

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Parshas Korach

פרשת קרח

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: The Best Goes to Hashem! · Korach, p. 326, §§1-2

Sicha 2: "Everyone Is Holy"? Korach's Mistake · Korach, p. 328, §§3-5

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.

The Best Goes to Hashem!

כל חלב לה'

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Korach, p. 326 (Hebrew edition pp. 33-35), sections 1-2. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Korach 5714 (1954). One sicha, divided here into two parts.

The point: *The parsha begins with Korach's dispute against Aharon's kehunah, then tells of Aharon's staff, which proved his kehunah was right, and then speaks of the matnos kehunah, the gifts to the kohanim. From everything a person has, he must set aside for the kohanim, both from "inner light", food (terumah and bikkurim), and from "surrounding light", clothing (the first of the shearing). The first of everything is given to Hashem; the kohanim, whose inheritance is Hashem and who have nothing to do with worldly matters, "receive from the table of On High." So the Rambam writes that anything done for the sake of G-d should be from the best: feed the hungry from the best and sweetest on your table, cover the naked with your nicest clothing, build a shul nicer than your own house, as it says, "kol chelev laShem", all the best is for Hashem. The Rambam's three things, food, clothing and house, hint that from all a person has he must give the first and the best to the "kohen" inside his soul, to holiness (and the G-dly soul of a beinoni is like a "poor man"). The general preparation is knowing that the main thing is for Hashem. This matters even materially: the man who gave less maaser than he should found that the next year his field grew only the amount that should have gone to the kohen. The same with time. Some times are free of worldly matters: a person's first years, Shabbos and Yom Tov, Rosh Hashanah and the Ten Days of Teshuvah. In each day, the calmest, best time is right after waking up, and it belongs to Hashem. The Frierdiker Rebbe explained "reishis arisoseichem" as "the first time after getting up from the bed", give it to Hashem. That is why, when yeshivah schedules were planned in America, he insisted that only holy studies be in the morning, when the mind is fresh, and secular studies in the afternoon. Businessmen too must know that the main thing is Torah and tefillah: first daven, then go from the shul to the beis midrash to learn, and only then eat breakfast and go to business, not to be sunk in business and learn one chapter morning and evening just to be yotzei, without hearing what you say. The best time and strength belong to Torah and tefillah. Terumah is only part, maaser a tenth, and one shouldn't spend more than a fifth on tzedakah, but this isn't tzedakah: even if most of the day goes to business and the smaller part to Torah and tefillah, that smaller part is the main thing of the whole day, so it must be the "chelev". The general preparation is kabbalas ol: as soon as you wake up, say Modeh Ani with kabbalas ol.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What three things come one after the other in Parshas Korach, and how are they connected?

Korach's dispute against Aharon's kehunah; Aharon's staff, which proved his kehunah was right; and the matnos kehunah, gifts to the kohanim. (§1)

- ★★ Which matnos kehunah come from "inner light" and which from "surrounding light"?

Inner light: food (terumah and bikkurim). Surrounding light: clothing (the first of the shearing, reishis hagez). (§1)

3. ★★ Why is the gift really given to Hashem, and not just to the kohen?

The kohanim's inheritance is Hashem and they have nothing to do with worldly matters, so the gift goes to Hashem, and the kohanim "receive from the table of On High". (§1)

4. ★ According to the Rambam, how should we give anything done for the sake of G-d? Give three examples.

From the best ("kol chelev laShem"): feed the hungry from the sweetest on your table, cover the naked with your nicest clothing, build a shul nicer than your house. (§1)

5. ★★★ What is the inner meaning of the Rambam's three things, food, clothing and house?

From all that belongs to a person he must give the first and best to the "kohen" inside his soul, to holiness. (The G-dly soul of a beinoni is like a "poor man".) (§1)

6. ★★ How does the story of the man who gave less maaser show that this matters even materially?

The next year his field grew only the amount that should have gone to the kohen. (§1)

7. ★★ Which times are free of worldly matters? Which is the best time of each day?

A person's first years; Shabbos and Yom Tov, especially Rosh Hashanah and the Ten Days of Teshuvah. In each day, right after waking up, when the mind is calm. (§2)

8. ★★ How did the Friediker Rebbe explain "reishis arisoseichem"? What did he insist on for yeshivos in America?

"The first time after getting up from the bed": give it to Hashem. Only holy studies in the morning, when the mind is fresh; secular studies in the afternoon. (§2)

9. ★★ What is the right order of the morning for a businessman?

First daven, then go from the shul to the beis midrash to learn, then breakfast, and only then business. (§2)

10. ★★ What is wrong with learning "one chapter in the morning and one at night" just to be yotzei?

