

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Parshas Nitzavim

פרשת נצבים

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: All of You Together: Head and Foot · Nitzavim, p. 398, §§1-4

Sicha 2: Your Bread Is Mine: Giving That Gives Back · Nitzavim, p. 401, §§5-9

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.

All of You Together: Head and Foot

אתם נצבים היום כולכם

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Nitzavim, p. 398 (Hebrew edition pp. 102–105), sections 1–4. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim 5710 (1950).

The point: *Likkutei Torah explains (and the Frierdiker Rebbe brings it in his notes on Nitzavim 5707) that Parshas Nitzavim is always read on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah, sometimes together with Vayeilech and sometimes alone. Every Shabbos includes and blesses the days of the week after it. So we read "Atem nitzavim hayom", "You are standing today", and "today" means Rosh Hashanah, the great day of judgment. On that day, "all of you" must stand before Hashem, all souls equally: from "your heads, your tribes" to "your woodchopper and your water carrier". Rashi explains that the woodchoppers were Canaanites who came to convert, like the Givonim in the days of Yehoshua, who were accepted only because of an oath, and they too stand before Hashem together with all of Yisrael, "all of you, as one". "All of you as one" doesn't only mean that the head puts up with the simple person. More than that: they receive from each other and complete each other, like the head and the foot in a body. Neither one is complete without the other. Reading it in the Torah on the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah gives us the strength to actually do it, the same way that Malchiyos, Zichronos and Shofaros on Rosh Hashanah bring proof from the Torah, and that makes it happen. (§1) Then the pasuk continues, "I'avrecha bivris", "to bring you into the covenant": standing together prepares for the bris between Hashem and Yisrael on Rosh Hashanah. Two loving friends, while their love is still strong, make a bris so that nothing, not even a fault one of them might find, will ever weaken it. A bris is above reason. On Rosh Hashanah, after Elul has removed the sins that hide the love, Yisrael and Hashem make a bris above reason. What awakens Hashem to do this is our "all of you as one", which is also above reason: by reason, one is a "head" and the other a "water carrier", so what connects them? (§2) But "all as one" must be REAL. Even if a person thinks he is a "head" and the other a simple person, first of all, who knows? Usually a person values others lower than they really are and himself higher. And even if he really is the head, the foot has an advantage, because the head becomes complete only through the foot. That is why the Givonim chopped wood specifically for the Mishkan and the Beis HaMikdash, where not every Jew served. And the oath that accepted them is above reason and reaches the essence of the soul, which shows up specifically in the "foot". (§3) When a Jew thinks that before the shofar he will ask, "Yivchar lanu es nachalasenu", "Choose for us our inheritance", and that choosing comes only from Hashem's Essence, infinitely beyond all creations, how does he dare ask? Thinking about this and assessing himself, he will have no time left to assess anyone else. Reb Hillel Paritcher longed to see the Alter Rebbe but always missed him. Once he hid under the bed in the Alter Rebbe's lodging, with a question in Masseches Arachin ("valuations") ready. As the Alter Rebbe came in, he heard him say in his tune: "When a young man has a question in Arachin, he must first value (assess) himself!" Reb Hillel fainted, and by the time they woke him the Alter Rebbe had left. The lesson: in Arachin, the value depends only on age, not on a person's qualities. One might ask, "I spent all my years in Torah and avodah, and he wasted his. How can our years be valued the same?" The answer: assess yourself properly first, and the question disappears. (§4)*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ When is Parshas Nitzavim always read? Why?

On the Shabbos before Rosh Hashanah. Each Shabbos blesses the days after it, and "hayom" (today) is Rosh Hashanah. (§1)

2. ★ Who stands before Hashem in "Atem nitzavim"? Who were the "woodchoppers"?
Everyone, from the heads to the woodchopper and water carrier. Canaanites who came to convert, like the Givonim, accepted only because of an oath. (§1)

3. ★★ "All of you as one" means more than putting up with each other. What does it mean?
They receive from each other and complete each other, like the head and the foot; neither is complete without the other. (§1)

4. ★★ How does reading this in the Torah help us on Rosh Hashanah?
The Torah reading gives the strength to actually do it, like Malchiyos, Zichronos and Shofaros, which bring proof from the Torah and so make it happen. (§1)

5. ★★ Why do two good friends make a bris while their love is still strong?
So that nothing, even a fault one finds in the other, will ever weaken the love. A bris is above reason. (§2)

6. ★★★ How does "all of you as one" awaken Hashem's bris with us on Rosh Hashanah?
It is above reason (by reason, what connects a "head" and a "water carrier"?), so it awakens Hashem to connect with us above reason. (§2)

7. ★★ Why can't a person be sure that he is the "head"?
Usually a person values others lower than they are and himself higher. (§3)

8. ★★★ Even if someone really is the "head", what advantage does the "foot" have?
The head becomes complete only through the foot. That's why the Givonim worked specifically in the Mishkan and Beis HaMikdash. (§3)

9. ★★ What does the Givonim's oath have to do with the "foot"?
An oath is above reason and reaches the essence of the soul, which shows up specifically in the foot. (§3)

10. ★★ Why will someone who thinks about “Yivchar lanu” have no time to judge others?

