

Friday Night, Parshas Vayetzey, 5764

Friday night at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"á* spoke inspiring words on the subjects of remembering the world to come and the power of imagination, based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 54.

Rebbe Nachman says: “We must guard our faculty of memory so we do not fall into forgetfulness, which is the category of ‘demise of the heart’. The main focus of one’s memory should always be to remember the world to come, and not think, G-d forbid, that there is only one world. It is a fitting custom of G-d-fearing people that as soon as one awakens in the morning before doing anything else, he should immediately remember the world to come. To guard one’s memory one must guard himself from falling into the category of ‘a bad eye’, which is also an aspect of the ‘demise of the heart’...and one must also guard the eye from the power of imagination. Even one who has a good eye needs to guard himself from this...and the power of imagination comes about through speaking *loshon hara* (slander). The power of imagination is the power of animalism, for an animal also has this power of imagination. And the one who speaks *loshon hara* falls into animalism...and a dream is an aspect of the power of imagination.” (This is a condensed version of the words of Rebbe Nachman).

Mohorosh explained that our faculty of memory is truly called “memory” only insofar as it is used to remember the world to come, that is, to remember Hashem and to always remember that there is another world and that this world is only an antechamber before the world to come. To remember material things and the vanities of this world is not referred to as “memory” in the true sense at all, rather it is in the category of ‘demise of the heart’ in that a person completely forgets his eternal goal, G-d forbid, and how he needs to prepare himself for eternal life in the world to come. For all of this world does not amount to the blink of an eye compared to the life of the world to come, for “the days of our years are seventy years and if with strength eighty years, and they are all cut off quickly and we fly away (paraphrase of *Tehillim*, Ch. 90)”, as Rebbe Nachman says (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 61): “All seventy years are only like a quarter of an hour”. Opposite this, the life of the world to come is eternal life without interruption.

So we find that remembering something of this world is not considered “memory” at all. The main thing is to remember the world to come, that there is another world, and it is our obligation to prepare ourselves for it always and at every moment and not to mislead ourselves by making this world into an independent entity and a separate existence. Therefore, a fitting custom of the G-d-fearing is that as soon as one wakes up in the morning he should remember the world to come and say, “*Modeh ani lifanecha* (I gratefully acknowledge and thank You...” with deep concentration, to thank Hashem for returning his *neshama* to him so that he can fill today with much true and eternal good whose fruits he will enjoy in this world while its capital will remain for him in the world to come.

The main cause of forgetting this is the trait of having a “bad eye”, which means that a person has a begrudging eye regarding the affairs of his fellow and he envies him for everything he has. This causes him to forget his eternal goal of the world to come and he falls under the control of Nature and the times of this world. For as soon as a person begins to envy his fellow and to look at him with a bad eye, he thus makes this world into an independent entity and existence and he completely forgets the goal of the world to come. For had he thought about his goal in the world to come, he would not have become bothered by his friend’s business at all, and he would have placed his full attention on amassing Torah, prayer, mitzvos and good deeds so that it should be treasured away for him for the world to come. Therefore, the first condition one must fulfill in order to remember the world to come is to acquire the trait of a good eye, and to place one’s entire attention and focus on seeing the G-dly vitality and the good that exists in everything.

Even one who already has a good eye needs to guard himself from the power of imagination. The power of imagination within a person is what causes one to see illusions, i.e. to see only the physical shell of things, to imagine that they are independent entities separate from Hashem, and to love only the physical shell and not the G-dliness within. We see how a person with very good vision can be mistaken about something when he looks at it from far away and it may appear to him to be the very opposite of what it really is. Therefore, one needs extra watchfulness in this area, for the imagination works powerfully on a person to implant within him all sorts of fantasies and illusions. For instance, he thinks that someone who walks with his head bent down is a true humble man and a true servant of Hashem. But the truth may be that it’s all a show and the ultimate in arrogance (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 197). The power of imagination can confuse a person’s mind to the

point that he sees elevated people as lowly and the lowly as elevated, as the Sage said to his son who saw this himself while he was temporarily unconscious during an illness: “My son, you have seen a clear world (*Talmud Pesachim*, 50a)”. What he saw while he was unconscious was what looked like an upside down world - those who he had imagined to be great when he was conscious were on the bottom rungs in his vision and those who he had imagined to be lowly were the leaders. But his father told him that he had in fact seen a right side up world in his vision.

