

Seuda Shlishis, Parshas Vayera 5766

At the third Shabbos meal, Mohorosh Shlit"a, spoke inspiring words based on the words of Rebbe Nachman in Lekutei Mohoran, Part I, Lesson 124, which speaks about prayer that can, so to speak, "conquer" Hashem.

Mohorosh began: Rebbe Nachman says, "It is written in Tehillim (88): 'Shir Mizmor Lam'natzeach' and our Sages explain (Pesachim 119a), 'Sing to the One Who we conquer and He rejoices.' When a person speaks out before Hashem all that is in his heart, pleading his case with logical arguments, claims and supplications, he wants to, so to speak, "conquer" Hashem. And Hashem has pleasure from this. Therefore, He sends this person words that can "conquer" Him in order to receive the pleasure. For without this, it would certainly not be possible for a human being to "conquer" the Holy One Blessed is He. But, Hashem Himself sends and arranges for the person words and arguments to "conquer" Him." (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that we see from this that when a person clearly expresses his problems before Hashem, pleading his case with logical arguments and excuses, and he wants to "conquer" Hashem, so to speak, with his prayer, Hashem has great pleasure from this. Hashem sends the person the right words with which he can "conquer" Him, because Hashem desires that a person reveal what is inside his heart to Him with complete sincerity and simplicity, and ask Him for all that he lacks spiritually and materially. Hashem wants us to even use strong and compelling arguments before Him and not to be embarrassed, because it is His pleasure that a person in this lowly world recognizes clearly that all that he needs depends only on Hashem. And since we are totally dependent on Hashem, there is no other way – besides asking Hashem and putting forth strong and compelling arguments before Him – to receive everything we need. And therefore, there is nothing wrong with this "conquering" at all. On the contrary, Hashem derives great pleasure from it, as Shimon ben Shetach said to Choni Hamagel, who spoke to Hashem in this manner while praying for rain (Berachos 19a): "What can I say? You speak to Hashem and He fulfills your wishes, like a son who speaks to his father and he fulfills his wishes. About you the verse says (Mishlei 23:25): 'Let your father and mother be glad, and let her who bore you rejoice.'" For this is the will of Hashem; that a person should "conquer"

Him with his prayer. We see this frequently in Tehillim where the Psalm begins “Lam’natzeach”. Dovid HaMelech is arousing a person to “conquer” Hashem with his prayer (see Lekutei Halachos, Birkas Re’iah, Halacha 5:12). And as our holy Sages have said (Pesachim 119a): “What is the meaning of the verse, ‘Lam’natzeach Mizmor L’Dovid’? It means, ‘Sing to the One Who we conquer and He rejoices.’ Come and see that Hashem’s ways are not like the ways of human beings. A human being, if you are victorious over him, will be sad. But the Holy One Blessed is He, if you are victorious over Him, rejoices, as it says (Tehillim 106:23): ‘And He said that He would destroy them, had not Moshe, His chosen one, stood in the breach before Him, to turn back His wrath from destruction.’” Rashi (Pesachim ibid.) comments on the word ‘Lam’natzeach’ that since it is not written ‘Le’natzeach’ this teaches us that He gave the power to people to “conquer” Him, and this is what Rebbe Nachman teaches us here. Hashem sends a person words that can “conquer” Him and wants to hear these words. Especially when a person prays on behalf of others and feels the pain of their burdens and troubles and pleads their case before Hashem with all kinds of compelling claims and arguments – this gives Hashem great pleasure. Because it is His will that people pray to Him on behalf of His children, as Moshe Rebbeinu did when he prayed that Hashem should forgive the people of Israel after the sin of the Golden Calf. And Hashem accepted Moshe’s prayer. This is the verse mentioned above: “Had not Moshe, His chosen one...” Rashi writes (ibid.) that the verse praises Moshe by referring to him as ‘His chosen one’ because he turned back Hashem’s wrath. So we see that a victorious prayer is very sweet and pleasant to Hashem. Therefore, happy is the one who merits to always speak out to Hashem all that is bothering him until he “triumphs” over Him with his prayer. For then he will be very beloved in the eyes of Hashem and he will accomplish all that he needs spiritually and materially. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot!

Mohorosh tied this idea to the Parsha in a most wonderful way. It is written (Shemos 6): “Elokim spoke to Moshe and said to him, ‘I am Hashem (yud-kay-vav-kay)’”. And Rashi explains that He took Moshe to task because he had spoken critically when he said, (v. 22) “Why have You done evil to this people?” We need to understand why Moshe Rebbeinu spoke in this fashion to Hashem, which made it appear as if Moshe was criticizing His ways, G-d forbid. But according to the words of Rebbe Nachman, we can understand why – it is the will of Hashem that a person should pray to Him specifically in a way of trying to win. When one tries to “conquer” Hashem with his prayer, Hashem sends him the words to do this, especially when a person prays for