It makes business the main thing. Torah and tefillah are the main thing, so they deserve the best time and strength, not words said without hearing or thinking. (§2)

11. ★★★ Terumah is only part and maaser a tenth. So why must Torah and tefillah get the “chelev”, even if they are only a small part of the day?

This is not tzedakah. Even if most of the day goes to business, the smaller part given to Torah

and tefillah is the main thing of the whole day, so it must be the best. (§2)

12. ★ What is the general preparation for all this, right at the start of the day?

Kabbalas ol: as soon as you wake up, say Modeh Ani with kabbalas ol. (§2)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

First a Torah Scholar

In 1966, a six-year-old boy from Los Angeles came with his family to yechidus with the Rebbe. His father, who came from Hungary, told the Rebbe proudly: “I want him to be a rosh yeshivah!”

The Rebbe looked at the boy and said: “First he should become a Torah scholar, and then we’ll see what his business will be.”

Those words set the tone for his whole life. His father quoted them again and again. The boy grew up, and with the Rebbe’s brachah he became a shliach in Sherman Oaks, California, while also running businesses and investments.

A business always pulls at you. There are pressures, deals and enticements to give it just a little more time. But whenever that happened, his father would say: “Nope. You have to learn Torah a few hours every day. The Rebbe said that first you have to be a Torah scholar, and then you’ll be in business.”

And so, every day, before everything else, Rabbi Moshe Weiss makes sure to spend a few hours learning.

Source: Rabbi Moshe Weiss, “First a Torah Scholar, and Then a Businessman”, JEM Here’s My Story (via anash.org)

Think: How does Rabbi Weiss live “kol chelev laShem”?

Even as a busy businessman, he gives Torah the first and best of his time, a few hours every day,

because Torah is the main thing and business comes after it.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Give Hashem the first and the best: the first minutes of your day, your best energy, your nicest things.

For example: When you wake up, don’t grab anything first. Say Modeh Ani slowly, wash, daven with your head clear, and give your morning seder your best concentration, not the leftovers.

“Everyone Is Holy”? Korach’s Mistake

כי כל העדה כולם קדושים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Korach, p. 328 (Hebrew edition pp. 35–37), sections 3–5. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Korach 5714 (1954).

The point: *Korach disputed Aharon’s kehunah. He claimed there was no need to give the best to the kohen, because “the whole congregation are all holy and Hashem is among them; why do you raise yourselves?”* There are arguments for this: the Shechinah rests on every ten Jews even when they aren’t learning Torah, and every Jew, even a complete rasha, has a neshamah (as a “makif”), so wherever he goes he goes with his soul and with Hashem. Even more so a “baal Torah”: he may do whatever he wants, since “Torah protects and saves; an aveirah extinguishes a mitzvah but not Torah.” A maamar of Chassidus explains that Korach’s group argued that all of them were “souls of Atzilus” (the generation of the desert was a “generation of knowledge”: from the spirit given to the seventy elders, all 600,000 received), so why should anyone stand above them? Moshe is needed only in later generations, when few have such souls. The same Korach-claim exists today: “I am a baal Torah, that’s enough.” The answer: a tallis all of techeiles still needs tzitzis, which stand for fear of Hashem and bittul; and “a house full of sefarim still needs a mezuzah.” The mezuzah has Shema (love) and Vehaya (fear), and just as it guards the house, love and fear guard the Torah: “Torah without fear and love doesn’t fly up,” and “whoever’s fear comes before his wisdom, his wisdom lasts.” Korach’s punishment was “they went down alive to Sheol”: people sunk deep in evil who think they are alive and claim “all are holy”. Korach was right that a Jew always has a neshamah, and even Torah, but what use is Torah when the Torah is in one place and he is in another? Worse, the Alter Rebbe says that Torah learned improperly is in galus among the klipos; “alive to Sheol” means taking the Torah, which is life, down to Sheol. The cure is “matnos kehunah”: giving the best time and strength to Torah and tefillah, with the preparation of Modeh Ani with kabbalas ol. Through this comes Birkas Kohanim, and Aharon’s staff blossoms: the flow of blessing never stops, and it comes down as “almonds” (shkeidim, from shoked, diligent for good). There is a custom to “take” something from the parsha to the shul. From Korach we take: the claim “all are holy” means today that everyone paskens halachah as he likes, and that leads to “machlokes not for the sake of Heaven, the machlokes of Korach.” We must be batel to those who can pasken by the Torah, whose psak even affects reality. And “kol chelev laShem”: the best of time, strength and everything a person has, and most precious of all, his children, so we give Hashem our children and the best of their time, their first years. Then come the blessings: “Yevarechecha”, with children and money; “v’yishmerecha”, that the money be used for healthy and happy things, not doctors; “v’yasem lecha shalom”, peace, the vessel that holds blessing; and “va’ani avarchem”, Hashem’s own blessing, greater than the main.

