

Friday Night, Parshas Vaeschanan, 5766

Friday night, at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"ta* spoke inspiring words about the type of prayer known as *tachanunim* (supplications), based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 196.

Rebbe Nachman says: “It is brought in the *Mishna* (*Pirkei Avos*, Ch. 2): ‘When you pray do not make your prayer *keva* (a set routine), but rather [beg with] compassion (*rachamim*) and supplications (*tachanunim*)...’ The meaning of this *Mishna* is: It is forbidden for a person to be stubborn and refuse to budge in his prayers regardless of what he is praying for; that is, it is forbidden to be obstinate in one’s prayer, feeling that Hashem must do for him exactly what he is asking for, for this is similar to taking something by force or stealing; rather he needs to pray and beseech Hashem in a way of asking for mercy and compassion – if Hashem will give, He will give, if not, not. This is the meaning of the *Mishna*: ‘Do not make your prayer *keva*’, *keva* connotes stealing, as it is written (*Mishlei*, Ch. 22): ‘...and rob the life of those who rob them (*v’kava es koveihem nafesh*)’, that is to say, whatever one asks for, whether it is a livelihood, or children, or any other need, it is forbidden to be obstinate and refuse to budge in one’s prayer, insisting that Hashem should do exactly what one asks for, for this is a *tefillas keva*, since that he takes something by force and by stealing; rather, he should only pray in a way of asking for mercy and compassion.” (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that the essence of prayer is the cleaving and self-nullification to Hashem that one experiences during prayer, whereby one cleaves to Hashem to the degree that everything is nullified and included in Him completely. And for this reason, prayer is called “*tefillah*” which has the connotation of cleaving and attachment, as in the verse (*Bereishis*, Ch. 30): “*Naftulei Elokim niftalti*” which the Aramaic translation *Onkelos* renders as “attachment” (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 84). Therefore, as soon as a person nullifies himself before Hashem during prayer, he thus becomes ready to give himself over entirely to the will of Hashem, desiring only that things should be exactly as Hashem desires them to be. Therefore, he will certainly not be stubborn in his prayer, expecting that Hashem should do exactly *his* will, since his entire will is only to be in synch with the will of Hashem, as

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehuda *HaNassi* used to say (*Pirkei Avos*, Ch. 2): “Treat His will as if it were your own will, so that He will treat your will as if it were His will.” Therefore, if Hashem’s will is one way, a person will certainly be pleased and satisfied that this is the way it should be. And a sign that he has reached a state of cleaving in his prayer is when his entire will becomes included in the Supreme Will; that is, he wants things to be only as Hashem wants them to be. And this is the secret of the words from the Kaddish prayer “...in the world that He created according to His will” – which means that a person is satisfied and pleased with the will of Hashem (see *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 177).

However, this is not the case if a person is obstinate in his prayer, believing that Hashem *must* fulfill his request. This is as if he is taking something by force, against the other’s will. Perhaps Hashem’s will is one way, and his will is different than Hashem’s, G-d forbid. If so, how can he possibly succeed in his way? This is what our holy Sages refer to as the blemish of “*iyun tefilla*” about which they have said (*Talmud Brachos*, 55a): “Three things cause a person’s sins to be recalled...*iyun tefilla* [is one of them].” And they have also said (*ibid*): “Whoever is *m’ayin* in his prayer comes to heartache”, as it is said (*Mishlei*, Ch. 13): “Hope deferred makes the heart sick; but desire fulfilled is a tree of life.” The definition of “*iyun tefilla*” is when a person stubbornly thinks that Hashem should fulfill his prayer just because he prayed with *kavanah* – focused concentration (*ibid*, see Rashi there, and in *Tosfos Talmud Shabbos*, 118b, the words beginning “*iyun tefilla*”). This type of praying with *kavanah* is not the ideal of prayer at all, for the essence of prayer is that a person should come to a state of total nullification before Hashem, until he is completely satisfied and pleased only with Hashem’s will, with nothing remaining of his own will. Therefore, happy is the one who merits true cleaving in his prayer until his entire prayer is one of supplication, of appealing for compassion before Him, to include himself in the Supreme will. For then, he will surely merit to see the fruits of all the requests he has made of Hashem, and he will be included in Him completely through his prayer. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected these ideas to our parsha in the following way. Moshe *Rabbeinu* said (*Devarim*, Ch. 3): “I beseeched Hashem at that time saying...” And Rashi explains: “All forms of the word *chinun* [such as *Vaeschanan*] signify a free gift (*matana chinam*). Although the Tzaddikim can rely [in their requests of Hashem] upon [the merits of] their good deeds, yet they only request from Hashem an unearned gift [i.e., not in reward for their good

deeds]...Another explanation: This [the language of *chinun*] is one of the ten types of prayer..." Let us ask the question: Why specifically here does Moshe *Rebbeinu* make use of the type of prayer known as *techina* - "*va'eschanan*" - which signifies an unearned gift? Let us try to answer this based on the above teachings of Rebbe Nachman.

