

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Sefer HaSichos 5752

ספר השיחות · תשנ"ב

Parshas Vayeitzei

פרשת ויצא

1 sicha in this booklet

Sicha 1: Go Down to Go Forward! · Shabbos Vayeitzei, §§1-4

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.

Go Down to Go Forward!

ויצא יעקב... וילך חרנה

Sefer HaSichos 5752 vol. 1, sicha of Shabbos Parshas Vayeitzei, Tes Kislev 5752 (1991), the birthday and yahrzeit of the Mitteler Rebbe. Sections as in the Sichos in English edition (vol. 50).

The point: *Tes Kislev is both the birthday and the yahrzeit of the Mitteler Rebbe: a tzaddik's perfection shows even in the physical, in his "full years". Yaakov had to go down to Charan, a place of Hashem's anger, to build the Jewish family. So the neshamah goes down into the body to make it a home for Hashem, and through the descent it goes forward ("vayeilech Charanah"). At the place of the Beis HaMikdash Yaakov "lay down", where head and feet are equal, the level of Hashem's Essence. He surrounded his head with "stones", the strength of the soul. Kislev is the month of Chassidus, and the Mitteler Rebbe (Binah, the "bridge") brought Chassidus down into the world.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What two unusual things are true about Tes Kislev and the Mitteler Rebbe?

His birthday and his yahrzeit are on the same day, and the day of his release, Yud Kislev, comes right after. (§1)

2. ★★ Chazal say Hashem "fills up the years of tzaddikim from day to day". What is the question on this?

A tzaddik's life is about his avodah, and the physical setting is secondary. Why should full years in time show that his avodah is complete? And most tzaddikim don't pass away on their birthday. (§1)

3. ★★★ How does the Rebbe answer?

The highest perfection is when a tzaddik's spiritual achievement shows even in the material world, which is made of time and space: "just as they are perfect, their years are perfect." So it was with the Avos, with Moshe, and with the Mitteler Rebbe, the leader of his generation. (§1)

4. ★★ Why does most of Yaakov's story take place in a bad environment?

"The deeds of the Avos are a sign for the children." Yaakov had to go to Charan (connected to "charon af", Hashem's anger) and live with Lavan, and there he built the family of the Jewish people. This teaches each of us how to deal with the world. (§2)

5. ★★ How is Yaakov's trip from Be'er Sheva to Charan like the neshamah's descent? What is its purpose?

The pure neshamah comes down from a high level (Be'er Sheva, Binah) into this world, which hides Hashem. The purpose is to overcome the concealment and build a Jewish home through Torah and mitzvos, making the physical serve the spiritual like a body serves the soul. (§2)

6. ★ What do the words "vayeilech Charanah" hint at?

It was the descent to Charan that let Yaakov "go", to move forward and grow spiritually. (§2)

7. ★★ What happens when a person "lies down"? What does it mean in galus?

His head and feet are on the same level. The concealment of Hashem, especially in ikvesa d'Meshicha, holds back a person's conscious powers, so his "head" is no higher than his "feet". (§3)

8. ★★★ Yaakov didn't sleep for 14 years in the yeshivah of Shem and Ever or for 20 years at Lavan's. Why did he lie down at the place of the Beis HaMikdash?

There is a good side to lying down. It points to Hashem's Essence, which is above every level and found in all of them equally, where head and feet are the same. The Mikdash is the place where the Essence is revealed. (§3)

9. ★★ What did the ladder show? What did it lead Yaakov to do?

Its feet were on the earth and its top in heaven, joining the physical and the spiritual. That led him to promise to give a tenth of everything to Hashem, connecting his possessions with G-dliness. (§3)

10. ★★★ How could stones protect Yaakov from wild animals? Why around his head?

Literally a stone can't stop an animal. Stones stand for strength: he surrounded himself with the power of the light of the soul, and when that light is revealed, the darkness of the world doesn't matter. They were around his head because the soul's light shows in the mind. And a stone, the lowest thing, awakens the essence of the soul. That stone became an altar, a "house of Hashem". (§3)

11. ★★ Why is Kislev the month of Chassidus? How does Chanukah fit?

Just as Sivan, the third summer month, is for the revealed Torah, Kislev, the third winter month, is for Pnimiyus HaTorah, with Tes, Yud and Yud-Tes Kislev. Chanukah's oil stands for Torah secrets, and lighting outside the door stands for spreading the wellsprings of Chassidus. (§3)

12. ★★ What was the special contribution of the Mitteler Rebbe?

The Alter Rebbe is Chochmah, the spark. The Mitteler Rebbe is Binah: long, broad explanation, bringing Chassidus into the world. "Mitteler" means a bridge. The Tzemach Tzedek said that if his finger were cut, Chassidus would flow out, not blood. (§4)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

"Many Waters Cannot Put Out Love"

A wicked informer named Lipman tried to blackmail the Mitteler Rebbe. "Not one penny will you get from me," the Rebbe told him. "I have done nothing wrong and I am not afraid of your slander." So Lipman forged a letter and accused the Rebbe of rebelling against the government.

On Motzaei Shabbos, 28 Tishrei 5587 (1826), police searched the Rebbe's house, while his family wept and pleaded. The only calm one was the Mitteler Rebbe. He went to his room and wrote a maamar of Chassidus, and afterward he received people for yechidus.

On the way to prison in Vitebsk, hundreds of Jews came out to greet him in every town. In Dobromysl he davened Minchah and then said a maamar on the posuk "Many waters cannot extinguish love." Even in prison he was allowed to say Chassidus twice a week.

At the final hearing he came dressed in white, looking like a malach, and the minister ordered a chair brought for him. The informer called him a fraud, then slipped and called him "Rebbe". On the 10th of Kislev the Rebbe was freed, just as he was saying the posuk "Padah b'shalom nafshi," "He redeemed my soul in peace."

Source: Yerachmiel Tilles, "10 Kislev: The Liberation of Rabbi DovBer" (chabad.org)

Think: How did the Mitteler Rebbe "put stones around his head" (§3)? And how does Yud Kislev fit §4?

He surrounded himself with the light of the soul, writing and saying Chassidus, so the danger didn't matter. His release was a victory that let Chassidus spread out into the world, the way he made Chassidus a "bridge" to the world.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

When you find yourself in a “Charan”, a hard or unfriendly place, it’s not a mistake. You were sent there to build and to grow. Surround your “head” with “stones”: Torah and Chassidus thoughts. Then the darkness around you won’t matter, and you can be a “bridge” bringing Chassidus into everyday life.

For example: You’re nervous before a big test, or you start in a new school where you don’t know anyone. Before it starts, say a perek of Tanya or Tehillim by heart, and keep a Chassidus thought in your head. Those are your stones. And use the new place to build: find one boy to learn with.