

## Seudah Shlishis, Parshas Matos-Masei 5766

At the third meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"a* spoke inspiring words about how a person's sins are etched upon his bones, based on the teachings of Rebbe Nachman in *Likutei Mohoran* part I, lesson 4.

Rebbe Nachman says: "A person's sins are on his bones, as it is written (*Yechezkel* 32:27) 'and their iniquities will be etched upon their bones'. Each sin has its own combination of letters. When a person commits a particular sin, a negative letter combination is etched upon his bones. This brings the spoken aspect of the prohibition which he has transgressed into the realm of impurity. For example, if he transgressed the command of the prohibition (*Shemos* 20:3) "You shall have no other gods before Me", then he destroys that word's positive letter combination and forms a negative letter combination. This negative letter combination is etched upon his bones as it is written (*Yirmiyahu* 5:25) 'Your iniquities have turned away these things' and as it is written (*Tehillim* 34:22) 'Evil is a deathblow to the wicked'. However, through spoken confession, the letters that have been etched upon a person's bones are released and transformed into the words of confession. For speech emanates from a person's bones, as it is written (*Tehillim* 35:10) 'All of my bones shall say'. Through spoken confession, the negative letter structure and combination are erased and the Kingdom of Holiness is created from them. This is (*Bamidbar* 31:23) 'Every *davar* (thing) that is used in fire, shall pass through fire'. "*Davar*" [note: can also mean *word*] corresponds to Kingship which has sunk into the realm of impurity due to the heat of the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). "Shall pass through fire" – its rectification is "through fire" – i.e., spoken confession. (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman).

Mohorosh explained that when a person sins, G-d forbid, it appears to him that he only blemished the spiritual essence of his soul and that he is not causing any evil or lack to his physical body as if this is impossible. But in truth it is not so, rather every sin that a person commits, G-d forbid, is literally etched upon his bones and they cause him much physical suffering as well, may G-d save us, as it is written (*Tehillim* 34:22) "Evil is a deathblow to the wicked" meaning that the evil of the wicked literally kills him and causes him all types of suffering and darkness throughout his life, may G-d save us. Therefore, a person's main effort is to increase his prayer and *hisbodedus* (personal prayer) in spoken confession before Hashem, blessed be He. For the prayer and *hisbodedus* with emanates from a person's lips with great enthusiasm erase the negative letter combinations that were etched on his bones due to his sins and are replaced with positive letter combinations which cleave to Hashem. This is because the holy arousal and enthusiasm replaces the evil arousal and enthusiasm of sins and it rectifies the evil caused to a person's soul. This is what is written (*Bamidbar* 31:23)

“every *davar* (thing/word) that is used in fire shall pass through fire”. That each sin made due to the fiery passion of the *yetzer hara*, now “shall pass through fire” – which are fiery and passionate *words* of prayer and confession and through this, he rectifies all of his sins.

However, the *yetzer hara* has two ways of attacking a person. The first way is to entice a person to sin by creating a fire for evil passions. A very effective way to ward off these desires is through the fiery and passionate words of prayer to Hashem which release all of the negative letter combinations which have been etched upon his bones. However, the *yetzer hara* has a much more dangerous way of attacking than this and it is by coldness and laziness which cool off a person serving Hashem and from performing *mitzvot*. It insists that a person be negligent in his performing of *mitzvot* saying, “So what if you don’t put on *tefillin* or you skip the *minchah* prayer for one day?” In this way, he traps a person in his net and the impurity of coldness, preventing him from performing *mitzvot*. This attack is stronger than the first because a person knows that the burning desires are distortions and surely a person regrets having fallen for this; therefore, he has hope to be saved from it. However, the attack of coldness and indifference is much stronger because it cools off a person altogether to the point where he doesn’t even notice what he’s lacking and he comes to a much lower level than the first, may G-d save us. Therefore, there is no other advice other than for him to push and force himself to perform *mitzvot* one after another, even if he feels cool or indifferent by them, until he breaks the coldness of his heart and he warms himself to perform Hashem’s will.

