

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 1

לקוטי שיחות · חלק א

Parshas Yisro

פרשת יתרו

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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.

Torah Lights Up the Whole Day!

באמור אלי כל היום איה אלקיך

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Yisro, p. 148ff, sections 1-3. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5713 (1952).

The point: *At Matan Torah everyone was there and heard, so what does “lemor”, “to say over”, mean? The Maggid: Matan Torah draws the Ten Commandments into the Ten Utterances of creation. So the light of Torah must shine into the world: not “Torah here, world there”, and even permitted things go by Torah’s rules, not the world’s. That is the cry “all day long, where is your G-d?”: feeling Hashem in davening and learning isn’t enough. The feeling must rule while eating, doing business and talking to people.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What question do the commentators ask about “Vayedaber Elokim es kol hadevarim ha’eileh lemor”?

Everywhere else “vayedaber... lemor” means the words must be passed on to Yidden who didn’t hear them. But at Matan Torah all of Klal Yisroel was there and heard. So what does “lemor” mean? It can’t mean “for future generations”, because their neshamos were also at Matan Torah. (§1)

2. ★ How does the Maggid of Mezritch answer?

Matan Torah “draws” the Ten Commandments of the Torah into the Ten Utterances with which the world was created; they are matched to each other (“asarah asarah hakaf”). So “vayedaber” (the Ten Commandments) goes into “lemor” (the Ten Utterances). (§1)

3. ★★ What does this mean in avodas Hashem? Which opinion does it reject?

The light of Torah must shine into the matters of the world. It rejects the view that Torah is one thing and the world another: in a Torah setting you’re a Torah Jew, but out in the world you follow the world’s ways. Everything, including this-worldly matters, must follow the Torah’s rules. (§2)

4. ★★ Is the Rebbe talking about forbidden things? Explain.

No. “What’s forbidden is forbidden” is obvious. He means that even in permitted things the world’s assumptions, “baalebatish” assumptions, shouldn’t rule, only the Torah’s. (§2)

5. ★ Which posuk does the Rebbe explain next?

“Haysa li dimasi lechem yomam valaylah, be’emor eilai kol hayom ayeh Elokecha”: my tears were my bread day and night, when they say to me all day long, “Where is your G-d?” (§3)

6. ★★ How can tears replace bread? Where does the bitterness come from?

The bitterness is so great that it takes away the feeling of hunger. It comes from “be’emor eilai”: a claim from Above, “all day long, where is your G-d?” (§3)

7. ★★ What does “Elokecha” mean, and Who is “your G-d”?

“Your strength and your life.” It is Havaya, above time, place and the whole seder hishtalshelus; even “Anochi”, “I am Who I am”, not hinted in any letter or even a kotz, is your strength and life. (§3)

8. ★★★ Why isn’t it enough to feel “Elokecha” during davening, learning or a farbrengen?

That could be reached by malachim, or by neshamos above under the Kisei Hakavod. The purpose of the neshamah coming down into a body is to refine the body and the animal soul, because “the neshamah itself needs no fixing at all” (Tanya ch. 37). (§3)

9. ★★ So when must the feeling of “Elokecha” rule a person?

All day long: while eating, drinking, doing business or working, and talking with people, as strongly as he understood and felt it while davening and learning. (§3)

10. ★★★ How are §1 (“lemor”) and §3 (“kol hayom ayeh Elokecha”) really the same idea?

Both say that Torah may not stay only in the “Torah” part of life. Matan Torah draws the Ten Commandments into the world’s Ten Utterances; in a person’s day, the Hashem he feels in davening has to come with him into eating, business and talking. (§§1–3)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Chickens, Children and Torah

Shalom Ber Goldshmid was four years old when his father was murdered in the Hebron massacre of 1929. In 1947 he came to the Lubavitcher yeshivah in New York. A year later the Rebbe, then the Friediker Rebbe's son-in-law, called him in and suggested he learn shechitah: "I knew your whole family in Yekaterinoslav, and they were all shochtim."

Then the Rebbe advised him to start a small business: shecht chickens on Thursdays and deliver them to Jewish homes for Shabbos. The reason was unusual: "It will give you the opportunity to hear many words of Torah. When you deliver the chickens, the children will be home, and they will want to show off what they learned in school." That is exactly what happened. He wrote the children's divrei Torah in a little notebook and reported them to the Rebbe.