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What was Korach’s claim against Aharon?

“The whole congregation are all holy and Hashem is among them; why do you raise yourselves?” So there is no need to give the best to the kohen. (§3)

- ★★ What arguments seem to support “all are holy”?

The Shechinah rests on every ten Jews even without Torah learning, and every Jew, even a rasha, has a neshamah (as a makif), so wherever he goes, Hashem is with him. (§3)

3. ★★ How might a “baal Torah” use Korach’s claim?

“Torah protects and saves; an aveirah extinguishes a mitzvah but not Torah”, so he may do whatever he wants, and the Torah will protect him. (§3)

4. ★★★ According to the maamar of Chassidus, why did Korach’s group say they didn’t need Moshe?

They were all “souls of Atzilus”: the generation of the desert was a “generation of knowledge”, and from the spirit of the seventy elders all 600,000 received. Moshe is needed only in later generations, when few have such souls. (§3)

5. ★★ What do the tallis of techeiles and the house full of sefarim answer to “I’m a baal Torah, that’s enough”?

A tallis all of techeiles still needs tzitzis (fear of Hashem and bittul), and a house full of sefarim still needs a mezuzah (love and fear). (§3)

6. ★★★ Why are love and fear like a mezuzah for Torah? Bring two sayings of Chazal.

The mezuzah has Shema (love) and Vehaya (fear), and it guards the house; so love and fear guard the Torah. “Torah without fear and love doesn’t fly up”; “whoever’s fear comes before his wisdom, his wisdom lasts.” (§3)

7. ★★ What was new about Korach’s punishment, “they went down alive to Sheol”? What does it mean in avodah?

Sheol and life together: people sunk deep in evil who think they are alive and say “all are holy”. Korach was right that every Jew has a neshamah and even Torah, but what use is Torah if it is in one place and he is in another? (§4)

8. ★★★ What is a second meaning of “alive to Sheol”, according to the Alter Rebbe?

Torah learned improperly is in galus among the klipos. Taking the Torah, which is life, and bringing it down to Sheol. (§4)

9. ★★ What is the cure, and what blessings come through it?

Matnos kehunah: the best time and strength to Torah and tefillah, starting with Modeh Ani with

kabbalas ol. Through it come Birkas Kohanim and the blossoming of Aharon's staff: an unbroken flow

of blessing, like almonds ("shoked", diligent for good). (§4)

10. ★★★ What does "all are holy" mean today, and what does it lead to? What is the answer?

Everyone paskens halachah as he likes. It leads to "machlokes not for the sake of Heaven, the

machlokes of Korach." We must be batel to those who can pasken by the Torah, whose psak even

affects reality. (§5)

11. ★★ What is the most precious thing a person has, and how does he give "the best" of it to Hashem?

His children. He gives Hashem the children and the best of their time, their first years (a Torah

chinuch). (§5)

12. ★★ Explain the blessings of "v'yishmerecha", "v'yasem lecha shalom" and "va'ani avarchem".

V'yishmerecha: that the money be used for healthy and happy things. Shalom: the vessel that holds

blessing. Va'ani avarchem: Hashem's own blessing, greater than the main. (§5)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Vilna or Mezritch?

When Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the future Alter Rebbe, was almost twenty, he was already known as a great genius in Torah. With the agreement of his wife, Rebbetzin Sterna, he decided to travel away from home to a center of Torah learning and avodas Hashem.

In those days there were two great Jewish capitals in Eastern Europe. In Vilna lived Rabbi Eliyahu, the famous Gaon of Vilna, the greatest master of Torah study. In Mezritch lived Rabbi DovBer, the Maggid, the leader of the chassidim after the Baal Shem Tov. Which way should he go?

Later the Alter Rebbe told: "I debated where I should go. I knew that in Vilna one was taught how to learn, and in Mezritch one could learn how to daven. To learn I was somewhat able, but of davening I knew very little. So I went to Mezritch."

"Hashem blessed me with making the right choice," he said. He became a devoted talmid of the Maggid, and when he came home to Vitebsk he taught his students the ways of Chassidus.

Source: Told by the Frierdiker Rebbe; "The Fork in the Road", tr. Yanki Tauber (chabad.org)

Think: How does the Alter Rebbe's choice answer "I'm a baal Torah, that's enough"?

He was already a great Torah genius, yet he knew Torah alone isn't enough: it needs love and fear

of Hashem, the "mezuzah" and the "tzitzis". So he went where he could learn avodah.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Knowing a lot of Torah isn't enough. Add yiras Shamayim and real davening, and when you have a shailah, don't pasken for yourself; ask a rav.

For example: You know your Gemara well and think, "I can figure out myself if this is allowed." Instead you ask your rebbi or rav. And tomorrow you give your davening the same effort you give your Gemara.