Our holy sages of blessed memory comment on the verse (*Mishlei* 31:21) ‘She is not afraid of the snow for her household; for all her household are clothed with *shanim* (scarlet)’. They said: ‘do not read *shanim*, rather *shenayim* (two)’ as in “*Give*, you shall surely *give...Open*, you shall surely *open...send*, you shall surely *send* away...” Reb Noson explains (*Likutey Halachos, Basar v’chalav; Halacha* 5) that there are two types of *gehinnom* (purgatory): *gehinnom* of fire and *gehinnom* of snow. *Gehinnom* of fire comes about from the burning desires of the body by the *yetzer hara* and from transgressing the *mitzvot* of the *Torah*. Therefore, its punishment is through the *gehinnom* of fire due to a person having committed sins as a result of his arousal for evil passions during his lifetime. By arousing his heart with holy words and Divine service, a person can rectify all of these sins and be saved from this *gehinnom*. However, the *gehinnom* of snow is a punishment measure for measure over having cooled off and not fulfilling Hashem’s *mitzvot*. Therefore, its main rectification is through “***Give***, you shall surely ***give...Open***, you shall surely ***open...send***, you shall surely ***send***...” as our sages said regarding these verses (*Bava Metzia* 31a) “Even [if you have to do it] one hundred times”. Because when a person forces himself to fulfill Hashem’s will time after time, even at the moment when he feels very cold and sluggish in his service, he will eventually

break his coldness and be saved from the *gehinnom* of snow. This is “She is not afraid of the snow for her household” – that is, from the *gehinnom* of snow. Why? Because “all her household are clothed with *shanim*”; do not read “*shanim*, rather, “*shenayim*”, as in “***Give***, you shall surely ***give***...***Open***, you shall surely ***open***...***send***, you shall surely ***send*** away...” This is to say, to fulfill Hashem’s will time after time with great enthusiasm and through this he will be saved from this coldness and merit to serve Hashem with great enthusiasm.

Also, immersing oneself in the *mikvah* is of great benefit for removing the coldness from a person and to give him holy arousal. Because the main coldness that befalls a person is due to the many evil *klipos* (husks/forces) and spirits that surround him from all sides and are attached to him because of his many sins. However, when a person regularly immerses in the *mikvah*, he removes the evil *klipos* which are attached to him and he is able to return and receive an aroused heart to serve Hashem; thereby having the merit of returning to the side of holiness. Therefore, happy is he who merits immersing in the *mikvah* regularly and causes his heart to burn for Hashem. Through this, he will destroy the *klipos* which he created through his sins and cause his heart to burn with a holy fire for Hashem. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected the above ideas to our *parsha* in the most amazing way. It is written regarding the purification of the vessels of Midian (*Bamidbar* 31:23) “Every *davar* (thing) that is used in fire, shall pass through fire and then it will be clean; it must, however, [also] be cleansed with sprinkling water, and whatever is not used in fire you shall pass through water”. Rebbe Nachman explains the beginning of this verse regarding a person who goes around trapped in the fires of the *yetzer hara*; that his rectification is through speaking words of prayer and confession before Hashem. This is “Every *davar* that is used in fire” – that is, the fire of the *yetzer hara* – “shall pass through fire” – that is, fiery words of prayer and confession. Through this we can also explain the end of the verse “whatever is not used in fire you shall pass through water” – that is, to fight against the [second type of] *yetzer hara* that doesn’t prevent a person from serving Hashem with enthusiasm, rather it cools him off from serving Him altogether. This is, “whatever is not used in fire”; its rectification is “through water” – meaning, the waters of the *mikvah* in order to destroy all of the *klipos* which conceal the holy fire and cool him from serving Hashem. Because through the waters of the *mikvah*, a person receives a new arousal to serve Him properly and he renews the days he spent in darkness. *Mikveh* can also mean hope; as in through immersing in the holy waters of the *mikveh*, a person has hope of standing a chance against this coldness. May Hashem grant us the merit of drawing down upon ourselves holy purity, in order to arouse our hearts to serve Him properly until we merit being elevated and included in Him from now and forever. *Amen v’amen*.