

Seuda Shlishis, Parshas Shlach, 5760

At the third Shabbos meal, Mohorosh Shlit" a spoke inspiring words about the holiness of the Land of Israel and of the Tzaddik, based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 129.

We find in our parsha the failure of the spies that were sent to Eretz Yisroel and how they spoke *loshon hara* about the Land. In reality, everything they saw in the Land was truly for their good, for everything Hashem does with a person is only for the good. However, the spies did not have the proper level of *hisch`azkus* (moral and spiritual self-fortification); so they turned everything upside down and saw bad where they should have seen good. Rebbe Nachman poses the following question (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 47): It is true that the spies spoke evil about the Land of Israel, but how can their lie be written in the Torah which is the Torah of Truth? We must say that there must be a certain amount of good hidden within their words; it was only that they did not know how to interpret and explain it correctly. And this is what Rebbe Nachman reveals in this lesson: How the words of the spies, when they said that the Land of Israel is "A land that devours its inhabitants", actually contain a great secret about serving Hashem and how we can derive from it a profound lesson. The spies said these words when they saw – everywhere they went in the Land – the Canaanites burying their dead (*Bamidbar Rabbah*, ch. 16:24). They did not understand that Hashem caused this to happen for their own good, i.e. that the Canaanites should be so involved with their mourning that they would pay no attention to the spies.

And Rebbe Nachman says: **“When one comes close to a Tzaddik, even though he receives nothing from the Tzaddik at all, the mere coming close is also very good. The *emunah* alone – that he believes in the Tzaddik – helps in his service of Hashem. And the secret of this is as follows: The nature of eating is that the nourishment is transformed into the one who is nourished by it. For example, when an animal eats vegetation, such as grass, the grass turns into the animal when it enters the animal’s innards and is digested. Likewise, from an animal to a human being – when the human being eats the animal, the animal turns into a person. And to every part of the body to which the food is sent – as**

it is distributed to all parts of the body – it literally becomes transformed there into the essence and nature of that part of the body. For example, a component of the nourishment that enters the brain is turned into the brain. The part that enters the heart becomes a heart; and so too, with respect to all other parts of the body.

And this is the meaning of: “A Land that devours its inhabitants”. ‘Land’ represents the concept of *emunah* (faith), as it is written (*Tehillim*, ch. 37): ‘Dwell in the Land and be nourished by *emunah*.’ ‘A Land that devours its inhabitants’ teaches us that when one enters the Land, he becomes ‘devoured’ by the Land. That is, he is transformed and turned into the Land’s essence and nature which is faith. Therefore, our Sages have said (*Talmud Kesubos* 111): ‘All who dwell in the Land of Israel dwell without sin, as it says (*Isaiah*, ch. 33): ‘The people that dwell in it, their sin is forgiven’, for it is ‘A Land that devours its inhabitants’, as the one who lives there is ‘devoured’ by it and thus converted into its holy essence and nature. Therefore, even one who ‘walks four cubits in the Land of Israel is assured of a place in the world to come’, as our Sages have said (*ibid*).

The same thing happens when one is attached to and believes in the Tzaddik. The Tzaddik also represents the concept of *emunah* because he teaches *emunah* to all his followers. When one comes close to the Tzaddik he is ‘devoured’ by the Tzaddik and is literally transformed into the essence of the Tzaddik.

This concept of spirituality ‘devouring’ physicality is also explained in another place in *Lekutei Mohoran* (Part I, Lesson 101) regarding the verse (*Tehillim*, ch. 27) ‘When *mereiyim* approach me to devour my flesh’. *Mereiyim* literally means ‘evildoers’, but can also mean ‘friends’. The ‘friends’ referred to here are the two intellectual faculties of *chochmah* (wisdom) and *binah* (understanding) that are like two inseparable friends. When I want these ‘two friends’ to come together [and together they teach a person *daas* (knowledge)], then I need to eat my own flesh, that is, I must subdue physicality through spirituality. This is called ‘to eat my flesh’ because it is the intellectual faculty of the soul that is eating the body and converting it into its very essence. And this is the concept of eating: food becoming converted into the essence of the one who eats it. This is what happens in the Land of Israel and at the court of the Tzaddik. You become devoured by their spirituality and