He sees how far Hashem’s Essence is above him and wonders how he dares ask; assessing himself leaves no time to assess another. (§4)

11. ★ Where did Reb Hillel Paritcher hide, and what did he hear the Alter Rebbe say?

Under the bed in the Alter Rebbe’s lodging. “When a young man has a question in Arachin, he must first value himself!” (§4)

12. ★★★ What is the “question in Arachin” in our avodah, and how is it answered?

“I spent my years in Torah and avodah and he wasted his; how can we be valued the same?” Answer: assess yourself properly first, and the question disappears. (§4)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“They Have a Background!”

George Rohr, a businessman who supported Chabad and had a special connection with the Rebbe, once stood in the long line of people waiting for the Rebbe’s brachah before Yom Kippur.

He knew that all day the Rebbe heard requests about pain and suffering, one after another. So he prepared a “gift” for the Rebbe: some good news to balance them.

When his turn came, he told the Rebbe happily that on Rosh Hashanah he had organized a beginners’ service in his shul for more than 130 Jews “who had no Jewish background.”

The Rebbe answered right away: “Go back and tell them that they HAVE a background. They are the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, Sarah, Rivkah, Rachel and Leah!”

To the Rebbe, there is no such thing as a Jew “without a background.” The Jew who doesn’t know how to open a siddur and the greatest tzaddik stand together on Rosh Hashanah as children of the same Avos and Imahos.

Source: “A Jewish Background” (chabad.org Magazine)

Think: George Rohr called them Jews “without a background.” What would the sicha say about that, using “from your heads to your water carriers”?

On Rosh Hashanah “all of you” stand before Hashem as one, from the heads to the water carriers

(§1). Every Jew has the same essence and roots, and the “head” is complete only together with the simple Jew (§3).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't look down on anyone. Every Jew completes you, and before judging someone else, "assess yourself first."

For example: There's a boy in your class who can't read Chumash as well as you. Instead of rolling your eyes when he gets stuck, help him find the place. Maybe you'll notice he says Modeh Ani with more feeling than you do!

Your Bread Is Mine: Giving That Gives Back

איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Nitzavim, p. 401 (Hebrew edition pp. 105-108), sections 5-9. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Nitzavim 5710 (1950).

The point: *Elul has the general acronym "Ani l'dodi v'dodi li", and also more detailed ones, matching the three lines: "Ina l'yado v'samti lach" (Torah, since words of Torah are a refuge), "Ish l're'eihu u'matanos la'evyonim" (gemilus chassadim, tzedakah), and "U'mal Hashem Elokecha es levavcha v'es levav zaracha" (avodah: tefillah and teshuvah, ending "to love", since the main avodah of tefillah is love). On tzedakah two questions: Why is the acronym from a pasuk about mishloach manos, and why from the LAST words, "ish l're'eihu..."? The pasuk says "matanos la'evyonim". An "ani" (poor man) is not rich but has something; an "evyon", says Rashi, "longs for everything", even the smallest thing, since he has nothing. It also means the other extreme: he longs even for a big thing he was used to, even a horse to ride, and if without it he can't fulfill his mission, you must give it to him. But a person may think HE is the rich one, giving from what is his. So the pasuk says first "ish l're'eihu", "a man to his FRIEND": the receiver is his equal. The giver isn't giving his own; he is returning what was left with him as a deposit. As the early chassidim in the Alter Rebbe's time said, "The slice of bread I have is yours as much as mine", and they said "yours" first. Chazal say the poor man does more for the householder than the householder does for him. (§5) Since a person is body and soul, tzedakah has a spiritual side too. Just as every Jew, even a poor one, must give tzedakah, every Jew, even one "poor" in ruchniyus, must give spiritual tzedakah, because everyone has something to give. The very fact that you met someone is a sign you are meant to give him something, since everything is hashgacha pratis. And just as with money the giver benefits himself, so in ruchniyus, by giving to another you receive from him, because true completeness comes only through head and foot together. (§6) The Tzemach Tzedek told his son, the Rebbe Maharash, what happened to him many years after the Alter Rebbe's histalkus. Traveling to Lubavitch, he hoped to see his grandfather the Alter Rebbe in a vision and prepared questions in nigleh and Chassidus. But in Lubavitch the Alter Rebbe did not appear, and he felt broken and searched his deeds to do teshuvah. On Wednesday, 20 Elul, on the way to shul, a townsman named Pinchas asked him for a loan of three rubles to buy a little in the market and have money for Shabbos. The Tzemach Tzedek said to come to his house after davening. As he put on his tallis, he remembered that it was market day, and Pinchas needed the money NOW. He took off his tallis, went home, and gave Pinchas five rubles. When he came back and washed his hands to daven, the Alter Rebbe appeared to him, answered his questions, and his holy face shone. (§7) So tzedakah helps in ruchniyus too. All the Tzemach Tzedek's efforts to see the Alter Rebbe didn't help; what helped was meeting a Jew in the street, in Pinchas's daled amos, about a loan for parnassah, and for that leaving his own davening. (§8) In practice: those who have two advantages, something to give and energy, should go to shuls on Rosh Hashanah and inspire Jews, on both days (each day has its own quality, and together they are one long day). Someone may argue, "I have a complicated account for the whole year, and these forty days of favor are for my own cheshbon. How can I give my time to others?" The answer: matanos la'evyonim are "ish l're'eihu"; by inspiring his friend, he himself gains. (§9)*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Which three detailed acronyms of Elul match the three lines of avodah?

