

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Shemini Atzeres & Simchas Torah

שמיני עצרת ושמחת תורה

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: One Bull, One Ram, One Circle · Shemini Atzeres-Simchas Torah, p. 433, §§1-3

Sicha 2: "Before the Eyes of All Yisrael" · Shemini Atzeres-Simchas Torah, p. 435, §§4-12

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.

One Bull, One Ram, One Circle

קשה עלי פרידתכם

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Shemini Atzeres-Simchas Torah, p. 433 (Hebrew edition pp. 135-137), sections 1-3. §§1-2 are from the sicha of the day of Simchas Torah 5716 (1955); §3 is from the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Bereishis 5716.

The point: *About Shemini Atzeres Chazal say: "Your parting is hard for Me. Like a king who said to his beloved friend: let us celebrate, you and I, with whatever there is." But if in the end we must part anyway, what is so important about one more day together? It must be that Shemini Atzeres keeps us from separating afterwards too. First, why "your parting" (pridaschem) and not "our parting"? (a) From Hashem's side there is never separation; He is always face to face with Yisrael. Separation comes only from the Jews' side, who "turned the back of the neck and not the face": "YOUR parting". (b) Where does separation from Hashem come from? From separation among the Jews themselves: "your parting" from each other. When "all of us as one" is damaged, "bless us, our Father" is damaged too. On Sukkos the Jews are united: the arba minim, from the esrog with taste and smell to the aravah with neither, become one mitzvah, and all Jews become "one band to do Your will". But that unity is for the sake of a mitzvah, and when the weekdays come the separation might return. So Hashem says, "Your parting is hard for Me", and the fix is the one extra day of Shemini Atzeres, which keeps the unity afterward too. (§1) The unity of Shemini Atzeres is greater than that of Sukkos. The arba minim aren't united in their essence: even together each stays its own kind, united only for the mitzvah; the mitzvah is to take four SEPARATE kinds. But on Shemini Atzeres: "one bull, one ram", not a union of different things, but truly one. So too with the dancing of Simchas Torah: all Jews, from the greatest to the simplest, dance together, not each in his own way according to his understanding, but all equal and united in something that includes them all. Dancing has no divisions. That is true unity: each one sets aside his separate self. And since it isn't a gathering of separate pieces but real oneness, it doesn't end when the cause ends; it lasts after Yom Tov, all year: Jews in unity and peace, the vessel that holds Hashem's blessing. (§2) One more point: dancing is not done with the head but with the feet, and through the feet the head dances too. If the dancing were "in the head", from understanding, the joy would be limited by how much one understands. But we want unlimited joy, so we dance with the feet. He doesn't know what Hashem is and what His Torah is, but he knows that Hashem and His Torah are the most precious thing in the world, and that awakens unlimited joy. That is why on Simchas Torah we don't sit and learn; we dance with the Sefer Torah wrapped in its mantle. We don't yet know what is written in it, but we know it is precious, so we rejoice without limit. And as in each person the feet carry the head, so in the whole body of Klal Yisrael: the unlimited joy of simple Jews in the Torah adds joy to the scholars too, and they too get simple, unlimited joy. Through this we reach "one bull": not like Sukkos, with seventy bulls for the seventy nations, but a level where there is only Hashem and Yisrael: "they shall be yours alone, with no strangers with you". (§3)*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What do Chazal say Hashem says on Shemini Atzeres? Tell the mashal.

"Your parting is hard for Me": like a king who tells his beloved friend, "Let us celebrate, you and I, with whatever there is." (§1)

2. ★★ If we must part anyway, why is one more day so important?

Shemini Atzeres keeps us from separating afterwards too. (§1)

3. ★★★ Why “YOUR parting” and not “our parting”? Give both explanations.

(a) From Hashem’s side there is no separation; it comes only from the Jews. (b) Separation from

Hashem comes from Jews separating from each other. (§1)

4. ★★ How do the arba minim show unity on Sukkos?

