

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Parshas Teitzei

פרשת תצא

3 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: A New House Needs a New Fence! · Teitzei, p. 384, §§1-4

Sicha 2: Amalek Wants You Cold! · Teitzei, p. 387, §§5-8

Sicha 3: Chai Elul: Life and Joy in Teshuvah! · Teitzei, p. 388, §§9-11

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.

A New House Needs a New Fence!

ועשית מעקה לגגך

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Teitzei, p. 384 (Hebrew edition pp. 89-91), sections 1-4. §1 is from the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Teitzei 5714 (1954); §§2-4 are from the sicha of 13 Tammuz 5716 (1956).

The point: *Our parsha begins, "When you go out to war against your enemies, Hashem your G-d will give him into your hand, and you will take his captives." In avodah, "your enemies" are the body and the animal soul, as the Alter Rebbe explains in Likkutei Torah: they are a person's real enemies, and he must go out to war against them. True, the goal is not to break them but to refine them, yet it is still a war, because they don't let themselves be refined, and it is a hard war, because the animal soul "came first". So the Torah says: just GO OUT to war, and you have a promise, "Hashem will give him into your hand": YOU will win, not the other way around. More than that, "you will take his captives": the sparks of holiness in physical things. (§1, Teitzei 5714) Someone once asked in a letter: the reason for a ma'akeh (a fence around a roof) is danger, "so you don't put blood in your house if someone falls". But the Rambam rules that we don't make a bracha on a mitzvah that is because of danger, and in the same chapter he rules that we DO make a bracha on a ma'akeh! A simple answer: the danger could be fixed other ways (lowering the roof, raising the street, slanting the roof), and then there is no mitzvah of ma'akeh, so the ma'akeh must be something more. But that isn't enough: if the reason is danger, the question comes back. The real answer: "make a ma'akeh" and "don't put blood in your house" are two separate mitzvos. The proof: the Rambam's rule is that the reason for a mitzvah is never counted as a mitzvah of its own, yet here he counts both, one as a positive mitzvah and one as a negative mitzvah, from the Sifri. (§2) In avodah: when a Jew builds a "new house", the fences he had before, with which he passed all his tests, are not enough. He might think, "I'll be fine, most of my years went by without sin," but a new house means a new avodah with new tests. For example, when he leaves the walls of the beis midrash and goes out into the world. And every single day: the day starts with davening and then learning, and when he leaves those "four amos" for the weekday world, he needs a ma'akeh, so that worldly things are as they should be and "no one falls". A real ma'akeh must be higher than the roof; so too in avodah, the fence must come from a higher place, help from Above. That is why we make a bracha. "Bracha" means drawing down, like "mavrich", planting a vine branch down into the ground. Hashem, Who is above the world, is drawn down to us as "King of the world", and "v'tzivanu" (from "tzavsa", joining) gives us the power to make a ma'akeh ten tefachim high. (§3) This is like the Friediker Rebbe's instruction: every Rosh Hashanah we must ADD in hiddur of mitzvos, in care with what's forbidden and in good conduct, even if everything was proper before, because every Rosh Hashanah a NEW light comes down (Iggeres HaKodesh). So whenever a Jew starts a new avodah, whether leaving yeshivah for the world or every morning after davening and learning, he must add something. The ma'akeh is ten tefachim: bringing the new light into all ten powers of the soul, from Chabad down to action. Then there is no danger, and more: it becomes "the beauty of a man dwelling in a house". (§4, 13 Tammuz 5716)*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ In avodah, who are "your enemies" that we go out to war against?

The body and the animal soul. They are a person's real enemies. (§1)

2. ★★ If the goal is only to refine the animal soul, not break it, why is it called a “war”?

Because it doesn't let itself be refined. And it's a hard war, because the animal soul “came first”. (§1)

3. ★★ What promise do we get if we just “go out” to war? What are the “captives”?

“Hashem will give him into your hand”: you will win. The captives are the sparks of holiness in physical things. (§1)

4. ★★★ What was the question in the letter about the bracha on a ma'akeh?

The ma'akeh is because of danger, and the Rambam rules there is no bracha on a mitzvah because of danger. Yet in the same chapter he rules that we make a bracha on a ma'akeh. (§2)

5. ★★ Why isn't it enough to answer that the danger could be fixed in other ways?

