

Collection

Toch HaNachal

(Within the Stream)

Wonderful words which were spoken
on *Shabbat Parshas Chayay Sarah 5771*

By the *Rav and Tzaddik,*
Mohorosh Shlit"o

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At the first meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"á* spoke inspiring words regarding the power of thought and self-sacrifice, based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman in *Likutei Mohoran* part I, lesson 193.

Rebbe Nachman says, “Know! Thought is very powerful. If a person focuses and intensifies his thought on anything in the world, he will be capable of having it come about. Even if he focuses his thought on acquiring money, he will surely attain it, and the same with anything else. However, the thought must be with complete detachment from all sensory input. Thought is so powerful that he can literally give up his life with thought. In other words, he can literally experience the pain of death by accepting upon himself in thought that he is willing to surrender his life for the sake of Hashem’s Name in whichever way the death will take place. A person can focus and intensify thought to such a degree that when he accepts upon himself in thought to surrender his life to die in *Kiddush Hashem* (the sanctification of Hashem’s Name, as a martyr), he can literally experience the pain of death!”

“This is the meaning of what Rabbi Akiva said (*Berachos* 61b), “All my days I was pained by this verse – when will the opportunity to fulfill it come my way? Now that it has come my way, shall I not fulfill it?” In other words, when during the recital of the *Shema*, when Rabbi Akiva would accept upon himself the four types of capital punishments, he accepted upon himself with such a focused and intense thought to surrender his life that he was literally pained by the experience of the death pangs as if he was literally being stoned and burnt. This is the meaning of, “All my days I was *pained*...when will it come...” He meant to say, “By imagining and accepting upon myself in thought, ‘When will the opportunity to fulfill it come my way?’ – to surrender my life in *Kiddush Hashem* – from this alone I was pained, literally experiencing and bearing the death pangs. So now, that the opportunity has come to me in actuality, shall I not fulfill it? I have already always literally borne this pain by having accepted it in thought alone.”

“And when a person focuses his thought so intensely on surrendering his life, he may literally die as a result of the pain, as if he were actually dying from this death in actuality, for there is no difference between actual death and the pain that a person experiences from dying in thought. Therefore, he must refrain from and avoid remaining in such thought when he senses that his soul may soon depart, so that he does not die before his time.” (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman).

Mohorosh explained that Rebbe Nachman is showing us in this lesson the greatness of the power of thought and how essential it is, because what a person thinks is as if he's created it. Therefore, a person is able to take upon himself much self-sacrifice from his thoughts alone; by imagining as though he is dying in *Kiddush Hashem*, coming to physically feel as though he did the act in actuality. This is as the holy Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk wrote in his "*Tzetel Katan*" (Paragraph #1) "Imagine a fearsome fire burning before you, reaching to the heart of heaven, and resolve that you're willing to overcome your natural instinct and cast yourself into that fire in order to sanctify Hashem's Name. Hashem counts a good thought as a deed (*Kidushin* 40a), and as a result you fulfill the commandment of the Torah of 'I will be sanctified among the Children of Israel'." For the power of thought is very great indeed, reaching higher and higher, as Rebbe Nachman said (*Likutei Mohoran*, part II, lesson 53), "I know how exceedingly precious thought is. Thought is indeed extremely precious. It literally creates complete realities that have existence for as long as the worlds will exist or for as long as Hashem wills it." There is no such thing as a thought that is null, without eventually becoming a reality; rather, it is something that is very much alive and stands forever!

And because the power of thought is so great, whatever a person thinks that is the essence of the person, as Rebbe Nachman said (*Likutei Mohoran*, part I, lesson 21), "You are where your thoughts are, make sure your thoughts are where you want to be!" Reb Noson said (*Likutei Mohoran*, part II, lesson 114), "I was once speaking with the Rebbe and I sensed that he wanted to reveal to me some perception that he had attained, as he always did, but he was having difficulty doing so. So I walked with him in silence, as he said nothing to me. But suddenly the following words came out of his holy mouth, 'It appears that one must be utmost careful about having immoral thoughts'. I understood from his holy words and gestures when he said this that it had just been revealed to him through his awesome perceptions the great blemish of improper thoughts, G-d forbid, how greatly it causes spiritual damage, may Hashem have mercy upon us. It would be impossible to describe it all in writing!" If a person entertains evil thoughts, G-d forbid, he should know that this is a heavenly test to see if he will push them away by thinking of something good; because "it's impossible to have two thoughts at the same time" (*Likutei Mohoran*, part II, lesson 50).

