

Friday Night, Parshas Balak, 5764

Friday night, at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"á* spoke inspiring words about “the sword of prayer” and the rectification of the *Bris* (Covenant), based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 2.

Rebbi Nachman says: “The main weapon of Mashiach is prayer...and this weapon needs to be received through the concept of ‘Yosef’, that is, through *shmiras habris* (guarding of the Holy Covenant)...And Yosef received this specifically through Yaakov, as it is written (*Bereishis*, Ch. 48): ‘And as for me, I [Yisrael/Yaakov] have given you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Emorite with my sword and with my bow.’ (And Rashi explains that sword and bow refer to prayer and supplication), for Yisrael represents the concept of *Bris*.” (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that in this lesson Rebbe Nachman reveals to us that the main weapon of the King *Mashiach*, and of each and every Jew, is prayer. This means that there is power in his mouth to request and pray to Hashem for everything he needs, spiritually and materially. For with the power of prayer we can win all of our battles and merit to accomplish whatever we need to accomplish in our lives. And when a person is strong in his prayer, there is no level in the world he can't reach.

However, the power of prayer needs to be received through the concept of ‘Yosef HaTzaddik’, who represents the concept of *shmiras habris*. For *shmiras habris* is the sanctity of thought. And *shmiras habris* actually begins with the sanctity of our thoughts, that one should not blemish his mind with foreign and evil thoughts, G-d forbid. And when a person has a clear and pure mind, he can pray with great vitality and attachment to Hashem and accomplish everything he needs to accomplish, spiritually and materially. However, when a person lacks *shmiras habris*, G-d forbid, and has blemished his mind with foreign and evil thoughts, clouds gather and cover his eyes and prevent him from praying properly, as thoughts of despair and discouragement begin to enter his mind: “Is Hashem really listening to my prayers?” “Does Hashem really need me?” These thoughts hold him back from praying properly. Therefore, a person needs to gird himself with might

to sanctify his mind and thoughts. And he should actually pray for this itself, i.e. that he should merit a clean and pure mind which will enable him to perceive Hashem's G-dliness from everything in creation. And then he will receive, in the proper measure, the "sword of prayer" and he will win all the battles he needs to win.

Yaakov Avinu merited the "sword of prayer" in the most complete way, because he was holy to the highest degree, as our Sages have commented on the verse (*Bereishis*, Ch. 49): "[Reuven, you are] my initial vigor", that he had never experienced a night time emission in his life (*Talmud Yevamos* 76a; Rashi on this verse). Therefore, Yaakov Avinu tells Yosef (*ibid*, Ch. 48): "...which I took from the hand of the Emorite with my sword and with my bow", that is, he won the battle against the Emorites with the sword and bow of prayer, as our holy Sages have said (*Talmud Bava Basra* 123b): "Did he really take [from the hand of the Emorites] with his sword and bow? Behold, it is written (*Tehillim*, Ch. 44): 'For I will not trust in my bow; nor will my sword deliver me.' Rather, 'my sword' is prayer and 'my bow' is supplication." We find that Yaakov merited the 'sword of prayer' to its fullest extent and passed it down to Yosef HaTzaddik. For Yosef also attained true *shmiras habris*, having withstood the test with Potifar's wife (*Bereishis*, Ch. 39). And at the crucial moments of the test, it was precisely the image of his father Yaakov that he saw in his mind's eye and this is what saved him from the sin, because his father was the one who transmitted this holiness to him. Therefore, the power of prayer was also passed down to him, as it is written (*Bereishis*, Ch. 45): "And as for me, I have given you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Emorite with my sword and with my bow" – it was specifically "**me**" – Yaakov/Yisrael, i.e. *shmiras habris* – **I have given to you** – Yosef – **one portion more than your brothers** – for you will also have this power in an exceedingly great measure - **which I took from the hand of the Emorite with my sword and with my bow**. Therefore, it is an essential service of a Jew to strive to sanctify and purify his mind as much as possible - and this is the matter of *shmiras habris* - and to put all of his strength into the service of prayer until he merits to win all of his battles and he accomplishes everything he needs to accomplish in his life. Praiseworthy is the one who merits this in truth. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected these ideas to our parsha in the following way. It is written (*Bamidbar*, Ch. 22): "Balak son Tzippor saw all that Israel had done to the Emorite. Moav became very frightened of the people for it was

