

Parshas Vayeishev, first Shabbos of Chanukah 5764.

On Friday night at the first Shabbos meal, Mohorosh Shlita, spoke very awesome and wondrous words based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman Zal in Lekutei Moharan part II, Lesson 12 which discusses the concept of a descent which leads to an ultimate ascent, see there.

Mohorosh began by saying that Rebbe Nachman teaches that even when a person falls, G-d forbid, into a state of doubt, and the fall could be so great, G-d save us, that he falls into doubting Hashem Himself, nevertheless, the fall and descent can lead to a supreme ascent. And this is implied in the word Breishis, which is referred to as “a hidden utterance”. This “hidden utterance” hints to the idea of G-d’s presence that exists but is in a state of concealment even in very lowly and dark places. And this is the concept of the verse in the Torah, “Where (Ahyeh) is the lamb for the Olah (an elevation or completely burnt offering; the word Olah literally means ‘ascent’)", which Yitzchak asked his father Avraham when they were climbing Mount Moriah together on their way to the Akeida. That is to say, when a person falls to great depths, and yet he asks, “Where (Ahyeh) is G-d”, this very asking “Where (Ahyeh)” is itself “the lamb for the elevation offering”. It is considered for him as if he offered an Olah to Hashem. See all this in Lekutei Mohoran, Lesson 12.

Mohorosh then explained that Rebbe Nachman revealed to us in Lesson 12 a very awesome and wondrous secret- how there is no such thing in the world as despair, and even if a person falls to the lowest level, G-d forbid, a terrible descent, exactly from there he can rise to the ultimate heights and transform all the darkness to light. For it is known that there is no necessary existence besides Hashem Himself, and even in unclean places far from Hashem’s Glory, Hashem’s life-force and existence are there. As it is written (Malachi chapter 1): “And in every place they offer incense to My Name.” And it is written (Tehillim 103): “His Kingship rules over everything.” For without His life-force and existence, there would be no existence for anything in the world. Therefore, our holy Sages said (Talmud Yerushalmi Taanis chapter 1): “If someone asks you where is your G-d, say to him, ‘He is in a great

city in Rome’” – that even in a place of impurity, Hashem can be found, albeit in a greatly concealed state. Certainly, these are forbidden, and filthy places and it is forbidden to enter them. However, if a person has already descended to these places for whatever reason, he should know, that also there he can find Hashem and if he cries out and asks, “Where is Hashem?” and sincerely searches and seeks Him, then it will be revealed to him how also from there he can return to Hashem. On the contrary, it will be revealed to him, that only through his descent did he find Hashem there. It turns out that he transformed a terrible descent into a supreme ascent, for it was specifically through his descent that he came to recognize how Hashem is found there.

And this is the idea behind the verse, “And where is the lamb for the Olah?”. If a person asks, “Ayeh?” - Where is Hashem?, this question itself is the “lamb for the elevation offering” and it is considered for him as if he offered an Olah that is completely consumed on the altar for the sake of Hashem. And a person ascends (lit. Olah) through asking this question to the utmost heights. And this is the meaning of the phrase, “the word Bereishis is a hidden utterance”, for there are ten utterances through which the world was created. These are the ten times that the word “Vayomer (and He said)” appears in the account of creation. But in truth, there are only nine utterances, nine times that the word Vayomer appears! However, the word “Bereishis” itself is also an utterance, but it is a “hidden utterance”, as it doesn’t say explicitly, “Vayomer”; rather the utterance (the Vayomer) is hidden within the word Bereishis in a state of great concealment which hints to the fact of Hashem being found, so to speak, also in unclean and lowly places. And this is the word, “Bereishis” whose letters make up the words “Bara tayish” (‘He created a goat’), that is, the lamb for the Olah, that had already been created from the time of the six days of creation. For the matter of asking “Where?” which transforms a descent into a supreme ascent was already established at the beginning of creation and without it the world could not exist at all. There are times when one finds oneself in very lowly places and situations, but when one knows that also there he can find Hashem Who gives continued existence to the entire Creation, happy is he! Fortunate is the person who doesn’t mislead himself by falling into despair over anything at all. Exactly

when he is lowly and fallen, he begins to seek out Hashem until he finds Him. And then he will ascend to the utmost height and transform all of the darkness to light. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh tied this entire concept to the weekly parsha in an amazing way as follows: We find in our parasha the descent of Yosef HaTzaddik to the most immoral place on earth in his time, Mitzrayim, by being sold by his brothers, until he comes to the house of an Egyptian. What a terrible descent! It is impossible to describe. For Yosef was a young lad who found refuge in the shadow of the wings of his father, always sitting within the walls of the beis medrash. And suddenly he is thrown into the power of the immorality of Mitzrayim. And there he went through what he went through. The Egyptians even suspected him of committing evil deeds. But what was the source of his strength and endurance? It was the above teaching of “Where (Ahyeh) is the place of His Glory”! Through our asking and searching for Hashem, also in lowly places, we transform the descent into a tremendous ascent, as it was with Yosef HaTzaddik, that in the end he was made second to the King, and he ruled over the entire land of Egypt. And this is what it says in the Torah (Bereishis 39): “And Hashem was with Yosef, and the man was successful and he was in the house of his Egyptian master (Potifar).” That is to say, this verse reveals to us how Yosef HaTzaddik merited this level (that Hashem was always with him and he was successful): it was due to the fact that “he was in the house of his Egyptian master (Potifar).” This means that through Yosef HaTzaddik’s very difficult predicament of utmost restriction and pressure and because it seemed as if there was no hope, through this very situation he was able to transform the descent into an extreme ascent and Hashem was revealed to him in a very great revelation.

And this is the concept of the holy days of Chanukah. In the days of the Hashmonaim it appeared as if a great darkness descended upon the world and that there was no way to save oneself from it, as our holy Sages said (Bereishis Rabbah Parshas Bereishis chapter 2): “And darkness was upon the deep” – this is the Greek exile which darkened the eyes of the Jews. However, through the Tzaddikim of that

generation who sought out and searched for Hashem from within the darkness, the Jewish people found the light, and the descent was transformed for them into the utmost ascent. And what came out of the klippah (impure shell) of Greece was the holy and awesome festival of the holy days of Chanukah during which great miracles were performed- the military victory and the lights of the menorah. Through these miracles shined the hidden light of the six days of Creation. And this teaches us that exactly from the utmost descent it is possible to merit the ultimate ascent. And this is why we find that the one remaining pure jar of olive oil was found buried in the earth. It was in order to protect the oil from impurity. This shows us that exactly through a descent into the ground will sprout forth a salvation of the utmost ascent. And may Hashem cause to be drawn upon us the holiness of these days and may we merit to truly cleave to Hashem until we merit to be entirely included in Hashem from now and forever. Amen and Amen.