

Parshas Vayeshev 5764

On Friday night at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh Shlita spoke inspiring words on the concept of “a descent which ultimately leads to an ascent”, based on Lekutei Moharan part II, Lesson 12.

Mohorosh began by saying that Rebbe Nachman teaches that even when a person falls into a state of doubt, G-d forbid, and the fall could be so great that he falls into doubting Hashem Himself, nevertheless, the fall and descent can ultimately lead to a supreme ascent. And this is implied in the word *Breishis*, which is referred to as “a hidden utterance”. This “hidden utterance” hints to the idea of G-d’s presence that exists but in a state of concealment even in very lowly and dark places. And this is the concept of the verse in the Torah, “Where (*Ahyeh*) is the lamb for the *Olah* (an elevation or completely burnt offering; the word *Olah* literally means ‘ascent’)”, which Yitzchak asked his father Avraham when they were climbing Mount Moriah together on their way to the *Akeida*. That is to say, when a person falls to great depths, and yet he asks, “Where (*Ahyeh*) is G-d”, this very asking “Where (*Ahyeh*)” is itself “the lamb for the elevation offering”. It is considered for him as if he had offered an *Olah* to Hashem. See all this in Lekutei Mohoran, Lesson 12.

Mohorosh then explained that Rebbe Nachman reveals to us in this lesson a very awesome and wondrous secret – how there is no such thing in the world as despair, and even if a person falls to the lowest level, a terrible descent G-d forbid, exactly from there he can rise to the ultimate heights and transform all the darkness to light. For it is known that there is no absolute existence besides Hashem Himself, and even in unclean places far from Hashem’s Glory, Hashem’s life-force and existence are there, as it is written (*Malachi* chapter 1): “And in every place they offer incense to My Name.” And it is written (*Tehillim* 103): “His Kingship rules over everything.” For without His life-force and existence, there would be no existence for anything in the world. Therefore, our holy Sages said (Talmud *Yerushalmi Taanis* chapter 1): “If someone asks you, ‘Where is your G-d?’ say to him, ‘He is in a great city in Rome’” – which means that Hashem can be found even in a place of impurity, albeit in a greatly concealed state. Certainly, these are filthy places and it is forbidden to enter them. However, if a person has already descended to these places for whatever reason, G-d forbid, he should know that he can find Hashem even there and if he cries out and asks, “Where is Hashem?” and

sincerely searches and seeks Him out, then it will be revealed to him how even from that place he has the ability to return to Hashem. It turns out that he has transformed a terrible descent into a supreme ascent, for it was specifically through his descent that he came to recognize how Hashem is found everywhere.

And this is the idea behind the verse, “And where is the lamb for the *Olah*?”. If a person asks, “*Ayeh?*” – Where is Hashem? – *this* question itself is the “lamb for the elevation offering” and it is considered as if he had offered an *Olah* that is completely consumed on the altar for the sake of Hashem. And a person ascends (lit. *Olah*) to the utmost heights by the very asking of this question. And therefore our Sages say, “the word *Bereishis* is a hidden utterance”, for there are ten utterances through which the world was created. These are the ten times the word “*Vayomer* (and He said)” appears in the account of creation. But in truth, there are only nine utterances – nine times that the word *Vayomer* appears! However, the word “*Bereishis*” itself is also an utterance, but it is a “hidden utterance”, as it doesn’t say explicitly, “*Vayomer*”; rather the utterance (the *Vayomer*) is hidden within the word *Bereishis* in a state of great concealment and this hints to the fact that Hashem is found, so to speak, even in unclean and lowly places. And this is the word, “*Bereishis*” whose letters make up the words “*Bara tayish*” (‘He created a sheep’), that is, the lamb for the *Olah* that had already been created from the time of the six days of creation. For the matter of asking “Where?” which transforms a descent into a supreme ascent was already established at the beginning of creation and without it the world could not exist at all. There are times when a person may, G-d forbid, find himself in very lowly places and situations, but when he knows that even there he can find Hashem Who gives continued existence to the entire Creation, happy is he! Fortunate is the person who doesn’t mislead himself by falling into despair over anything at all. Precisely when he is lowly and fallen does he begin to seek out Hashem until he finds Him. And then he will ascend to the utmost heights and transform all of the darkness to light. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected the above ideas to our parsha in the following way. We find in our parsha the descent of Yosef HaTzaddik to the most immoral place on earth in his time – *Mitzrayim* - by being sold by his brothers until he arrives at the house of an Egyptian. What a terrible descent! It is impossible to describe. For Yosef was a young lad who found refuge in the shadow of his father’s wings, always sitting within the walls of the *beis medrash*. And suddenly he is thrown into the tremendous immorality of *Mitzrayim*. And

there he went through what he went through. The Egyptians even suspected him of committing evil deeds. But what was the source of his strength and endurance? It was the above teaching of “Where (*Ahyeh*) is the place of His Glory”?! Through our asking and searching for Hashem even in lowly places we transform the descent into a tremendous ascent, as it was with Yosef HaTzaddik that in the end he was made second to the King, and he ruled over the entire land of Egypt. And this is what it says in the Torah (*Bereishis* 39): “And Hashem was with Yosef, and the man was successful and he was in the house of his Egyptian master (Potifar).” This verse reveals to us how Yosef HaTzaddik merited this great level – that Hashem was always with him and he was successful – it was due to the fact that “he was in the house of his Egyptian master (Potifar).” This means that through Yosef HaTzaddik’s very difficult situation and because it seemed as if there was no hope, he was able to transform the descent into a supreme ascent and Hashem was revealed to a very great extent.

And this is the concept of the holy days of Chanukah. In the days of the *Hashmonaim* it appeared as if a great darkness had descended upon the world and that there was no way to save oneself from it, as our holy Sages have said (*Bereishis Rabbah* chapter 2): “And darkness was upon the deep” – this is the Greek exile which darkened the eyes of the Jews. However, through the Tzaddikim of that generation who sought out and searched for Hashem from within the darkness, the Jewish people found the light, and the descent was transformed for them into a supreme ascent. And what came out of the *klippah* (impure shell) of Greece were the holy days of Chanukah during which great miracles were performed – the military victory and the lights of the menorah. Through these miracles the hidden light of the six days of Creation shined. And this teaches us that it is possible to merit the ultimate ascent precisely from the utmost descent. And this is why we find that the one remaining pure jar of olive oil was found buried in the earth. It was in order to protect the oil from impurity. This shows us that a salvation of the utmost ascent will sprout forth exactly from a descent into the ground. And may Hashem cause to be drawn upon us the holiness of these days and may we merit to truly cleave to Hashem until we are included in Him completely for now and evermore. *Amen and Amen.*