

Friday Night, Parshas Matos Maasay, 5766

Friday night, at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"a* spoke inspiring words on the opening verse of parshas Masei: “These are the journeys of the Children of Israel”, based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 62.

Rebbe Nachman says: “It is written (*Bamidbar*, Ch. 33): ‘**These are the journeys of the Children of Israel**’. It is brought in a Midrash that the journeys of the Children of Israel, that is, their travels from place to place, which are referred to in the verse ‘**These** are the journeys of the Children of Israel’, atone for their having said regarding the Golden Calf: ‘**These**, Israel, are your gods (*Shemos*, Ch. 32)’, that is, they atone for the blemish of idolatry. For even when they are not worshipping idols, there is still the blemish of idolatry, for the corruption of *emunah* (faith) is also an aspect of idolatry, as it is brought in the name of the Baal Shem Tov on the verse (*Devarim*, Ch. 11): ‘[Lest] you turn away and serve other gods’ – that as soon as they begin to turn away from Hashem, this is already an aspect of idolatry. But through the journeys of Israel, it is atoned for.’” (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that we see from this lesson that the travels of the Children of Israel from place to place are not a simple thing at all. In fact, many very lofty matters are hidden within them. We see with our own eyes how every Jew is constantly moving around from place to place – this one travels for business, that one to visit someone who is ill, this one on a leisure trip. But where does the sudden inspiration to travel to a certain place come from? The real cause of this desire to travel comes from the need to rectify one’s soul. A person needs to travel to a place where he will be able to perfect a certain aspect of his soul. And in that specific place there is something he needs to fix. The fixing sometimes is accomplished through his eating a particular piece of food or by praying a certain prayer, or by performing a certain mitzvah. Hashem leads each and every person, according to the root of his soul, to the place he needs to be in order to fix and perfect his soul. Therefore, Rebbe Nachman says (*Sichos HaRan* 85): “When a person sees a necessity to travel to a certain place, he should not be stubborn and refuse to go, for perhaps he needs to fix something in that place in order to perfect his soul; and if he does not go willingly, he will end up being forced to go there

in iron chains, as the Midrash states regarding Yaakov Avinu (*Yalkut Shimoni Hoshea* 528) that it was fitting that Yaakov be brought down to Egypt in iron chains, had it not been for the sale of Yosef.”

No matter where a Jew goes, he is in the process of fixing something and it is essential that he be particularly vigilant to guard himself from transgression when he is traveling. Wherever he is, he recites blessings, prays and fulfills other mitzvos. And through this, he effects rectifications wherever he goes. Sometimes, a person finds himself on a long business trip, and it turns out that the trip was not a financial success; but what he doesn't realize is that the main purpose of his trip was for the sake of rectifying an aspect of his soul, as the Baal Shem Tov explained the verse (*Tehillim*, Ch. 37): “From Hashem the steps of a man are established, and he desires his way.” He explained that all of the steps a person takes are prepared and guided by Hashem, where and when he needs to reach every place; but in a person's own eyes – “he desires his way” – it seems to him that he desires to go to a certain place for the sake of some practical need or desire, such as for the sake of his business or for some other rational matter. But in truth, all of his steps are prepared by Hashem. In the same spirit, the Baal Shem Tov explained the verse (*Tehillim*, Ch. 107): “Hungry and thirsty, their soul was wrapped in them”. Sometimes a person arrives at a certain place and feels a sudden hunger or thirst and is thus compelled to eat and drink, but he doesn't know the cause of these sudden pangs. But the true cause is “their soul was wrapped in them”, that is, with that particular piece of food or drink he wraps his soul with sparks of holiness hidden in the food or drink – sparks that relate to the root of his soul and which he needs in order to perfect his soul. Therefore, Hashem causes him to feel hungry or thirsty at this particular time. So, we find that hidden in all of a person's paths and journeys are great rectifications for the sake of perfecting his soul. Happy is the one who merits to give himself over to Hashem with simple and clear faith and with the intention to fix that which needs to be fixed in every place he finds himself.

