

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Vayishlach

פרשת וישלח

3 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.

Just Passing Through!

עם לבן גרתי ותרתי"ג מצות שמרתי

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayishlach, p. 68ff, sections 1-6. Compiled from sichos of Shabbos Parshas Vayishlach 5716-5718 (1955-1957).

The point: *"Im Lavan garti": for Yaakov, all of Lavan's physical things were "gerus," a temporary stay; his real home was his neshamah, Torah and mitzvos. That is exactly how he could keep all 613 mitzvos (garti = taryag), and the physical things themselves rose to "li," part of him. "Chamor" hints at Moshiach: Yaakov was ready for the Geulah, but Esav was not yet. The lesson: get yourself ready for Moshiach even if the world isn't, since one good deed can tip the whole world. Chassidus, revealed on 19 Kislev, gives the strength for this.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What does Rashi add to Yaakov's words "Im Lavan garti"? How does he see it in the word?

"And I kept the 613 mitzvos," because the letters of "garti" are the letters of "taryag" (613).

(§1)

- ★★ What three questions does the Rebbe ask on this Rashi?

1) How does the simple meaning of "garti" (living as a stranger) fit with the derash of 613? 2)

Why did Yaakov have to tell Esav that he kept the mitzvos? 3) What is the lesson for our time?

(§1)

- ★★ What did "Im Lavan garti" mean for Yaakov?

All of Lavan's things, the physical things of this world (ox, donkey, flocks, servants), were

"gerus" to him, foreign. Only the neshamah, Torah and mitzvos were "home." (§2)

- ★★ How does the posuk "Vayiven lo bayis ul'miknei hu asah sukkos" show the same idea?

For himself (his neshamah) he built a permanent house; for his possessions, the physical things

added from outside, he made only sukkos, a temporary dwelling. (§2)

- ★ What did the Maggid of Mezritch say, in the story the Frierdiker Rebbe told?

"At home it's different." At home a person wants everything nice, but on the road he is happy with

a plain room and plain furniture. And we are on the road. (§2)

6. ★★★ So how does the simple meaning (“garti”) fit with Rashi’s derash (613)?

Only because Yaakov felt like a stranger to the world’s physical things could he keep all 613

mitzvos carefully, without the world getting in the way. (§2)

7. ★★ What more happens when physical things are “gerus”? Where is this hinted?

They don’t only stop disturbing; the ruchniyus flows into them until the physical itself becomes

holy. That is “Vayehi li shor vachamor”: the physical things rose to the level of “li,” part of

Yaakov himself. (§3)

8. ★ What does the Midrash say about the word “chamor” in this posuk?

“Chamor, this is Melech HaMoshiach,” as it says “ani verochev al chamor.” (§4)

9. ★★★ Why did Yaakov send malachim to Esav, and what did their answer mean?

To tell him that the birurim (refining) given to Yaakov were done and he was ready for Moshiach,

thinking Esav was refined too. They answered, “We came to your brother, to Esav”: you sent us to a

“brother” like you, but he is still Esav, not yet refined, so the Geulah can’t come yet. (§4)

10. ★★ What is the lesson for every Jew?

Even if the world around isn’t ready, a Jew must get himself and all his things ready for the

Geulah, by knowing that this whole world is “garti,” a temporary stay. Then the physical doesn’t

disturb, and physical blessing comes too. (§5)

11. ★★★ How can one person’s preparation change the whole world?

The world is balanced half and half: one good deed can tip it to the good and bring the Geulah.

The Rambam rules that when Yidden do teshuvah they are redeemed right away, and the Alter Rebbe

adds “tekef umiyad.” So no matter how the world looks, one’s teshuvah brings a personal geulah,

and through it the Geulah of the whole world. (§5)

12. ★★ How is Yud-Tes Kislev connected to this parshah and its lesson?

By hashgachah pratis, the Alter Rebbe's geulah (19 Kislev 5559) falls in the week after

Vayishlach. Chassidus gives every Jew the strength not to reckon with the world around him, to

complete "Im Lavan garti" himself and reach "chamor = Moshiach." Chassidus is the preparation and

keli for Moshiach: through "yafutzu maayanosecha chutzah," Moshiach comes. (§6)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

"I Am Ready"

A woman once came before the Rebbe and asked for a very big brachah: "If you would bring Moshiach, all our prayers would be answered."

"I am ready," the Rebbe answered, "but I need the cooperation of all the Jews around me."

Right away she changed her request: "Then a brachah that we should work harder to bring him."

