

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Parshas Pinchas

פרשת פינחס

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.

If It Came to You, It's Yours!

פנחס זה אליהו

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Pinchas, p. 342 (Hebrew edition pp. 48–49), sections 1–3. From the sicha of Yud-Beis Tammuz 5714 (1954).

The point: *When Zimri sinned in public, the Jews didn't know what to do, even though Moshe, Elazar and the elders were there. Pinchas, then the youngest in the group, spoke up. (The Gemara tells the order in which Moshe taught Torah: first Aharon, then Elazar and Isamar, then the seventy elders, then all of Israel; so Pinchas learned together with all of Israel.) He said, "Zealots may strike him", and they answered: "The one who reads the letter should be the messenger." Sometimes the great ones of the generation are silent about something. That isn't always proof that nothing should be done, nor a reason to find clever excuses to avoid it. Whoever sees he is able to do something must do it; the fact that greater people say nothing may be "so that Pinchas would get the kehunah": this is his part to refine, and only through him it reaches its completion. Just as in physical things each person has his own portion and no one touches his friend's livelihood, all the more so in spiritual things each has his portion in Torah ("give us our portion in Your Torah"), not only in understanding Torah but in chiddushim (the Gemara tells that Rabbi Akiva said a halacha even Moshe didn't know), and also in keeping mitzvos. "If he merits, he takes his share and his friend's share" is said about Gan Eden, the reward; but in the mitzvah itself, which is higher than its reward, each has his own part. So maybe someone else isn't doing it because it is your job. "Pinchas is Eliyahu": why not "Eliyahu is Pinchas", since Pinchas came first? The Zohar says Eliyahu existed even before Pinchas, as an angel, not born of a woman. In avodah: we just said each person must not look at others but do whatever comes to his hand. Where does he get the strength? "Pinchas is Eliyahu": since Hashem sent him something to do with mesirus nefesh, he is given the strength for it, and maybe even a spark of one "not born of a woman" dresses itself in him. The lesson for young men today: don't calculate that this one or that one can do it. Whatever comes to your hand is your part, you have the strength for it, and you must do it with mesirus nefesh. Mesirus nefesh, as the Rebbe (the Frierdiker Rebbe) said, doesn't mean climbing onto a roof and jumping off, chas v'shalom. It must be without noise ("Hashem is not in the noise"), in all the everyday actions: "he closes his ears... and shuts his eyes". Even learning Torah needs mesirus nefesh: not to take the Torah to yourself, but to take yourself to the Torah. When a person truly wants, he will surely succeed. And with the mesirus nefesh of Pinchas, "Pinchas is Eliyahu", who will announce the Geulah: all of today's avodah is the preparation for Moshiach, to make the world a Mikdash for Hashem.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Who stood up to act when no one knew what to do? Who was there and stayed silent?
Pinchas, the youngest in the group. Moshe, Elazar and the elders were there. (§1)
- ★★ How do we know Pinchas was the "youngest"? (What order did Moshe teach Torah in?)
Moshe taught Aharon, then Elazar and Isamar, then the seventy elders, then all of Israel. Pinchas learned together with all of Israel. (§1)
- ★★ What did they answer Pinchas? What does it mean?
"The one who reads the letter should be the messenger": you know the halacha, so you do it. (§1)

4. ★★★ When the great ones of the generation are silent about something, what should a person who is able to act do? Why might they be silent?

He must act, not find excuses. Maybe they are silent "so that Pinchas gets the kehunah": it is his part, and only through him it reaches completion. (§1)

5. ★★ "No one touches his friend's livelihood." How does this apply to Torah and mitzvos? Give two examples.

Each has his own portion in Torah ("give us our portion"), even in chiddushim (Rabbi Akiva said a halacha Moshe didn't know), and in keeping mitzvos. (§1)

6. ★★★ "If he merits, he takes his friend's share." Why doesn't this go against what the Rebbe says?

That is said about Gan Eden, the reward. In the mitzvah itself, which is higher than its reward, each has his own share. (§1)

7. ★★ Why does it say "Pinchas is Eliyahu" and not "Eliyahu is Pinchas"?

