

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Parshas Shelach

פרשת שלח

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Don't Lock Yourself in the Teivah! · Shelach, p. 320, §§1–5

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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.

Don't Lock Yourself in the Teivah!

י-ה יושיעך מעצת מרגלים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Shelach, p. 320 (Hebrew edition pp. 28–31), sections 1–5. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Shelach 5715 (1955).

The point: *“Moshe called Hoshea bin Nun Yehoshua”: the Gemara says Moshe prayed, “May Hashem save you from the plan of the spies.” But the spies were “kosher at that time” (otherwise Moshe, who decided whether to send them, “shelach lecha, according to your judgment”, wouldn’t have agreed), so why pray? And if he worried something might happen, why pray only for Yehoshua? The Gemara says: “This is the craft of the yetzer hara: today it says do this, tomorrow do that, until it says serve idols.” How can a Jew, whose neshamah is pure, sin? Little by little. First the yetzer says, “Why do the mitzvah with hiddur? Just do it.” Then, “Do the bare minimum.” Then it finds an opening for a real aveirah. If a weakening in any mitzvah leads to an aveirah, how much more in ahavas Yisrael, the foundation of all the mitzvos (“a great principle of the Torah”, R’ Akiva). A convert asked Shammai to teach him the whole Torah on one foot, and Shammai pushed him away with the builder’s measuring rod. Hillel told him: “What is hateful to you, don’t do to your friend; the rest is the explanation.” If it’s true, why didn’t Shammai say it? There are two paths among tzaddikim. Some serve in the line of gevurah, of rising up, with no connection to the physical world, like Rashbi in the cave. That path isn’t for everyone: “Many did like Rashbi and did not succeed.” Beis Shammai went in the line of gevurah, measuring and limiting: good for themselves, but not for the world, which is why the halachah doesn’t follow Beis Shammai. So Shammai’s “measuring rod” had no room for the convert, while Hillel (“b’hilo nero”, chesed, drawing down) found room for him and said that through ahavas Yisrael one gets the whole Torah. The Zohar speaks of three tzaddikim in unworthy generations. Noach prayed only for himself and his family and didn’t go to the people; he told them about the flood only when they asked about the teivah, so the flood is called by his name. Avraham went out to everyone and spread G-dliness, but his work was making tzaddikim: for Sedom he asked “maybe there are tzaddikim”, and when there weren’t ten, “Avraham returned to his place.” Moshe, the faithful shepherd, demanded forgiveness for all the Jews after the eigel, even the wicked, and said, “If not, erase me from Your book”: mesirus nefesh beyond reason. That is the path after Matan Torah: the leader risks himself for every Jew without exception, even for the generation of the desert, of whom R’ Akiva said they have no share in Olam Haba; Moshe stayed in the desert to bring them with him. Why did Moshe pray for Yehoshua? Chassidus explains that the spies didn’t want to enter Eretz Yisrael because they didn’t want to deal with the physical world: in the desert they had the mann, Miriam’s well, and clothes cleaned by the clouds. For themselves that may have been a good path, but the shepherd of the generation, to make a dirah b’tachtonim, must give himself up completely and come down to the generation’s problems. Kaleb didn’t join the spies because he was batel to Moshe (“Kaleb quieted the people toward Moshe”), so “a different spirit was with him.” Moshe knew that Yehoshua would take over the leadership (Eldad and Meidad prophesied “Moshe will die and Yehoshua will bring Israel into the land”), so he prayed for him even while the spies were still kosher, because a leader must give himself to everyone.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What did Moshe pray for Yehoshua when he changed his name?

“Kah yoshiacha mei’atzas meraglim”: may Hashem save you from the plan of the spies (Sotah 34b).

(§1)

2. ★★ Why is Moshe's prayer hard to understand? Ask both questions.

(1) The spies were kosher at that time (otherwise Moshe, who decided whether to send them, wouldn't have agreed), so why pray? (2) If he was worried something might happen, why pray only for Yehoshua and not for all of them? (§1)

3. ★★ What is "the craft of the yetzer hara"? How does it explain how a Jew can sin?

"Today it says do this, tomorrow do that, until it says serve idols." A Jew's neshamah is pure, so it never happens all at once, only little by little. (§2)

4. ★★ What are the steps the yetzer hara uses with a mitzvah?

First: "Why with hiddur? Just do it." Then: "Do the bare minimum." Then it has an opening to get you to do an aveirah. (§2)

5. ★★ Why is weakening in ahavas Yisrael even more dangerous than in other mitzvos?

Ahavas Yisrael is the foundation of all the mitzvos, "a great principle of the Torah" (R' Akiva). Weakening in it gives room for the opposite, chas v'shalom. (§2)

6. ★ What did the convert ask, and what did Shammai and Hillel each do?