become part of them. But every thing depends on a persons will. If one has a very strong will to come close to Hashem and to serve Him, but it is difficult for him to break the lusts of his body, then through coming close to the Tzaddik, and through coming to Eretz Yisroel, he enters the category of ‘eating’, and he will be ‘eaten’ by the Tzaddik, and by the Land of Israel and he will be converted into their very essence and character. However, if it is not his will to serve Hashem, then coming to the Tzaddik or to Eretz Yisroel will not help him, and he enters the category of food which is not able to be digested. If one eats a certain food which he cannot tolerate, then it will not be digested and converted into the person. Instead, the body will vomit it out. The same thing applies to the situation where the person is not ‘eaten’ by the Tzaddik or by Eretz Yisroel. Since the Tzaddik or the Land cannot tolerate him, they must disgorge him. This alluded to in the verse which speaks about the Land of Israel (*Vayikra*, ch. 18): “And the Land shall not vomit you as it vomited out the nations before you”. The Land cannot tolerate people that do not want its holy essence. So it disgorges them.” (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that the very act of coming close to anything of holiness, even though one does not feel that anything has been gained from it, is nonetheless very good. And *emunah* alone – that one believes in the Tzaddik or in the object of holiness – helps very much in one’s service of Hashem. And in the end, one will merit to be converted to the very essence of the thing he believes in. Rebbe Nachman gives an example of this: When an animal eats a plant, the plant is literally converted within the animal to the essence of the animal itself. Likewise, when a human being eats an animal, the animal is transformed within the human being into the human being himself, for the nourishment is transformed into the one who is nourished by it. The same thing applies to drawing close to anything of holiness. When one brings himself close to something holy, for example, a Tzaddik or the Land of Israel, and one believes in their holiness, then, little by little, one is ‘eaten’ by the Tzaddik or by the Land of Israel and is transformed into their essence and character. And this is the meaning of: “A Land which devours its inhabitants”, that is, the Land of Israel ‘eats’ the one who lives there and converts him into its essence. For the essence of the Land of Israel is *emunah*, as it is written (*Tehillim*, ch. 37): “Dwell in the Land and be nourished by *emunah*”, for in the Land of Israel Hashem’s divine Providence is revealed to a greater degree than anywhere else in the world, as it is written (*Devarim*, ch. 11): “The eyes of Hashem your G-d are always on it [the Land], from the

beginning of the year until year end.” Therefore, when one lives in the Land of Israel in order to recognize and find Hashem’s Providence there, one will be ‘eaten’ and converted to the essence of the Land – and that essence is *emunah*.

It is the same with regard to coming close to the Tzaddik. The entire essence of the Tzaddik is only about revealing *emunah* in the world. His entire will and desire all the days of his life is to reveal and publicize Hashem’s G-dliness to all the earth’s inhabitants, until everyone, from the greatest to the smallest, will recognize Him. Therefore, the closer one brings himself to the Tzaddik and the more one believes in him – even though he does not feel he has benefited from the Tzaddik in any way – little by little, he will be ‘eaten’ by the Tzaddik and become transformed into the essence of the Tzaddik. Through the sheer abundance of speech that he hears from the Tzaddik, and from the open G-dliness that surrounds the Tzaddik, the Tzaddik’s great light will be engraved within him, and he will also begin to radiate the holy light of *emunah*.

