

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Parshas Eikev

פרשת עקב

2 sichas in this booklet

Sicha 1: The World Isn't That Big! · Eikev, p. 371, §§1-3

Sicha 2: Snake, Serpent, Scorpion: Don't Get Cold! · Eikev, p. 373, §§4-6

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 World Isn't That Big!

המדבר הגדול

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Eikev, p. 371 (Hebrew edition pp. 76–78), sections 1–3. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Eikev, 20 Menachem Av 5716 (1956). One sicha, divided here into two parts.

The point: *Parshas Eikev is one of the “seven of consolation”, when not only the haftorah but also the parsha speaks of consolation: since a haftorah is like its parsha, and the haftorah speaks of the comfort of the Geulah, the parsha must speak of Geulah too. Really the whole Torah deals with Geulah, since “only one who learns Torah is free”: learning Torah frees the neshamah from the galus of the body and animal soul, and then the body is freed from the actual galus too. But the whole Torah speaks of different things through which the Geulah comes, while in the “seven of consolation” the Geulah itself is discussed. We are now in galus. To explain the Geulah, first the galus and its cause are explained; knowing the cause, we know how to fix it, and when the cause is fixed, the result is fixed, and the Geulah comes. Like a sick person: when he knows he is sick and how the illness shows itself, he goes to the doctor, can explain it, and the doctor knows what medicine to give. Knowing that he is sick, and how, is half the cure, and in time it brings the second half, until he is completely healthy. So explaining the galus and its cause begins the Geulah, since knowing what galus is leads to looking for ways to cure it. Before the Jews first entered the land they passed through a great desert. “What happened to the fathers is a sign for the children”: the desert before entering Eretz Yisrael is a sign that our galus is like that desert. Knowing about that desert, we know how to heal the galus. The parsha describes it: “the great and awesome desert, snake, serpent and scorpion, and thirst where there is no water”. A “desert” is a place where people don’t live. “The great desert” is when the unsettled part is bigger than where people live. “Adam” refers to the Jews (“you are called Adam”); the Shelah explains “Adam” from “adameh l'Elyon”, like the Supernal Man on the Throne. “The great desert”: the part without “Adam” is bigger than the settled part, as it says, “you are the fewest of all the nations”; and even among Jews, those who keep Torah and mitzvos properly are not, for now, the majority. The first word for galus is “the great desert”: the first step of the descent, where galus begins, is considering the world around as big. Seeing the “settled place”, Jews and Yiddishkeit, as a small area, and the world around, the desert of the nations, as a bigger body than the Jews. In truth no body in the world can rule over Jews; on the contrary, everything is batel to the Jews, as the haftorah says, “kings will be your nurturers”, and as the Gemara says on “all the nations of the earth will see that the name of Hashem is called upon you, and fear you”: this is the tefillin on the head. When the head has “Shema Yisrael, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One”, when the mind is filled with the knowledge that Hashem alone rules the whole world, then “all the nations will fear you”; everything is batel to it. But when a person calculates the “great desert” and gives importance to the world, saying the world is big and he is small, he asks, “How will Yaakov stand, for he is small?” That very question, giving importance to the world, creates the galus, the hiding, the possibility for the world to rule over him. That is the start of galus. But when a person remembers “You chose us from all the nations and raised us up”, he isn’t impressed by anyone, knowing the Jews are raised above everything, and for him there is no galus. Hashem gives him his parnassah, he can run his business by the ways of the Torah, and he has time left for set times of Torah learning.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★ What are the “seven of consolation”? What do they speak about?

The seven Shabbosos after Tisha B'Av. Not only the haftorah but the parsha too speaks of comfort, the Geulah itself. (§1)

2. ★★ How does the whole Torah deal with Geulah?

“Only one who learns Torah is free”: learning frees the neshamah from the galus of the body and animal soul, and then the body is freed from actual galus. (§1)

3. ★★ Why do we first need to understand the galus and its cause? Explain the mashal of the sick person.

Knowing the cause shows how to fix it. A sick person who knows he is sick and how goes to the doctor and can explain; knowing is half the cure. (§1)

4. ★★ Why does the desert before Eretz Yisrael teach us about our galus?

“What happened to the fathers is a sign for the children”: our galus is like that desert, and knowing it shows us how to heal it. (§2)

5. ★ Which words in the parsha describe the desert?