Later he opened a butcher shop on Empire Boulevard in Crown Heights, and the Rebbe told him: "Everybody who comes in should come out with meat for Shabbos, whether they pay or they don't." When a mother of many children suddenly bought only chicken wings because her husband had lost his job, he told her: "No problem. The Rebbe told me that ahavas Yisroel means I should give you whatever you need." And somehow it worked out well for everybody, as the Rebbe promised.

Source: Shalom Ber Goldshmid, "The Business of Charity", *Here's My Story* (JEM / chabad.org)

Think: How did a chicken business become "lemor", the Torah shining into the world (§§1-2)?

A permitted, ordinary business was run by Torah's rules, not the world's: it was a way to hear

Torah, and the shop ran on ahavas Yisroel. That is the Ten Commandments inside the "Ten

Utterances" of daily life.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Torah isn't only for the beis medrash. "All day long, where is your G-d?" goes with you to the table, the park and the phone, even in things that are permitted.

For example: In a ballgame in the park the other team argues about a call, and everyone starts yelling and calling names. You stay honest and calm, because the Torah's rules don't stop at the yeshivah door.

Chassidus Isn't a Secret!

החלק הנסתר שבתורה - נגלה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Yisro, p. 149, section 4. From a sicha of Shavuos 5713 (1953).

The point: *Some say Chassidus is "nistar", hidden, so there's no need to learn it. But at Matan Torah the whole Torah was given, revealed and hidden. In fact, the revealed part was then hidden (the 620 letters of the Ten Commandments only hint at the 620 mitzvos), while the hidden part was revealed: every Jew saw the Merkavah ("shinan"), and the Merkavah is pnimiyus haTorah.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What do some people claim about Chassidus?

That it is "nistar", hidden and wondrous matters, so there is no need to learn it, chas veshalom.

(§4)

2. ★ What was given at Matan Torah?

The whole Torah: both the revealed part (nigleh) and the hidden part (nistar). (§4)

3. ★★ How was nigleh "hidden" at Matan Torah?

The Ten Commandments have 620 letters, which hint at the 620 mitzvos. So all the mitzvos were inside the Ten Commandments only as hints, hidden. (§4)

4. ★★ Why 620 and not 613?

613 mitzvos from the Torah plus 7 mitzvos d'Rabbanan. (§4)

5. ★ Where is the 620 letters idea found?

Rashi on Shemos 24:12, and the Baal HaTurim on Shemos 20:13. (§4)

6. ★★ How was nistar "revealed" at Matan Torah?

All of Klal Yisroel saw "maaseh merkavah", the Divine Chariot. (§4)

7. ★★ What hint is there in the posuk "Elef shinan... Sinai bakodesh"?

"Shinan" stands for shor (ox), nesher (eagle), aryeh (lion), and the nun for pnei adam (the face of a man): the four faces of the Merkavah. (§4)

8. ★ What is maaseh merkavah?

Pnimiyus haTorah, the inner part of the Torah. (§4)

9. ★★★ How does this answer the claim that Chassidus is “nistar”?

At Sinai the “hidden” Torah was the open part, seen by every single Jew. So pnimiyus haTorah is not a secret for a few; it was given to, and seen by, every Jew, and it is ours to learn. (§4)

10. ★★★ The Rebbe says “adaraba”, on the contrary. Why is that stronger than saying “nistar was given too”?

Not only was the hidden part given; at Matan Torah it was the revealed part, while nigleh was the hidden one. So calling Chassidus “too hidden to learn” turns Matan Torah upside down. (§4)

11. ★★ Why does this sicha belong to Shavuos?

Shavuos is zman Matan Toraseinu, when the whole Torah, inner part included, was given to all of us. (§4)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Fill It to the Brim!

Zalmon Jaffe, a businessman from Manchester, England, was on a small committee that published the Tanya with an English translation printed opposite the Hebrew, page by page. They did the work with their own money, without asking for guidance at every little step.

At the farbrengen of Shabbos Parshas Nasso, the Rebbe asked everyone who had taken part in publishing the Tanya to say l'chaim. Mr. Jaffe raised a tumbler half full of wine. The Rebbe was not impressed with a half-full cup, and told him to fill it again, right to the brim. He said l'chaim again and drank it all.