And this is how Rebbe Nachman concludes this lesson: Everything depends on the will. If a person wants to come close to Hashem through some holy means, for example, through the guidance of a Tzaddik or through the Land of Israel, then these things will certainly help him get close to Hashem. But, if it is not a person’s will to come close to Hashem, and he comes to the Tzaddik in order to mock him, or he comes to the Land of Israel to do whatever he wants there, throwing off from himself the yoke of Torah and mitzvos, G-d forbid, then the opposite effect will occur – the Tzaddik and the Land of Israel will disgorge him and he will be thrown out, as it is written (*Vayikra*, ch. 18): “So that the Land not vomit you out when you defile it.” For exactly as in the analogy of a person that eats something which isn’t fit for consumption and how his body will vomit it out; so too, the Tzaddik and the Land of Israel will disgorge him and he will be expelled.

If we find a person who had originally been close to a Tzaddik but afterwards distanced himself from him, we should know that his initial coming close to the Tzaddik was not sincere (*Sefer HaMiddos*, ch. Tzaddik). One needs *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) to be able to remain close to the Tzaddik and not distance himself from him. And with respect to the Land of Israel, one should not think that he will be free from the *yetzer hara* and not need to do battle with it there. Just the opposite! In the Land of Israel there is more of a battle against the *yetzer hara*, since in the Land the *yetzer hara* is extremely

strong and it clothes itself in things which appear to be mitzvos but are actually not; and it uses this ploy to a much greater extent than it does outside the Land. As the holy Rebbe Rabbi Mendel Vitebsker once remarked when he moved to the Land of Israel, that when he was living outside the Land he always thought that the *Satan* (*yetzer hara*) was found outside the Land and only the Satan's emissaries were in the Land. But when he began living in the Land of Israel, it became apparent to him that the *Satan* is found in the Land and his emissaries are outside the Land. For the holier something is, the lower it falls. And the Land of Israel is precisely where the *klippos* (impurities) are the strongest. Therefore, one needs to come to the Land of Israel with a strong will to come close to Hashem and then the essence of the Land will help him truly come close to Him. But if one's will to come close to Hashem is not strong, in the end the Land of Israel will disgorge him. We see with our own eyes how many people flee from the Land of Israel and go to other lands because they are unable to find a place for themselves there. The same dynamic applies with coming close to the Tzaddik. If one does not come with the sincere intent to come close to Hashem through the guidance of the Tzaddik, then the Tzaddik will disgorge him and he will no longer be able to remain with the Tzaddik. Therefore, happy is the one who does not deceive himself, but dedicates himself totally to come close to every holy thing. And in good time, a very awesome holiness will be drawn upon him and he will merit to come close to Hashem in truth.

Mohorosh said that according to the words of Rebbe Nachman an awesome and wonderful secret is hidden in the words of the spies – “A Land which devours its inhabitants”. And the secret is that by living in the Land of Israel, each and every person's essence is transformed into the essence of the Land itself. If such a wonderful teaching is hidden in the spies' words, then in what way did they fail? And why should we even begin to look at their words in a negative way? But the matter is as explained at the end of Rebbe Nachman's lesson above: It all depends on a person's will. If a person has the will to sincerely come close to Hashem and he also has the proper *hischazkus* to strengthen himself no matter what he goes through in life, even in situations which appear bad to him, then in the end he will be included within the light of holy *emunah* and see with his own eyes how everything turns into good. But if he does not have a sincere desire to come close to Hashem and lacks the proper *hischazkus*, then as soon as things start not going his way, he will become very broken and he will flee from holiness. And this is what happened to the spies. They saw “a Land which devours its inhabitants”: In its simple meaning, many of the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the Land, had

died. But if they had had a strong will and true *hischazkus*, they would have believed that it was all for their good. And in the end, they would have understood how Hashem did them a wonderful favor by causing the Canaanites to be distracted and preoccupied with burying their dead. But, because they didn't have the proper *hischazkus*, they imagined that Hashem had decreed evil against them. So they thought, "Why do we need to enter the Land of Israel only to die?" But Yehoshua and Kalev, who both had a different spirit, were equipped with true *hischazkus* which they constantly received from Moshe Rabbeinu. They were therefore able to nullify themselves totally, feeling no need to ask difficult questions about what lay before them. In this way, they merited what they merited: Yehoshua brought the Jewish people into the Land of Israel and Kalev received a beautiful inheritance – the city of Chevron. Everything depends on a person's will and *hischazkus*!