Hashem takes great pleasure when a person battles against his bad thoughts and drives them out, as Rebbe Nachman said (*Likutei Mohoran*, part I, lesson 233), "When evil thoughts and fantasies overwhelm a person, and he struggles against them and overcomes them, this gives Hashem great pleasure and is very precious in His eyes. This can be compared to kings who when on vacation would have wild

animals fight each other while they stood by and watched. The fighting gave them great pleasure. Similarly, thoughts can be compared to animals: holy thoughts can be compared to kosher animals, while evil thoughts can be compared to non-kosher animals. They are intentionally allowed from Above to fight with each other, and it gives Hashem great pleasure when man overcomes the non-kosher animals and overpowers them.” Therefore, a person should take great care not to stumble in his thoughts, and when he realizes the evil thoughts are overpowering him, he should know that it’s only a test from heaven in order to see him overpower them and flee from them. Through this, he causes Hashem to have great pleasure from this and merit ridding himself of them and drawing down upon himself great holiness.

Rebbe Nachman showed an example of Rabbi Akiva’s self-sacrifice during the time of reciting the *Shema* prayer. For it is written in the *Shema* prayer (Devarim 6:5), “And you shall love Hashem your G-d with all your heart, and with all your soul...,” upon which our holy sages stated (*Berachos* 54a), “Even though He takes your soul [life]” – that is, by giving up one’s life in *Kiddush Hashem*. Rabbi Akiva’s intention during the recitation of the *Shema* prayer was as though he was giving up his life in *Kiddush Hashem*. Therefore, when the time came to really give up his life in *Kiddush Hashem* (he was one of the ten martyrs killed by the Romans, may Hashem avenge their blood), he gave up his life with complete love for Hashem. We see from this that the main perfection of the *mitzvah* of reciting the *Shema* prayer is to say it with the intention as if one is giving up his life in *Kiddush Hashem*.

The holy Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk wrote in his “*Tzetal Katan*” (Paragraph #2) “In the first verse of the *Shema* prayer you should have in mind that if all the nations of the world were to torture you in every possible way to deny true Faith, you would withstand all suffering and not give in, G-d forbid. Imagine that they are actually doing all this to you, and you will then fulfill the obligation of the *Shema* prayer to perfection.” We are able to fulfill this four times a day by reciting the *Shema* prayer – twice in the morning and twice in the evening. In the morning, during the recitation of the *korbanos* (sacrificial offerings) and the *Shema* blessings. In the evenings, during the *maariv* (evening) prayer and the recitation of the *Shema* before going to sleep. If a person recites the *Shema* prayer with the intention of giving up one’s life in *Kiddush Hashem*, he fulfills the verse “I will be sanctified among the Children of Israel” four times each day and will be greatly elevated.

Now, our holy sages have also prescribed us with the *tachanun* and *nefilas apayim* prayers after the *Shemonei Esrei*. The the holy *Zohar* states (*Bamidbar* 120) that one should recite *Tehillim* 25 “Of David. Unto You, O Hashem, do I lift up my soul”

with the intention of giving up one's life in *Kiddush Hashem*. Through this, one elevates all of the fallen holy sparks from the depths of the *klipos* (evil husks); causing a great rectification in all of the four worlds – *Atzilus*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah* – and atones for all of one's sins. This is because during the time of prayer we ascend to the four worlds, beginning from *Asiyah* until *Atzilus*. The verses of the *korbanos* correspond to the world of *Asiyah*; *Pesukei D'Zimra* corresponds to the world of *Yetzirah*; the *Shema* blessings to the world of *Beriah*; and the *Shemonei Esrei* to the world of *Atzilus*.