“The great and awesome desert, snake, serpent and scorpion, and thirst where there is no water.” (§2)

6. ★★ What is a “desert”, and what is a “great desert”? Who is “Adam”?

A place where people don't live; a great desert is when the unsettled part is bigger. “Adam” is the Jewish people (“adameh l'Elyon”). (§3)

7. ★★ What is the first step of the descent into galus?

Considering the world around as big, and Jews and Yiddishkeit as small. (§3)

8. ★★★ What does the Gemara say about “all the nations will see... and fear you”? What does it mean in avodah?

This is the tefillin on the head. When the mind is filled with “Hashem is One”, the only ruler, everything is batel to it. (§3)

9. ★★ What question comes from thinking “the world is big and I am small”? What does that question do?

“How will Yaakov stand, for he is small?” The question itself creates the galus and lets the world rule over him. (§3)

10. ★★ What happens when a person remembers “You chose us from all the nations”?

He isn’t impressed by anyone, and for him there is no galus: Hashem gives him parnassah, he does business by Torah, and has time to learn. (§3)

11. ★★ “Kings will be your nurturers.” What does this verse from the haftorah show?

That no power in the world truly rules over Jews; everything is batel to them. (§3)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“We Have No Need to Answer You”

King Nevuchadnetzar set up a giant golden statue and commanded everyone to bow down to it when the music played. Whoever didn’t bow would be thrown into a burning furnace.

Three young Jews whom the king himself had put in charge of the province of Bavel, Chananya, Mishael and Azarya, did not bow.

In a rage, the king had them brought before him. “If you bow, good. If not, you will be thrown into the burning furnace at once, and what god can save you from my hand?”

They answered: “Nevuchadnetzar, we have no need to answer you about this. Our G-d whom we serve can save us from the burning furnace and from your hand, O king. And even if not, know that we will not serve your god or bow to the golden statue.”

The furnace was heated seven times hotter, and they were thrown in. But the fire didn’t touch them. Not a hair of their heads was singed, and they walked out of the furnace.

Source: *Tanach, Daniel ch. 3*

Think: How did Chananya, Mishael and Azarya refuse to see the world as a “great desert”?

The mightiest king in the world couldn’t impress them. They knew only Hashem rules, so “we have no need to answer you”, and the fire had no power over them.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Don't think the world is big and you are small. Hashem chose you! When you remember that, nothing can rule over you.

For example: Your cousins on vacation make fun of your tzitzis hanging out. Don't tuck them in to fit in. Remember "Atah vechartanu" and wear them proudly.

Snake, Serpent, Scorpion: Don't Get Cold!

נחש שרף ועקרב

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Eikev, p. 373 (Hebrew edition pp. 78-79), sections 4-6. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Eikev, 20 Menachem Av 5716 (1956).

The point: *From seeing the world as a "great desert", a further descent can come: not only "great" but also "awesome". "Great" means it is bigger than him, but he is still something, at least a minority. "Awesome" means he is afraid of it, thinking it has power and rule over him. When he sees the world only as "great", he is impressed by it only when he deals with the world and its matters, since he recognizes its greatness, but in his own four amos he holds strong. But when he sees the world as "great and awesome", even in his own four amos, in shul, in yeshivah or at home, he is afraid of the world; he is scared to keep Torah and mitzvos openly, worried the world will find out: what will the goyim say? From there a further descent: "snake". The sefer Erchei HaKinuyim says "the snake's poison is hot": the person begins to get excited with the heat of the world, and because of that, his excitement for holiness gets smaller. Then a bigger descent: "serpent" (saraf, burning): his excitement for the world grows so much that it not only lessens his excitement for holiness but burns it up completely. And a still bigger descent: "scorpion", whose "poison is cold". This is worse than snake and serpent, because when a person has heat and excitement, even for worldly things, it shows he has life and can have excitement for holiness. But coldness, a sign of the opposite of life, is many times worse, like a goat (which damages coldly) compared to a goring ox. From there an even greater descent: "thirst where there is no water". Even when he is stirred from Above (through a heavenly voice and the like, as Chassidus explains) until he becomes thirsty, still "there is no water", and "water is Torah": he doesn't know what he is thirsty for, since he is so far that he has no connection to holiness and doesn't know it exists. Where does it all start? From the "great desert", from considering the world important; that is the first step of all the descents down to "thirst where there is no water". So to fix all the descents, one must first fix the first cause: be strong in Yiddishkeit and remember "You chose us from all the nations and raised us up". Then we leave the galus and go to a good and wide land, through Moshiach, speedily in our days. This explains the Gemara: "If a snake is wrapped around his heel (while davening), he shouldn't stop; if a scorpion is wrapped around his heel, he should stop." When a person stands davening and suddenly the heat of the world attacks him ("a snake wrapped around his heel"), though it isn't good, he shouldn't stop but continue davening; since he has life, in the end he will turn it into holiness. But "a scorpion wrapped around his heel": when in the middle of davening coldness attacks him, even if only at his heel, the cold poison hasn't yet reached the mind and heart, only the heels, he should stop. If coldness, lack of life, can attack him in the middle of davening, it proves his whole order of avodah is lacking, so he must stop that order of avodas Hashem and take on a new order, avodah with life, which comes from learning pnimiyus haTorah, the Tree of Life.*

