

Friday Night, Parshas Chayay Sarah, 5767

Friday night, at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"á* spoke inspiring words on the great importance of the trait of *hischadshus* (self-renewal), based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 261.

Rebbe Nachman says: “When a person falls from his level, he should know that it came from heaven, for "distancing is the beginning of drawing near". Therefore, if he fell it is in order that he should be aroused to draw closer to Hashem. And the advice for him is to begin entering the service of Hashem anew as if he had never begun before. This is a great rule in serving Hashem – every day one needs to literally begin anew.”

Mohorosh explained that this teaching of Rebbe Nachman’s is an essential principle for a person’s entire lifetime. And this principle is the trait of *hischadshus* – which means that every day one needs to start again from the beginning as if one had never before begun, not thinking about yesterday at all. For most of a person’s falls stem from his thinking about yesterday, for example, how he didn’t succeed in learning and praying properly. And as a result, he becomes discouraged and thinks that again today things will most likely go the same way and he loses hope of ever seeing any good in his life.

But when he accustoms himself to the trait of *hischadshus*, not thinking about yesterday at all, but only focusing his attention entirely on today, then he will see much success in his life. He will strive to fill every day with much true and eternal good and snatch for himself an abundance of Torah, prayer, mitzvos and good deeds. And then he will amass great wealth for the sake of his eternal home in the world to come. For the reward they pay a person in the upper worlds for every mitzvah and every good point is beyond calculation – “No eye has seen it, G-d, except for You (*Yeshayahu* 64).” And we receive entire worlds in the merit of the Torah and mitzvos we do, as our holy Sages have said (end of Tractate *Uktzin*): “In time to come, Hashem will cause each and every Tzaddik to inherit 310 worlds.” Likewise, it is written in the *Tikkunei Zohar* (introduction 14a): “One who learns one tractate is given one world, two tractates two worlds and so on”.

So we find that when a person merits the trait of *hischadshus* and every day he snatches good points of Torah and mitzvos, then there is no way to measure the amount of holy riches he acquires for himself. Therefore, happy is the one who guards each and every day of his life and toils to fill them with as many good points of Torah and mitzvos as possible. He will then merit to enjoy the fruits of his labors and to delight in the pleasantness and radiance of the *Shechinah*. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected the above ideas to our parsha in the following way. It is written (*Bereishis*, Ch. 23): “And the life of Sarah was a hundred years and twenty years and seven years – the years of the life of Sarah.” Rashi points out in the name of our Sages that the word “years” is written after each number (the 100’s, 10’s and 1’s), whereas in all previous chapters of the Torah – in *Bereishis* and *Noach* – we don’t find this regarding anyone else’s lifespan. The Sages explain this unusual wording as follows: “The reason the word ‘year’ is written at every group of years is to tell you that every one is to be explained by itself. [When she was] 100 years old she was like a 20 year old regarding sin. Just as when she was 20 she was not considered as having sinned since she was not yet subject to punishment, so, too, at 100 she had not sinned. And when she was 20 she was like a seven-year-old, regarding [her] beauty.” And on the apparently redundant words at the end of the verse - “the years of the life of Sarah” - the Sages say that this tells us that “they were all equally good.”

Reb Nosson explains (*Lekutei Halachos, Tefillin, Halacha 5:38*) that this verse is hinting to the teaching of *hischadshus*. For the root of man’s achieving wholeness (*shleimus*) is to begin to live a new life with every new day. And even when one reaches old age, he should see himself as a complete newborn, as if he has not even begun to live and serve Hashem yet, and now he begins to live in the service of Hashem as a brand new creature. And this is the verse: “When she was 100 years old she was like a 20 year old... and when she was 20 she was like a 7 year-old....they were all equally good”, for not one day of her life went by without her adding on some new holiness and vitality into her life. And our mother Sarah bequeathed to us this trait of *hischadshus* so that we could merit to perpetually live new life and fill our days and years with goodness and sweetness.

According to what we have said above, we can taste the sweetness of the following interesting *Midrash* (*Bereishis Rabbah 58:3*): “Rabbi Akiva was sitting and teaching but noticed that his listeners were dozing off. He wanted

to perk them up so he said to them, ‘What did Esther see that encouraged her to rule over 127 countries? She saw that she was the descendant of Sarah who lived 127 years.’ This is very puzzling! What is the connection between Ester’s ruling over 127 countries and our mother Sarah’s 127 years? And why did Rabbi Akiva choose this particular teaching with which to rouse them from their slumber? Let’s try to answer this according to the above words of Rebbe Nachman.

When Rabbi Akiva saw his audience falling asleep in the middle of his lecture, he understood that they were lacking the attribute of *hischadshus* and that their divine service had become old to them, as it is brought in the words of Rebbe Nachman (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 60): “There are people who are sleeping away their days, and even though it may appear to the world that they are serving Hashem and involved in Torah and prayer, Hashem has no pleasure from all their service, as their minds are asleep and all of their service remains down in the lower world and they cannot elevate themselves to the upper worlds.” Therefore, Rabbi Akiva wanted to rouse them from their sleep by planting within them the trait of *hischadshus*. And this is why he said to them, “What did Esther see that encouraged her to rule over 127 countries? She saw that she was the descendant of Sarah who lived 127 years.” For the idea behind Esther reigning over 127 countries was that this was her reward for her tremendous self-sacrifice to sanctify the name of Hashem and His holy Torah. Therefore, she received her reward both spiritually and physically by ruling over 127 countries which are the holy worlds that were created through the power of her divine service and self-sacrifice. And she learned this trait from her grandmother Sarah who lived 127 years, all of which equaled each other in goodness due to her powerful *hischadshus* each and every day.

Therefore, it was precisely with this teaching that Rabbi Akiva tried to awaken his audience, for he revealed to them that with the power of their Torah and mitzvos they could acquire entire countries and worlds for themselves in both a spiritual and physical sense and how it would be such a pity to waste their days and years with unnecessary sleep. And when they heard this, they surely woke up right away, for they understood the enormous preciousness and importance of every single moment of serving Hashem and learning His holy Torah. And then and there, they made a brand new start in serving Hashem. May Hashem help us to renew ourselves in His service and to fill all our days and years with Torah, prayer, mitzvos and good deeds until we merit to ascend and be included in Him completely for now and evermore. *Amen v’amen.*