

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Sefer HaSichos 5752

ספר השיחות · תשנ"ב

Parshas Va'eira

פרשת וארא

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: Names That Don't Change! · Eve of 24 Teves, §1

Sicha 2: Fathers Prepare, Children Reveal! · Shabbos Va'eira, §§1-2

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.

Names That Don't Change!

ושמתי כדכד שמשתיך

Sefer HaSichos 5752 vol. 1, sicha of the eve of 24 Teves 5752 (1991), the beginning of the Alter Rebbe's yahrzeit. Sections as in the Sichos in English edition (vol. 51).

The point: *Tonight begins the Alter Rebbe's yahrzeit, in Teves, when Hashem's essence takes pleasure in our avodah in the physical world. 24 (כ"ד) hints at "kadmah", shining rubies: two paths, from above and from below, fused together, and a stone that becomes the cornerstone. The shevatim went down to galus and came out with the same names; galus didn't change them. The Frieddiker Rebbe's "call" in HaKriah VeHakedushah, Rashi's "to the Avos", and the name Havaya to be revealed in the Geulah: we are at the table of the feast. Make everyone a shliach for tzedakah, and the Geulah will come.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Why is tonight, after Maariv, a special time?

The avodah of a day begins after the evening service, and tonight begins the Alter Rebbe's yahrzeit. (§1)

- ★★ What do Chazal call Teves, and how does Chassidus explain it?

"The month when the body derives pleasure from the body." Chassidus explains that in this month Hashem's essence takes pleasure in the avodah of the Jewish people in the physical world. Fully and completely, this avodah is revealed by tzaddikim. (§1)

- ★★ What does 24 (כ"ד) hint at? Explain "kadmah".

The posuk "Vesamti kadmah shimshosayich", I will make your windows of shining rubies. Chassidus links kadmah to "kedein ukedein", "like this and like this": two paths in avodah, one starting from the revelation from Above and one from raising up the world. The highest avodah fuses the two. (§1)

- ★★ How does "kadmah", a shining stone, connect to the Geulah?

"Even", stone, is connected with the Sefirah of Binah, and the prophecies of the Geulah say that "a stone" will become "the main cornerstone". (§1)

5. ★ Why does Sefer Shemos repeat the names of the shevatim, though they were already listed in Bereishis?

To teach that just as the Jewish people went down into galus with these names, they came up from galus without changing them. Galus had no effect on them. (§1)

6. ★★ How does the Rebbe apply this to our galus?

Chazal said "all the ketzin have passed", yet we are still in galus. The Frierdiker Rebbe explained how close the Geulah is in three public notices printed in HaKriah VeHakedushah, and asked that they be spread to many people. (§1)

7. ★★ What does the name HaKriah VeHakedushah mean, and what did it do?

"HaKriah" means "the call": a living call to every Jew of the generation to add in kedushah and make it alive. In many cases, learning what was printed there brought an increase in kedushah. (§1)

8. ★★ What does Rashi add on "Va'eira", and why?

"To the Avos": the revelation came to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov because they are the fathers of the Jewish people, who pass their spiritual qualities to their children. (§1)

9. ★★ When was the name Havaya revealed, and when will it be fully revealed? Are we ready?

At Matan Torah, and completely in the days of the Geulah. Yes: "we are sitting at the table of the feast"; all that is needed is for Hashem to open our eyes for the feast of the Geulah to begin. (§1)

10. ★★★ What will hasten the Geulah, and how does it lead to "Bo el Paroh"?

Making everyone a shliach to give out tzedakah, because "tzedakah brings the Geulah near." The Zohar explains that Pharaoh (in kedushah) is the source of "the revelation of all lights", which will come fully in the Geulah with the revelation of Hashem's essence through "the new Torah that will come out from Me." (§1)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“For Tzedakah in the Holy Land”

Two passengers in a taxi from Ben Gurion airport to Yerushalayim started talking. One was from Antwerp. When the other asked what brought him to Eretz Yisroel, he hesitated, then told the truth.