Moshe *Rebbeinu* taught us the secret that *tefilla* needs to be done in a way of imploring for mercy and compassion. And this is "*va'eschanan*" - an unearned gift - if Hashem will give, He will give, and if not, not. Moshe *Rebbeinu* himself had prayed 515 prayers (the *gematria* of the word *va'eschanan*) that he should be allowed to enter the Land of Israel. But when Hashem said to him (verse 26), "It is too much for you! Do not continue to speak to me further about this matter", he was stubborn no longer, and instead nullified his will completely before Hashem. And this is the idea of praying for an unearned gift: A person does not rely on his good deeds or on his prayer that he prayed with much *kavanah*, for this is the blemish of *iyun hatefilla* as mentioned before; rather, he gives himself over completely to Hashem and implores like a poor and needy person for a free gift - if Hashem will give, He will give, and if not, not. And this is the true perfection of prayer. Therefore, Moshe *Rebbeinu* used the language of "*va'eschanan*" to teach us the way of prayer - that it needs to be done precisely in the mode of begging for compassion (*rachamim*) and for a free gift (*tachanunim*). And then one will surely accomplish tremendous things with his prayers. For through his prayers he will merit to be included in the Supreme Will, and this is the greatest perfection of all.

And now we can understand what I have heard from my father and master, may his merit protect us, (see the book "*Minchas Zev*", beginning of parshas *Vaeschanan*) concerning the Midrash: " '*Vaeschanan el Hashem* [And I beseeched Hashem - '*el Hashem*' means '*to Hashem*']', do not read '*el Hashem*' but '*al Hashem* [for Hashem].'" My father and master explained, according to another Midrash (see the book *Parshas Drachim*, *drush* 8), that had Moshe *Rebbeinu* entered the Land of Israel, the *Beis HaMikdosh* would not have been destroyed, and Israel would not have gone into exile. Therefore, Moshe *Rebbeinu's* entire prayer to enter the Land of Israel was for the sake of the *Shechinah* (the Divine presence), that Israel should not go into exile, for the *Shechinah* is with Israel in exile, as it is written (*Tehillim*, Ch. 91): "I am with him in pain". It is also written (Isaiah, Ch. 63) "In all of their pain, He has pain." Moshe *Rebbeinu's* prayer was not for his own benefit at all, as our holy Sages have said (*Talmud Sotah*, 14a): "Moshe surely did not

need to enter the Land in order to eat of its fruit...rather, Moshe *Rebbeinu* wanted to enter the Land of Israel so there should be no further exiles nor pain to the *Shechinah*.” And this is “ ‘*Vaeschanan el Hashem* (And I beseeched Hashem)’, do not read *el* (to), but *al* (for – I beseeched *for* Hashem)”, since his entire prayer was for the sake of Hashem and the *Shechinah*, that they should not be exiled. All of the prayers of the Tzaddikim are only about including themselves in the Supreme Will for the sake of the *Shechinah*, and not at all for their own sake. Therefore, they certainly do not become obstinate in their prayers. Instead, they give themselves over completely to Hashem and to the knowledge that everything will be according to His will. May Hashem help us to be occupied with *tefilla* and *tachanunim* always, and we will give ourselves over totally to Hashem until we merit to be included in Him completely for now and evermore. *Amen v’amen*.

Seuda Shlishis, Parshas Vaeschanan, 5766

At the third Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit”a* spoke inspiring words on the topic of praying with passion and attachment to Hashem, based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 62.

