

## Friday Night, Parshas Pinchas, 5766

Friday night, at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"á* spoke inspiring words about the strength of the 'master of prayer' who stands in the 'throat' of the Satan, based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 8.

Rebbe Nachman says: "When there is the blemish of the lust for sexual immorality, G-d forbid, then a person's prayer is [looked upon from Above] with the attribute of judgment [instead of with the attribute of mercy and favor], and the *sitra acharah* [the side of spiritual impurity; the Satan] tries to swallow the prayer [and prevent it from rising to heaven and accomplishing its appropriate mission]. We then need a man of great strength who will offer a prayer that [also] has the attribute of judgment [a forceful prayer, zealous and assertive – a prayer with all of one's strength – as opposed to a submissive and quiet prayer of supplication], as happened during the episode of Zimri, when Pinchas needed to offer a prayer that was in the category of judgment. For when this mighty man offers a prayer that has the attribute of judgment [a bold and assertive prayer], the *sitra achara* wants to swallow it [thinking it is an improper prayer and hoping to draw strength from it], for it always swallows prayers that are in the category of judgment. But when it wants to swallow *this* prayer, it stands in the Satan's throat, forcing the Satan to vomit, that is, the Satan is forced to vomit out and eject all of the holiness he swallowed, which is an aspect of the verse (Job, Ch. 20): 'He has swallowed down riches and he shall vomit them up.' Not only will he vomit and eject all of the holiness he swallowed, but he will also be forced to vomit out and eject the very essence of his life-force." (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that we see from this lesson that the true Tzaddikim in every generation are at war with the *sitra achara* – the force that increases the lust for sexual immorality in the world and that seeks to break the spiritual channel from which Israel draws its strength. This lust destroys the holiness of Israel and steals from them their prayers and their morale. For the one who is held in the grips of this spiritual impurity, G-d forbid, his mind and very being cleave to it, like a mouse stuck in a glue trap from which it is impossible for it to escape. So too, this lust seizes the mind and the very being of a person, making it impossible for him to offer a proper prayer and mixing

all of his prayers with foreign and evil thoughts. This is when we need the prayer of the man of strength, the true Tzaddik, who descends into the throat of the *sitra achara* (willing to sacrifice his life and soul and praying with all his strength) and forces it to disgorge the souls of Israel it has swallowed; for the true Tzaddik has awesome teachings for souls that have been seized by the *sitra achara*, and he teaches them that there is never – ever – such a thing as giving up.

*Teshuvah* helps for every sin and from every fall and descent there is a way to escape and return to holiness, as Rebbe Nachman decreed and said (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 112): “If you believe you can destroy, believe you can fix.” The main thing is that a person “believes” and has faith, that is, if he will “believe” he can destroy then he will also “believe” he can fix. And this is the great power of the true Tzaddik – that he can go down into the spiritual channel of the Wicked One from which it draws sustenance and destroy the very source of its life-force (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 8). And through this, he takes the souls of Israel out from under the Satan’s hand. And not only does he make the *sitra achara* disgorge the holy souls he swallowed, but he actually extracts from the *sitra achara* the essence of its life force. For the Tzaddik teaches the souls of Israel such awesome teachings of strength until he heals them completely from the terrible sicknesses that cling to them from the lust for sexual immorality; and he brings them back in complete *teshuvah* until the name of the *sitra achara* is blotted out from the world entirely.

The main way the Tzaddik accomplishes this is through “prayer with strength”. He is always offering his prayers with tremendous strength and self-sacrifice. And he is always praying to Hashem that the souls of Israel should be rescued from the blemish of the lust for sexual immorality and that they should not be caught in the evil trap of the *sitra achara*. The Tzaddik is ready to sacrifice his very being in order to raise up and elevate a soul that has fallen and descended into this filth. He teaches this soul wonderful ways to strengthen itself in the service of prayer and how to cry out to Hashem with strength to save him from destruction. And then his prayers stand in the throat of the *sitra achara* and force it to vomit up and eject all of the holiness it had swallowed, which is an aspect of the verse (Job, Ch. 20): “He has swallowed down riches and he shall vomit them up again.” And the first letters of the words in this verse spell out the holy name *Ches-Beis”Vav*, a name which is a remedy for restoring the holiness of the *Bris*. Therefore, the main hope a person has is through drawing close to the true Tzaddik, the true man of strength. For through the true Tzaddik, a person will receive the right advice