"Teach me the whole Torah on one foot." Shammai pushed him away with the builder's measuring rod. Hillel said: "What is hateful to you, don't do to your friend; the rest is the explanation." (§3)

7. ★★★ If Hillel's answer is true, why didn't Shammai say it? Explain the two paths of tzaddikim.

Some tzaddikim serve in the line of gevurah, rising up with no connection to the physical world (like Rashbi in the cave). That is good for them but not for everyone. Shammai, whose way was measuring and limits, had no room for the convert. Hillel, whose way was chesed and drawing down, found room for him. (§3)

8. ★★ Why is the halachah not like Beis Shammai?

Their way of gevurah was good for themselves, but not for the world as a whole. (§3)

9. ★★ What did Noach do for his generation? Why is the flood called "mei Noach"?

He prayed only for himself and his family and didn't go to the people; he told them about the flood only when they asked about the teivah. Because he didn't pray for them, the flood is called by his name. (§4)

10. ★★ How was Avraham better than Noach? Where did he stop?

He didn't wait; he went out to everyone and spread G-dliness. But his work was making tzaddikim: for Sedom he asked "maybe there are tzaddikim", and when there weren't ten, he "returned to his place". (§4)

11. ★★★ What did Moshe do that was beyond reason? Even for whom did he stay in the desert?

After the eigel he demanded forgiveness for all the Jews, even the wicked: "If not, erase me from Your book." He stayed in the desert to bring the generation of the desert with him, even though R' Akiva said they have no share in Olam Haba. (§4)

12. ★★★ Why didn't the spies want to enter Eretz Yisrael? So why did Moshe pray for Yehoshua?

They didn't want to deal with the physical world (plowing and sowing); in the desert they had mann, Miriam's well and clothes cleaned by the clouds. Moshe knew Yehoshua would be the next leader, and a leader must give himself up and come down to the generation's problems, so he prayed for him even while the spies were still kosher. (§5)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Stay for Even One Meal

After the war, a Jewish boy from Poland who had been hidden with a non-Jewish family was placed in an orphanage near Paris, run by the chassid Rabbi Zalman Schneerson. One day in 1947 the children were told to dress in their best: an important visitor was coming. The tall, distinguished guest spoke with each of the thirty children, one by one. He asked the boy, "When do we say Hallel?" A few months later, large new siddurim arrived as a gift from the visitor. Only years later did the boy learn who he was: the Rebbe.

Later, as a bochur in New York, he was called to yechidus. "Your mother wrote asking whether to move to America," the Rebbe said. "Where does she live now?" She lived with his non-observant sister, keeping house, cooking and watching their baby.

"If one can prevent a Jew from eating non-kosher food even one time," said the Rebbe, "that is an amazing accomplishment. If your mother stays, your sister will have a kosher home. She should not leave them."

His mother stayed in Paris for another ten years.

Source: Rabbi Bentzion Wiener, "A Mysterious Visitor", *Here's My Story* (chabad.org)

Think: How do the Rebbe and the mother act like Moshe, and not like Noach in his teivah?

The Rebbe cared about each child one by one. The mother gave up her own plans and stayed with a family who weren't observant, just to keep them from eating treif. That is like Moshe staying in the desert for his generation.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't lock yourself in your own "teivah". Care about every Jew, even one who doesn't seem to "deserve" it, and watch out for the yetzer hara's small steps.

For example: A boy in your grade stopped coming to minyan and hangs out with a rough crowd. Others say, "He's not our type." You call him, save him a seat and walk to shul with him.

Above Calculations? Above Nature!

אשר הוצאתי אתכם מארץ מצרים

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Shelach, p. 324 (Hebrew edition pp. 31–32), sections 6–7. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Shelach 5713 (1953).

The point: *The Midrash says that Moshe asked Hashem: what use is giving the Torah and mitzvos to the Jews, if they live in this physical world and may forget it all? Hashem answered: I will give them the mitzvah of tzitzis, which will remind them of all the mitzvos. "Tzitzis" has the gematria 600, and with the eight strings and five knots that makes 613, as the posuk says, "You shall see it and remember all the mitzvos of Hashem." But if the tzitzis are what remind us of the 613 mitzvos, why do we need a tallis? Why not just the tzitzis? Because a tallis is a "makif", something that surrounds: it isn't food that a person digests inside himself, but a garment around him from outside, which he can't take in. We have to know that the 613 mitzvos hinted in the tzitzis come from the "tallis", from a source higher than understanding. Tzitzis without a tallis aren't a mitzvah and don't remind anyone of anything. Only tzitzis hanging on a tallis, knowing that all of Torah and mitzvos come from something above reason that can't be grasped, make a mitzvah. The parsha of tzitzis ends: "I am Hashem your G-d, who took you out of the land of Egypt." A person might make a "calculation": the Torah's way is the opposite of the world's way. He has to keep Shabbos and Yom Tov and even add to them, though he has non-Jewish competitors (and Jewish ones who don't keep Shabbos). As soon as he gets up he has to daven and then learn, and only then go to his business; in the middle of the day, deep in business, he has to stop and daven Minchah (which is why Minchah is so precious); at night Maariv and Shema at bedtime; and he must be careful with stealing, cheating and unfair competition, the opposite of the ways of business. How can he live by the Torah? So the parsha of tzitzis, which is above reason, ends this way: when a person doesn't go by the measures and limits of reason and keeps mitzvos above reason, Hashem acts with him above the limits of nature. That is "who took you out of Egypt": naturally not even one slave could escape Egypt, yet 600,000 men went out, not counting women and children, each with at least ninety donkeys loaded with silver and gold, and even the eirev rav came along, so that even non-Jews saw it was completely above nature. When a Jew acts beyond the limits of nature, Hashem gives him blessings above nature too, in children, life and plenty.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What did Moshe ask Hashem, and what did Hashem answer?