"Yes," the Rebbe said with a smile, "and as soon as possible."

The Rebbe explained many times what each of us can do. In his words: "Not knowing which deed, word or thought will be the final one, start with one good deed, followed by another, and then another and another. And eventually you will merit that Hashem will lead you to the precise action, word or thought that will bring deliverance to yourself and the entire world: the true and complete Geulah through Moshiach Tzidkeinu!"

Source: Mendel Kalmenson, *On Purpose*, ch. 30, "The Final Frontier" (chabad.org); the encounter is from JEM, *Living Torah* vol. 26, ep. 101, "Partners in Bringing Moshiach"

Think: How is the Rebbe's answer like the sicha's story of Yaakov and Esav?

Yaakov was ready, but Esav (the world) was not yet. The Rebbe was ready too, and asked every Jew

to help. We have to get ourselves ready even if the world isn't, and the next good deed may be the

one that tips the scale (§§4-5).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Live in this world like a traveler: enjoy what Hashem gives, but your real home is your neshamah, Torah and mitzvos. Then nothing stops you from keeping them all, and the physical things become holy too. Don't wait for the world to be ready for Moshiach; get yourself ready, one good deed at a time.

For example: On a class trip you sleep in a cramped cabin and don't mind, because you're just passing through. Treat the newest game or sneakers the same way: nice to have, but not "home." And when someone says "nobody's ready for Moshiach," do your part anyway. The extra mitzvah you do today might be the one that tips the scale.

Moshiach's Donkey

עני ורכב על חמור

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayishlach, p. 70ff, sections 7–15. From a sicha of Yud-Tes Kislev 5718 (1957).

The point: *Why is Moshiach hinted at with a donkey and not the clouds of heaven? The same donkey served Avraham (only for the wood and knife), Moshe (for his wife and sons) and will serve Moshiach (who rides it himself). "Chamor" is "chomer," physicality: refining it lifts a person to places the soul alone can't reach, and at the Geulah even the soul's highest levels will be lifted this way. In prison the Alter Rebbe told the minister's official that Hashem asks every person "Ayeka? Where are you?" That question kept him in this world to finish his job, and it gave him the power to bring the secrets of Torah into human understanding.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ Why is it surprising that Yaakov hinted at the Geulah with a donkey?

The Gemara says: if Yidden merit (zachu), Moshiach comes "with the clouds of heaven"; if not,

"poor and riding a donkey." Yaakov had finished his work and was ready, so why use the "lower"

picture of a donkey? (§7)

2. ★ According to Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer, whose donkey will Moshiach ride?

The same donkey Moshe used ("vayarkivem al hachamor") and Avraham used ("vayachavosh es chamoro").

(§8)

3. ★★ What do Avraham, Moshe and Moshiach have in common?

They are one chain: Avraham began the 2,000 years of Torah, Moshe received the Torah and gave it to all Yisroel, and the purpose of Matan Torah will be revealed by Moshiach. (§8)

4. ★★ How did each of them use the donkey differently?

Avraham used it only for the wood and the knife, and walked himself. Moshe put his wife and sons on it, who are close to a person, like part of him. Moshiach will ride it himself. (§9)

5. ★★ What is riding for? What is the spiritual "chamor"?

Riding brings a person or thing to a place too high or far to reach without it. "Chamor" is

"chomer," physicality (the Baal Shem Tov on "ki sir'eh chamor"). By refining the physical a person can rise to a level the soul alone can't reach: "rav tevuos b'koach shor." (§10)

6. ★★★ Why, in Avraham's time, could the physical help only the "helpers" (the wood and knife)?

Before Matan Torah the decree separating upper and lower worlds was in force, so kedushah didn't rest in physical things. Working with them could only keep the world from disturbing kedushah, or help it, but the thing itself didn't become holy. Yaakov's sticks drew down spiritual light, yet they didn't stay holy objects afterwards. (§11)

7. ★★ What changed after Matan Torah?

A mitzvah done with a physical thing makes the thing itself holy: the physical world became a keli for Elokus. Now even a person's own lower parts (like his wife and children, and the revealed powers of the soul) could be lifted. (§11)

8. ★★★ What new thing will happen when Moshiach comes?

Even the highest levels of the soul (chayah and yechidah) will be lifted through the physical, because the advantage of the body over the soul will be revealed ("eishes chayil atores ba'aloh"), and the true root of the created world will be seen. (§11)

9. ★★★ So what do "zachu" and "lo zachu" really hint at? What did Yaakov mean by "vayehi li shor vachamor"?