And this is how Rabbi Efraim'l from Peshedborzh zat'zal, author of the book "Oneg Shabbos", explains what we find in our parsha regarding the spies bringing back with them some of the fruit of the Land, whereas Yehoshua and Kalev brought nothing back. It seems to be difficult to understand how Yehoshua and Kalev fulfilled the words of Moshe Rebbeinu who commanded all twelve of the spies: "Strengthen yourselves and take from the fruit of the Land." Rabbi Efraim'l explains that the spies merely fulfilled the second part of Moshe Rabbeinu's command, namely, "take from the fruit of the Land." But they forgot completely about the "Strengthen yourselves" part. But this was the main part! The main thing was that they should have true *hischazkus*, to know what was before them and to bring back a positive report that would strengthen the Jewish nation. On the other hand, Yehoshua and Kalev fulfilled the essence of "Strengthen yourselves" entirely because they had true *hischazkus* in understanding that all that Hashem does is for the good. And how did they fulfill "take from the fruit of the Land"? By having the proper *hischazkus*, they automatically took from the fruit of the Land because they took the essence of the spiritual illumination of the Land which is the illumination of holy *emunah*. What more beautiful fruit than that can be found anywhere! And in this way, they merited what they merited.

Mohorosh said that this is a profound teaching for everyone in every generation: How one needs true *hischazkus* in everything he goes through. For a person does not know what awaits him in life. And when the groom stands under the *chuppah* he can't dream of what will be in the coming days. But when he prepares himself with true *hischazkus*, that is, in everything he

goes through in life he will run to Hashem in prayer and believe that the hand of Hashem is treasured away in everything, then it will be a good and sweet life and he will merit to cleave to Hashem with a true attachment. This is not the case for one who believes that everything in life should go according to his will. For as soon as things do not go as planned, he becomes completely broken. A person like this will be so broken and weak that he will not be able to hold his ground in life.

The essential level of a person is measured only according to his *hischazkus*, as once expressed by Rebbe Nachman when he said: “The main thing is what we call ‘*derhalten sich* (holding oneself strong).” And Reb Nosson once gave an amazing talk on *hischazkus* in which he related that all the Tzaddikim reached their levels only through the trait of *hischazkus* and he said, “How did Moshe Rebbeinu reach his level? Only through his having the trait of *hischazkus*. How did Rebbe Shimon bar Yochai reach his level? Only through his having the trait of *hischazkus*. How did the Arizal reach his level? Only through his having the trait of *hischazkus*. How did Rebbe Nachman reach his level? Only through his having the trait of *hischazkus*. And he concluded, How did I come to what I have come to? Only through my having the trait of *hischazkus*.” For over all of the Tzaddikim passed suffering and afflictions, disputes and controversy within their own homes and without. But through holding their ground and not complaining about the ways of Hashem, G-d forbid, and by strengthening themselves and accepting everything with love, they came to what they came to. But if a person complains and speaks harshly about Hashem’s ways, G-d forbid, in the end he was suffer a great fall, as we find regarding Levi (*Talmud Sotah 53a*) that he spoke harshly against heaven and as a result became lame in one leg. For although his intentions were good in praying for rain, he did not pray for it in the proper way, i.e. in the form of supplication and begging for compassion. Instead he said to Hashem, “Have you gone up to the heavens and forgotten Your children?” As a result he was punished by falling to the ground and becoming lame. For a person always needs to beg for compassion before Hashem and afterwards to believe that everything Hashem does is for the good. And then he will have true *hischazkus* and be very successful all the days of his life. May Hashem help us to acquire the trait of true *hischazkus* and to hold our ground no matter what, until we merit to see the redemption and salvation of Israel with the coming of our righteous Moshiach swiftly in our days. *Amen v’amen*.