"Ina l'yado v'samti lach" (Torah); "Ish l're'eihu u'matanos la'evyonim" (tzedakah); "U'mal Hashem Elokecha es levavcha..." (avodah: tefillah and teshuvah). (§5)

2. ★★ What is the difference between an “ani” and an “evyon”?

An ani has something; an evyon has nothing and longs for every little thing, or even for a big thing he was used to. (§5)

3. ★★★ Why does the pasuk say “ish l're'eihu” before “matanos la'evyonim”?

So the giver won't think he is the rich one giving his own. The receiver is his friend and equal; the giver is only returning a deposit. (§5)

4. ★★ What did the early chassidim say about a slice of bread? Why did they say “yours” first?

“The slice of bread I have is yours as much as mine.” Because the other's part comes first: it was only deposited with me. (§5)

5. ★★ Who must give spiritual tzedakah? Why?

Every Jew, even one “poor” in ruchniyus, because everyone has something to give. (§6)

6. ★★ What does it mean if you happen to meet someone?

It is hashgacha pratis, a sign you are meant to give him something. (§6)

7. ★ Whom did the Tzemach Tzedek hope to see in Lubavitch? What happened at first?

His grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, in a vision. The Alter Rebbe did not appear, and he felt broken and searched his deeds. (§7)

8. ★★ Why did the Tzemach Tzedek take off his tallis? What did he give Pinchas?

He remembered it was market day and Pinchas needed the money right away. He gave five rubles instead of three. (§7)

9. ★★★ What finally brought the Alter Rebbe to appear? What does it teach?

Not his own efforts, but helping a Jew with parnassah, in Pinchas's daled amos, even leaving his own davening. Tzedakah helps in ruchniyus. (§8)

10. ★★ Who should go to shuls on Rosh Hashanah, and on which days?

Those with something to give and with energy, on both days. (§9)

11. ★★ ★ "I need these days for my own cheshbon!" What is the answer?

Matanos la'veyonim are "ish l're'eihu": by inspiring his friend, he himself gains. (§9)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Mission Almost Impossible

On Rosh Hashanah 5782 (2021), in Berkeley, California, a teenage basketball player named Avraham had just heard the shofar when Rabbi Ferris of Chabad handed him a shofar and a siddur. "I have a mission for you."

A Jew named Sergei, very ill, couldn't come to shul, and someone had to blow the shofar for him. The problem: the rabbi didn't know the address, only the street, and on Yom Tov you can't look it up. Also, Avraham had never blown a shofar! "Who am I," he thought, "to blow shofar for a sick Jew on Rosh Hashanah?" But he accepted.

He walked, practicing the shofar as people stared, and searched building after building for the name on a mailbox, over a mile down the street and back up the other side. At the very last building he found it. A family let him through the locked gate.

A nurse opened the door: "Don't expect him to respond." Sergei lay with his eyes closed. Avraham said the brachah and blew the shofar, and its blasts filled the room.

After Yom Tov he learned that Sergei had passed away the day after Rosh Hashanah. Avraham had given his Jewish "teammate" his last shofar.

Source: Abe (Avraham) Quastler Cumming, "Mission Almost Impossible: Locate and Blow the Shofar for a Bedridden Jew" (chabad.org)

Think: Avraham could have said, "I already heard shofar; I've done my part." How does his mission fit the sicha's call for Rosh Hashanah?

The sicha says whoever has something to give and the energy should go out on Rosh Hashanah to

others (§9). His meeting Sergei was hashgacha pratis (§6), and like the Tzemach Tzedek, giving to

another gave him something great (§§6–8).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Whatever you have, Torah, a smile, a mitzvah, belongs to the other Jew too. Give it, and you'll gain more than you gave.

For example: On Rosh Hashanah afternoon, instead of just relaxing, go with your father or a friend to blow (or bring someone to hear) shofar for an elderly neighbor who can't come to shul. Or, this Elul, teach a younger kid the brachah on the shofar.