“This past summer I went to the Lubavitcher Rebbe for a brachah for my handicapped son. We’ve had great difficulty finding him a shidduch. The Rebbe gave me a dollar, saying ‘besuros tovos’. Then he gave me another dollar and said: ‘For tzedakah in the Holy Land.’ I was sure the Rebbe thought I was from Israel. But on Chol Hamoed Sukkos my wife said, ‘Maybe we should take the Rebbe’s words seriously. Go to Eretz Yisroel and give tzedakah there, as the Rebbe said.’ So here I am.”

Now he noticed that the man from Yerushalayim looked shaken. “I’m coming back from New York, where I spent Yom Tov,” he said. “I asked the Rebbe for a brachah for my daughter. The Rebbe gave me lekach for her and said: ‘May she find a good shidduch soon.’” He took a deep breath. “Perhaps we should both look into this. You see, my daughter also has a handicap.”

The engagement party was held soon after.

Source: *Eli & Malka Touger, To Know and to Care, vol. 1, “A Dollar for Tzedakah, a Fountain of Blessing” (Sichos in English)*

Think: The Rebbe made the man from Antwerp a shliach for tzedakah. How did his tzedakah “bring the Geulah near” for two families (§1)?

Doing the Rebbe’s shlichus of tzedakah brought him to exactly the right taxi and the right person,

and both families saw their brachah open up: a small taste of how tzedakah brings the big Geulah.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Like the shevatim, stay who you are in every place; and be a shliach for tzedakah, and make others shluchim too. Tzedakah brings the Geulah near.

For example: Before school, ask your parents for some coins and give one to each of your little brothers and sisters to put in the pushka. Now they are shluchim of tzedakah too.

Fathers Prepare, Children Reveal!

וארא - אל האבות

Sefer HaSichos 5752 vol. 1, sicha of Shabbos Parshas Va'eira, 28 Teves 5752 (1992), Shabbos Mevarchim Shvat. Sections as in the Sichos in English edition (vol. 51).

The point: *Why is the parsha named after the revelation to the Avos, if the Jews received more? Rashi: "to the Avos", because the fathers' avodah is the source of what came after. The Avos tasted Matan Torah (Avraham's bris became holy) and touched the essence of the soul, but only in themselves; Matan Torah brought it into the whole world. Like a wedding, where three generations of ancestors attend. Our Torah and mitzvos in galus prepare the Geulah the same way. Shvat (shevet, the 11th month) points to Moshiach, and the Friediker Rebbe's life (Tomchei Temimim, 30 years of nesius, and after) matches the three stages. All the preparations are done.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ What two questions does the opening posuk raise?

(1) If the Torah is saying the Jews' revelation is greater than the Avos', why is "I appeared to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov" a reason for "therefore tell the children of Israel"? (2) Why is the parsha called Va'eira, after the revelation to the Avos? (§1)

- ★ What does Rashi add on "Va'eira", and what does it teach?

"To the Avos": they were given their revelation because they were fathers, the source of the spiritual legacy of the Jewish people. Their revelation is the source and cause of the higher revelation the Jews received later. (§1)

- ★★ How did the Avos' avodah anticipate Matan Torah, even though Havaya wasn't revealed to them?

They kept the whole Torah before it was given, and the Zohar says their avodah anticipated Matan Torah. Avraham told Eliezer, "Place your hand under my thigh": his bris had become a holy object on which an oath could be taken, a foretaste of joining ruchniyus with the physical. (§1)

- ★★ What was the difference between Avraham's holiness and a mitzvah after Matan Torah?

Avraham could draw G-dliness only into his own body, not into the world. After Matan Torah, every Jew doing a mitzvah draws G-dliness into the physical things where it is done. Still, Avraham's body was physical, so it also showed an infinite power. (§1)

5. ★★★ From another angle, what did the Avos have, and what did Matan Torah add?

Their avodah touched the essence of the Jewish soul: Avraham was “the first of the believers” and opened the channel of emunah and mesirus nefesh for all generations. Matan Torah let that essence be revealed in the world: through learning Torah into the conscious powers of the soul, and through mitzvos into the body and the world. (§1)

6. ★★★ So whose avodah has the advantage?