others and is pained over their troubles. We see this trait of Moshe Rebbeinu as it is written (Shemos 2:11): “He (Moshe) went out to his brethren and observed their burdens.” All of Moshe’s argumentation and pleading came from his great love for the Jewish people, as our holy Sages have said (Menachos 65a): “Moshe Rebbeinu was a lover of Israel”, therefore, even though he spoke strongly, and it appeared as if he were using the attribute of strict justice, it was revealed afterwards that this was Hashem’s will and that Hashem Himself sent Moshe the words with which to “conquer” Him. And through this, Hashem’s attribute of strict justice was transformed into the attribute of compassion. It is thus written: “Elokim spoke to Moshe”, Elokim is the trait of strict justice. At first Hashem’s attribute of strict justice was revealed to Moshe but afterwards, “And He said to him (to Moshe), ‘I am Hashem (yud-kay-vav-kay).’” This is the Name of compassion. That is, He revealed to Moshe that He Himself was within the words that Moshe spoke, and through this, the attribute of strict justice was transformed into the attribute of compassion. As it is brought in the Midrash (Shemos Rabbah, 6:1): “The attribute of justice sought to attack Moshe, as it is written, ‘Elokim spoke to Moshe’ but because Hashem saw that it was for the sake of Israel’s pain that Moshe spoke this way, He therefore turned and dealt with him with the attribute of compassion, as it says, ‘And He said to him, ‘I am Hashem (yud-kay-vav-kay).’” For when a person prays in a fashion of trying to win his case, in the end Hashem will change the justice into compassion, and he will draw upon himself complete kindness and mercy.

We see that the main claim of Moshe Rebbeinu was (Shemos 5:22): “Why have you done evil to this people?” i.e. he was asking about the great harshness of the enslavement of the Jews in Egypt. We need to understand how Hashem answered him and specifically how the verse, “And I have also heard the groaning of the Children of Israel whom Egypt enslaves,” was an answer to Moshe’s question. It is explained in the commentaries (Sefer Prashas Derachim, Derech Mitzrayim, Drush 5) that the decree of exile in Egypt should have been 400 years as it was said to Avraham Avinu at the “Bris Bein HaBesarim” when he asked (Bereishis 15:8): “How shall I know that I will inherit it (the Land)?” Hashem said to him, “Know with certainty that your offspring will be strangers in a land not their own, and they will serve them and they will oppress them 400 years.” But in actuality, the Jews were only in Egypt for 210 years. How did they make up for the other 190 years? Many answers are given for this, and one of them is that the great harshness of the slavery made up for the time (Sefer Prashas Drachim, ibid.). Therefore, at the time that Moshe made the claim before Hashem, “Why have

you done evil to this people?” i.e., why are the Jews suffering such a harsh enslavement, Hashem answered him (Shemos 6:5): “Moreover, I have heard the groan of the Children of Israel whom Egypt is enslaving...” That is, the great harshness of the slavery that you, Moshe, are asking about, is exactly what will fulfill the allotted time of the exile, so the Children of Israel can leave before the period of 400 years.

With regard to the harshness of the slavery, it is brought in the book “Techeiles Mordechai” by the brilliant and holy Maharsham z”l, that the essence of the harshness was that the Children of Israel were the slaves of slaves. An analogy: A rich man who had a servant, lost his wealth, became poor and was forced to become a servant to another rich man. It would have been much worse had he been forced to serve his servant. There would have been no greater disgrace than this. We see that Cham was cursed by his father Noach (Bereishis 9:25): “A slave of slaves he will be to his brothers,” and from him Mitzrayim (Egypt) was born. And when the Children of Israel became their slaves, this was for them a great disgrace up to the heavens, since they became slaves to slaves. Therefore, even though it was decreed against them, “Know with certainty that your offspring will be strangers in a land not their own (for 400 years),” however, this 400 years was possible had it been a different nation who weren’t servants to Israel. Not so, if they were exiled to Egypt. This is a very great disgrace. And this was the essence of the harshness of the slavery. This is also, “I have heard the groan of the Children of Israel whom ‘Egypt’ enslaves,” because it was Egypt in particular who were enslaving them, and not another nation. And this was the essence of the harsh slavery. Therefore they are already fit to be redeemed.

In the book, “Ksav Sofer”, by the brilliant and holy Rabbi Avraham Shmuel Binyomin Sofer from Pressburg z”l (Parshas Shemos) it is written that the essence of the harshness of the subjugation was the Egyptians’ trait of ingratitude, because it was only proper for them to be grateful to the Jews for Yosef Hatzaddik who saved them from starvation and destruction. It was bad enough that they were ungrateful, that they acted as if they didn’t know Yosef, but to even pay them back evil for good is a situation that would greatly pain anyone. If one knows that he was good to another person, and not only does the person he helped not show gratitude but even afflicts and subjugates him, this situation causes tremendous pain. This was the essence of the harsh subjugation – that it was specifically “Mitzrayim” that subjugated them instead of another nation, because Mitzrayim paid them back evil for

good, and because of this (Shemos 6:5): "...and I have remembered My covenant" and they are already fit to be redeemed.

And my father and teacher, Harav Hatzadik Rav Menachem Zev Schik z"l, may his merit protect us, in his book, "Minchas Zev" explains according to the above idea the words of the Midrash (Shemos Rabbah, 6:2): "Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe, 'you are particular about My words, by your life, you should know that it says (Koheles 7): 'The end of a matter is better than its beginning' – Israel's end is better than their beginning when I had first placed them in Egypt.'" This needs explanation. What did Hashem say to Moshe with this? But according to everything we learned above, we can understand it very well. For Moshe Rebbeinu asked about the harshness of the subjugation. And Hashem said to him, "Israel's end is better than their beginning," that they will leave before the time that was originally decreed for them". For "In the beginning, I placed them in Egypt," i.e., they were in Egypt and became the slaves of slaves (as the Maharsham writes) or they suffered from the Egyptians' ingratitude (as the Ksav Sofer writes), and through this, they had a good ending and were redeemed before the time that was originally decreed for them. And Hashem should help that we should soon go out from all of our troubles and it should be fulfilled with us, "As in the days of your going out from Egypt I will show you wonders," speedily in our days. Amen V' Amen.