בס״ד

SHAILOS L'CHAZARA

Review Questions

Likkutei Sichos Vol. 2

לקוטי שיחות · חלק ב

Parshas Mattos-Masei

פרשת מטות-מסעי

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2 sichas in this booklet

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Name: _____

Class: _____

★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder
Each sicha has questions, a true chassidishe story, and a lesson for you.

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Out of Mitzrayim, Again and Again!

אלה מסעי בני ישראל

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Mattos-Masei, p. 348 (Hebrew edition pp. 54–56), sections 1–4. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Mattos-Masei 5715 (1955). One sicha, divided here into two parts.

The point: *"These are the journeys (mas'ei, plural) of the Jews who went out of the land of Mitzrayim." The famous question: the Jews left Mitzrayim in one journey only, from Ramses to Sukkos (the other journeys came after they had already left), so why does it say "journeys", plural? And what do the 42 journeys from Mitzrayim to Eretz Yisrael, "a good and wide land", add? Already with the first journey, leaving "Mitzrayim" (from "meitzarim", limits), they were in a wide-open place! The answer: "Mitzrayim" and "wide-open" have many levels. A level that is called "wide-open" compared to a lower one is called "Mitzrayim" compared to a higher one, until the true wide-open place, the last journey, "at the Yarden by Yericho", which hints at Moshiach ("who smells and judges"). So the first journey, though it took them out of Mitzrayim, was still "Mitzrayim" compared to a higher level, and they needed another journey to leave that "Mitzrayim" too, all the way to the Yarden by Yericho, the highest level. The Torah is eternal, all the more so the going out of Mitzrayim, since "a person must see himself as if he went out of Mitzrayim today". The lesson in avodas Hashem: even after a person has brought himself to avodah above reason, beyond every limit, and so left even "holy Mitzrayim", it isn't enough. Compared to higher levels he is still in "Mitzrayim", so he must keep going. We see this in davening. Torah comes from above to below; tefillah is a person's avodah from below to above, "a ladder standing on the ground with its top reaching heaven", going up from a narrow place to a wide one. Davening has many ascents, and each lifts the person from where he was, yet it is never enough. The first avodah is the preparation for davening: davening is before Hashem, who has no limit, while a person is in a body with an animal soul, maybe dirtied by his sins. How can he stand to daven? So first he frees himself from all his own matters, and then comes to daven. Just standing up to daven, before "Hodu" or "Mah Tovu", just putting on the gartel and standing ready, already takes him out of his own matters and refines him. (This explains the halacha: "before davening one should relieve himself and wash his hands": freeing himself from open and inner waste, and from tumah, which is only "surrounding".) Still, this ascent isn't enough. Now he begins to daven, says "Hodu", and frees himself even from where he was after the preparation, which compared to a higher level is still a narrow place. In davening itself there are many ascents, generally four "rungs", and each level is a narrow place compared to the one above it, up to Shemoneh Esrei, the highest point, where a person is completely free of his own self (whatever level, even a self refined by all his avodah until now). He stands with complete bittul, like a servant before his master who has no self at all, and says "Hashem, open my lips, and my mouth will tell Your praise": You open my lips, and I only answer after You. So Shemoneh Esrei has two opposite things: complete bittul (he is "like one who answers after the one who calls"), and asking for his needs, not only spiritual but also physical. In Pesukei D'Zimrah, the brachos of Shema and Shema there are no requests for physical needs (since he has left his own self), and only in Shemoneh Esrei do they appear. Because of its very high level, two opposites can join there; the higher the place, the greater the joining. This is like the revelation of the future, "and all flesh will see": G-dliness will be felt even in the physical body, two opposites joined. Yet though Shemoneh Esrei is the highest point, the next day he must start again: preparation, then "Hodu", Pesukei D'Zimrah and so on, because the higher the level he reached yesterday, it is a "narrow place" compared to where he must reach today. The same is true of all avodas Hashem. A person must be a "mehalech", one who walks. Even after he has freed himself completely from evil and reached a high level, he must know it isn't enough, since compared to a higher level he still has some connection to evil. (A proof: he still sees evil in someone else; the Baal Shem Tov said that when a person sees evil*

in another, it proves that this evil is in him, at least in a fine way.) He must free himself from that too. He must keep refining the physical body, not by crushing it with fasts and self-affliction, but by refining it, as the Baal Shem Tov taught on "when you see the donkey (chamor) of your enemy". As soon as he gets up in the morning he must harness his "donkey", his "chomer" (physical self), because exactly through it we reach the future revelation, "and all flesh will see", when the physical body will be so refined that it sees G-dliness.

