

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 20

לקוטי שיחות · חלק כ

Parshas Lech Lecha (Ben Pazi)

פרשת לך לך · שיחה ב

1 sicha in this booklet

Sicha 1: The Master of the Gold · vol. 20 pp. 45–53, §§1–14

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.

The Master of the Gold

אל תירא אברם ... שכרך הרבה מאד

Likkutei Sichos vol. 20, Parshas Lech Lecha, Sicha 2, pp. 45-53, sections 1-14. From a sicha of Shabbos Parshas Lech Lecha 5741 (1980).

The point: *Avraham served only out of love, so why did Hashem promise him "s'charcha harbeh me'od"? The Zohar's story of Rabbi Yossi ben Pazi explains: inside even "shelo lishmah" is "lishmah." A true servant of Hashem wants reward only to add kavod Shamayim, and becomes the master ("ben") over the gold ("paz").*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What was Avraham afraid of after the war with the kings, according to Rashi?

That he had already received the reward for all his tzidkus through the miracle of defeating the kings. Hashem told him, "Al tira... s'charcha harbeh me'od." (§1)

2. ★★ Why is that hard to understand?

The Rambam says Avraham was an "oved me'ahavah," who did the truth because it is true, not for any reward. So why would he worry about reward? (§1)

3. ★★ Why can't we answer that reward was just a "sign" that his avodah was complete?

Then Hashem should have said "your avodah is perfect." The posuk speaks only about the reward, so the reward itself matters. (§2)

4. ★ Tell the Zohar's story in short.

Rabbi Abba announced: whoever wants wealth, come learn Torah. A single young man, Yossi, came to learn for wealth. Later he asked, "Where is the wealth?" Rabbi Abba wanted to pray that he be punished, but a bas kol said, "Don't punish him, he will be a great man." A rich man paid Yossi (with a golden cup, "kasa d'paz") to learn for him. Later Yossi cried that he had traded his Torah for gold, gave back the cup, and was called "Rabbi Yossi ben Pazi." (§3)

5. ★★ Give two questions the Rebbe asks on this story.

(1) Rabbi Abba himself promised wealth, and “mitoch shelo lishmah ba lishmah,” so why punish him?

(2) Why give back the cup? The merit of the Torah already learned belongs to the rich man. (3)

“Ben Pazi” sounds like a reminder of his “shelo lishmah,” and one may not remind a baal teshuvah of his past. (§§4–5)

6. ★★★ What are the two kinds of reward for learning Torah?

(1) Reward Hashem gives from Above (Olam Haba, or “osher v’chavod” in this world), “shelo lishmah” but allowed. (2) What a person “takes” for himself from his Torah: honor, a title, a living. That is also “using the Torah as a tool.” (§7)

7. ★★ What is allowed and not allowed in “taking” from Torah?

One may earn a living (parnassah) from Torah to support his family, but not use Torah to become rich. (§§7–8)

8. ★★★ So why did Rabbi Abba want to punish him? Why does the Zohar mention that Yossi was a “rovak” (single)?

Rabbi Abba meant wealth given from Heaven. Yossi’s question showed he wanted Rabbi Abba to make him rich, which is using the crown of Torah. A family man needs parnassah, which is allowed; but Yossi was single, so he clearly wanted riches. (§8)

9. ★★★ What is the deeper meaning of “mitoch shelo lishmah ba lishmah”?

“Mitoch” = from the inside: inside every Jew’s “shelo lishmah” there is already “lishmah,” the will to do what Hashem wants. Even the wish for reward comes from the neshamah wanting kavod Shamayim to grow, like the Baal Shem Tov on “re’eivim gam tzmei’im.” (§§9–11)

10. ★★ Why doesn’t this work for someone who learns “to annoy others” (l’kanter)?

That goal is the opposite of Torah, with nothing good in it, so its “inside” cannot be lishmah. (§11)

11. ★★★ What did the bas kol (“gavra rabba lehevei”) reveal?

Yossi had kochos to become a “gadol hador,” whom the community must make rich (“gadleihu mishel echav”). So deep inside, his wish for wealth was his neshamah wanting to be a gavra rabba and add kavod Shamayim. (§12)

12. ★★ Why did he give back the cup, and what does “ben Pazi” really mean? How does this answer the question on Avraham?

To show how far learning lishmah must go. “Ben Pazi” is praise, like “ben chorin”: he was the master over the gold and could turn it into lishmah. So too Avraham: his reward was not for himself but more kavod Shamayim, so “s’charcha harbeh me’od” shows his greatness. (§§13–14)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

The Coins That Shone

Reb Gavriel of Vitebsk, a chassid of the Alter Rebbe, had once been a rich merchant, but hard times had destroyed his fortune. At that time the Alter Rebbe was raising large sums to free Jewish prisoners (pidyon shevuyim), and Reb Gavriel was expected to give a certain amount. He didn't have it, and he was heartbroken.

His wife, Chana Rivkah, sold her pearls and jewelry, polished the coins until they sparkled, and with a heartfelt tefillah sent them with her husband to the Rebbe.

When the package was opened, the coins shone with an amazing brightness. The Alter Rebbe said: “Of all the gold, silver and copper that the Jews gave for the Mishkan, nothing shone but the kiyor (washbasin), made from the women's mirrors, given with mesirus nefesh and joy. Where did you get these coins?”

When he heard, he blessed the couple with children, long life, wealth and chein, and told Reb Gavriel to deal in diamonds and precious stones. He became rich, had sons and daughters, and was called “Reb Gavriel Nossei Chein.”

Source: Yitschak Meir Kagan, “The Coins Shone” (chabad.org), from Hatamim vol. 2 p. 628

Think: Who was the real “master of the gold” here? Why did these coins shine?

Reb Gavriel and his wife used their money (even their jewelry) purely for Hashem, with mesirus nefesh and simchah. Money used lishmah shines.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

It's OK to enjoy a prize for learning, because deep inside, your neshamah wants the Torah itself. But be the boss over the prize: before learning, think "I'm learning because it's Hashem's Torah," and use what you get for kedushah.

For example: Your rebbi gives a prize or money for finishing a masechta or knowing mishnayos by heart. Go for it! But when you get it, put part in the pushka, and remember why you learned: Torah in your heart, gold in your hand.