Each has one. Revealing G-dliness in the whole world shows its true, unlimited quality, which the Avos' hidden avodah didn't show. But the Avos' avodah was mainly spiritual, while ours after Matan Torah is mainly in the world as it is. (§1)

7. ★★ Explain the wedding mashal and its two lessons.

Matan Torah is the wedding of Hashem and the Jewish people, and at every wedding the souls of three generations of ancestors attend, so the Avos and Imahos were there. (1) The avodah of later generations comes from the Avos. (2) The avodah of later generations reveals the essential power the Avos had. (§1)

8. ★★ How does all this apply to us today?

Matan Torah was the betrothal; the wedding will be in the Geulah, with “the new Torah that will come out from Me”. Just as the Avos prepared Matan Torah, our Torah and mitzvos now draw G-dliness into the world and prepare the Geulah, when “all flesh will see”. Our avodah in galus touches the essence of the soul, and that is what will be revealed. (§1)

9. ★★ How does Parshas Bo, read at Minchah, connect?

“Bo el Paroh”: the Zohar says Pharaoh in kedushah is “the source of the revelation of all lights”, and “the fifth part to Pharaoh” points to the revelations connected with five that will shine in the Geulah. (§1)

10. ★★ Give three ways the month of Shvat points to Moshiach.

(1) Shevet = staff of kingship: "the shevet will not depart from Yehudah"; the Rambam says "a shevet will arise in Israel" is Melech HaMoshiach. (2) Shevet = branch: "a shoot will come out from the stem of Yishai" (Metzudas David: Melech HaMoshiach). (3) It is the 11th month, above the pattern of ten. (§2)

11. ★★ What were the three decades of the Frierdiker Rebbe's nesius?

5680–5690 in Russia, fighting for Yiddishkeit with open mesirus nefesh; 5690–5700 in Poland, teaching Chassidus Chabad, a revolution there; 5700–5710 in America, spreading the wellsprings outward and calling "Immediately to teshuvah, immediately to Geulah." (§2)

12. ★★★ How does his whole life match the three stages, and what should that make us do?

His first 40 years, helping his father as director of Tomchei Temimim, are like the Avos. The 30 years of nesius are like the time after Matan Torah. The years after his passing, when he is still the Nasi, are like the Geulah: all the preparations are complete. So at any moment the Frierdiker Rebbe can come in and see what his chassidim and students are doing, and that should push us to add in avodah and make up what's missing. (§2)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“How Fortunate Are the Eyes”

When Reb Bentcha was a bochur in the yeshivah in Lubavitch, an older boy with long peyos showed up, clearly not from a Chabad home. He kept to himself, and the boys began to tease him. Finally he said, “If you promise to stop bothering me, I’ll tell you a story about your Rebbe that you’ve never heard.” They agreed at once.

“I am a Slonimer chassid. Last year my Rebbe traveled to visit many tzaddikim in different countries. When he came back he held a gathering to say Torah, as is our custom. In the middle he stopped and said: ‘I traveled the world to see tzaddikim and holy Jews. I saw a real tzaddik in Lubavitch. He sits with two golden chains on his waistcoat and a golden watch, but he has a humility and modesty like no other person.’

“Later he stopped again and said with deep feeling: ‘How fortunate are the eyes that looked into the eyes of a real tzaddik!’ And then: ‘How fortunate are the eyes that look into the eyes of the one who saw a real tzaddik!’

“When the food was served, I sat near my Rebbe and took some shirayim like everyone. He turned to me and said: ‘This is not the way for you. Go to Lubavitch.’

“And so I came.”

Source: Hillel Zaltzman, Samarkand, “I Saw a Genuine Tzadik in Lubavitch” (chabad.org)

Think: “The eyes that saw the one who saw”: how is this like the Avos and their children (§1)?

What the Avos had flows on to every generation after them, and a later generation can bring it out

even more: the boy didn’t settle for second-hand; he went to Lubavitch himself.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Your Torah and mitzvos now, in galus, are like the Avos before Matan Torah: they prepare the Geulah. And the Rebbe can “walk in” at any moment and see what you’re doing.

For example: It’s the boring last part of the shiur and everyone is drifting. Imagine the Rebbe walking in right now. Sit up, follow the Gemara, and prepare one thing to say at your class’s Yud Shvat farbrengen.