The Zohar says Eliyahu existed before Pinchas, as an angel, not born of a woman. (§2)

8. ★★ Where does a person get the strength to do every job that comes to him?

Since Hashem sent him something to do with mesirus nefesh, he is given the strength, maybe even a spark of one "not born of a woman". (§2)

9. ★ What is the lesson for young men today?

Don't calculate who else can do it. Whatever comes to your hand is your part, you have the strength, and you must do it with mesirus nefesh. (§3)

10. ★★ What is NOT mesirus nefesh, according to the Friediker Rebbe? What is it really?

Not climbing onto a roof and jumping off. It is without noise, in all the everyday actions: closing your ears and eyes to what is wrong. (§3)

11. ★★ What is mesirus nefesh in learning Torah?

Not to take the Torah to yourself, but to take yourself to the Torah. When you truly want, you will succeed. (§3)

12. ★★ How is today's avodah connected to Eliyahu?

With Pinchas's mesirus nefesh, "Pinchas is Eliyahu", who will announce the Geulah. All our avodah now prepares for Moshiach, making the world a Mikdash. (§3)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Math Teacher's Secret

In Soviet Samarkand, Moshe Chaim Cohen went to Public School 37. His math teacher, "Alexander Pavlovitch," was very strict, and most of the students didn't like him. Moshe Chaim knew he was Jewish, but nothing more.

A year after his bar mitzvah, Moshe Chaim's uncle asked him to go early one morning, before school, to make a minyan for a man sitting shiva. He knocked on the door, and his math teacher opened it! "I'm sorry, I made a mistake," he stammered. "You came to the right address," said the teacher. "I asked for you." His real name was Reb Betzalel Chadosh, the son of one of the first students of Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch.

The next day, after the minyan, Moshe Chaim came to math class half an hour late. "Why are you late?" the teacher asked sharply. "I got up late." "Why are you late?" he demanded again in front of everyone. "If you ask me one more time," said Moshe Chaim, "I'll tell you the truth!" "Just sit down," said the teacher.

After class, he put his arm around Moshe Chaim. "As a teacher, I had to ask."

Source: Hillel Zaltzman, Samarkand, "The Math Teacher's Secret" (chabad.org)

Think: How does Reb Betzalel show mesirus nefesh "without noise"?

Every day he kept Yiddishkeit and a minyan in secret, while acting like an ordinary strict teacher. No speeches, no jumping off roofs, just quiet strength day after day.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

If a good thing came your way, it's your job, and Hashem gave you the strength for it. Do it quietly and steadily.

For example: Your class decides to say Tehillim for a sick classmate, but no one organizes it. Don't wait for the older boys. Make the list and get it going.

A Fire! Don't Stop to Ask

קנאים פוגעים בו

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Pinchas, p. 344 (Hebrew edition pp. 49–51), sections 4–5. From the sicha of Yud-Beis Tammuz 5713 (1953).