Then the Rebbe spoke about the Tanya's translations: the first chapter in Russian about 75 years earlier, the Frierdiker Rebbe's Yiddish, then English, French, Italian and Spanish. But this was the first time a translation stood right opposite the original Hebrew. “Now, students will be able to much more easily learn and understand the Tanya.” He hoped for a second and third edition, so that other sifrei Chassidus could be translated the same way.

Then the Rebbe called the committee up to the dais and gave each of them a bottle of vodka.

Source: Zalmon Jaffe, *My Encounters with the Rebbe*, “The Tanya Gives the Rebbe Further Pleasure” (chabad.org)

Think: Why was the Rebbe so happy that the Tanya could now be learned “much more easily” (§4)?

Because Chassidus isn't a secret for a few. At Sinai the inner Torah was revealed to every Jew; making it easy for everyone to learn continues that.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Chassidus is yours. It isn't "too deep for me" or "only for big rabbanim": at Sinai every Jew saw it.

For example: A friend says, "Chassidus is for the older bochurim, I'll stick to Gemara." Show him the daily Tanya with a translation and learn the day's portion together for five minutes after Minchah.

Medicine for the Ego!

הקדים הקב"ה רפואה למכה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Yisro, p. 150ff, sections 5-10. From a sicha of Yud-Beis Tammuz 5712 (1952).

The point: *Opponents of Chassidus ask: if it's needed, why didn't it exist before? And isn't its bittul just negation? The Rambam says the soul has illnesses and cures like the body. Most illnesses are something missing; one is something extra, a growth, and its cure destroys the growth. It was found only recently because it spread only recently. So too, near Moshiach the kelipah of Amalek, chutzpah and yeshus, grows, and Hashem sent the cure first: Chassidus. Unlike the medicine, you can learn Chassidus without stop, and it only strengthens the healthy part.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What two claims do opponents of learning Chassidus usually make?

(1) If it is needed, why didn't it exist before? Many years without Chassidus prove it isn't

necessary. (2) It leads to bittul, nullifying physical existence and the "yesh", and bittul is

only negation and absence. (§5)

- ★ What does the Rambam say in Shmoneh Perakim?

Just as the body has illnesses and cures, so does the soul. So from the illness and healing of the

body we can learn about the soul. (§6)

- ★★ How is one illness different from almost all others?

Usually an illness means a part of the body is missing or weak. In this one nothing is missing;

something is added, a growth. Yet it is a serious illness, often worse, so serious people don't

even want to call it by name. The extra flesh harms its place and can spread. (§7)

- ★★ How is its cure different from other cures?

Other cures add something to the person. This cure destroys the extra part, and that is how the

person is truly healed. It was discovered only a few generations ago, the detailed ways of using

it came later, and research still goes on. (§7)

5. ★★ Give the two excuses of someone who refuses this cure, and the answer to each.

(1) "Medicine is supposed to strengthen the body, not destroy." Answer: we strengthen the healthy

body; the growth isn't part of the body, it harms it, so it must be destroyed. (2) "For

generations nobody used it; I'm my own expert." Answer: before, the illness wasn't so common, and

above all the cure hadn't been sent from Above; now that it spread, Hashem sent the cure before

the blow. (§8)

6. ★★ Why did this illness and cure appear in the body only in recent generations?

Everything physical comes from its root in ruchniyus. They came now because their spiritual match

came now. (§9)

7. ★★★ What is the spiritual "growth" of our times, and why is it so strong now?

It is ikvesa d'ikvesa d'Meshicha, right before "ketz sam lachoshech", so the kelipah of Amalek

grows: chutzpah and yeshus with no reason or cause. There was pride before, but not so coarse.

(That is also why, physically, there is a growth with no purpose that takes the body's strength.)

(§9)

8. ★★ What cure did Hashem send for it?

Hashem sent the cure before the blow and revealed Chassidus, which destroys the sick part of the

yesh. (§9)

9. ★★★ In which detail is the mashal unlike the nimshal?

Using the medicine for a long time can harm the healthy part too. Chassidus can be learned without

a break, again and again, and it destroys only pride and yeshus. To the healthy part it gives

strength: Torah is "oz vesushiyah", sushiyah for the animal soul and oz for the G-dly soul. (§10)

10. ★★★ Use §§6–10 to answer both claims in §5.

