open, with a clear explanation and a mashal for everything, so that even simple Jews could grasp G-dliness.

Source: Tzvi Freeman, "How the Baal Shem Tov and Alter Rebbe Changed Everything" (chabad.org); the traditional account of Yud-Tes Kislev

Think: Which of the two ways in §8 does this story show? What came of the arrest?

The second way: what looked like an obstacle to Chassidus was really meant to help it. Because of the arrest, the Alter Rebbe was told to go even further, and from Yud-Tes Kislev Chassidus spread more than ever.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

You can turn an "other" into a "son": bring a friend closer to Yiddishkeit right now, without waiting until you're perfect. But work on yourself too, because people feel your faults. And when something gets in your way, don't only fight it. Look for how it is really helping.

For example: You want your friend to join your Mishnayos chavrusa. Don't wait until you're a tzaddik. Ask him today. But make sure you show up on time yourself. And if rain cancels mitvzoim on Friday, don't just be annoyed. Use the free hour to learn with that friend.

Pure Oil, No Shortcuts!

חנוך לנער על פי דרכו

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayeishev (Chanukah), p. 81ff, sections 9-16. From a sicha of the night of the third Chanukah candle, 5714 (1953).

The point: “Chanukah” comes from “chinuch”, a beginning. Yet the miracle was that Hashem gave pure oil, even though halachah would have allowed impure oil. So in kedushah, start from the very beginning with full hiddur and no shortcuts. That is how children must be educated. A cut in a grown tree stays small, but a cut in a seed spoils the whole tree. A “small” detail, “a hair”, can decide a whole life. When the other side fights hard over a detail, that is the proof it matters. Those who don’t compromise succeed, and their light grows every night like the Chanukah lights.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What two “opposite” things does the Rebbe point out about Chanukah?

1) The name “Chanukah” comes from “chinuch”, a beginning: the avodah in the Beis HaMikdash started

again. 2) The miracle was a jar of pure oil sealed with the Kohen Gadol’s seal. (§9)

- ★★ According to halachah, why didn’t they really need pure oil? So why did Hashem make the miracle?

Halachah allows impure oil when the whole community is impure (“tumah hutrah b’tzibbur”). But to show His love for the Jews, Hashem made a miracle so the mitzvah would be done with full hiddur, without any heter, not even a valid one from Shulchan Aruch. (§9)

- ★ What lesson does the Rebbe learn from these two points together?

In matters of kedushah, already at the very beginning, at the start of chinuch, do it in full perfection and full hiddur. (§9)

- ★★ How should children be educated, and what did the Chachmei Yisrael do about it?

From the dawn of childhood, give them complete Yiddishkeit, without compromises or heterim. The Chachmei Yisrael fought over every detail, even ones that seemed unimportant, because the years of chinuch give a child weapons for every battle in life. (§10)

- ★★ How do we make sure that “even when he grows old he will not turn from it”?

Not by planning to tell the child, when he is grown and out in the world, that he must fight and be moser nefesh. You have to start with him while he is still young. (§10)

6. ★★★ Explain the mashal of the tree.

“Man is like a tree of the field.” A cut in a grown tree stays in that one spot and does no real damage. But a cut in a seed about to be planted can make the whole tree grow damaged. (§§10–11)

7. ★★ Why is a compromise worse for a young person than for a middle-aged one?

A man with forty years without compromise behind him has the strength to forget a one-time compromise and come back. But a young person educated to compromise loses his warmth and zeal for Yiddishkeit for life, and may grow up a damaged Jew. (§11)

8. ★★ If “even a Jew who sinned is still a Jew”, why isn’t that enough?

Because we need a young generation of healthy, living Jews in ruchniyus (and so also in gashmiyus) in this world, who can conquer the world for Hashem, for themselves and also for the middle and older generations. (§12)

9. ★★★ What does “resha’im nidmeh lahem k’chut hasa’arah” teach about small details?

To the wicked, the yetzer hara looks as thin as a hair. A thing that looks small can decide whether a person becomes a tzaddik, or chas v’shalom a rasha. (§13)

10. ★★ How can a person tell which “small” detail he must never give up?

When the other side stands so firmly over it, ready to lose millions, people and support just so as not to give in on that detail. That shows us not to give in either. It is like a shoelace (“arkasa d’mesani”) at a time of decree. (§13)

11. ★★ What should a supporter of chinuch do when people tell him he is raising “batlanim” with beards and long coats?

Not be impressed. The very pressure proves that here lies the rescue of the Jewish people, so from now on he should work even harder for kosher chinuch. (§15)

12. ★ What does the Rebbe promise to those who stand firm in chinuch with no compromise?

Just as Hashem helped then, He will help now: even as it grows darker outside, the light in Jewish homes grows every night, and we will soon merit the pure Beis HaMikdash from above. (§16)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

No Public School!

In 1960, in Soviet Tashkent, the chassid Reb Zalman Leib Estulin refused to send his son Naftali to the communist public school. Hiding the thirteen-year-old at home was getting too hard, so he sent him, alone, with a group traveling to a wedding in Samarkand, where it was rumored that boys were secretly learning Torah. It was not simple to send a young boy to a strange city without knowing where he would eat, where he would sleep, or who would teach him. But Reb Zalman Leib sent him no matter what.

In Samarkand Naftali hid for a month in the house of an old couple who ran the mikvah. Early one morning the chassid Reb Berke Chein came to toivel and then said Shema with deep concentration. Naftali woke up and realized he had forgotten to leave water by his bed for negel vasser. Not wanting to disturb Reb Berke, he walked over to the sink.

After Shema Reb Berke said: "You walked four amos without washing?! You should have told me. I would have stopped and brought you water!"

Soon a small group of boys gathered, and they planned a schedule like Tomchei Temimim's: seven hours of Gemara and halachah and four hours of Chassidus every day.

Source: Hillel Zaltzman, "The First Student Arrives", from his memoir of Samarkand (chabad.org)

Think: Which two points of the sicha does this story show?

Reb Zalman Leib would not compromise on his son's chinuch at any price (§§9–10). Reb Berke would not let a "small detail" like negel vasser slide, even for a young boy (§13).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Your chinuch is happening right now, and the habits you build at your age shape your whole life. Don't take shortcuts in Yiddishkeit, and don't give up "small" details. The harder people push you to drop something, the more you know it matters.

For example: On a trip your friends say: "Skip Mincha just this once, we'll miss the ride," or, "That snack's hechsher is fine, nobody cares." It looks like a hair. Stand firm, politely. That "small" thing is exactly the cut in the seed that you don't want.