"Zachu": avodah only with pure, spiritual things brings "the clouds of heaven," light coming down step by step. "Lo zachu": avodah of refining physical things brings the higher revelation of "riding a donkey," rising from below, reaching where the soul alone can't. Yaakov meant: my work with Lavan's physical things made me ready for that highest revelation. (§12)

10. ★ What did the minister's official ask the Alter Rebbe in prison, and how did he answer?

Why did Hashem ask Adam "Ayeka?", didn't He know where he was? After Rashi's answer, the Alter Rebbe said: when a person is so many years old (he named the official's exact age), Hashem calls to him, "Ayeka? Where are you? What have you done with your purpose in the world?" (§13)

11. ★★ How did that answer save the Alter Rebbe himself? What is the lesson for every Jew?

He was so full of joy at giving himself over for Chassidus that his soul almost left him. Thinking about Hashem's question "Ayeka, have you finished your job?" kept him in this world to complete it. Everyone is asked "Ayeka," each by his level: one must not run away to klos hanefesh but do his shlichus below; another must stop running after his desires and strengthen Torah and mitzvos. The demand also gives the strength to do it with joy. (§§13–14)

12. ★★★ Why was the Alter Rebbe arrested, and why was he freed? How could he bring the secrets of Torah into human understanding?

There was a kitrug Above about revealing Chassidus in human sechel, even in the sechel of the nefesh habahamis; that caused the arrest below. The freedom came because Above gave permission and power to reveal it. He could do it because, even in klos hanefesh, he took in the call "Ayeka": make a dirah for Hashem below. With the power of the One Who calls, the impossible becomes possible. (§15)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Whip the Horses!

Once the young Rabbi Shneur Zalman, later the Alter Rebbe, was getting ready to leave Mezritch after a long stay with his Rebbe, the Maggid. The Maggid's son, Rabbi Avraham "the Malach," came out to see him off. As the coach was about to leave, Rabbi Shneur Zalman heard Rabbi Avraham tell the driver: "Whip the horses so that they stop being horses!" (Another version: "...so that they know that they are horses!")

These words opened a new path in avodas Hashem for Rabbi Shneur Zalman, and he decided to stay in Mezritch a while longer.

The Rebbe explained it with the Baal Shem Tov's teaching on the posuk, "When you see the donkey (chamor) of your enemy lying under its load... you shall surely help him." Chamor also means chomer, the physical: the body and its wants. At first a person sees his physical side as an enemy, and Torah and mitzvos feel like a heavy load. But don't give up on the body or push it away. Help it: first let it know that it is a "horse," then train it until it "stops being a horse," and its strength goes to holy things.

Source: Yanki Tauber, "Whipping Into Shape" (chabad.org, Kehot), with the Rebbe's explanation

Think: What does it mean to "whip the horses so they stop being horses"? How does it fit Moshiach's donkey?

Not to break the body but to refine it, until its strength serves Hashem. Refining the "chamor"

takes a person higher than the soul alone could go: that is "riding on a donkey" (§§10, 12).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Your body and the physical world aren't the enemy. Refine them and use them for mitzvos, and they take you higher than the soul alone could go. And hear Hashem's question every day: "Ayeka? Where are you? Did you do your job?" The question itself gives you the strength to answer it with joy.

For example: You love basketball. The same energy that makes you sprint for the ball can get you to minyan on time, or carry an old man's groceries up the stairs. And tonight, before Shema, ask yourself "Ayeka?": what did I do today for Hashem, and what will I do better tomorrow?

Kislev Is Like Sivan!

שלך גדולה משלהם

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Vayishlach, p. 75f, sections 16–17. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Toldos 5717 (1956).

The point: *Kislev is the third month from Tishrei, as Sivan is the third from Nissan. In Sivan the Torah was given after the tzaddikim's avodah of Nissan; in Kislev, after the baalei teshuvah's avodah of Tishrei, came the "Matan Torah" of pnimiyus haTorah. A new revelation in Torah brings a new revelation in the world: miracles. That is why Chanukah is in Kislev, and its lights last forever, and so does the miracle of 19 Kislev, the spreading of Chassidus, which prepares the world for Moshiach.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ To which month is Kislev compared, and why?

To Sivan. Sivan is the third month from Nissan (which is also a Rosh Hashanah), and Kislev is the third month from Rosh Hashanah in Tishrei. (§16)

2. ★★ How is the avodah of Nissan different from the avodah of Tishrei?