The point: *The parsha tells how Pinchas was zealous for Hashem. "A beis medrash can't be without a chiddush"; that is said about the Oral Torah, so all the more so in the Written Torah, where whole halachos are learned from each letter, a whole story like Pinchas's must have a chiddush. What is it? "It is the halacha, but we don't teach it" and "zealots may strike him". There are things that, if someone asks a beis din how to act, the answer is no, because that is what the Shulchan Aruch says; yet the same Shulchan Aruch has the halacha "zealots may strike him": when a person doesn't come to beis din but acts from the feeling deep inside his soul, he has acted according to halacha and done Hashem's will. Usually one must ask beis din about everything. But with zeal for Hashem it is like the halacha that whoever stops to ask about pikuach nefesh is like a murderer: it must touch him so much that he acts by himself without asking. So too when zeal for Hashem takes over his inner soul, he doesn't go and ask. He doesn't want to walk only on an "iron bridge", because every moment is precious. Why? "A person sins only if a spirit of foolishness enters him." As the Alter Rebbe said, a Jew by himself doesn't want and can't be separated from G-dliness; only the animal soul can make him act like an animal. So when he is stirred with zeal, not for his own honor or his family's, but "I was zealous for Hashem", so completely that he doesn't even think whether it is allowed, he has pushed himself aside. When the body and animal soul are pushed aside and only the G-dly soul is left, which is always faithful to Hashem, the soul by itself surely does Hashem's will. That is why, as soon as Pinchas killed Zimri, "the plague stopped". Pinchas saved thousands of Jews from the terrible sin of Baal Peor, about which the Midrash says it always accuses the Jews and Moshe pushes away the accusation, something not said about any other sin. So he received "I give him My covenant of peace", and Pinchas is Eliyahu, who comes to every bris and will announce the Geulah. Now too it is a time of plague, as the Frierdiker Rebbe said, Hashem set the walls of galus on fire. No proofs are needed; we see it. Many Jews, in the Diaspora and in Eretz Yisrael, are being lost to Yiddishkeit, going on a crooked path that may lead them to oppose Hashem and His Torah. In a time like this, a time of fire, when a Jewish boy or girl may be lost to Yiddishkeit, there is no need to go to beis din or search in books whether one may stop learning for an hour for this, and similar questions. Every minute of delay is dangerous: "it is a time to act". Every Jew must light up the zeal in his soul, which is possible through pnimiyus haTorah, go out of his four amos to other Jews, and speak with them pleasantly and with feeling. Don't get into intellectual debates: in a fire there's no time, and with pikuach nefesh it's hard to convince with arguments. Speak with feeling, in the language of the soul, and light the fire inside the other ("its sparks are sparks of fire, the flame of G-d"). Then "the plague stopped", and Pinchas, who is Eliyahu, will come "before the great and awesome day, and turn the hearts of the fathers to the children", and announce the Geulah through Moshiach, speedily in our days.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★★ Why must the story of Pinchas have a chiddush?

"A beis medrash can't be without a chiddush." If that is true in the Oral Torah, then all the more

so in the Written Torah, where halachos are learned from every letter. (§4)

2. ★★ What is the chiddush of the story?

"It is the halacha, but we don't teach it" and "zealots may strike him": if someone asks beis din, the answer is no, yet one who acts from the deep feeling of his soul has done Hashem's will. (§4)

3. ★★ What halacha about pikuach nefesh is like zeal for Hashem?

Whoever stops to ask about pikuach nefesh is like a murderer. It must touch you so much that you act right away without asking. (§4)

4. ★★★ Why is a person who acts out of pure zeal for Hashem surely doing Hashem's will?

A Jew sins only through a "spirit of foolishness" from the animal soul. When he is zealous only for Hashem (not his honor), he pushes his body and animal soul aside. What is left is the G-dly soul, always faithful to Hashem. (§4)

5. ★ What happened right after Pinchas acted? What did he receive?

"The plague stopped." He received "My covenant of peace", and he is Eliyahu who comes to every bris and will announce the Geulah. (§4)

6. ★★ What is special about the sin of Baal Peor?

The Midrash says it always accuses the Jews and Moshe pushes the accusation away, something not said about any other sin. Pinchas saved thousands from it. (§4)

7. ★★ What did the Frierdiker Rebbe say about our time? What "plague" do we see?

Hashem set the walls of galus on fire. We see many Jews, everywhere, being lost to Yiddishkeit. (§5)

8. ★★ In a time of "fire", what question don't we need to ask?

Whether we may stop learning for an hour to save another Jew's Yiddishkeit. Every minute of delay is dangerous: "it is a time to act". (§5)

9. ★★ How can a Jew light up the zeal in his soul? What must he then do?

Through pnimiyus haTorah. Then go out of his four amos to other Jews and speak pleasantly and with feeling. (§5)

10. ★★★ Why not use intellectual debates? What should we use instead?

In a fire there's no time, and with pikuach nefesh it is hard to convince with arguments. Speak with feeling, in the language of the soul, and light the fire inside the other. (§5)

11. ★ What will happen then?