(1) Why not before? The "illness" wasn't so strong, and the cure hadn't been sent; now that it has

spread, Hashem sent Chassidus. (2) Only negation? It negates only the sick "growth" of ego, which

isn't really you, and it strengthens the healthy part, so it isn't absence at all. (§§5–10)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“Fear of Arrogance”

One of the chassidim of the Mittlerer Rebbe learned and davened with great devotion and was kind and gentle to everyone. But he had one serious flaw: he greatly admired his own good qualities. Afraid that he was becoming arrogant, he went to the Rebbe for guidance.

The Mittlerer Rebbe was quiet for a moment, then told him a mashal. When the evil side was created, Hashem called it “the Serpent”. When Adam and Chava did teshuvah, it begged to be destroyed, so Hashem gave it a new name no one would recognize: “the Angel of Death”. When Avraham and Sarah spread the knowledge of Hashem, it got a new name, “Satan”. When Moshe taught Torah, its name was changed to “Arrogance”, and in that disguise it got even into the batei medrash: people learned and, instead of being humbled, looked down on the unlearned, saying they were only defending the honor of Torah.

Then the Baal Shem Tov came and revealed Hashem’s true oneness, before Whom everyone is equal. So the evil side got one more name: “Fear of Arrogance”.

“Know,” concluded the Mittlerer Rebbe, “that Fear of Arrogance is Arrogance, who is Satan, who is the Angel of Death, who is the Serpent himself! Quickly, throw him out of your house, because your life is at risk!”

Source: Yossy Gordon, “Sly Arrogance” (chabad.org), from *Shmuos V’Sippurim* vol. 2, pp. 169–170, and *Reshimos Devarim* vol. 4

Think: What disguise of the yeshus did the Mittlerer Rebbe uncover? Why does it need the “medicine” of Chassidus (§§9–10)?

Even worrying about how great you are is still thinking about yourself, the yeshus in a

holy-looking disguise. Chassidus destroys exactly that growth, however it’s dressed up, and leaves

the good (learning, davening, kindness) stronger.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

The ego grows quietly, like that extra growth, and today it’s stronger than ever. Chassidus every day is the medicine, and there is no overdose.

For example: You got a 100 on the Gemara test and catch yourself looking down at the boy who struggles. Learn a few lines of Tanya that night, and next day offer to review the sugya with him.

Eat for Davening!

מוטב לאכול לשם התפלה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 1, Parshas Yisro, p. 151ff (this sicha has no numbered sections, so answers cite the page).
From a sicha of Yud Shvat 5719 (1959).

The point: *Rebbetzin Rivkah, at 18, was told by the doctor to eat as soon as she woke. To avoid eating before davening she got up very early, and lost sleep. The Tzemach Tzedek told her: a Jew must be healthy and strong to put life into mitzvos; "better to eat for the sake of davening than to daven for the sake of eating." There are three ways: davening and "eating" as two separate worlds; davening for the sake of eating; and the goal, eating for the sake of davening. Even wealth is for Torah, mitzvos, tzedakah and influencing others. And the lesson was told to a mother: she plants this in her children from the cradle.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Whose memories does the Frierdiker Rebbe's reshimah record, and why is it fitting for Yud Shvat?

Memories of his grandfather the Rebbe Maharash and his grandmother Rebbetzin Rivkah, whose yahrzeit is also on Yud Shvat. (p. 151)

- ★ What happened when Rebbetzin Rivkah was eighteen?

She was very ill, and the doctor ordered her to eat as soon as she woke up. Since she didn't want to eat before davening, she got up very early, davened, and then ate. Of course it didn't help her health, and because of it she didn't sleep enough either. (p. 151)

- ★★ What did the Tzemach Tzedek tell her?

A Jew must be healthy and strong. "Vachai bahem" means putting life into the mitzvos (as the Maggid explains), and for that you need strength and simchah. "You should not be without food. Better to eat for the sake of davening than to daven for the sake of eating." (p. 151)

- ★ Why must we learn a lesson from this story?

Stories of our Rebbeim, especially those passed from generation to generation, aren't "just stories"; being passed down shows they surely concern the listeners. (p. 151f)

5. ★★ What two kinds of things does a person do, and what are their inner names?