Nissan is the avodah of tzaddikim: yetzias Mitzrayim was like becoming a ger, and "a ger is like a newborn," with no sins. Tishrei is the avodah of baalei teshuvah. (§16)

3. ★ What was given in the third month after Nissan, and what in the third month after Tishrei?

In Sivan, the Torah. In Kislev, the "Matan Torah" of pnimiyus haTorah, the inner part of Torah (Chassidus). (§16)

4. ★★ Teshuvah is higher than Torah. What proves this? And yet what is the source of teshuvah?

Teshuvah can fix even a flaw in Torah. Still, the source of teshuvah is the Torah itself. (§16)

5. ★★★ If pnimiyus haTorah was revealed in Kislev, where does it come from?

From Matan Torah in Sivan, when everything in Torah was given, even the Torah Moshiach will teach (next to which today's Torah is "hevel"). In Sivan it was hidden; it was revealed in Kislev, the third month from the month of teshuvah. (§16)

6. ★★ What do revealing pnimiyus haTorah and spreading the wellsprings prepare for?

For the revelation of Moshiach. (§16)

7. ★★ Why is Kislev a month of miracles?

Because it is the time of a new revelation in Torah, and since Hashem "looked into the Torah and created the world," a new revelation in Torah brings a new revelation in the world: miracles.

(§17)

8. ★★★ How does Chassidus explain miracles? Isn't nature a miracle too?

Nature really is a miracle too, but because it happens all the time the miracle isn't noticed, until a person might wrongly think the "palace has no Owner." A miracle that breaks the usual pattern makes a new revelation. (§17)

9. ★★ Why are the Chanukah lights greater than the lights of the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash?

The Ramban brings the Midrash: Hashem told Aharon, "Yours is greater than theirs." The Mikdash lights don't last forever; the Chanukah lights last forever. The miracle of the oil stands for the secrets of the secrets of Torah. (§17)

10. ★★★ What is the "next miracle" of Kislev, and why does it last forever like the Chanukah lights?

Yud-Tes Kislev: the spreading of Chassidus. It lasts forever because spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus is the keli and preparation for the coming of Moshiach. (§17)

11. ★★★ Why do you think the "Matan Torah" of Chassidus came specifically after the month of teshuvah, and not after Nissan?

Teshuvah is higher than Torah, so after Tishrei's avodah of teshuvah came the revelation of the deepest part of Torah, which had been hidden at Sinai. (§16)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Boat in the Middle of the River

After his arrest in 5559 (1798), the Alter Rebbe was held in the Peter-Paul fortress in St. Petersburg. For his interrogations he was taken across the Neva River by ferry.

During one crossing he asked the official with him to stop the ferry so he could say Kiddush Levanah. The official refused. "If I want, I can stop the boat myself," said the Alter Rebbe. The man refused again, and the boat stopped in the middle of the river. The Alter Rebbe said the Tehillim before Kiddush Levanah, but not the brachah itself. The ferryman begged him to let the boat go, and it went on its way.

Then the Alter Rebbe asked the official again to stop the boat. "What will you give me in exchange?" the man asked. The Alter Rebbe gave him a brachah, and at his request wrote it down in his own hand. The official later rose to power and lived to an honored old age, and he kept the note under glass in a gold frame.

The Frierdiker Rebbe told this story on Yud-Tes Kislev. As a boy he wondered: once the boat had stopped, why not just say the brachah? When he grew older he understood: a mitzvah is meant to be done through the ways of nature, not through miracles.

Source: Yerachmiel Tilles, "The Moon Over the River" (chabad.org), based on Sippurei Chassidim; told by the Frierdiker Rebbe on Yud-Tes Kislev

Think: Why didn't the Alter Rebbe say the brachah while the boat stood still by a miracle? How does that fit §17?

A mitzvah is done through nature, which is itself a hidden miracle (§17). The open miracle

revealed something new: Hashem, not the officials, runs the world. But the mitzvah itself was done

the natural way.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Kislev is a month of Matan Torah, the Torah of Chassidus, and a month of miracles. Learn Chassidus and share it, and it lasts forever, like the Chanukah lights. And look at the "regular" things in your life: they are miracles too.

For example: Yud-Tes Kislev is coming. Make a hachlatah now: a few minutes of Chassidus every day, maybe Tanya with a friend, and one Chassidus thought at the Shabbos table. And tomorrow morning, when you wake up healthy, say Modeh Ani knowing it's a miracle, just a quiet one.