"The plague stopped", and Eliyahu will come, turn the hearts of fathers to children, and announce the Geulah. (§5)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Melody of the Poltava Prodigy

In the days of the Rebbe Maharash, a young chassid in Poltava was called "the prodigy of Poltava." He spent hours thinking deeply about Chassidus, but it was cold and in his head only. "He thought so deeply," the Rebbe Maharash is said to have remarked, "he forgot the One he was thinking about."

In time he left Yiddishkeit behind and became a famous actor on the grand stages of St. Petersburg.

One day he was given a part that made fun of an old Jew saying Krias Shema before going to sleep, thinking over his day and crying over his sins. He rehearsed, but he couldn't truly feel it. He remembered how, as a boy, he had seen his own father sobbing for an hour over his day.

On opening night, the memories broke through. The pain and the emptiness of his new life poured out. It was no longer acting. He was pulled off the stage.

He travelled to Lubavitch, poured out his heart to the Rebbe Maharash, and did complete teshuvah. Years later a Rebbe passing through Poltava heard a young man davening with a niggun full of "a love of a different order." Chassidim still sing it.

Source: Tzvi Freeman, "A Melody of Love of a Higher Order" (the story behind the Poltava Niggun, chabad.org)

Think: Why couldn't cold thinking hold him, and what brought him back?

His Chassidus stayed in his head; his heart wasn't in it. What brought him back was feeling: a memory of his father's tears lit the fire in his soul, the "language of the soul", just as the sicha says.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

When another Jew needs you, don't wait and calculate. Go to him, and speak from your heart, not with arguments.

For example: A boy at camp says davening is boring. Don't argue with him. Daven next to him with feeling, sing a niggun together, tell him what davening means to you.

The Hard One Is Your Special One!

אך בגורל יחלק את הארץ

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Pinchas, p. 346 (Hebrew edition pp. 51–53), sections 6–10. From the sicha of 16 Tammuz 5712 (1952).

The point: *One of the chiddushim of Parshas Pinchas is the order of dividing the land. Korbanos and counting the Jews appear at length in other parshiyos too, but the laws of inheritance, and of inheriting Eretz Yisrael in particular, are spelled out in Pinchas. The portions in Eretz Yisrael were set by lottery: "Only by lot shall the land be divided"; the Gemara and Midrash explain it was by lottery and by the Urim V'Tumim. But since the physical division of Eretz Yisrael follows the spiritual division, it means the "division" in avodas Hashem is by lottery. Shouldn't the order of avodah be by reason, not by a lottery, which is above reason? True, the foundation of avodah is kabbalas ol, but that is only the foundation. The beginning of avodah, knowing how to act, what is allowed and what is forbidden, must follow the Torah, which needs understanding. So how can the "division", the sorting of practical avodah, be by lottery? And more: "only" ("ach") limits it, as if it must be only by lottery, when it seems it should be only by reason! A maamar of the Tzemach Tzedek and of the Rebbeim after him explains "only by lot" in the soul and in avodah. A lottery is above reason, and the land had to be divided only by lottery because the division comes from something above reason. Though every Jew must keep all the mitzvos, each Jew has special things that belong to him in particular. Tanya (Igeres HaKodesh) explains that some Tannaim and Amoraim were "extra careful" in certain mitzvos: they were careful in all mitzvos, but in some more, because those belonged to them in particular, and through them the rest of their mitzvos were raised up too. A person's connection to his special things isn't by reason, by understanding that he is connected; it is above reason, like a lottery. So when a person sees that with a certain mitzvah he has extra hiddenness and obstacles, that itself proves it is especially connected to him. Even if he doesn't see it, and on the contrary, this mitzvah is harder for him than others, or he has no sweetness or success in a certain area of Torah, still it is his special matter, and through it all his Torah and mitzvos will be raised. That is exactly why the yetzer hara fights him so hard there: it touches him so much. So he shouldn't leave it and devote himself to other things; he should try hardest exactly there. The fact that he doesn't understand the connection is itself one of the hiddennesses. Now we understand "only by lot". Eretz Yisrael had different kinds of land: mountain, lowland and valley, grain field and orchard. Who got a mountain and who got a valley, who an orchard and who a grain field, followed each one's personal connection to the spiritual Eretz Yisrael, which showed itself in the physical land. That connection isn't by reason but above it, and below, its example is a lottery. Since this was told to us, and the Torah is eternal, it touches us: each person has a special matter that belongs to him. Despite the hiddenness, and in fact because he sees the yetzer hara and the world standing against him, he must try more and more to do it, because it is especially his, and through it all his other matters will be raised too.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What is one of the chiddushim of Parshas Pinchas that isn't spelled out elsewhere?

