

Seudah Shlishis, Parshas Tazria – Metzora 5766

At the third Shabbos meal, Mohorosh Shlit”a spoke inspiring words based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 25, which discusses the importance of *Hisbodedus*.

Rebbe Nachman says: “The level of *Hisbodedus* is higher and greater than everything. In *Hisbodedus*, a person sets aside an hour or so to be by himself in a room or in a field, to speak out everything that is on his heart between himself and his Maker. He should put forth all sorts of logical arguments and excuses using graceful, charming, and appeasing words. And he should ask and beg Hashem that He should bring him close to Him to serve Him in truth. And this prayer and conversation should be in one’s everyday language [e.g. English].” (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that Rebbe Nachman reveals to us in this teaching that there is nothing higher than prayer and *Hisbodedus* – which is actually prayer in your own language – and that they are the gate and the entrance through which we come to Hashem (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 84). Certainly, we are all yearning to come close to Hashem and to attach ourselves to Him totally. But the main source of our distress is that we don’t know the path and the gate that leads to Him. In truth, the path and the gate are prayer and *Hisbodedus*, about which it is said (*Tehillim* 118): “This is the gate of Hashem; the righteous shall enter through it.” And the mouth is referred to as a doorway, as it is written (*Micha*, ch. 7): “Guard the doors of your mouth.” And through this doorway we come to Hashem. The more a person talks to Hashem and speaks out before Him everything that is in his heart with complete honesty and simplicity – as he would speak to a friend and as a child would speak to his parent – the more will *Emunah* (faith) become established and fixed in his heart. And then he will merit to feel the truth of Hashem’s existence, which hovers over and shields him always. Everyone can reach this level through increasing in prayer and *Hisbodedus* until eventually one’s entire being becomes prayer, as King Dovid wrote (*Tehillim* 109): “But I (*ani*) am [all] prayer.” And what part of a person is referred to as “I (*ani*)”? It is a person’s *neshama* (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 22). And when a person is deeply engaged in prayer, his “I” (*ani*; *aleph-nun-yud*; i.e. his ego) is changed into “Nothing (*ain*; *aleph-yud-nun*)”, which means that he ascends

and cleaves to Hashem's endless light. However, the Satan attempts to weaken the light of *emunah* by discouraging a person from praying to Hashem. And then it is fulfilled in this person the verse (*Yechezkel*, ch. 1): "I was among the exiles," for his *neshama* is in a very bitter and dark exile where Hashem's endless light is hidden from him. If a person would know with a full heart that (*Yeshaya*, ch. 6): "The whole earth is full of His glory", and that Hashem stands over him when he prays, listening to every word coming from his mouth, then he would certainly pray with great enthusiasm and be very careful to think about every word of his prayer (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 62); and there would certainly be no sadness, laziness and heaviness in his prayer and he would truly pray as he should. However, the main cause of confusion in prayer comes from a lack of *emunah* (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 155). Therefore, the primary service of a person is to work on strengthening his power of *emunah* and to increase in prayer and *Hisbodedus* to Hashem at all times, for then, he will merit to ascend and cleave to the Supreme Light and he will taste the World to Come in this world. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected these ideas to our *parsha* in the following way. We find in our *parsha* the laws of the afflictions that come upon a person through forbidden speech. Instead of using his faculty of speech for prayer and *Hisbodedus* to Hashem, he speaks *loshon harah* (lit., evil talk; information which is derogatory or potentially harmful even if the information is true), *rechilus* (information that potentially can cause ill will between Jews) and other forms of forbidden speech, and as a result he is punished with *tzaraas* (leprosy - a physical affliction which is a manifestation of a spiritual illness; the primary cause is slander, but it is also a punishment for other types of anti-social behavior such as bloodshed, false oaths, immorality, pride, robbery and selfishness). At first, the afflictions only affect the walls of his house, to remind him to do *teshuvah* (to repent and return to the proper way); and the verse is fulfilled in him (*Chavakuk*, ch. 2): "For the stone shall cry out of the wall," as the very stones of his house call out to him to do *teshuvah*, to elevate and repair his speech, to begin to engage in prayer and *Hisbodedus* the way he should. Even the stones and beams of one's house bear witness to all of a person's deeds, as our holy Sages have said (*Talmud Taanis* 11a): "Who testifies against a person? The stones and beams of his house testify against him." Even in our time when there is no *tzaraas*, if a person's home has been damaged in some way, for example, a water pipe breaks or the ceiling leaks from the rain, it is proper for him to contemplate that from Heaven they are reminding him to do *teshuvah* and Hashem is having compassion on him by

