

Friday Night, Parshas Devarim, 5766

Friday night, at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh Shlit" a spoke inspiring words about the inspiration a person can receive from specific places, based on Lekutei Mohoran, Part II, Lesson 124.

Reb Nosson says: "I have heard in the name of Rebbe Nachman that sometimes a thought of *teshuvah* and a yearning for Hashem can come to a person suddenly in a certain place. At that very place, a person should strengthen himself with this thought of *teshuvah* and yearning before moving from there. For example, he should speak at that very place some words of prayer and supplication, or words that describe his longing for Hashem without waiting or leaving that place, even though the place is not specifically designated for this, as is a *shul* or *beis medrash*. For if he is to leave this place, it could very well be that his inspiration will cease. We saw this phenomenon occur many times with Rebbe Nachman himself. He would be pacing back and forth in his house and then suddenly remain standing in the middle of the room, whereupon he would start speaking to us amazing words of inspiration and wondrous and beautiful teachings. It was very noticeable that he did not want to move from his place until he had finished what he wanted to say. This happened many times." (These are the words of Reb Nosson.)

Mohorosh explained that it is known (see Lekutei Mohoran, Part I, Lesson 61) that the souls of Israel possess a great power to sanctify the places where they live or merely pass through. When they learn Torah and perform mitzvos in a particular place, a supernal holiness descends upon that place, to the extent that whoever comes there experiences a special enlightenment and a great desire to elevate himself and cleave to Hashem. For a trace of the holiness that was generated in that place enters the visitor and inspires him to get closer to Hashem.

There are many stories about Tzaddikim who came to a certain place and sensed there a special enlightenment and even the smell of *Gan Eden*. And when they looked into the matter, it was revealed to them that in this place a great mitzvah or *Kiddush Hashem* was made which left a trace and an imprint of supernal holiness there. Therefore, Rebbe Nachman revealed to us that if a

person is suddenly struck with a thought of *teshuvah* or suddenly feels inspired toward holiness in a certain place, even if it is in the middle of the marketplace, he should not move from there until he has spoken some words of prayer and supplication that express his desire and longing for Hashem. For if he would leave that spot, it is possible that this sudden inspiration will also leave him, because inspiration is literally connected to certain physical locations. Therefore, he should be careful to *daven* or to perform some other act of holiness in the exact spot at which he became inspired.

Likewise, in a place where a certain sin was done, G-d forbid, great darkness and impurity rest there. And when a person comes to that place, he might feel a spirit of darkness descending upon him with no idea of where it is coming from, when in reality it is due to a certain sin that was done there. As a result, the *klippas* (unclean spirits) that were created from the sin now rest in that place.

There are many stories of Tzaddikim who, upon their arrival at a particular place, suddenly became very shaken, whereupon they left as fast as they could. And it became revealed afterwards that at this place certain sins had been committed, as in the following well-known story about the Baal Shem Tov: He once traveled together with his students in a carriage driven by his personal wagon driver, Alexi. At a certain place on the way, the Baal Shem Tov suddenly became very shaken. He ordered his wagon driver to drive on from there as quickly as possible. And so he did. Afterwards, his students asked their holy master why he had suddenly started trembling and why he ordered the wagon driver to leave so quickly. The Baal Shem Tov said that they should ask the wagon driver what entered his mind when they reached that place. At first, the wagon driver was very embarrassed to tell them, but the Baal Shem Tov told him not to be ashamed. So Alexi said to them that it had suddenly entered his mind to stop the wagon, kill them all and take their money. As soon as he drove away from that place, the evil thought also went away. The Baal Shem Tov's students were dumbfounded because Alexi was a very trusted and dedicated servant of the Baal Shem Tov. How could such a perverse and strange thought have entered his mind? The Baal Shem Tov then told them that in that place a Jew was once murdered and the *klippas* that were created from the act were still resting there. Therefore, when they passed through that place, the *klippas* seized the non-Jewish wagon driver and caused him to have these thoughts.

So we see that a place can be the cause of our thoughts and feelings, sometimes for good and sometimes for bad. And because of this, it was the opinion of many Tzaddikim, among them the holy Satmar Rebbe, Rebbe Yoel of blessed memory, not to visit the city of Auschwitz and its infamous camps for it was a place of tremendous destruction – where millions of our brothers and sisters were murdered, may Hashem avenge their blood – and powerful *klippas* rest there. Therefore, we have no need to enter that place at all. Happy is the one who merits to sanctify every place he reaches by performing some act of holiness or through speaking words of desire and yearning for Hashem. For in this way, a supernal holiness will rest upon these places which will generate holy inspiration and a desire for Hashem for many more souls of Israel who will one day be in those places. And the merit of all these people will be ascribed to him. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected these ideas to our parsha in the following way. It is written (Devarim, Ch. 1): “These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the Wilderness, concerning the Aravah, opposite the Red Sea, between Paran and Tofel, and Lavan, and Chatzeiros, and Di-Zahav.” And Rashi explains: “Because these are words of rebuke, and all of the places where they angered Hashem are enumerated here, therefore, Moshe did not mention the sins explicitly but instead only hinted to them [by the names of the places] for the sake of Israel’s honor.” Why did Moshe Rebbeinu allude to specific sins with the names of the places where they occurred, instead of using other kinds of hints – hints that allude to the nature of the sins themselves rather than to *where* they occurred? Let’s try to answer this question based on the above teachings of Rebbe Nachman.