Name:_____ Date:_____

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ Why is it hard that the posuk says "journeys" (plural)? And what is hard about the 42 journeys?

2. ★★ What is the answer? Explain "Mitzrayim" and "wide-open" as levels.

3. ★ What was the last journey, and what does it hint at?

4. ★★ What is the lesson for a person who has already reached avodah above reason?

5. ★★ What is the difference between Torah and tefillah?

6. ★★ Why does a person need to prepare before davening? What does just standing up to daven do?

7. ★★★ Explain “before davening one should relieve himself and wash his hands”.

8. ★★ What happens in Shemoneh Esrei? What do we say at its start, and what does it mean?

9. ★★★ What two opposite things are in Shemoneh Esrei? How can they be together?

10. ★★ Why must a person start the whole order of davening again the next day?

11. ★★★ How can someone know he still has some connection to evil, according to the Baal Shem Tov?

12. ★★ How should a person refine his body? What is his “donkey”?

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

“Joy Breaks Down the Gates!”

Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonne was a great and serious rabbi. He later wrote the very first chassidic book ever printed, Toldos Yaakov Yosef. Earlier in his life he had written much about the importance of tears and fasting.

After he became a disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, the Baal Shem Tov heard that he was saying one must fast to do teshuvah. He wrote him a letter:

“My insides tremble from this! I command you, and with me are the angels above and Hashem and His Shechinah, that you should not do this, for it is a thing of sadness and gloom.”

The Baal Shem Tov traveled from village to village, bringing simple Jews hope and joy. He taught that the warmth with which they served Hashem was dear to Him.

And Rabbi Yaakov Yosef later wrote in the name of his Rebbe: “If tears open the gates of Heaven, joy breaks them down completely!”

Source: *“Perpetual Joy: The Baal Shem Tov’s Revolutionary Approach to Joy” (chabad.org)*

Think: How does this story match what the sicha says about refining the body?

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Every day is a new journey out of “Mitzrayim”. Yesterday’s best davening is today’s starting point. Go higher, with joy!

For example: Yesterday you davened Shemoneh Esrei with real kavanah. Great! Today, prepare a moment before davening and add one more posuk said slowly with meaning.

My turn: My “next journey” in davening this week:

SICHA 2 OF 2 · VOL. 2 · P. 351 (HEB. ED. P. 56) · §§5–7 · SHABBOS MATTOS-MASEI 5715

Never “Enough”, Never Give Up!

מהלך ולא עומד

Likkutei Sichos vol. 2, Parshas Mattos-Masei, p. 351 (Hebrew edition pp. 56–58), sections 5–7. From the sicha of Shabbos Parshas Mattos-Masei 5715 (1955).