Rebbe Nachman says: “In truth, if a person would know this with his whole heart, that (Isaiah, Ch. 6): ‘The whole earth is full of His Glory’, and that Hashem stands over him at the time of prayer and listens to his prayer, then he would surely pray with tremendous passion and be very particular about concentrating on all his words [of prayer]. However, because a person does not know this with a full heart, he therefore does not pray with passion and is not so careful [with each word]. And each person according to the degree he lacks this knowledge, thus will his passion and concentration in prayer also be lacking.” (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that we see from this lesson that the most important preparation for the service of prayer is in the area of *emunah* – the *emunah* that Hashem stands over him at the time of prayer, listening to every word that leaves his mouth. For when he integrates this *emunah* within himself and fixes this knowledge in his heart, he will then be very particular to concentrate in his prayer, and he will burn with tremendous passion for Hashem when he prays, for he realizes that Hashem is listening to every word

and awaits the prayer of every Jew. Therefore it is certainly fitting to devote as much time and effort to prayer as possible.

When a person is not so particular about concentrating on his prayers and feels little passion to pray, he should realize that this is a result of undeveloped *emunah*. This is due to all sorts of questions and doubts that have entered his heart. He thinks to himself, (*Shmos*, Ch. 17) “Is Hashem among us or not?” And he starts questioning whether Hashem truly needs his prayers. Know, that all of this comes from the *kli* of Amalek (Amalek has the same *gematria* as the word *safeik* – doubt). Amalek causes all of this doubt and confusion, even thoughts of atheism and heresy, G-d forbid, to enter a person’s mind. But simple faith is to know that “The whole earth is full of His Glory” and that Hashem wants and desires the prayers of Israel, as we say in “*Ani maamin*” – “I believe with perfect faith, that the Creator, may His Name be blessed, to Him alone is it proper to pray and not to any other.” Therefore, the more a person fixes this knowledge in his heart, the greater will be his concentration and passion during prayer. And he will merit to see the fruits of every request of his heart that he made to Him. Happy is the one who merits to occupy himself with prayer always.

Mohorosh connected these ideas to our parsha in the following way. It is written (*Devarim*, Ch. 3): “I beseeched Hashem at that time saying...” The *Baal HaTurim* notes that the words “Hashem your G-d (the last verse of the preceding parsha, parshas *Devarim*)” are juxtaposed with the word “*Vaeschanan*” to teach that (*Tehillim*, Ch. 16) “I have set Hashem before me always.” That is, the previous parsha concludes with the verse “Do not fear them, for Hashem your G-d is the One Who fights for you” and the very next verse is “*Vaeschanan*”, to say that “I have placed Hashem before me always.” What is the *Baal HaTurim* trying to teach us here? Is it not already written in the verse “*Vaeschanan el Hashem*”, which automatically puts it in the category of “I have placed Hashem before me always”? Moreover, it is an explicit teaching of our Sages (*Talmud Sanhedrin*, 22a): “One who prays should regard himself as though the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence, were before him, as it says: ‘I have set Hashem before me always.’” So what new idea is the *Baal HaTurim* teaching us here? Let’s try to answer this question based on the above teachings of Rebbe Nachman.

The essential preparation for the service of prayer is to fix in one’s heart the knowledge mentioned above – “The whole earth is full of His Glory” and Hashem stands over a person at the time of prayer, listening to every word

that leaves his mouth. So, we see that one who comes to pray needs to regard himself as though the *Shechinah* were before him, for then he will surely feel much passion in his prayer and be very particular to concentrate on his words. However, to be able to do this, one first needs to do battle with all of the confusion and strange thoughts that want to bring him down and conceal this knowledge from him. Generally speaking, all of this confusion and these strange thoughts are referred to as the *klippos* of Amalek and of the other nations of the world that want to prevent the souls of Israel from serving Hashem through prayer and from cleaving to their Maker. Therefore, first it is written in the previous parsha, “**Do not fear them**”, that is, do not be afraid at all of any of these *klippos* that want to stop you from praying; instead you should only know that “**Hashem your G-d is the One Who fights for you**” – Hashem will fight for you when He stands over you at the time of prayer, to protect you from all of these evil *klippos*. And with this you will be able to fulfill the verse “I have placed Hashem before me always”, and then you will surely fulfill “**I beseeched Hashem** (*Vaeschanan el Hashem*)” – you will be occupied with prayer always, with great concentration and passion. For as soon as you know with a full heart that Hashem stands over you at the time of prayer, you will surely occupy yourself with prayer always. May Hashem help us to be occupied with prayer and *hisbodedus* all our days, until we merit to see the fruits of all of the requests we have made of Hashem and to see the consolation of Zion and Yerushalayim, swiftly in our days. *Amen v’amen*.