After the *Shemonei Esrei*, when a person has in mind to give up his life in *Kiddush Hashem* during the recitation of the verses in “Of David, Unto You, O Hashem, do I lift up my soul”. At that very moment he elevates all of the holy sparks which are trapped in the depths of the *klipos*; causing a great and wondrous rectification in all of the worlds (See all this in the Arizal's commentary of *Nefilas Apayim* in *Sha'ar HaKavanos*). Therefore, a person must be careful to recite *Tehillim 25* during the *tachanun* prayer, as the holy Arizal wrote, with the intention of being ready to give up his soul in order to die in *Kiddush Hashem*. Through this, a person draws upon himself a great degree of holiness.

If so, each Jew has several occasions each day to give up his life in *Kiddush Hashem* during the four times he recites the *Shema* prayer and during the recitation of *Tehillim 25* in the *tachanun* prayer which comes immediately after the four sections of the morning prayers. Happy is the person who merits having the intention of giving up his life in *Kiddush Hashem* with utter simplicity and sincerity. For he will merit being elevated and cleaving to Hashem through his holy intentions. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected the above ideas to our *parsha* in a wonderful way. It is written, (*Bereishis 23:2*) “And Sarah died in Kiriath-Arba”. Perhaps we can say that the holy Torah is hinting us about the above intentions which a person should have of giving up his life in *Kiddush Hashem* at the time of reciting the *Shema* and *Nefilas Apayim* prayers. This is “and Sarah died” – meaning, the self-sacrifice of a Jew. “In Kiriath-Arba” – in other words, “during the *Keriat Arba* (four recitations),” which are the four times we recite the *Shema* prayer each day; for that is a very propitious time to “give up one's life” in *Kiddush Hashem*. Also, “in Kiriath-Arba” alludes to the four letters of Hashem's Infallible Name, which correspond to each of the four worlds of *Atzilus*, *Beriah*, *Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*. This is the rectification of the recitation of the *tachanun* prayer with self-sacrifice, which comes after the four sections of the *shachris* prayer. This is an auspicious time to recite it and by doing so, one merits drawing down upon oneself a great holiness from Above.

Rebbe Nachman said at the end of this lesson, “And when a person focuses his thought so intensely on surrendering his life, he may literally die as a result of the pain, as if he were actually dying from this death in actuality, for there is no difference between actual death and the pain that a person experiences from dying in thought. Therefore, he must refrain from and avoid remaining in such thought when he senses that his soul may soon depart, so that he does not die before his time.”

Now, we find that Sarah *Imeinu* gave up her life to Hashem in actuality and died; as Rashi explains (verse 2) “Sarah’s death was juxtaposed to the binding of Isaac because as a result of the news of the binding, that her son was prepared for slaughter and was almost slaughtered, her soul flew out of her, and she died.” Perhaps we can say that after Sarah heard about the great *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem* – for Hashem Himself had at first commanded Abraham to slaughter Yitzchak – at that moment, she too agreed to give up her life in *Kiddush Hashem* in actuality. Through this act she rectified two things which she perhaps felt needed atonement – one in thought and the other in speech. In thought, what is written (*Bereishis* 18:12) “And Sarah laughed within herself, saying...” – the internal laughter possibly being unnecessary. In speech, what is written (*Bereishis* 16:5) “May Hashem judge between me and you” – raising a Heavenly Judgment against Abraham. Our holy sages teach regarding this (*Baba Kamma* 93a), “He who invokes a Heavenly Judgment against his fellow is himself punished first, as it says (*Bereishis* 16:5), ‘And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee,’ and it is says subsequently (*Bereishis* 23:2), ‘And Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her’.” Now, through her act of self-sacrifice in thought and speech, which corresponds to “in Kiriath-Arba,” she rectified these two things and reunited the four letters of Hashem’s Name; thereby rectifying everything she blemished. And may Hashem grant us the merit of binding to Him in truth, with all our hearts, souls and strength, until we merit being included in Him altogether, from now and forever. *Amen v’amen*.