The order of inheritance, and especially of dividing Eretz Yisrael. (§6)

- ★★ How was the land divided? What do the Gemara and Midrash add?

By lottery ("only by lot shall the land be divided"), and also by the Urim V'Tumim. (§6)

3. ★★★ What is the question on dividing the land by lottery, in avodas Hashem? Why does the word “ach” make it stronger?

Avodah (what is allowed and forbidden) must be by Torah and understanding, not by a lottery, which is above reason. And “ach” (only) limits it, as if it must be ONLY by lottery. (§6)

4. ★★ Kabbalas ol is above reason. Why doesn't that answer the question?

Kabbalas ol is only the foundation. The beginning of avodah, knowing how to act, must be by Torah, with understanding. (§6)

5. ★★ What does Tanya say about Tannaim and Amoraim who were “extra careful” in certain mitzvos?

They were careful in all mitzvos, but some belonged to them in particular, and through those all their other mitzvos were raised. (§7)

6. ★★ Why is the land divided “only by lot”?

A person's connection to his special matters isn't by reason but above it, like a lottery. (§7)

7. ★★★ How can a person know which mitzvah is especially his? Why is that so?

When he has extra obstacles and hiddenness with it, even if it is harder or less sweet for him. The yetzer hara fights hardest exactly there, because it touches him so much. (§8)

8. ★★ What should a person do with the mitzvah that is hardest for him?

Not leave it for other things, but try hardest exactly there. (§8)

9. ★★ Someone says, “I don't feel this mitzvah is connected to me.” What does the sicha answer?

That not feeling the connection is itself one of the hiddennesses. (§8)

10. ★★ What different kinds of land were there? What decided who got which?

Mountain, lowland, valley, grain field, orchard. Each one's personal connection to the spiritual Eretz Yisrael, above reason, shown by the lottery. (§9)

11. ★ What is the lesson for us?

Each of us has a special matter. Because the yetzer hara and the world stand against it, we must try more and more, and through it everything else is raised. (§10)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“In What Was Your Father Most Careful?”

The Gemara tells how great Amoraim would speak about the mitzvah they were especially careful in.

Rav Yosef once asked Rav Yosef, the son of Rabbah, “In what was your father, Rabbah, especially careful?”

“In tzitzis,” he answered.

One day Rabbah was climbing the stairs when one of the strings of his tzitzis tore. He would not take another step down until a new string was put on the garment.

In the same place, other Amoraim spoke of “their” mitzvah. Rav Nachman said he hoped for reward for doing the mitzvah of tzitzis beautifully. And Abaye said: when he saw a young talmid chacham finish a mesechta, he would make a celebration for all the Chachamim.

They kept every mitzvah, but each had one that was especially his.

Source: *Talmud, Shabbos 118b (the source of Tanya’s “zahir tefei”, Igeres HaKodesh)*

Think: How does this Gemara show “each has his own portion”?

They kept all the mitzvos, but each Amora had his own special mitzvah, done with extra care, like each tribe’s own portion in Eretz Yisrael.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Find your “special mitzvah”. Often it is exactly the one that is hardest for you. Don’t run from it. Work on it most!

For example: For you, getting to davening on time is the hardest thing. That may be your special mitzvah! Set your alarm, put your clothes out the night before, and make it your project.