

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Vayigash

פרשת ויגש

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Yeshivos First, No Calculations! · p. 94, §§1-8

Sicha 2: Bring Them to the Torah! · p. 98, §§9-15

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.

Yeshivos First, No Calculations!

להורות לפניו גשנה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayigash, p. 94ff, sections 1–8. §§1–2 from a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Vayigash 5711 (1950); §§3–8 from a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Shemos 5713 (1953).

The point: *Yehuda was ready even to go to war against the mighty Yosef, because he had taken responsibility for one child, Binyamin. So every parent must be moser nefesh for each child's chinuch. Before going down to Mitzrayim, Yaakov first sent Yehuda to set up a yeshivah. "Never did a yeshivah leave our forefathers," even in Mitzrayim, the hardest galus of all. So no calculations. Not "this isn't the time for yeshivos", not "I'll give when I'm comfortable", not "first I must secure parnassah". That kind of thinking comes from the "air of the street". Today the work is much easier, because most of the sparks have already been refined.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What do Chazal say about how Yehuda approached Yosef?

He came ready for anything, even for war. (§1)

2. ★★ Why is it surprising that Yehuda was ready to fight?

The brothers were few, and Yosef ruled all of Mitzrayim. Yosef was also stronger: when Yehuda stamped and Mitzrayim shook, Yosef showed the same strength, until Yehuda said, "This one is stronger than me." (§1)

3. ★★ So why was Yehuda ready to risk himself?

"Your servant is areiv (responsible) for the boy." Since he had taken responsibility for Binyamin, he was moser nefesh for one Jewish child, even though all his other brothers were safe. (§1)

4. ★ What is the lesson for every father and mother?

Hashem gave them responsibility for each child, so they must be moser nefesh even for one child. Through mesirus nefesh for pure chinuch we reach "vayifru vayirbu me'od". (§2)

5. ★★ Why did Yaakov send Yehuda ahead to Goshen? What does it show?

To set up a house of learning (Rashi). Even though Hashem promised "I will go down with you", Yaakov first prepared yeshivos, because yeshivos are the foundation of the Jewish people's existence. (§3)

6. ★★★ Give the four reasons Galus Mitzrayim was the hardest galus.
- 1) It was before Matan Torah, so Torah was learned by their own power and reached only the root of creation. 2) It was the first galus, the hardest to bear. 3) All the Jews were in one place under one government. 4) Mitzrayim was impossible to escape, not even for one slave. Still, "a yeshivah never left them". (§4)*
7. ★★ What does the Rebbe answer to those who say "now isn't the time for yeshivos"?
- In Mitzrayim things were much harder, yet they made no calculations and learned Torah. Now the galus is much easier and the Torah much higher, so surely no calculations: we need yeshivos. (§5)*
8. ★★ What about someone who says, "When I'm comfortable, I'll give to the yeshivah"?
- In Mitzrayim they didn't even have their own straw, and the taskmasters stood over them with whips, yet they supported yeshivos. (§6)*
9. ★★★ Why is it bad even to walk past a place of avodah zarah, if all you see is wood and stone?
- Everything affects the air around it. Where there is tumah, the air carries a "flow" of tumah, which can affect a person. (§7)*
10. ★★ What is the "air of the street" doing to some yeshivah students?
- Some say they can't learn properly because they must first secure a parnassah. They worry about supporting the children they'll have after their shidduch, so at least their mind "goes out to the street" to think about a "tachlis". (§8)*
11. ★★ How does the Rebbe answer those students?
- In Mitzrayim they were so crushed they couldn't even listen to Moshe, yet before Moshe came they made no calculations about a "tachlis" and sat and learned. Surely now: sit and learn without calculations. (The Frierdiker Rebbe said the "ice" in America has moved, but moving is far from "boiling" like fire.) (§8)*

12. ★★★ Why is our work so much easier today?