first striking the structure of his house instead of his body. If a person does not take these hints from Heaven, then the afflictions will begin to affect his clothing; his clothing being much closer to his body than the walls of his house. And again, Heaven is trying to arouse him to do *teshuvah*. And even today, when some mishap occurs to one's clothing, for example a garment suddenly rips or becomes soiled, it is proper to contemplate that this is similar to the *tzaraas* that can affect a person's clothing, as described in our *parsha*, and that once again Heaven is hinting to him to do *teshuvah* and to fix his speech through prayer and *Hisbodedus*. If after all this, he has still failed to do *teshuvah*, then the afflictions finally come upon his body and life becomes very bitter and dark for him, for in the Aramaic translation of the Torah the *metzora* (the person afflicted with *tzaraas*) is referred to as a "*sagirah*" (one who is closed off or shut in). And this corresponds to the Zohar (Parshas Tazria 49b) which describes the *metzora* as one who is: "*sagiro d'nerhora ilaah*", that is, one who is closed off from the Supreme Light – the light of the *Shechinah*. And then life is very difficult for him, for the doorway to holiness has been blocked off; and this doorway is prayer, as mentioned before. And he is left in a state of exile, which is an aspect of the verse (*Yechezkel*, ch. 1): "I was among the exiles". His main rectification is through the *Kohein* – the Tzaddik – who, as described in our *parsha*, must ostracize the *metzora* from all other Jews by sending him to live alone outside the city, as it is written (*Parshas Tazria*, ch. 13): "He shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp." And the main purpose of his isolation and solitude is that he should contemplate well his ways and be alone with Hashem and begin to fix his faculty of speech that he blemished through using destructive words that damaged people's relationships; that ruined friendships, marriages and people's livelihoods. For through solitude he can return to using his speech for prayer and *Hisbodedus* to Hashem and then he will be healed from his *tzaraas*.

The purification of the *metzora* is dependent upon his immersion in water, as it is written (*Parshas Metzora*, ch. 14): "He shall immerse his flesh in water and become pure." Immersing in a *mikvah* helps for all kinds of spiritual contamination. Rebbe Nachman spoke much about the great virtue of regularly immersing in a *mikvah* and Breslover Chassidim traditionally do so every day. Water also hints to prayer, as it is written (*Eichah*, ch. 2): "Pour out your heart like water in the Presence of Hashem." For the main rectification of the *metzora* is to pour out his speech and prayer before Hashem like water, and then the *Kohein* will show him the path of return to Hashem. The purification process of the *metzora* also includes two live

kosher birds – one is slaughtered and the other is set free into an open field. It is explained in the holy *Zohar* (*Parshas Metzora* 53b; also mentioned in *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 3) that the two live kosher birds correspond to the *sefiros* of *Binah* (Understanding) and *Malchus* (Kingship). The bird that corresponds to the *sefirah* of *Binah* comes to rectify what he blemished with his thoughts. Because he did not contemplate Hashem's G-dliness that shines throughout the entire creation but instead entertained evil and negative thoughts about people, he eventually came to speak *loshon harah* and *rechilus* about them. And the bird that corresponds to the *sefirah* of *Malchus* comes to rectify the blemish of speech, for the main way we accept Hashem's kingship upon ourselves is through speech, which is prayer and *Hisbodedus*. And when one has blemished his speech, his acceptance of Hashem's kingship has been undermined. The bird that corresponds to *Malchus* is slaughtered in order to correct his damaged speech, of which it is said (*Yirmiyahu*, ch. 9): "Their tongue is a sharpened arrow; it speaks deceit," for it is necessary to completely put an end to evil speech. After the first bird has been slaughtered, the second bird that corresponds to the *sefirah* of *Binah* is set free and released upon the open field, for as soon as we have rectified speech, then *Binah*, which is the mind, has also been set free - free to take off and fly; free to contemplate Hashem's G-dliness once again. And may Hashem help us to purify our minds from all kinds of impurities and we will use our speech only for holy words of Torah and prayer until we merit to ascend and be included in Him completely, now and forever. Amen v'amen.