From the esrog (taste and smell) to the aravah (neither), all become one mitzvah, like all Jews becoming “one band”. (§1)

5. ★★ Why could separation come back after Sukkos?

That unity is for the sake of a mitzvah; when the weekdays come it might end. (§1)

6. ★★★ Why is the unity of Shemini Atzeres greater than that of Sukkos?

The arba minim stay separate kinds united for a mitzvah. Shemini Atzeres is “one bull, one ram”: truly one, not a union of different things. (§2)

7. ★★ How is Simchas Torah dancing true unity?

Everyone, greatest to simplest, dances together, not each by his understanding; dancing has no divisions, and each sets aside his separate self. (§2)

8. ★★ Why does this unity last all year?

It isn’t a gathering of separate pieces that ends when the cause ends; it is real oneness. (§2)

9. ★★★ Why do we dance with the feet and not the “head”?

Joy from understanding is limited by the understanding; dancing with the feet, from knowing the Torah is precious, gives unlimited joy. (§3)

10. ★★ Why don’t we sit and learn on Simchas Torah?

We dance with the Sefer Torah closed in its mantle: we rejoice not because of what we understand, but because it is precious. (§3)

11. ★★ How does the joy of simple Jews help the scholars?

As the feet carry the head, their unlimited joy brings simple, unlimited joy to the scholars too.

(§3)

12. ★★ What is the difference between the seventy bulls of Sukkos and the “one bull” of Shemini Atzeres?

Seventy for the seventy nations; one bull is a level with only Hashem and Yisrael, “with no

strangers with you”. (§3)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Hakafos in Samarkand

Hillel Zaltzman grew up among the Lubavitcher chassidim of Samarkand under Soviet rule, where a Jewish celebration could bring arrest. Some years they took off their shoes for hakafos and danced in their socks for hours, singing in whispers so the neighbors wouldn't hear.

In the 1960s they had a bold idea. Near midnight, when the streets were empty, a few young men climbed the fence of the main shul in the old city and unlatched the gate. Everyone came in, took the Sifrei Torah in their arms, and danced with unrestrained joy.

One Simchas Torah night, walking through the old city, Hillel wished every Jew he met “a good Yom Tov”. His friend saw a man coming: “That's my teacher, the assistant principal! Don't go near him!” But Hillel walked right up: “Today is Simchas Torah and we are all Jews. Come, let's dance together!”

Hillel later heard that this man moved to Eretz Yisrael and became a Torah-observant Jew.

Source: Hillel Zaltzman, “Dancing with Danger”, from the book *Samarkand* (chabad.org)

Think: Hillel said to a stranger, “We are all Jews, come let's dance together!” Which idea of the sicha does this show?

On Simchas Torah all Jews, from the greatest to the simplest, dance together as one, with no

divisions (§2), not from understanding but from the feet, with unlimited joy (§3). And that

oneness lasts beyond the Yom Tov.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Bring the oneness of Simchas Torah into the whole year. Don't separate yourself from any Jew, and rejoice in the Torah even before you understand it all.

For example: At hakafos, there's a kid nobody is dancing with. Pull him into the circle! And after Yom Tov, when you're back in class, stay friends with him, not just on Simchas Torah.

“Before the Eyes of All Yisrael”

לעיני כל ישראל · בראשית ברא

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Shemini Atzeres-Simchas Torah, p. 435 (Hebrew edition pp. 137-141), sections 4-12. From the sicha of the night of Simchas Torah 5718 (1957).

The point: *The last words of the Torah, read on Simchas Torah, are “Leinei kol Yisrael”, “before the eyes of all Yisrael”, hinting at unity, the avodah of Simchas Torah. All Jews are one body; each is not just a detail of the whole but a part of the essence, and as the Baal Shem Tov says, “when you grasp part of the essence, you grasp all of it.” That explains “love your fellow kamocha”, really like yourself: just as self-love isn’t for a reason but essential, so love for another Jew must be essential. How is that possible, if we are two separate people? Because it isn’t love for “someone else” but for the same “I”: one essence appearing in many parts. So the Baal Shem Tov says ahavas Yisrael means loving a Jew you have never seen or heard of. (§4) Chazal say ahavas Yisrael is the foundation of the whole Torah; Tanya explains that the foundation of the Torah is raising the soul above the body, and that is shown in ahavas Yisrael. As long as a person feels himself a separate “somebody”, his love for another can’t be “kamocha”; he must step out of himself and see himself as part of the essence of Yisrael. The Frieddiker Rebbe told about a great man who cried very much when his child was ill, and afterwards complained that he wouldn’t have cried as much for another Jewish child, proof, he said, that he was still at the beginning of avodah; true avodah reveals the essence of the soul, where all Jews are one. (§5) “May they all become one band to do Your will with a whole heart”: a real “one band” is possible only when its purpose is “to do Your will”. A group for other goals, even permitted ones, isn’t truly one: (a) its members are separate people, connected only in the few powers needed for the goal; (b) even in that goal, each acts from his own self and feelings, together only on the outside (like “the dispute of Korach and his congregation”: they were split among themselves); (c) even outwardly it doesn’t last, because when it hurts their own interests they separate. So the best advice for any group with a worldly goal: make Torah and mitzvos part of its foundation, and it will last. (§6) That is why Yisrael is “one sheep among seventy wolves, and it survives”: each wolf is separate, but Jews are united and strong. And a Jew who keeps Torah, even alone in his place, has with him all of Yisrael since Matan Torah. (§7) “Leinei kol Yisrael” connects to the next words, “Bereishis bara”, and to the start of the parsha, “Vzos haberachah”. “Bereishis bara Elokim es hashamayim v’es ha’aretz”: a Jew must know that Hashem created the spiritual and the physical; he has nothing of his own, Hashem creates everything every moment. “Vzos haberachah asher beirach Moshe”: Moshe is the shepherd of Yisrael, through whom all their needs come (the manna in his merit; the clouds and the well returned in his merit). To receive from him and his extension in every generation, a person must be devoted like a sheep to its shepherd, with no will of his own. Knowing he has nothing of his own (Bereishis) and being devoted to Moshe (Vzos haberachah) takes him out of his separate self, and then he is part of “kol Yisrael”. (§§8-9) And “kol Yisrael” prepares for “Bereishis”. On Simchas Torah every Jew must finish the Torah and start again on a higher level. Looking at his past year he may think, “I’m not ready at all; what place do I have here?” The advice: “kol Yisrael”. If alone he can’t learn and keep the whole Torah, let him join other Jews and support Torah learners, and he gets a share in their learning, like Zevulun and Yissachar. (§10) That is when he was too busy and only learned a chapter morning and night. But what if he didn’t learn even in his free time? Still, don’t despair! Our Rebbeim say that on Simchas Torah, through joy, one can do what Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur do through bitterness. Even if he didn’t do teshuvah through Elul, Rosh Hashanah, the Ten Days, even Ne’ilah, on Simchas Torah he can return through joy, and “Leinei kol Yisrael”, joining all Jews from the essence of the soul, which is always whole, he can always begin the Torah again, higher. (§11) And the content of “Bereishis bara”: “bara” also means “revealing”. The beginning of avodah is to reveal the G-dliness hidden in the heavens and earth and*

all their hosts, the G-dly life-force that is their whole existence. And much more so in every Jew, whose G-dly soul may be hidden by the body and animal soul: he must reveal it, even its essence connected to Hashem, and the sign of that is "love your fellow as yourself", "L'einei kol Yisrael". Through this he can reveal G-dliness in the whole world, until in everything it is openly felt that "there is nothing else besides Him". (§12)

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What are the last words of the Torah, and what do they hint at?

"L'einei kol Yisrael": the unity of all Jews, the avodah of Simchas Torah. (§4)

2. ★★★ How can we love another Jew "kamocho", really like ourselves, if we are separate people?