for how to escape from all of his base lusts and how to straighten everything that is twisted. And then he will merit a complete *teshuvah*, to illuminate his days with Hashem's blessed light. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected these ideas to our parsha in the following way. We find in our parsha Hashem's high praise of Pinchas HaTzaddik who saved the souls of Israel from annihilation, as it is written (*Bamidbar*, Ch. 25:11): "Pinchas the son of Elazar the son of Aharon the Kohen, turned my wrath away from the Children of Israel, when he was zealous for My sake among them and I did not annihilate the Children of Israel in my zealousness", in reward for which (*Bamidbar*, Ch. 25:12) "Therefore say, 'Behold, I am giving him My covenant of shalom (*brisi shalom* – My covenant of peace).' " Let us ask the following questions: First, where do we see the divine principle of measure-for-measure in this, that in reward for Pinchas' zealousness, Hashem declares: "Therefore say, 'Behold, I am giving him My covenant of shalom'"? Secondly, what is meant by Hashem's preface to the declaration of Pinchas' reward, i.e. the words "Therefore say", instead of saying immediately after verse 11: "Behold, I am giving him My covenant of shalom" without the words "Therefore say"? Lastly, what is the meaning of the "broken" letter *vav* in the word 'shalom'? Let's try to answer these questions according to the above teachings of Rebbe Nachman.

In the episode of Zimri, there was a strengthening of the lust for sexual immorality in the world. Pinchas reacted to this with zealotry and descended into the throat of the *sitra achara* in order to break its power and save the souls of Israel from being annihilated. Pinchas' main strength came from "prayer with strength", as our holy Sages have commented (*Talmud Sanhedrin* 44a) on the verse (*Tehillim*, Ch. 106): " 'And Pinchas stood up and wrought judgment (*vaye'pallel* - he judged; also has the connotation of praying - *hispallel*)', this teaches that he worked judgment with his Maker [he acted and prayed with the attribute of strict judgment and served as Israel's defense attorney before his Maker]" – in other words, he offered "prayers with strength"! And he showed all the souls of Israel that they need not be frightened at all by the *sitra achara* and its lusts; rather, they only need to strengthen themselves with the power of prayer and with this they will defeat the *sitra achara* completely. And this was the zealousness that Pinchas had for G-d – it was the prayer with strength that he offered; and with this he stood in the throat of the *sitra achara* and forced it to disgorge the souls of Israel it had swallowed. For Pinchas taught everyone that with the power of prayer we can be victorious in everything. And "when he was zealous for My

sake among them (*b'socham* – among them)”, that is, he took his zealotry, which was prayer with strength, and placed it “*b'socham* (which also means ‘within them’)” – within each and every Jew - and he taught them that there is never – ever – such a thing as giving up and that with the power of prayer they can subdue the lust for sexual immorality and break the spiritual channel of the *sitra achara* completely. And this is hinted to in the prefatory words “Therefore say”; that is, in the merit of “saying” and prayer, then measure-for-measure, “Behold, I am giving him My covenant of shalom (*brisi shalom*)” - he will merit perfection (*sheleimus*) of the Covenant – the *Bris*. With the power of prayer we can merit everything. Even where there is a “broken” letter *vav* – symbolizing a break of holiness (in Kabbalah the *vav* represents the *bris*) – and the *sitra achara* wants to swallow the prayers of Israel, nevertheless, the prayers of the true Tzaddik stand in its throat and annihilate its spiritual channel of sustenance. And he elevates the souls of Israel from there in peace, drawing upon them a supernal holiness. May Hashem help us to be close to the true Tzaddikim and to draw down upon ourselves the holiness of the *bris* in the most perfect way, until we merit to ascend and be included in Him completely, now and forevermore. *Amen v'amen*.