

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 18

Matos-Masei

The Context:

When the parshiyos of Matos and Maasei are combined during the Three Weeks of mourning for the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, they allude to the general theme of this time — the descent into exile, and the possibility of redemption.

The Explanation:

The tribes of Israel are referred to by two names: Shevatim and Matos. The word shevet also means a branch of a tree that retains some moisture; the word matah also means a staff that is dry and hardened.

When the Jewish people are called by the name shevatim, it alludes to the fact that they retain their “moisture,” their tangible connection with their Divine source. When they are referred to as matos it alludes to their detachment from their Divine source. This is true of the soul when it descends

into this world, and of the Jewish people when they descend into exile.

The purpose of this “hardening” and spiritual decay, however, is to lead to the second parshah, Masei, which means journeys. By experiencing descent and spiritual hardship, we are able to reach deep within our souls to propel ourselves even higher, “journeying” on to places we could not have reached previously.

The Explanation Reprised:

Alternatively, the descent and ascent are alluded to in each parshah name individually:

Matos: The hardness and insensitivity of the soul as a result of its descent into a body actually leads to a positive “hardness.” The soul is forced to steel itself in its confrontation with the body’s resistance. It has to draw upon reserves of stoicism and strength, its own spiritual “hardness,” to fulfill its desires and its responsibilities. By doing so, the essential, obdurate source of the soul is revealed within the person. Thus, the negative hardness of the soul in exile is

transformed into the radiant hardness of the soul's essence.

Maasei: The "journeys" of the parshah can allude to the downward journey from heaven to earth, or from the Land of Israel into exile. The purpose of these negative travels is to bring to the positive implication of journeying, the trek back to redemption.

This is the overall theme of the Three Weeks. Although it is a time of mourning the descent into exile, it is also simply a prelude to the revelation of the essential durability of the soul (matos) and the ultimate journey to redemption (maasei).
