

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Parshas Shoftim

פרשת שופטים

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Don't Judge Him Until You're in His Place! · Shoftim, p. 380, §§1-2

Sicha 2: Run to Your City of Refuge! · Shoftim, p. 382, §§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.

Don't Judge Him Until You're in His Place!

שופטים וערי מקלט

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Shoftim, p. 380 (Hebrew edition pp. 85–86), sections 1–2. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Re'eh, Shabbos Mevarchim Elul 5714 (1954).

The point: *Chassidus explains that the month of Elul is like the arei miklat, the cities of refuge, where someone who killed by accident would run and live. The Torah's "shoftim v'shotrim", judges and officers, were appointed even outside Eretz Yisrael, so we might think there were also cities of refuge outside Eretz Yisrael. Why? Because the two are connected. The judges, and even the officers who used force, were never there to punish: their purpose was only to make the person pure. The same is true of the cities of refuge: "galus atones". The Alter Rebbe explains in Iggeres HaTeshuvah that "kapparah" means wiping clean: the sin is wiped away so completely that the person becomes as beloved as before the sin. But in fact the cities of refuge were only in Eretz Yisrael. The Midrash says the land is called "eretz" because it "ratsah", it WANTED to do its Maker's will; "chutz la'aretz", outside the land, hints to being outside His will. (§1) Teshuvah has two parts: regret for the past and a firm decision for the future. When is regret worth something? Only together with a decision to act properly from now on. Without that, the regret is like someone who goes into the mikvah while still holding something impure in his hand. That is why the cities of refuge were only in Eretz Yisrael: if a person wants to stay outside "the land that wants to do its Maker's will", what use is his regret? A city of refuge took in someone even from outside the land, and the galus helped him too, but the galus itself had to be in Eretz Yisrael. So why were there judges outside the land? Because about judging others we are taught, "Don't judge your friend until you reach his place." A court in Eretz Yisrael, where "Hashem's eyes are on it from the beginning of the year to its end", cannot know the hiddenness of chutz la'aretz, where every deed, word and even thought takes great effort and there are many tests. So the Jews of chutz la'aretz needed judges who were there with them. As the famous story tells about the Mitteler Rebbe, and also about the Tzemach Tzedek: once, in the middle of yechidus, he stopped for a while before going on. He explained: when someone comes to ask for a tikkun for something, the Rebbe must find that same thing, at least in the finest, tiniest way, in himself, and only then can he answer. Now a question about something very low had come, and he could not find it in himself even in the finest way, so he had to stop. That is why Hashem told Moshe at the sin of the golden calf, "Go down, for YOUR people has sinned." Moshe was then in Heaven, not eating or drinking, while the people were very low. By calling them "your people", Hashem tied Moshe to them, and then he could defend them. The Alter Rebbe also wrote that he does not want his judgment to be in the hands of the angels, who do not feel the hiddenness that a neshamah has in a body, but "from before You let my judgment come". That is the reason there had to be judges outside the land too. (§2)*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What does Chassidus compare the month of Elul to?

To the arei miklat, the cities of refuge. (§1)

- ★★ What was the real purpose of the judges and officers, even the officers who used force?

Not to punish, but only to make the person pure. (§1)

3. ★★ How does the Alter Rebbe explain the word “kapparah”?

Wiping clean: the sin is wiped away so completely that the person becomes as beloved as before the sin. (§1)

4. ★★ Why is Eretz Yisrael called “eretz”? What does “chutz la’aretz” hint to?

Because it “ratsah”, it wanted to do its Maker’s will. Chutz la’aretz hints to being outside His will. (§1)

5. ★ What are the two parts of teshuvah?

Regret for the past and a firm decision for the future. (§2)

6. ★★★ Why is regret without a decision for the future like going into the mikvah holding something impure? How does this explain why the cities of refuge were only in Eretz Yisrael?

The impurity is still in his hand, so the mikvah doesn’t help. If a person wants to stay outside “the land that wants to do Hashem’s will”, what use is his regret? So the galus itself had to be in Eretz Yisrael. (§2)

7. ★★ Then why were there judges outside Eretz Yisrael?

“Don’t judge your friend until you reach his place.” A court in Eretz Yisrael can’t know the hiddenness and the tests of chutz la’aretz, so judges were needed there. (§2)

8. ★★ Why is it so much harder to serve Hashem in chutz la’aretz than in Eretz Yisrael?

There, every deed, word and even thought takes great effort and there are many tests. In Eretz Yisrael “Hashem’s eyes are on it” all year. (§2)

9. ★★★ Why did the Mitteler Rebbe (or the Tzemach Tzedek) once stop in the middle of yechidus?

To give someone a tikkun, the Rebbe has to find that same thing, even in the finest way, in himself. The question was about something very low, and he couldn’t find it in himself even slightly. (§2)

10. ★★★ Why did Hashem say to Moshe “Go down, for YOUR people has sinned”?

Moshe was up in Heaven, far above the people, who were very low. Calling them “your people” tied him to them, so he could defend them. (§2)

11. ★★ Why didn't the Alter Rebbe want his judgment to be in the hands of the angels?

They don't feel the hiddenness a neshamah has in a body. He wanted “from before You let my judgment come”. (§2)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

What Did You Think of Me?

A man from the Upper Galil once worked for a landowner in the South for three years. On Erev Yom Kippur he said, “Please give me my wages, so I can go home and feed my wife and children.”

“I have no money,” said the landowner. “Then pay me in fruit.” “I have none.” “In land?” “I have none.” “In animals?” “I have none.” “Then give me pillows and blankets.” “I have none.” The worker put his tools on his back and went home with a heavy heart.

After Sukkos, the landowner came to the worker's house with his full wages and three donkeys loaded with food, drink and sweets. After they ate together, he asked: “When I said I had nothing, what did you think of me?”

“I thought maybe you had used the money for a bargain. The animals? Maybe they were rented out. The land? Maybe it was leased. The fruit? Maybe it wasn't yet tithed. And the pillows and blankets? I thought maybe you had given all you own to the Beis HaMikdash.”

“That is exactly what happened!” said the landowner. “I had vowed all my property to Heaven. Later the Chachamim undid my vow. And you, just as you judged me favorably, may Hashem judge you favorably!”

Source: *Talmud, Shabbos 127b*

Think: The worker could not see inside the landowner's life. How did he follow “Don't judge your friend until you reach his place”?

He didn't know the landowner's situation, so instead of thinking badly, he found a good explanation for every “I have none” (§2). And he was right!

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Teshuvah is regret PLUS a real decision for next time. And when someone else does something that looks bad, remember: you are not in his place. Look for the good explanation.

For example: A boy in your class comes late every morning and his homework is never done. Before you roll your eyes, think: maybe he's getting his little brothers ready for school every morning. You don't know his "place".

Run to Your City of Refuge!

ונס שמה

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Shoftim, p. 382 (Hebrew edition pp. 87-88), sections 3-5. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Re'eh, Shabbos Mevarchim Elul 5714 (1954).

The point: *Even though the cities of refuge were only in Eretz Yisrael, there are levels among them. There were cities of refuge in Ever HaYarden (across the Jordan), where such accidents were more common; there were cities in Eretz Yisrael itself; and even in the times of Moshiach, when Hashem "widens your borders", there will be more cities of refuge. This means that every level, by its own nature, has things it needs to fix. Even in the future, when our avodah will be very high, there will still be a "lack" compared to THAT level, and a need for a city of refuge. Compared to "uvo sidbakun", clinging to Hashem completely, even the avodah of "oso sa'avodu", serving Him, is something to do teshuvah for. (§3) So too the cheshbon hanefesh of Elul, which is like a city of refuge: everyone does it according to his own level. A person makes an accounting of all his thoughts, words and actions of the whole year: were they according to the Shulchan Aruch? Did he go beyond the letter of the law? Were they "according to the camel", as much as HE can carry? Where they were not, he does teshuvah. This is not only for businessmen. Even "yoshvei ohel", those who sit all year in the tent of Torah and davening, need a city of refuge in Elul: "Betzer bamidbar", inside the Torah itself and inside davening. The Rebbe adds what was said two years earlier, on Chai Elul, about the custom in this country to send yeshivah students home during Elul and Tishrei. It goes against the Torah and against plain sense! Elul is the time to do MORE teshuvah, and instead they go home. In Elul a student must stay in the yeshivah, with a firm decision: "Whatever happens, in these few weeks of 'Seek My face' I must be as I should be." (§4) This is also a lesson for businessmen. Even someone who is busy with his business all year must, in Elul, or at least from Chai Elul, or at least in the days of Selichos, run to a city of refuge, a place of yiras Shamayim like a yeshivah, and live there. (The cities of refuge were also in Ever HaYarden, outside Eretz Yisrael proper.) "V'nas shamah", he should flee there from everything he is busy with all year, settle there, and make it his real home. The Gemara says about a city of refuge "there shall be his kevarah (resting place)". The Mishnah in Avos says that at 100 years old a person is as if he has passed from the world: he has completed himself in all his powers, so the hiding of the world can't touch him, and that is why he can live long years with nothing to fear. That is what running to the city of refuge in Elul does. This cheshbon hanefesh, "v'nas shamah", prepares us for a kesivah vachasimah tova on Rosh Hashanah, for a good and sweet year with children, life and plenty of parnassah. (§5)*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Where were there cities of refuge? Will there be any in the times of Moshiach?