Rebbe Nachman says in the name of the Midrash that all of the travels of the Children of Israel, which the Torah refers to as “**These** are the journeys of the Children of Israel”, are in their inner essence a rectification for the blemish of “**These**, Israel, are your gods (*Shemos*, Ch. 32)”, which is the sin of the Golden Calf. What was the sin of the Golden Calf? It was a weakening and corruption of *emunah*. They wanted to set up the calf as an intermediary between themselves and Hashem and they said (*Shemos*, Ch. 32): “make us a god that will go before us”, meaning an intermediary. Even today, most

people fall into this error by making the “apparent” causes of things into intermediaries between themselves and Hashem (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 62). They believe in Hashem, but they also believe in the power of the intermediary and think that without it they are lost. For example, they believe in Hashem, but they feel that the main cause of their sustenance is their job, as if, G-d forbid, without this specific job, Hashem wouldn't be able to give them a livelihood. And likewise with regard to healing, they feel that the medicine is what is responsible for healing them, as if, G-d forbid, without these specific medicines, Hashem wouldn't be able to heal them. It is just not so. Hashem is the Cause of all causes, and He has no need for any other causes. A person who is involved with one of these causes (e.g. his occupation or medicines) needs to believe in Hashem alone, and not make the “apparent” causes into the real causes. Therefore, when a person is on the road and he gives himself over completely to Hashem, hoping to fix whatever it is he needs to fix in these places, in this way, he automatically fixes all of the blemishes of faith that he caused by making the “apparent” causes into the true causes, as he now gives himself up entirely to Hashem, understanding that He alone is the Cause of all causes. Through this hope and faith in his heart he will merit reaching all of the places he needs to reach in order to fix and perfect his soul. And through this, he will once again be illuminated by the light of Hashem. Therefore, happy is the one who merits to give himself up entirely to Hashem; to have the intention in all of his travels to fulfill the will of Hashem and to straighten out all that is crooked. And through this, he will merit to completely rectify his soul and to illuminate his days with the Light of Life. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected these ideas to our parsha in the following way. “These are the journeys of the Children of Israel.” - Our parsha lists the entire route the Children of Israel followed in the wilderness from the time they left Egypt until they were about to enter the Land of Israel. And it gives the names of each of their encampments – a total of forty-two places. And regarding all of their travels it says (*Bamidbar*, 9:18,20,23): “According to Hashem they encamped and according to Hashem they journeyed.” Likewise, it is written in our parsha (*Bamidbar*, Ch. 33): “And Moshe wrote down their goings forth for their journeys ‘according to Hashem’, and these are their journeys for their goings forth.” What is the deeper meaning of the phrase “according to Hashem” that is mentioned in connection with all of the travels of the Children of Israel? Also, what is the meaning of the reversal of words in this verse: First it says “Their goings forth for their journeys” and at the end of the verse the words are reversed to read - “Their journeys for their goings forth”?

Let's try to answer these questions according to the above teachings of Rebbe Nachman.

All of the paths and travels of the Children of Israel were exactly “according to Hashem”, for in every place they needed to accomplish rectifications which were known only to the “Knower of mysteries”, the One who prepares the footsteps of man for each and every journey. And this is: “And Moshe wrote down their goings forth for the journeys according to Hashem” – Moshe *Rebbeinu* wrote down in the Torah the names of each of their encampments to hint to the great rectifications that the souls of Israel accomplished on all of their journeys (see Ramban on this verse). “Their goings forth (*motza-eihem* – also has the connotation of ‘their findings’ or ‘things they brought forth into actuality’)” – that is, what they found and accomplished on the way was all “according to Hashem” – for the sake of reaching their eternal rectification. And the places were named after the great rectifications that were effected there (see Sefer Avodas Yisroel of the Magid of Koznitz). “Their goings out (*motza-eihem*) for (or of) their journeys according to Hashem” – first “*motza-eihem*”, that is, the rectifications they found and effected in every place were the reason **for** “their journeys”, they were the true cause **of** all their travels. But most people travel innocently, only looking at the road before them, unaware of the inner content, i.e. the rectifications they need to accomplish, as the Baal Shem Tov explained the verse “he desires his way” – that a person desires to take a certain path for his own reasons, but in truth, all is caused by the need to fix his soul. And this is “These are their journeys for their goings forth” – First it says “**These** are their journeys” – they traveled for the practical reason of being commanded to travel and it was their desire to obey the command of Hashem to journey forward, but the inner reason of all their travels was because of “**These**, Israel, are your gods” – because they considered the “apparent” cause (the Golden Calf) to be the real cause, not realizing that every detail of their lives is “according to Hashem” - that Hashem is the Only Cause. And this is “And these are their journeys for their *motza-eihem*” – the purpose of their journeys was for them to find and bring out all of the sparks of holiness that were hidden in every place, and to accomplish great rectifications for the perfection of their souls. May Hashem help us attain perfect faith, and we will give ourselves over to Him totally until we merit to ascend and be included in Him completely, now and forevermore. *Amen v'amen.*