All Jews are one essence in many parts; "grasp part of the essence and you grasp all of it." It is love for the same "I". (§4)

3. ★★ What does the Baal Shem Tov say ahavas Yisrael means?

Loving a Jew you have never seen or heard of. (§4)

4. ★★ Why is ahavas Yisrael the foundation of the whole Torah?

The foundation of Torah is raising the soul above the body; stepping out of your separate self is what lets you love another Jew "kamocho". (§5)

5. ★★ What did the great man in the Friediker Rebbe's story complain about himself?

He cried more for his own sick child than he would for another Jewish child, so he felt he was still at the beginning of avodah. (§5)

6. ★★★ Why is a group for other purposes not truly "one band"? Give three reasons.

(a) They connect only in a few powers; (b) even then each acts from himself, like Korach's congregation; (c) it falls apart when it hurts their interests. (§6)

7. ★★ What is the advice for any group with a worldly goal?

Make Torah and mitzvos part of its foundation, and it will last. (§6)

8. ★★ How does "one sheep among seventy wolves" survive?

Each wolf is separate, but Jews are united. A Jew keeping Torah even alone has all of Yisrael with him. (§7)

9. ★★★ How do “Bereishis bara” and “V’zos haberachah” help us reach “kol Yisrael”?

Bereishis: everything is Hashem’s; I have nothing of my own. V’zos haberachah: devotion to Moshe like a sheep to its shepherd. Both take a person out of his separate self. (§§8–9)

10. ★★ What advice does the sicha give someone who feels “I’m not ready to start the Torah again”?

“Kol Yisrael”: join other Jews and support Torah learners, like Zevulun and Yissachar. (§10)

11. ★★★ What can Simchas Torah do for someone who didn’t do teshuvah even at Ne’ilah?

Through joy, Simchas Torah can do what Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur do through bitterness; joining all Jews from the always-whole essence of the soul, he can always begin again, higher. (§11)

12. ★★ What does “bara” mean here, and what is the beginning of avodah?

Revealing. Revealing the G-dliness hidden in the world, and the G-dly soul in yourself; its sign is ahavas Yisrael. (§12)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

An Invitation to Hakafos

On Hoshana Rabbah, the day before Simchas Torah, the Rebbe gave out lekach (honey cake) to thousands of people, wishing each a sweet year. A woman from Miami Beach, whose family was going through a hard time, passed by. The Rebbe asked her whether her husband, Louis, was in New York too. She answered that as far as she knew, he wasn't, but a bochur named Alti Bukiet was his close friend.

The Rebbe asked an aide to find Alti right away, and told him: "I would like Louis to attend tonight's hakafos."

Louis had drifted far away and had no interest in coming. But after an hour of pleading, "the Rebbe personally invited you!", he took the next flight to New York.

That night and the next, among thousands of dancers, Louis enjoyed the singing and dancing immensely. Again and again the Rebbe caught his eye, smiled and nodded.

After Yom Tov, as Louis passed by, the Rebbe said with a loving smile: "I was happy to see you in good spirits during the holiday."

Source: *Levi Bukiet, "When the Rebbe Invited Louis to Celebrate With Him" (chabad.org)*

Think: Out of thousands of people, the Rebbe thought of one Jew who wasn't there and brought him to hakafos. Which ideas of the sicha does this show?

Ahavas Yisrael for a Jew who isn't even in front of you (§4), because all Jews are one essence.

And on Simchas Torah, through joy and "I'einei kol Yisrael", any Jew, however far he drifted, can come back and begin again (§11).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Love every Jew as yourself, even ones you've never met, because we are really one. And on Simchas Torah, start the Torah again, higher, no matter how last year went.

For example: You hear that a boy in your shul's youth group stopped coming. You don't know him well, but call him before Simchas Torah: "Come dance with us at hakafos!" And make your own fresh start: one new seder in learning, starting Bereishis.