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

- ★★ What is the difference between seeing the world as "great" and as "great and awesome"?

"Great": it is bigger than him, but he is still something, and holds strong in his four amos.

"Awesome": he is afraid of it, even in shul, yeshivah or at home. (§4)

2. ★ What does a person who sees the world as “awesome” worry about?

He is scared to keep Torah and mitzvos openly: what will the goyim say? (§4)

3. ★★ What is the “snake” in avodah?

Its poison is hot: he gets excited about worldly things, and his excitement for holiness gets smaller. (§5)

4. ★★ What is the “serpent” (saraf)?

His excitement for the world grows so much that it burns up his excitement for holiness completely. (§5)

5. ★★★ Why is the “scorpion” worse than the snake and the serpent?

Its poison is cold. Heat, even for worldly things, shows life that can turn to holiness; coldness is a sign of the opposite of life. (§5)

6. ★★★ What is “thirst where there is no water”?

Even when he is stirred from Above and feels thirsty, there is no “water” (Torah): he is so far that he doesn’t know what he is thirsty for. (§5)

7. ★★ Where do all these descents begin? So what must be fixed first?

From the “great desert”, giving the world importance. First be strong in Yiddishkeit and remember “You chose us”. (§5)

8. ★ What does the Gemara say about a snake or a scorpion wrapped around one’s heel while davening?

A snake: don’t stop. A scorpion: stop. (§6)

9. ★★ Why shouldn’t he stop davening when the “snake” (heat of the world) attacks?

He still has life, and in the end he will turn it into holiness. (§6)

10. ★★★ Why must he stop when the “scorpion” (coldness) attacks, even only at his heel? What should he do instead?

It proves his whole order of avodah is lacking. He must take on a new order, avodah with life, from learning pnimiyus haTorah, the Tree of Life. (§6)

11. ★★ What is the source of a “living” avodah?

Learning pnimiyus haTorah (Chassidus), “the Tree of Life”. (§6)

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Barrels in the Snow

A story is told about an old chassid who every year, on Rosh Chodesh Elul, set out on foot to spend the Yamim Nora'im with the Tzemach Tzedek in Lubavitch.

One year, deep in a snowy forest, his legs gave out. Just as he was about to collapse, a wagon full of big barrels came by, and the driver called, “Want a ride? Find a place and jump in!”

Squeezed between the barrels, the chassid was still freezing. Then he noticed a small spigot on one barrel. It was vodka! The driver told him to take as much as he needed. After a little cup he was warm and happy, and soon he was singing all the way to Lubavitch.

When he arrived, he gathered everyone in the shul. “Today I learned a great lesson,” he said. “Torah is compared to water, and Chassidus is the ‘vodka’ of Torah, the part that makes a Jew warm and alive. I discovered that a chassid can sit surrounded by barrels of Chassidus, a whole sea of Torah, and still be cold. But if just a little bit goes inside... then he becomes warm and alive, and can even warm up the whole world around him!”

Source: Tuvia Bolton, “Barrels in the Snow” (chabad.org)

Think: What does the chassid’s lesson have to do with the “scorpion” of coldness?

The cure for coldness is pnimiyus haTorah, Chassidus, but only when it goes inside and warms you,

not when it just sits around you in “barrels”.

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Watch out for coldness in Yiddishkeit. Let Chassidus go INSIDE you, and daven and learn with life and warmth!

For example: You daven every day, but it has become fast and automatic. Before davening, learn one short piece of Chassidus and think about it for a minute. Then daven one part slowly, with feeling.