Because if the whole reason for the ma'akeh is danger, the question comes back: on such a mitzvah we don't make a bracha. (§2)

6. ★★ What is the real answer, and how do we prove it from the Rambam?

“Make a ma'akeh” and “don't put blood in your house” are two separate mitzvos. The Rambam never counts a reason as its own mitzvah, yet he counts both (one positive, one negative). (§2)

7. ★ What is the “new house” in our avodah? Give two examples.

A new avodah: leaving the beis midrash and going out into the world; and every day, after davening and learning, going out to weekday things. (§3)

8. ★★ Why aren't the old fences enough for a new house?

A new house means new avodah with new tests. Even if most of his years passed without sin, he must prepare for the new tests. (§3)

9. ★★★ Why must a ma'akeh be higher than the roof? How does this explain why we make a bracha?

In avodah the fence must come from a higher level, help from Above. A person can't reach above his own level alone, so he needs a bracha, which draws it down. (§3)

10. ★★ What does “bracha” mean? What does “v’tzivanu” mean?

Bracha means drawing down, like “mavrich”, planting a vine branch into the ground. “V’tzivanu” is from “tzavsa”, joining together. (§3)

11. ★★ What did the Friediker Rebbe instruct for every Rosh Hashanah? Why, if everything was fine before?

To add in hiddur of mitzvos, in care with what’s forbidden and in good conduct, because every Rosh Hashanah a new light comes down. (§4)

12. ★★ Why is the ma’akeh ten tefachim high? What happens when we make it?

To bring the new light into all ten powers of the soul, from Chabad to action. Then there’s no danger, and it even becomes “the beauty of a man dwelling in a house”. (§4)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Master of the House

A chassid once asked the Maggid of Mezritch: “How can a person control his thoughts and feelings? Deeds and words, maybe. But thoughts just come into the mind by themselves!”

The Maggid didn’t answer. He told him to go at once to Zhitomir, to the home of his talmid, Rabbi Zev.

It was the middle of winter. The chassid traveled for two weeks through deep snow, shivering in his fur hat and sheepskin coat. He arrived in the middle of the night and saw a light in Rabbi Zev’s window. He knocked. No answer. Through a crack he saw Rabbi Zev sitting among piles of sefarim, deep in learning. He knocked louder, he banged, for hours. Rabbi Zev didn’t come.

Just before dawn, Rabbi Zev opened the door, welcomed him warmly, sat him by the fire with hot tea, and took care of him like a king for several days.

When the chassid finally told him why he had come, Rabbi Zev said: “My friend, does a person own his mind and heart any less than his house? The night you came, I already began to teach you. I am the master of my house. I let in whoever I want, and I don’t let in whoever I don’t want. It is my choice who comes in.”

Source: *Batya Schochet Lisker, “By Invitation Only” (chabad.org)*

Think: How is Rabbi Zev’s locked door like the war with the animal soul and like a ma’akeh?

You are the master of your mind and heart, so you decide what comes in. Go out to the war and you will win (§1), and build a fence that keeps out what doesn’t belong, especially when you go out into the world (§3).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Every new start needs a new fence: a new grade, camp, and even every morning when you leave davening and go out into the day. Add something new, and ask Hashem to help.

For example: You're going to sleepaway camp this summer. Your good habits from home are great, but camp brings new tests. Make a new "ma'akeh" before you go: pack your Chitas and decide to learn it every day, even when nobody reminds you.

Amalek Wants You Cold!

אשר קרך בדרך

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Teitzei, p. 387 (Hebrew edition pp. 91–92), sections 5–8. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Zachor 5716 (1956).