numerous, and Moav was disgusted because of the Children of Israel.” Let’s analyze the specific wording of these two verses. In the first verse it is written: “Balak son Tzippor” alone, that he saw all that Israel had done to the Emorite. In the next verse it is written: “Moav” became very frightened and “Moav” was disgusted – i.e. Balak’s nation. From the wording of these verses it would appear that Balak saw and understood something more than his entire nation of Moav had. Also, why in the first verse is it written: “all **that ‘Israel’ had done to the Emorite**, whereas in the next verse it says: “Moav was disgusted because of the **‘Children of Israel’** and not just because of **‘Israel’**”? Let us try to answer these questions according to the above teachings of Rebbe Nachman. **‘Israel’** written in the first verse alludes to grandfather Israel – Yaakov Avinu – who possessed the perfect “sword of prayer”, and about whom it is written: “**which I took from the hand of the Emorite** with my sword and with my bow.” And this is what Balak perceived and understood: He understood the great holiness of grandfather Israel and how it was through the great holiness of his *shmiras habris* that he merited the ‘sword of prayer’. And this was “all that **Israel** had done to the Emorite.” And therefore, “Moav became very frightened of the people for it was numerous” - it was specifically the nation of ‘Moav’ that became very frightened of the Jewish people, for their nation was called Moav in reference to a lack of *shmiras habris*, as Moav was born from the incestuous act of Lot and his daughter. And she unashamedly and brazenly called his name “Moav” because he was from her father (*me’av* – from father); and this was the blemish and corruption of the mind and chochmah (wisdom), as wisdom is called *Av*, as is known in Kabbalah. Also, the numerical value of Moav is forty-nine, which alludes to the forty-nine gates of impurity that are opened through the defilement of the mind.

As soon as Balak understood the tremendous holiness of the people of Israel, which they had inherited from their grandfather Israel, Moav became very frightened of the people; Moav - those whose minds are defiled - are afraid and terrified that the people of Israel would overpower them through the holiness of their thoughts and the service of their prayer. “And Moav was disgusted because of the Children of Israel” because it is the way of defilement to become disgusted with holiness and to be unable to tolerate it at all, as it is written concerning the Egyptians (*Shemos*, Ch. 1): “And they became disgusted because of the Children of Israel.”; for the Egyptians were more immoral and immersed in filth than any other nation in the world, as it is brought in *Tanna D’bei Eliyahu*, Ch. 7. Therefore, when Moav saw the holiness of Israel, they were completely disgusted by them, because

defilement and filth cannot tolerate holiness. And this is “Moav was disgusted”, that is, those whose minds were corrupted were disgusted “because of the Children of Israel” who possess an inheritance of holiness from their grandfather Yaakov. Therefore, Moav’s strategy was to attack the Children of Israel with the spiritual impurity of the wicked Bilaam, whose main advice to them was to defile Israel’s minds with sexual immorality, may Hashem save us, as he said (Rashi 24:14): “The G-d of these people hates unchastity”, and through this it is possible to nullify their weapon, which is prayer, and then the curse upon them will take effect, G-d forbid. And when Moav saw Israel winning their battles in a supernatural way, they said (Rashi, 22:4): “The Jews are coming with the one [Moshe] whose power lies only in his mouth (in prayer). Then we will also come against them with a man whose power lies in his mouth (Bilaam)” - a man with an impure mouth who will defile them through immorality and corrupt their minds with foreign and evil thoughts, G-d forbid. But Hashem, who guards the souls of Israel, protected them from the curse of the wicked Bilaam and shielded them in the merit of their forefathers. And through this, in the end, they were able to bring Bilaam down and remove him from the world. May Hashem always protect us from all evil and may we merit to sanctify and purify our minds with the utmost degree of holiness and purity, and to always involve ourselves in prayer all the days of our lives until we merit to be victorious in all of our battles and to see the revelation of our righteous *Mashiach* swiftly in our days. *Amen v’amen*.