What use is giving the Torah to Jews who live in a physical world and may forget it? Hashem

answered: I'll give them tzitzis, which will remind them of all the mitzvos. (§6)

- ★ How do the tzitzis add up to 613?

"Tzitzis" has the gematria 600, plus eight strings and five knots = 613. (§6)

- ★★ If the tzitzis are what remind us of the mitzvos, why do we need a tallis at all?

A tallis is a "makif" (surrounding), not food you take inside, but a garment around you. It shows

that the 613 mitzvos come from a source higher than understanding. (§6)

4. ★★★ What happens if someone takes the tzitzis without the tallis? What is the lesson?

It isn't a mitzvah, and it reminds him of nothing. Only tzitzis hanging on a tallis make a

mitzvah: when you know that all Torah and mitzvos come from something above reason. (§6)

5. ★★ What "calculation" might a person make about living by the Torah?

The Torah's way is the opposite of the world's way, so how can he keep it and still make a living?

(§7)

6. ★★ Give three examples from the sicha of how the Torah's way seems to go against business.

Keeping Shabbos and Yom Tov and adding to them, though competitors stay open; davening and

learning first thing, and stopping in the middle of business for Minchah; being careful with

stealing, cheating and unfair competition. (§7)

7. ★★ Why is Minchah especially precious?

Because it comes in the middle of the day, when a person is busy with his business, and he has to

stop for it. (§7)

8. ★★★ How does "I am Hashem who took you out of Egypt" answer the calculation?

When a person keeps mitzvos above reason, without the measures and limits of calculation, Hashem

acts with him above nature, just as He did at Yetzias Mitzrayim. (§7)

9. ★★ Why was Yetzias Mitzrayim completely above nature?

Naturally not even one slave could escape Egypt, yet 600,000 men went out, besides women and

children, each with at least 90 donkeys of silver and gold, and the eirev rav came too. Even

non-Jews saw it was above nature. (§7)

10. ★★★ Connect the beginning of the parsha of tzitzis to its end.

The tzitzis hang on a tallis, which is above understanding: mitzvos come from above reason. The

parsha ends with Yetzias Mitzrayim: when we serve above reason, Hashem blesses us above nature, in

children, life and plenty. (§§6-7)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Cabdriver's Minchah

Professor Yaakov Brawer used to come to Crown Heights every winter and davened Minchah with the Rebbe before flying home to Montreal. One Sunday he ordered a car to LaGuardia for 3:45. The car service was run by chassidim, and he was sure it wouldn't come on time.

At three o'clock he squeezed into the packed little shul for the Rebbe's Minchah. He raced through his own davening, worrying about his flight. Then he heard soft crying beside him. A tall, thin chassid stood with his eyes closed and tears running down his cheeks. "What terrible trouble must this man have," he thought. "A sick child? Crushing debts?"

At precisely 3:45, a rusty, noisy station wagon pulled up. The driver was the same man who had cried at Minchah! Now he was humming a happy niggun. The professor asked carefully about his health, his family and his parnassah. To every question the driver answered, "Thank G-d!" His wife was about to have a baby, and he was full of joy.

Slowly the professor understood: those tears were just this man's ordinary, everyday Minchah, in the middle of his working day.

Source: Yaakov Brawer, "The Cabdriver" (chabad.org)

Think: How did the cabdriver live the lesson of the tallis and of Minchah?

In the middle of his busy working day he stopped and davened Minchah with his whole heart, not by calculation. And he still came exactly on time.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Sometimes the Torah's way doesn't seem to "add up". Do it anyway, above calculations, and Hashem will take care of you above nature.

For example: Your recess game is tied when it's time for Minchah. The "smart" move is to finish the game. Instead you stop, daven Minchah properly, and trust Hashem with the rest.