The point: *Some opinions hold that reading Parshas Zachor is a mitzvah from the Torah, the positive mitzvah “Zachor, remember what Amalek did to you.” Besides the “remember”, there is also a negative mitzvah, “Don’t forget.” This is one reason for the opinions that even women must remember Amalek: since they are obligated in the “don’t”, they are obligated in the “do” too. We see how necessary it is to remember Amalek: EVERYONE must. (§5) In the physical sense, there is no mitzvah now to wipe out Amalek. Some say that mitzvah belongs to the king. And even according to those who say it is on every Jew, there is no place for it now: it applies only when the Jews are strong, and only when it is clearly known who comes from Amalek. Since Sancheriv mixed up all the nations, no one can know. Only when Moshiach comes will the king Moshiach wipe out everything of Amalek. But in avodah it applies NOW: all Jews must remember what Amalek did, even women, who don’t go out to war, and not once in a lifetime or once a year, but every day (as the Alter Rebbe writes in his Shulchan Aruch). That shows how important remembering Amalek is in serving Hashem at all times. (§6) What is Amalek in avodah? “Asher karcha baderech”: the Midrash explains “karcha” as “he cooled you”. Amalek makes a person COLD on the path of Torah and mitzvos, and we must fight this coldness every day. It is not enough that yesterday he was on fire in learning and davening; he must keep fighting today. Every day, before he goes out to deal with the world, a person must get fired up in his war against Amalek, and this happens in davening. With the fire of davening he can fight Amalek when he deals with worldly things. This prepares the way for wiping out Amalek physically when Moshiach comes, soon in our days. (§7) What must be announced is this: the war against Amalek must be in every generation and every day, and we can’t be satisfied with what was already done. A person can’t rely on having had a kosher grandfather, a kosher father, or on having been a kosher Jew himself until now. He must keep fighting the coldness of Amalek, because if he has “weak ones” in him, Amalek can sneak in, “and he cut off all the weak ones behind you”. This goes on until “you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek” when Moshiach comes, and “I will surely wipe out the memory of Amalek”, very soon. (§8)*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What two mitzvos are there about remembering Amalek?

“Zachor”, remember what Amalek did (a positive mitzvah), and “Don’t forget” (a negative mitzvah).

(§5)

- ★★ Why do some opinions say that women must also remember Amalek? What does this show?

Since women are obligated in the “don’t forget”, they are obligated in the “remember” too. It

shows how necessary it is: everyone must remember Amalek. (§5)

3. ★★ Why is there no mitzvah now to wipe out Amalek physically? When will it happen?

It applies only when the Jews are strong and only when it is known who comes from Amalek; since

Sancheriv mixed up the nations, no one knows. It will happen when Moshiach comes. (§6)

4. ★★★ How do we see that remembering Amalek is so important in avodah today?

Everyone must remember, even women who don't go out to war, and not once a year but every day.

(§6)

5. ★ What does "asher karcha baderech" mean in avodah?

Amalek "cooled you": he makes a person cold on the path of Torah and mitzvos. (§7)

6. ★★ If a person was on fire in learning and davening yesterday, why isn't that enough?

Amalek's coldness comes back every day, so the war must be fought every day. (§7)

7. ★★ When and how should a person get "fired up" for the war against Amalek?

Every day, before going out to deal with the world, through davening. With the fire of davening he

can fight Amalek all day. (§7)

8. ★★★ How does the daily war against coldness connect to Moshiach?

It prepares the way for wiping out Amalek physically when Moshiach comes. (§7)

9. ★★ What three things can a person NOT rely on?

A kosher grandfather, a kosher father, or having been a kosher Jew himself until now. (§8)

10. ★★ Who are the "weak ones" (nechshalim), and what does Amalek do to them?

The weak, lagging parts of a person. Through them Amalek can sneak in and "cut off" the ones

behind. (§8)

11. ★ Until when does the war against Amalek go on?

Until Moshiach comes, when Amalek's memory will be wiped out, very soon. (§8)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

It's Not the Snake!

The Gemara praises a person who davens with all his heart: he doesn't need to be afraid even of a snake. And it brings a story.

In one place there was a dangerous snake-like creature, an arvad, that was harming the people. They came to Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa, the great tzaddik whose tefillos were always answered, and asked for help.

"Show me its hole," he said. They showed him. Rabbi Chanina put his heel right over the opening of the hole. The arvad came out and bit him, and the arvad died.

Rabbi Chanina put the arvad over his shoulder and carried it into the beis midrash. "See, my children," he said to everyone there, "it is not the arvad that kills a person. It is the sin that kills. The arvad has no power over someone who is free of sin."