Of 288 sparks, 202 were refined already in Mitzrayim ("erev rav", 202, went up with them). Only 86 (Elokim) were left, and Jews have refined most of those with sweat and blood, so only "small jugs" remain. And the sparks already refined help us. (§8)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

A Yeshivah That Never Stopped

In Elul 5657 (1897) the Rebbe Rashab founded Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch, with Chassidus as part of the learning schedule. Then came hard times. The yeshivah had to move to Rostov, where the bochurim lacked the most basic necessities. In 1921 the Communists closed it, arrested the teachers, and drove the students out of the city.

Did the Frierdiker Rebbe stop? No. That same year he opened a branch in Warsaw, and for decades secret, "underground" branches kept learning all across Russia, with students and teachers always hunted by the Soviet police.

In 1936 the yeshivah moved to Otwock, a golden period. Then in 1939 the Germans invaded Poland and the yeshivah was scattered. From Riga the Frierdiker Rebbe worked tirelessly to get visas for his students. Many escaped across the world, through Japan, to Shanghai.

And in Shanghai, far from home in the middle of a world war, the yeshivah kept learning. The bochurim even set up a printing press and printed a Tanya and maamarim of the Rebbe Rashab. After the war, those same students went on to build Chabad communities around the world.

Source: Mordechai Rubin, "From Lubavitch to Shanghai: The History of Tomchei Temimim in 11 Images" (chabad.org)

Think: How does this story show "a yeshivah never left our forefathers" (§§3-5)?

Through hunger, Communism, war and exile, they never said "now isn't the time". They made no calculations and kept the yeshivah going wherever they were.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Yeshivah is the foundation of the Jewish people, and your learning now is your "Goshen". Learn without calculations, don't let the "air of the street" in, and take responsibility for one younger child, like Yehuda.

For example: You catch yourself in seder thinking, "What will I be? How will I make money?" That's street air. Hashem takes care of that. Right now, learn. And take "achrayus" for one younger boy: help him with his Mishnayos every day this week.

Bring Them to the Torah!

אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן לתורה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayigash, p. 98ff, sections 9–15. From a sicha of the second night of Pesach 5714 (1954).

The point: Yosef told the Egyptians “Ha lachem zera” and made them do bris milah. He meant to spread G-dliness, but because he did it on his own, not as Hashem wanted, it gave strength to the kelipos and made the galus stronger. Moshe taking the erev rav on his own led to the Eigel. The lesson: love every Jew and bring him close, but bring him to the Torah, not the Torah to him. No compromise, not even on a minhag. Changing Torah is like trying to put out a fire with kerosene, and you may not be “more righteous than the Shulchan Aruch”. “Ha lachma anya” is the tikkun: “Come and eat”, but “come and do the whole Pesach”.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ According to the Arizal, what did Yosef’s “Ha lachem zera” cause? And what does “Ha lachma anya” hint at?

Yosef made the Egyptians do bris milah, which added life to the kelipos and brought Galus

Mitzrayim. “Ha lachma anya” hints at the Geulah. (§9)

- ★★ How does the Arizal vowel the word “ha” in “Ha lachma anya”? What does it mean?

With a tzeirei, not a kamatz. With a kamatz it means “This is the poor bread”; with a tzeirei,

“Here is for you the poor bread”, like “Ha lachem zera”. (§9)

- ★★ Why does it seem Yosef did something good?

By moving the Egyptians, he took away his brothers’ shame, so they wouldn’t be called “exiles”.

And Yosef was a “tzaddik yesod olam”, so spreading G-dliness even to Mitzrayim seems right. (§10)

- ★★★ So what was wrong with it?

He did it on his own. It did add holiness to the Egyptians, but since they weren’t ready, it gave

more life to the kelipos and made Galus Mitzrayim stronger. (§10)

- ★★ Where do we find something similar with Moshe Rabbeinu?

He took the erev rav on his own, and that led to the Eigel. Hashem told him, “Your people, which

you brought up, have become corrupt.” (§10)

- ★ What did the Frierdiker Rebbe say is the main thing in everything we learn?