As we previously explained, it all depends on the place. There are places that inspire a person towards good and holiness and there are places that have the opposite effect. Therefore, on the one hand, Moshe Rebbeinu mentioned all of these places in order to rebuke them in a way that would not embarrass them, but that would rather inspire them to thoughts of *teshuva*, especially as they were on the verge of entering the Holy Land; on the other hand, he mentioned all of these places so that they should be judged favorably before Hashem and to arouse divine mercy toward them, **since it was the places themselves that influenced them to sin**. The Sinai desert was a place of powerful *klippas*, as explained by the Zohar on the verse (Devarim, Ch. 8): “Who led you through the great and dreadful wilderness, snake, fiery serpent, and scorpion, and thirst where there was no water...” These animals – snake, fiery serpent and

scorpion – are the names of *klippos* that rested in the desert and that needed a rectification through the divine service of the Children of Israel.

And this is the way of the Tzaddikim when they need to rebuke the Jewish people for their bad deeds: To the people themselves they give words of rebuke but before Hashem they seek to recall the merits of the Jewish people and to arouse divine mercy towards them, as Moshe Rebbeinu had done in the sin of the Golden Calf. To the Jews he said (Shemos, Ch. 32): “You have sinned a great sin...” but to Hashem he said (ibid): “Why, Hashem, are You angry with your people?... (see Lekutei Mohoran, Part I, Lesson 22). Although Moshe’s intention in mentioning all of the places where the Jewish people fell short was to rebuke them, at the same time it was also his intention to recall on their behalf all of the good deeds they had done there, as explained in the book “*Igra d’Kalla*” by the holy Rebbe, Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov, that Moshe advocated for the Jewish people before Hashem in mentioning the words “On the other side of the Jordan”; with these words he recalled on their behalf what they had done “on the other side of the Jordan”, namely, that they nullified through their holiness the *klippah* of Sichon and Og. In the same spirit, the words “concerning the Wilderness” recall how the Jewish people followed Hashem in an unsown land (the Wilderness). “Concerning the Aravah” – in this place, Pinchas risked his life for the holiness of His name, in the episode of Zimri. “Opposite the Red Sea” – this is where Nachshon ben Aminadav sanctified the name of Hashem by leaping into the sea.

This is the way of the Tzaddikim, to advocate for the Jewish people by always mentioning their positive points and their merits. And even when they rebuke the Jewish people, the rebuke is given in a way of love, which enhances their beauty and causes a wonderful fragrance to be poured upon their souls. The rebuke is given in order to strengthen them, as Moshe Rebbeinu rebuked them in our verse. Our holy Sages explain (Talmud Shabbos, 88b) that the verse (Shir HaShirim, Ch. 1): “While the King sat at His table, my spices gave forth their fragrance (*Nirdei nasan reicho* – my spices gave forth their fragrance)” is a reference to the episode of the Golden Calf and specifically to the rebuke given by Moshe Rebbeinu. The Sages explain the verse as follows: “When the King was giving the Torah at Mt. Sinai, my rebels (*nirdei*) gave (*nasan*) their fragrance.” The verse should have said “my rebels lost (*azav*) their fragrance i.e. due to the sin, the people lost the pleasing ‘fragrance’ of their good deeds. However, when Moshe Rebbeinu came down from Mt. Sinai and saw the people worshipping the Golden Calf, instead of saying, “You wicked idol

worshippers!” he rebuked them with love and said to them, “Even though you have sinned, Hashem still loves you.” And this caused them to do *teshuvah*. So the verse says “My rebels *gave* their fragrance”, because by rebuking them with love, Moshe Rebbeinu poured over them a wonderful perfume which inspired them to once again give off their beautiful fragrance.” (see Lekutei Mohoran, Part II, Lesson 8).

Moreover, it is explained in other holy books on the verse (Mishlei, Ch. 9): “Do not rebuke a scoffer lest he hate you. Rebuke a wise man and he will love you” as follows: When you rebuke someone do not say to him “You are a scoffer”, lest he come to hate you, since by rebuking him this way you will embarrass and offend him. And he will surely hate such rebuke. Rather, say to him: “See, you are a wise man, how could such an act have come to you?” And then he will of himself feel ashamed and do *teshuvah*. And he will also love you. This is the explanation of the verse (Vayikra, Ch. 19): “You shall surely rebuke your fellow Jew and do not bear a sin because of him (can also be read ‘do not cause him to carry a sin’)” – that even if you rebuke him, see to it not to arouse divine judgment against him as if you were his prosecutor; rather you should judge him favorably and recall his merits at the same time you rebuke him. And in this way, you will surely inspire him to do *teshuvah*. May Hashem help us to be close to the true Tzaddikim, to receive their words with love and awe until we merit to return in perfect *teshuvah* before Hashem, to be included in Him completely for now and evermore. Amen v’amen.