The way things appear to people according to the power of their imagination is for the most part the exact opposite of the truth. The one who people consider to be a humble man may really be a *baal gaavah* (arrogant); and the one considered a *baal gaavah* may actually be a true humble man, as it is brought in the Zohar (*Parshas Chayei Sarah*, 122b): “The one who is great is small and the one who is small is great”, meaning that the one who holds himself great is actually very small, while the small one is really the great one. The imagination confuses a person’s mind to such an extent that the *yetzer hara* itself is called the “the power of imagination (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 25)”, for the imagination engenders all kinds of fantasies of lust and sin in a person until it seduces him to carry it out in actuality, G-d forbid. Therefore, we need to escape from the imagination, which is the power of animalism within a person, and elevate ourselves to the intellect. It is referred to as the power of animalism because an animal is deeply sunken in the power of imagination and illusion, in that they are only drawn after their physical drives and senses and are therefore only interested in the physical shell (i.e. the touch, taste and smell of things). Likewise, a person who does not fix his eyes and heart on the eternal goal will also be sunken in the power of imagination. And what he sees before his eyes is also a world of imagination. Therefore, he needs to guard himself very much from the power of imagination and ascend to the divine intelligence and wisdom that Hashem has implanted in everything.

The power of imagination is fueled mainly by speaking *loshon hara*. Shlomo HaMelech wrote (*Mishlei*, Ch. 10): “And he that speaks slander is a fool.” When a person’s intellect departs from him he falls from the love of Hashem into the love of animalism, i.e. the love for imagination. For the one who allows himself to speak evil about his fellow and to spread *loshon hara* and strife, uproots himself from true wisdom and falls into animalism until his power of imagination overpowers him exactly as it overpowers an animal. But the one who’s mind is complete and whole, that is, he who places his

heart and eyes to gaze at the good that exists in everything, will not speak evil of any creature in the world, for our holy Sages have said (*Pirkei Avos*, Ch. 2): “Do not judge your fellow until you have reached his place.” And who really knows what his fellow has gone through in life and has reached his place? But, as soon as one falls from the “mind of Man” into animalism, the power of imagination begins to overpower him and he is liable to imagine all sorts of falsehood and vanity as he wanders this world as if in a dream.

A dream also comes from the power of imagination. When a person is sleeping, his intellect departs from him and he enters the world of imagination. Therefore, what a person sees in his dreams cannot affect a halachic dispute (*Sanhedrin*, 30a), for most people’s dreams are only imaginary and contain no truth. They dream about what they have contemplated and imagined during the day. And when they sleep and their intellect departs from them they continue to see these images. Not so the Tzaddikim who cleave to Hashem with a true attachment, and all day their heart and eyes gaze upon the goal of the world to come. When they sleep, lofty matters and secrets of the Torah are revealed to them and their dreams are accurate and true. Therefore, happy is the one who merits to bind his thoughts to Hashem and to always remember the world to come, for then he will merit the trait of a having a good eye and to look at the good that is in everything. He will be guarded from the power of imagination and have holy and pure dreams until he will be included in Hashem completely. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected the above ideas to our parsha in the following way. It is written (*Bereishis*, Ch. 28): “He dreamt and behold, a ladder standing on the earth and its top (lit., ‘its head’) reaching heavenward.” We need to understand why Yaakov saw in his dream this particular vision of a ladder that stood on the ground and whose top reached heavenward. Let’s try to answer this question according to the above words of Rebbe Nachman.

The dream of Yaakov *Avinu* was completely pure and separated from the power of imagination and, therefore, he had dreams that were holy, trustworthy and true. Therefore, he saw in his dream the matter of remembering the world to come, as mentioned above, how a person is placed here in this world with his feet on the ground, which is an aspect of “a ladder standing on the ground” but “its head reaches into heaven”, that is, his head and thoughts are bound to the heavens above – to the world to come – and he is always thinking about Hashem. Therefore, the moment he awakens in the

morning he performs the custom of the G-d fearing – “and Yaakov awoke from his sleep and he said, ‘Indeed, Hashem is in this place...’ – i.e., he reminded himself of the world to come and contemplated the G-dliness that exists in everything. And with this, he taught us for all generations how every person has the power to raise himself up from the earth to the heavens with his thoughts. For everyone can merit to purify his power of imagination until he will always see this ladder standing before his eyes - its feet standing on the earth and its head reaching up into the heavens.

And the main way to accomplish this is by means of the “ladder (*sulam*)” whose gematria (136) is the same as the word *kol* (voice), as it is brought in the *Tikunim* (pg. 83a) as well as in the Baal Haturim on this verse. For through a person’s voice – when it is guarded from evil words of *loshon hara* – his power of imagination undergoes a purification and clarification until he is able to perceive the G-dliness that exists in everything. The memory of the world to come will always be before his eyes and he will ascend and attach himself to Hashem from all aspects and details of his life. May Hashem help us to sanctify our minds until we are bound to Him in truth, and we will merit to be included in Him completely for now and evermore. *Amen v’amen*.