At that moment the Chachamim said: "Woe to the person who meets an arvad, and woe to the arvad that meets Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa!"

Rabbi Chanina knew who the real enemy was. It wasn't the creature in the hole. It was sin, and a Jew who is close to Hashem need not fear anything.

Source: *Talmud, Berachos 33a*

Think: "It's not the snake, it's the sin." What is the real enemy we fight every day, and what gives us the strength?

Today the real "Amalek" is inside: the coldness and the sin (§§6–7). The strength comes from davening with fire, like the Gemara's praise of one who davens and fears nothing (§7).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Yesterday's fire isn't enough. Every morning, get fired up again in davening before you go out into the day, and don't let coldness sneak in.

For example: Yesterday, after a great farbrengen, you davened with real feeling. This morning you want to rush. That's Amalek pouring "cold water"! Pick one part, like the first line of Shema, and say it slowly, with fire.

Chai Elul: Life and Joy in Teshuvah!

ח"י אלול

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Teitzei, p. 388 (Hebrew edition pp. 92-94), sections 9-11. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Tavo, Chai Elul 5716 (1956).

The point: *This week is Chai Elul. The Frierdiker Rebbe said in the name of the elder chassidim that "Chai Elul" means it gives "chayus", LIFE, to Elul. Elul is the time to fix the past year and so earn a good and sweet new year, and Chai Elul puts life into this avodah. Not only so that it isn't done by habit: even when a person prepares and has kavanah, it can still be without life, and Chai Elul adds the life. Chai Elul is the birthday of the Baal Shem Tov, and as the Frierdiker Rebbe said, not only of his body but of his neshamah. Years later, Chai Elul was also the day the Baal Shem Tov was revealed, the day Chassidus in general was revealed. Then the Alter Rebbe brought these teachings into understanding, Chassidus Chabad, and his birthday is also Chai Elul. So Chai Elul, the revealing of Chassidus Chabad, puts life into all of Elul's avodah, and life goes together with joy. (§9) But Elul's avodah is teshuvah: regret for the past and a good decision for the future, done with bitterness. How can joy, its opposite, go with it? The Rambam rules that every mitzvah must be done with joy because we are doing Hashem's will, and teshuvah is a mitzvah, so it too must be with joy. But that joy comes from something on the side: he is happy because he is doing a mitzvah. Chai Elul, Chassidus, taught something new: inside teshuvah itself, which is usually bitter, there is joy. The life is in Elul itself, and joy does not contradict bitterness. As the Alter Rebbe says in Tanya about teshuvah: "Crying is stuck in my heart on this side, and joy is stuck in my heart on that side." Two opposites, at the same time, in the same matter. Even while a person is bitter and angry at his yetzer hara (from the side of the animal soul), he must be joyful from the side of the G-dly soul, with full trust that "no one will be pushed away" and that "all of Yisrael have a share in the World to Come". The joy comes from the teshuvah itself: the G-dly soul is coming back to Hashem. (§10) The Frierdiker Rebbe said that the twelve days from Chai Elul to Rosh Hashanah are twelve days of cheshbon hanefesh for the past year, one day for each month. There are levels in davening (weekday davening has requests; Shabbos davening is only praise of Hashem) and in Torah (nigleh deals with physical things and refining them; pnimiyus haTorah speaks only of G-dliness). The main cheshbon of these twelve days should be about pnimiyus haTorah. Of course there must be a cheshbon about all 613 mitzvos and every detail, since "action is the main thing", but that cheshbon should be finished before Chai Elul. From Chai Elul, the day Chassidus was revealed, the life of the cheshbon should be about pnimiyus haTorah: like "In what was your father most 'zahir' (careful)?", and "zahir" is from "zohar", shining light, a light that lights up everything else. Not only about learning it, but about living by Chassidus. This brings light into his cheshbon about everything, leads to good decisions for the future, "yafutzu maayanosecha chutzah", spreading the wellsprings outward, and then Moshiach comes, soon in our days. (§11)*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What does "Chai Elul" mean, according to the elder chassidim?

It gives "chayus", life, to Elul. (§9)

- ★★ Even when a person does Elul's avodah with preparation and kavanah, what can still be missing? Who brings it?