(1) Things for Hashem: Torah, tefillah, mitzvos, called "tefillah", meaning connection, "know before Whom you stand". (2) Things for himself, which he really needs or seem needed, called "eating": what he is "hungry" for, which quiets his hunger when he gets it. (p. 152)

6. ★★ Describe the first, "split" way. What does the Gemara say about it?

Davening and "eating" have nothing to do with each other: while he davens and learns he looks like a tzaddik gamur, but in business or eating no kedushah is seen on him. About this it says, "Are we dealing with fools?" and "we don't deal with the wicked." (p. 152)

7. ★★ What is "davening for the sake of eating"? Is it a valid way?

He keeps the Shulchan Aruch, but so he can show Hashem a "bill" and get his needs ("Im bechukosai... venasati gishmeichem"). The Gemara calls "this sela for tzedakah so my son will live" a tzaddik gamur (Rashi: if he's regular in it), so it is a way, but since it comes from self-interest it is not the goal. Learning shelo lishmah is only so it leads to lishmah. (p. 152)

8. ★★★ What is the ideal way?

Davening for the sake of davening, not for a reward, not even Olam Haba, just because Hashem commanded. And beyond that, eating for the sake of davening: all his matters for kedushah, "bechol derachecha da'eihu". (p. 152f)

9. ★★ Being rich isn't the purpose of creation. What is the purpose of wealth?

To learn Torah with peace of mind, keep mitzvos generously and give tzedakah with a wide hand, and to influence others. People mock a poor man but copy a rich one even when he does something foolish; so when he puts on (Rabbeinu Tam) tefillin, keeps Shabbos or eats shmurah matzah, everyone will follow. (p. 153)

10. ★★ What extra lesson comes from the fact that this was told to a woman, a mother of a future Nasi?

To raise children who eat for the sake of davening depends on the mother: she lives that way

herself and plants it in them from the cradle, that everything is for connecting with Hashem, and

without that, even if there is food, it has no taste. (p. 153)

11. ★★★ With what brachah does the sicha end? Does “eating for davening” mean having little?

Hashem wants Jews to have from His full, open hand: children, life and plenty of sustenance

(“bnei, chayei, mezonei revichei”), a house blessed in ruchniyus and gashmiyus, with nachas in

both. Eating for davening means the plenty is used for holiness, not that it is missing. (p. 153f)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“Did You Eat Properly Today?”

Reuven Donin grew up in Jerusalem before Israel’s independence, left his studies as a teenager and went to work the land on a kibbutz. Alone on his tractor he would think about the world and search for answers, and in time he began learning Chassidus seriously. In 1958 he went to the Rebbe’s yeshivah in New York and put all his energy into learning and working on himself.

One night he came into the Rebbe’s room for yechidus, very emotional. “Rebbe, I can’t take the struggles of life! I just want to stay here in this room forever... I just can’t anymore...”

The Rebbe’s answer was not what he expected: “Did you eat properly today?”

He hadn’t. The Rebbe told him to go eat right away, explained how caring for the body affects a person’s feelings, and gave him detailed guidance for his daily health. For months afterward, whenever the Rebbe saw him, he would ask what he was eating, how long he slept (the Rambam says six to eight hours), and whether he took walks in the fresh air between his hours of learning.

Later Reb Reuven married, built a family and went back to his tractor. Young people came to him with their struggles, and he told them this story: sometimes, under a heap of turmoil, there is simply a neglected body.

Source: Levi Shmotkin, “Did You Eat Properly Today?”, *Letters for Life* (chabad.org)

Think: How was the Rebbe’s question the Tzemach Tzedek’s lesson, “eat for the sake of davening”?

Eating, sleep and fresh air weren’t a break from avodah; they gave him the strength and simchah to

learn and daven with life (“vachai bahem”), just as the Tzemach Tzedek told Rebbetzin Rivkah.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Your eating, sleeping and playing should be “for davening”: koach to serve Hashem. And your davening shouldn't be only to get things.

For example: You stay up past midnight with a game, skip breakfast, and sit cranky and half asleep in Gemara shiur. Go to sleep on time, eat a real breakfast with a clear brachah, and think: this is my koach for learning.