To draw out the practical “bechen”, the lesson for avodas Hashem. (§11)

7. ★★ What must we always do, and what must we always remember? Give the mashal.

Bring every Jew close, no matter who he is, but never compromise in Torah and mitzvos. When someone is drowning you must save him, but be careful not to drown yourself. (§11)

8. ★★ What are the two lessons in “ohev es habriyos umekarvan laTorah”?

1) Bring everyone close, even “briyos”, whose only merit is that Hashem created them. 2) Bring them to the Torah, not adapt the Torah to them, with no compromise. The same goes for minhagim, since “a Jewish minhag is Torah”. (§11)

9. ★★ What do some people say about outreach? What is the Rebbe’s mashal?

“I’ll give up a little on the mechitzah and more people will come,” or “Among frum Jews be careful about every dot, but where there’s opposition give up the ‘extras’.” That is like wearing weapons at home in peacetime but going to war unarmed. Pure foolishness. (§12)

10. ★★★ Retell the Frierdiker Rebbe’s answer about water and fire.

Someone said drinking water must be checked, but for putting out a fire any water will do. The Frierdiker Rebbe answered: that’s true only if it’s really water. If it’s kerosene, which is also a liquid, it will make the fire bigger. Changing even a minhag doesn’t help, it does the opposite. (§13)

11. ★★★ “Who cares about one hair, if I gain the main thing?” Give the Rebbe’s two answers.

1) Even if it were sure to bring the greatest benefit, “Don’t be too righteous”: you may not be more righteous than the Shulchan Aruch, and who says the benefit outweighs halachah? 2) In truth, since it’s not according to Torah, it won’t help, only harm. Just as Yom Kippur does not atone for sins against Yom Kippur itself: “the prosecutor cannot become the defender”. (§14)

12. ★★ How is “Ha lachma anya” the tikkun for “Ha lachem zera”?

We say “Whoever is hungry, come and eat”, and bring everyone, but only in the Torah’s way: “Whoever needs, come and do Pesach”, the whole Seder. Then “now we are here... next year in Eretz Yisrael, free”. (§15)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Kosher on Campus

In the early 1960s Rabbi Efraim Sturm, head of Young Israel, saw a frightening trend: more and more frum boys and girls who went to out-of-town colleges were dropping Yiddishkeit. His organization asked several Jewish leaders what to do. One said they needed more Orthodox professors. Another said high schools must give students more Yiddishkeit. None of it was practical. Then they went to the Rebbe.

"Americans are not interested in debating religions," the Rebbe explained. "They respect consistency. If a person is religious consistently, the average American will respect him." But, the Rebbe continued, picture a boy eating cottage cheese alone every day in a college dining hall. How long can he hold out when friends say, "Have a taste, it's delicious"? Not because they mean to pressure him, but that's life.

So the Rebbe advised: bring the Jewish students together at their most vulnerable time, not in the classroom but at meals. Set up kosher dining clubs on the campuses.

Young Israel did it, and the clubs were hugely successful. "Of all the advice we were given," said Rabbi Sturm, "the only one we found practical was the Rebbe's. And it worked."

Source: Rabbi Efraim Sturm, "Keeping Kosher on Campus", JEM My Encounter with the Rebbe (chabad.org)

Think: How does the Rebbe's advice fit "bring them to the Torah, not the Torah to them" (§11)?

He didn't suggest giving anything up. Being consistent with no compromise is what earns respect,

and the answer was to build a place where they could keep the Torah fully.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Love every Jew and bring him closer, but bring him to the real Torah, not a watered-down version. People respect a Jew who is consistent. Changing Torah to "help" is pouring kerosene on the fire.

For example: Your cousin, who isn't frum, invites you to his party at a non-kosher restaurant. Go, be warm and happy with him, but don't eat there. Bring your own kosher food, or eat before. He won't push you away. He'll respect you more, and maybe one day he'll want what you have.