Life. It can still be done without chayus, and Chai Elul adds the life. (§9)

3. ★★ What three great things happened on Chai Elul?

The Baal Shem Tov was born (body and neshamah); years later the Baal Shem Tov was revealed; and the Alter Rebbe was born. (§9)

4. ★★ What did the Alter Rebbe add to the Baal Shem Tov's Chassidus?

He brought it into understanding: Chassidus Chabad. (§9)

5. ★★★ Teshuvah is done with bitterness. How can there be joy in it? What is the difference between the Rambam's joy and Chai Elul's joy?

Rambam: every mitzvah with joy because we do Hashem's will; that joy comes from the side. Chai

Elul/Chassidus: the joy is inside the teshuvah itself, and it doesn't contradict the bitterness.

(§10)

6. ★★ What does the Tanya say about crying and joy in teshuvah?

"Crying is stuck in my heart on this side, and joy on that side": two opposites at the same time.

(§10)

7. ★★ Where does the joy of teshuvah come from?

From the G-dly soul, with full trust that no Jew is pushed away and all Yisrael have a share in

the World to Come. The G-dly soul is coming back to Hashem. (§10)

8. ★ What are the twelve days from Chai Elul to Rosh Hashanah for?

Cheshbon hanefesh for the past year, one day for each month. (§11)

9. ★★ What is the difference between weekday and Shabbos davening? Between nigleh and pnimiyus haTorah?

Weekday davening has requests; Shabbos davening is only praise. Nigleh deals with physical things

and refining them; pnimiyus haTorah speaks only of G-dliness. (§11)

10. ★★★ From Chai Elul, what should the cheshbon be mainly about? What about the cheshbon on all 613 mitzvos?

Mainly about pnimiyus haTorah: learning Chassidus and living by it. The cheshbon on the 613

mitzvos should be finished before Chai Elul, since action is the main thing. (§11)

11. ★★ What does “zahir” mean here, and what does this kind of cheshbon lead to?

From “zohar”, shining light that lights up everything. It brings light into the whole cheshbon, good decisions, “yafutzu maayanosecha chutzah”, and Moshiach. (§11)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Innkeeper's Words

The Frierdiker Rebbe told this in the Baal Shem Tov's own words:

“On my sixteenth birthday, Chai Elul 5474, I was in a small village. The innkeeper was a very simple Jew. He could barely read the tefillos and didn't know what the words meant. But he had great yiras Shamayim, and about everything that happened he would say, ‘Boruch Hu, u'mevorach l'olam va'ed,’ ‘Blessed be He, forever and ever.’ His wife would say, ‘Boruch Shem kodsho,’ ‘Blessed be His holy Name.’

“That day I went out alone to the pasture to think, as one should on his birthday. I said Tehillim with deep kavanos. Suddenly I saw Eliyahu HaNavi, and he was smiling. I was amazed.

“Eliyahu said: ‘You are working very hard on the holy kavanos of Dovid HaMelech's Tehillim. But Aharon Shlomo the innkeeper and Zlata his wife, who know nothing of kavanos, with their simple words of praise, shake up all the worlds even more!’

“He told me how much pleasure Hashem has from the praise of simple people, especially when it never stops. From then on, I made it my path to get men, women and children to praise Hashem. I would ask them how they were, and each one would answer with words of praise to Hashem.”

Source: Tzvi Freeman, “How the Baal Shem Tov Changed the Way We Think About Happiness” (chabad.org), from the Frierdiker Rebbe's telling

Think: Why was Eliyahu smiling? How does this Chai Elul story show what Chai Elul gives to Elul?

The simple innkeeper's nonstop praise, with pure faith and joy, reached higher than great kavanos.

From that Chai Elul the Baal Shem Tov brought life and joy to every Jew's avodah, which is what

Chai Elul gives to all of Elul (§9).

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Teshuvah isn't only sad. Feel bad about what you did wrong, AND be happy: your neshamah is coming back to Hashem. And from Chai Elul, learn some Chassidus and live by it.

For example: You realize you weren't nice to your little brother this year. Feel bad, then smile: you're coming closer to Hashem! Decide to learn the day's Hayom Yom every morning and do one thing it says.