In Ever HaYarden and in Eretz Yisrael. Yes: when Hashem widens our borders, there will be more cities of refuge. (§3)

- ★★★ Why will we still need cities of refuge in the times of Moshiach, when avodah will be so high?

Every level has its own "lack" compared to what that level should be. Even compared to "uvo sidbakun", "oso sa'avodu" is something to do teshuvah for. (§3)

3. ★ What three questions does a person ask himself in the cheshbon hanefesh of Elul?

Were my thoughts, words and actions according to the Shulchan Aruch? Did I go beyond the letter of the law? Were they "according to the camel", as much as I can carry? (§4)

4. ★★ What does "according to the camel" mean? Why does it make the cheshbon different for every person?

Each one is measured by what HE can carry. So everyone makes his cheshbon by his own level. (§4)

5. ★★ Do "yoshvei ohel", who learn and daven all year, also need a city of refuge? Where is it?

Yes. Their city of refuge is "Betzer bamidbar": inside the Torah itself and inside davening. (§4)

6. ★★★ What did the Rebbe say about sending yeshivah students home in Elul and Tishrei? What should a student decide?

It goes against the Torah and plain sense; Elul is the time for MORE teshuvah. A student should stay in yeshivah and decide: "Whatever happens, in these weeks of 'Seek My face' I must be as I should be." (§4)

7. ★★ What is the lesson for businessmen? When should they "run"?

In Elul, or at least from Chai Elul, or at least in the days of Selichos, run to a place of yiras Shamayim like a yeshivah and live there. (§5)

8. ★★ What does "v'nas shamah", "he shall flee there", teach?

To flee from everything you are busy with all year, settle in the place of Torah, and make it your real home. (§5)

9. ★★★ Avos says that at 100 a person is "as if he passed from the world". How does the sicha explain this in a good way?

He has completed himself in all his powers, so the hiding of the world can't touch him. That is why he can live long years with nothing to fear. (§5)

10. ★ What does the cheshbon hanefesh of Elul prepare us for?

A kesivah vachasimah tovah on Rosh Hashanah: a good and sweet year with children, life and plenty of parnassah. (§5)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Why Is Father Crying?

The Frierdiker Rebbe wrote in his diary about when he was a small boy, learning with his melamed, Reb Yekusiel.

He would run to shul to listen to his father, the Rebbe Rashab, daven, and his heart was heavy: Why didn't Father daven quickly like everyone else, like his uncles? An uncle told him, "Your father can't say the words easily," and the little boy was very upset.

Once he came into the shul. No one was there, only his father, standing with his face to the wall, davening, begging Hashem for mercy. The boy didn't understand: Why does Father need Hashem's mercy more than other people?

Suddenly his father began to cry. "Shema Yisroel..." and he cried. "Hashem Elokeinu..." and he cried. Then, in a powerful voice from the depths of his heart and with a flood of tears: "Hashem Echad!"

The boy ran to his mother, and she sent him to his grandmother, Rebbetzin Rivkah. She calmed him: "Your father is a great chassid and tzaddik. Before every word he says, he first thinks about what it means."

From then on, the boy looked at his father differently. He knew that his father was above other people.

Source: "Father Prays", from the diary of the Frierdiker Rebbe (chabad.org)

Think: The Rebbe Rashab was a great tzaddik, yet he begged Hashem for mercy and cried more than anyone. How does this fit with the sicha?

Every level has its own "city of refuge" and its own cheshbon, even the highest (§3). A tzaddik

measures himself by HIS level, "according to the camel", so he asks for mercy more, not less (§4).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Everyone needs a cheshbon hanefesh, even the best boy, each by his own level. And find your "city of refuge": a time and place for Torah and davening that you run to.

For example: You're one of the good boys in class and you don't do anything "bad". Still, ask yourself: Did I daven with feeling today, or just say the words? Before bed, take two minutes: what went well today, and what will I fix tomorrow?