

Friday Night, Parshas Yisro, 5762

On Friday night, at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh Shlit"va spoke inspiring words based on Lekutei Mohoran, Introduction to Part II, which discusses the verse, "One was Avraham."

Rebbe Nachman says, "It is written (Yechezkel 33): 'One was Avraham.' Avraham served Hashem only through his being 'one', i.e. he considered himself to be the only one in the world, paying no attention at all to the rest of humanity who turned away from Hashem and who tried to hinder him, not even to his father or to the rest of his opponents – rather, he served Hashem as if he were the only one in the world. This is the meaning of the verse, 'One was Avraham.' So too, anyone who wishes to enter into the service of Hashem will not be able to do so without utilizing this concept. He must think that there is no one in the world besides himself – just one individual in the world. And he should pay no attention to anyone who tries to hold him back – neither his father or mother, father-in-law or mother-in-law, wife or children. He should disregard all hindrances that come from all of the people in the world who mock, seduce and try to prevent him from serving Hashem. He should not be pained or pay any attention to them. Rather, he should be in the category of 'One was Avraham' – as if he were the only one in the world." (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that for a person to merit entering into the service of Hashem properly, he is required to devote himself entirely to Hashem and to think that he is the only one in the world – serving Hashem with real self-sacrifice. Even though the rest of humanity does not understand him at all, and are unable to comprehend the depth of his thinking – how his whole desire and will is to attach himself to Hashem – nevertheless he should not stop at all. For behold, there is only himself with Hashem alone. And the purpose of his being created is only to recognize Hashem, as it is brought in the Holy Zohar (Parshas Bo, 42b): "*B'gin diyishtamodin ley* (in order that we recognize Him)." Therefore our Holy Sages said (Sanhedrin 37a): "Everyone is obligated to say, 'The world was created for my sake'." For in truth, the world *was* created for *his* sake, and all of humanity toils to help him reach his eternal goal. There is not even a grain of arrogance in this at all. Just the

opposite – this is the ultimate in humility – since he is not gazing at other people at all and neither does he wish to rule or lord over them, G-d forbid. Rather, his entire aim and focus is to recognize Hashem and to be attached to Him completely. This was the level of *Avraham Avinu*, who was the foremost of all the believers. He understood that it is impossible to succeed in serving Hashem unless one considers oneself to be alone in the world, which is the concept of (Yechezkel 33): “One was Avraham.” Idolators were numerous in his days, even in his father’s house. And all of his acquaintances were idolators. So he was forced to adopt the thinking that he was alone in the world since he knew that his purpose in life was to recognize Hashem and to reveal and publicize Him to all of humanity. And then *his* oneness would be included in Hashem’s oneness. This is the root of Faith: “Hear O’Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is one.” When a person serves Hashem with the concept of “one” in mind, he ascends and is included in Hashem’s oneness, and becomes one with Him, so to speak, which is the concept of “He is one, and there is no second” (from the Adon Olam prayer). His entire intention is only to attach himself to Hashem and to reveal His oneness to all of humanity. And then he rises and cleaves to Hashem properly and merits to delight in the pleasantness of the glow of the Divine Presence. Happy is he and fortunate is his portion.

Mohorosh tied these ideas to our Parsha in a wonderful way. We find in our Parsha that Moshe Rebbeinu also served Hashem through the concept of “one”. He paid no attention to the fact that people alienated him and drove him away from where he lived. He became isolated from other people when he was forced to flee from Egypt and from his father’s home. And he found his spouse in a remote place in Midyan and named his firstborn son “Gershom” after his being forced to live as a foreigner in a strange land (Shemos 18): “For he said, I have been a stranger in a strange land.” And also there, he found himself among idolators, as our holy Sages have said (Mechilta, ch. 18): “I have been a stranger *in a strange land (b’eretz nachriya)* – *nechar ya* – among people who were estranged from Hashem. Moshe said, ‘Since the whole world are idolators, I will serve the ‘One Who spoke and the world came into being.’” He also named his son Gershom, as the idolators banished (were *m’gareish*) his father-in-law, Yisro, from his own home (see the commentary of the Ohr Hachaim on this verse). We see that *Moshe Rebbeinu* served Hashem through the concept of being “one”, that is, by not paying attention to anyone, by viewing oneself as being alone in the world and by realizing that it is one’s duty to serve and recognize the ‘Only One’ may His name be blessed. And because Moshe Rebbeinu served

Hashem through the concept of “one”, he merited to bring down the Torah to the Children of Israel and to teach them about Hashem and His oneness for all times.

And this is what we find in our Parsha: that the *Aseres Hadibros* (the Ten Commandments) were said in the singular, as it is written (Shemos 19): “I am Hashem *your* (singular form of you) G-d Who has taken *you* (singular you) out from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery, etc.” The commentators have already remarked on why it was said in the singular. The Ramban on verse 2 explains that it comes “to warn that each individual is responsible for the mitzvos, for He spoke to and commanded each individual that they should not imagine that they can simply follow the crowd and be saved with them.” And this follows the above words of Rebbe Nachman – that each person needs to serve Hashem as if he were the only one in the world and not pay attention to others at all. Rather, he should know that the entire Torah was given to him alone, and he is responsible for all of it. And then he will be very successful.

Rashi (Shemos 19:2) gives another reason for why the *Aseres Hadibros* were said in the singular – in order to give Moshe Rebbeinu an opening for the future to defend the Jewish people for the incident of the Golden Calf: Moshe said to Hashem, ‘You did not command them in the plural, i.e., ‘There shall not be to you (*la’chem* – plural) other gods’, but You only commanded me alone [when You spoke in the singular]. This explanation is also in line with the above words of Rebbe Nachman. For the true Tzaddik receives his strength to judge Israel favorably and to defend them precisely because he serves Hashem in the manner of “one” and he is self-effacing and unassuming to the extent that he has no desire at all to rule over others. Rather, he only wants to see the success of each and every individual, as it is brought in the words of Rebbe Nachman (Lekutei Mohoran, I:79): “Because Moshe Rebbeinu recognized his own lowliness, he was able to recognize the importance and virtues of Israel, and he was able to sacrifice his very soul for them.” Therefore, precisely because Moshe Rebbeinu served Hashem in the manner of “one”, combined with his his great humility, he knew that all of the *Aseres Hadibros* were said to him alone. And this is how he was able to judge favorably even the lowliest member of Israel and to save them from all evil.

At the end of our Parsha it is written (Shemos 20): “You shall not go up by steps on my altar, that you not expose your nakedness upon it.” This verse warns each and every person about the trait of humility - that a person should

not ascend to levels that are too far above him, and that he should not indulge in self-praise and pride in his service of Hashem as if he were greater and more important than his fellow. “That you not reveal your nakedness upon it” – that you should not reveal your disgrace in public – for the destiny of one who is haughty towards others is that his disgrace will be exposed in public and everyone will see that, in truth, he is nothing. Therefore, a fundamental rule of divine service is to serve Hashem in the manner of “one”, i.e., to include oneself only in Hashem’s oneness, to not pay attention to others at all, and certainly not to desire to rule over them. Then, one will walk on a secure path, and wherever he turns he will find success. And Hashem should help us to serve Him in truth and simplicity all the days of our lives until we merit to ascend and be included in Him completely, now and forever. Amen v’ Amen.