The point: *A person may claim: “I have worked hard enough to get rid of open, coarse evil, and I am already at a high level. Who says I must keep toiling? The level I am at now is enough for me.” The answer: a person’s job and nature is to be a “mehalech”, one who walks, not one who stands. Every day Hashem gives him, he must fill his mission in the world, as it says, “days were formed, and every one of them is his”. That is the lesson of the journeys: not to be satisfied with where you are now. On the other hand, someone may say in his heart: “Since I am so low (a person knows himself), all my work is for nothing.” For this too comes the lesson of the journeys: even in one journey a person can go out of “Mitzrayim” and reach “a good and wide land” (for his present level, and from there keep going to the highest point). Even when a person is at the very lowest level, he must never despair, because through avodah he can always leave where he is and reach the very highest levels. If back then, when the Jews in Mitzrayim were sunk in 49 gates of impurity, before Matan Torah, when the decree still kept “Rome” and “Syria” (upper and lower) apart, they reached a good and wide land through the journeys, all the more so now. However low one’s level, the work is much easier, since only “small jugs” are left, and especially with the strength from Matan Torah, when Hashem cancelled the decree and upper and lower can join, and especially when there is the bond between a Rebbe and chassidim, and the Rebbe, the Frierdiker Rebbe, connects the Jews with Hashem’s Essence. Surely every Jew has the power to leave his place and reach a good and wide land, up to the Yarden by Yericho, the revelation of Moshiach, the truest wide-open place. This explains why Mattos and Masei are always read in Bein HaMetzarim, the Three Weeks. First, “breaking down in order to build”: the breaking is for the sake of building a better building. As the Baal Shem Tov said on “it is a time of trouble for Yaakov, and from it he will be saved”: from the trouble itself comes the salvation, a joining of two opposites. So we read Mattos, which means joining (as explained in the maamar), and Masei, going out of “Bein HaMetzarim” (between the narrow places). The lesson: at whatever level a person stands, he shouldn’t be impressed; on the contrary, from the trouble itself will come the salvation, reaching the Yarden by Yericho. That is also “Menachem Av”, which means comfort: in truth everything is for the good, like a father who strikes his son because he cares about his good. When a person thinks about it, he sees that it is truly good, not only with the eyes of his mind but, as a result, even with physical eyes: it turns into good that is seen and revealed, like those on the level of “this too is for the good” and “all that Hashem does is for the good”, which also showed itself in actual fact. True, “Hashem will wash away the filth of the daughters of Tziyon” is needed, as Tanya’s mashal says, “a great and awesome king who washes the filth of his only son himself”, but it is with kindness and mercy: besides the whole thing being for the good, even the suffering itself is with kindness and mercy, as it says there, “his merciful father”. And the main thing is that in the end it shows itself as visible, revealed good, and the trouble itself turns into light.*

Name:_____ Date:_____

QUESTIONS ★ easy ★★ medium ★★★ harder

1. ★★ What might a person claim after working hard and reaching a high level?

2. ★★ What do we answer him? Which posuk is brought?

3. ★★ What might a person say who feels very low? What does the lesson of the journeys answer him?

4. ★ May a person ever despair? Why?

5. ★★★ Why is it much easier for us today than for the Jews in Mitzrayim? Give three reasons.

6. ★★ When are Mattos and Masei read, and why is that surprising?

7. ★★ What is “breaking down in order to build”?

8. ★★★ What did the Baal Shem Tov say on “a time of trouble for Yaakov, and from it he will be saved”?

9. ★★ What do “Mattos” and “Masei” each stand for here?

10. ★★ What does “Menachem Av” mean? What mashal is brought?

11. ★★★ What does Tanya’s mashal of the king washing his son teach about suffering?

12. ★ Which two famous sayings show seeing the good even with physical eyes?

A CHASSIDISHE STORY

Seventy Years Old, and Just Getting Started

In 1972, the Rebbe turned seventy. Thousands of letters came from around the world. Some well-wishers gently suggested that perhaps it was time for the Rebbe to slow down and take it easy after so many busy years.

At the farbrengen in honor of his birthday, the Rebbe answered: "I have been asked, 'Now that you have reached seventy, what are your plans? It would seem a good time to rest a bit.' My answer is that we must begin to accomplish even more!"

He called for at least seventy-one new institutions to be opened that year, and offered to cover at least ten percent of the costs himself. "And don't be disturbed if we start not seventy but eighty, or even a hundred!"

Ten years later, for his eightieth birthday, the Rebbe again called for growth. After a six-hour farbrengen, he personally handed a Tanya to each of the 10,000 people there. The last one got his at 6:15 in the morning.

Source: *"1972: The Rebbe's Thoughts on Retirement" (chabad.org)*

Think: Which words of the sicha does this story live out?

THE LESSON FOR YOU

Never say "I've done enough", and never say "I'm too far behind". Every day is another journey forward.

For example: You finished a whole mesechta of Mishnayos. Instead of stopping, start the next one tomorrow. And if you fell behind in your learning, start again today with one Mishnah.

My turn: My next "journey" this week: