

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Sefer HaSichos 5752

ספר השיחות · תשנ"ב

Parshas Vayechi

פרשת ויחי

1 sicha in this booklet

Sicha 1: Iron, Seeds, and Eternal Life! · Shabbos Vayechi, §§1-3

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.

Iron, Seeds, and Eternal Life!

יעקב אבינו לא מת

Sefer HaSichos 5752 vol. 1, sicha of Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, 14 Teves 5752 (1991), combined (as printed) with the talks of the eve and day of Asarah b'Teves. Sections as in the Sichos in English edition (vol. 51).

The point: *Vayechi ends the "Book of the Just", and Yaakov passes the Avos' influence to all generations; he never died, because his children live. Asarah b'Teves, the start of the destruction, is the strictest fast, yet its goal was teshuvah, and it holds the seeds of the Third Beis HaMikdash, where even iron (barzel = Yaakov's wives) and brass (galus) will be raised. Yaakov's "seed" already holds the Geulah: invest in children, and see every act as a seed of endless growth.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★ Why is Sefer Bereishis called "Sefer HaYashar", and how far does the influence of the Avos reach?

It refers to the Avos, Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov, who were "yesharim". "The deeds of the Avos are a sign for the children": their influence goes from Shemos through all of Tanach to Divrei HaYamim ("chronicles"), meaning all the chronicles of the Jewish people in every generation. (§1)

- ★★ Why does the parshah begin "Vayechi Yaakov", and how is that seen in the parshah?

Yaakov's life completes the "Book of the Just"; he passes the Avos' influence on to all their children. That is why the parshah tells of Yaakov's brachos to his sons and to Yosef's sons, who make up the twelve shevatim. (§1)

- ★★ "Yaakov Avinu never died." Why is Yaakov's life eternal, and what does he give his children?

"As his children are alive, he is alive." Yaakov is identified with Torah, "our life and the length of our days", so his life is eternal, and he gives his children the eternal life that comes from Torah and mitzvos. (§1)

- ★★ In what way is Asarah b'Teves stricter than other fasts, even Tisha b'Av? Why?

Other fasts are postponed if they fall on Shabbos, but Asarah b'Teves would be kept even on Shabbos (Avudraham), because it says "b'etzem hayom hazeh", as by Yom Kippur. It was the beginning of the tragedies: the siege of Yerushalayim, before the breach of the walls (17 Tammuz), the Churban (9 Av) and Gedaliah (3 Tishrei). (§2)

5. ★★ Why is the positive side of Asarah b'Teves even stronger than that of the other fasts?

All fasts will become Yamim Tovim, and a fast is "a day of will" and of teshuvah, which brings the Geulah. On Asarah b'Teves Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash were still whole; the siege was only to wake the Yidden to teshuvah. Had they done teshuvah, nothing else would have happened. (§2)

6. ★★ Why is the siege connected with iron, and how is iron fixed in kedushah?

Iron is the opposite of the Beis HaMikdash: no iron was used to build it, because iron was used to destroy it. It is fixed by using iron, strength, in holiness: Eretz Yisroel is "a land whose stones are iron", and a talmid chacham ("boneha", its builders) must be strong as iron. (§2)

7. ★★★ Yaakov is connected with the Third Beis HaMikdash, the most perfect, but with brass, the lowest metal. How can that be?

Nechoshes (brass) is related to the nachash, the source of evil, and to galus. Yaakov, the Torah, can turn even the nachash's influence into the perfection of the Third Beis HaMikdash. Gold (zahav) = the gift of a healthy person = 1st Beis HaMikdash; silver (kesef) = 2nd; brass (nechoshes) = "a sick person who says 'give'" = galus. We ask Hashem, and He gives the Third Beis HaMikdash. (§2)

8. ★★★ "Barzel" (iron) is the initials of Yaakov's wives. Why are the maidservants first, and what does it teach about iron in the Third Beis HaMikdash?

Bilhah, Rachel, Zilpah, Leah: the maidservants come first, because the receiver has an advantage over the giver; Malchus that goes down into the lower worlds rises higher. Stone (Malchus of Atzilus) was in the Beis HaMikdash; iron (Malchus in the lower worlds) wasn't yet. In the Geulah iron itself will be raised and will strengthen the eternal Beis HaMikdash. (§2)

9. ★★ How is Asarah b'Teves the beginning of building the Third Beis HaMikdash? What do the number ten, Teves, and that year's Tuesday hint at?

The destruction that began then was meant to lead to the building. Teves is the tenth month from Nissan ("the tenth shall be holy"; the tenth song). Teves is "the month the body enjoys the body": Hashem enjoys our avodah in the physical. On Tuesday "ki tov" was said twice, the second time about plants with seeds: Asarah b'Teves holds the seeds of the Geulah. (§2)

10. ★★ Bereishis ends with going down to Mitzrayim. Where does the strength to go up from galus come from?

From "Vayechi Yaakov": Yaakov is Torah, the middle line that goes from the highest to the lowest without change; truth ("give truth to Yaakov") and eternity. He gives it to his "zera", his seed: the eternal life of the Geulah is already planted in us, and grows through our avodah in galus.

(§3)

11. ★★ What is the practical lesson of Vayechi, especially about children?

Strengthen your thought, speech and action in Torah and mitzvos, and work with Yaakov's "seed", Jewish children. The effort in their chinuch is like seeds that will flower and make new seeds in future generations. (§3)

12. ★★★ How should a person see each thought, word and deed? What does "Yaakov = yud eikev" add?

Each one as a seed you plant, which gives fruit with more seeds: endless growth, and eternal life.

Yud eikev: Hashem's influence (the yud) reaches even the heel. Each act can be the mitzvah that "tips the scale" for yourself and the whole world (Rambam), and "the table is already set" for the feast of the Geulah. (§3)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

A Beard in the Shul

In the 1960s the Rebbe sent chassidim into the Soviet Union as tourists. In some cities they met secretly with the chassidic underground. In others, meeting was too dangerous. Even so, the Rebbe told them to pass through those cities and stop at the shuls.

Years later, a Lubavitcher who got out of Russia explained what those visits meant. “None of us got to speak to the shliach. Only months later did we find out for sure that the Rebbe had sent him. But his visit had a tremendous effect on us.

“The government was trying to break us. They would call us in and show us headlines from American Jewish papers about assimilation and intermarriage. ‘Your faith is finished,’ they said. ‘In Europe your brothers were wiped out, and in America they forgot who they are. Why be so stubborn?’ We didn’t fully believe them, but when you read about ‘the vanishing American Jew’, your heart sinks.

“And suddenly we saw it wasn’t all so dark in America: a young American with a yarmulke, tzitzis and a full beard! It strengthened our faith in the future.”

Source: *Eli & Malka Touger, To Know and to Care, vol. 2, “Opening the Iron Fist” (Sichos in English)*

Think: How was the shliach’s quiet visit a “seed” (§3)? What showed “Yaakov Avinu never died”?

Without a word, his very Yiddishkeit planted strength that grew in their hearts. A young American

Jew living as a Yid showed that Yaakov’s “seed” is alive, so Yaakov lives.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Every mitzvah, word and thought is a seed that will grow and make more seeds. Be strong as iron in Yiddishkeit, and invest in younger children: what you plant now will blossom later.

For example: You read with your little brother or help a younger boy in the cheder with his Chumash. It looks small, but it’s a seed that will grow for generations.