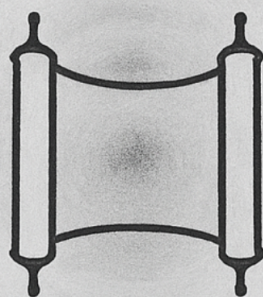


בס"ד

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Horodak
Parshas Vayera**



Dedicated To:

טנייה מלכה בת דינה דבורה
דפואה שלמה

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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz Parshas Vayera

Introduction

In this Maamer, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok delves into the mysterious balance between faith and understanding, between revelation and concealment. He reveals that the very act of divine opposition—when God seems to hide or contradict Himself—is not a punishment, but the ultimate aid to human growth. True spiritual ascent, he teaches, is born not of clarity but of resistance. By exploring Avraham Avinu's trials, especially the Akeidah, the Maamer exposes the deep spiritual truth that all divine opposites, all seeming paradoxes of good and evil, converge in one place—within the boundless, simple will of Hashem.

In the Midrash, Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha opened: “An altar of earth you shall make for Me, and you shall offer upon it, etc.” A person makes an altar and offers upon it burnt offerings and peace offerings, and it is said about him, “In every place where I cause My Name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.” Avraham our father, who offered himself—how much more so, as it is said, “And Hashem appeared to him.”

This can be explained by first introducing two questions raised by the commentators: Why was the test of the Akeidah called by Avraham's name and not Yitzchak's, who gave his life to Him, as Rashi explains on “After these things,” that they were Yishmael's words, and Yitzchak replied that he would give himself for His Name.

The second question: Why is Avraham's trial in Ur Kasdim not mentioned in Scripture?

But the matter is known from our Sages' saying: “Whoever is greater than his fellow, his evil inclination is greater than he.” And they said, “A person's inclination overcomes him daily; were it not that the Holy One, blessed be He, helps him, he could not overcome it,” as it is written, “The wicked watches for the righteous and seeks to slay him; Hashem will not abandon him.”

And behold, the author of *Akeidas Yitzchak* explains the verse “I will make for him a help opposite him” that sometimes opposition itself is the help—for without opposition, “this opposite that,” as God made, there would be no free choice, reward, or punishment.

במדרש פתח רבי יצחק נפחא כותב "מזבח אדמה תעשה לי והעלית עלי וגו'". אדם עושה מזבח וזוהב עליו עולות ושלמים נאמר עליו "בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי אבוא אליך וברכתיד". אברהם אבינו שזבח את עצמו על אחת כמה וכמה שנאמר "וירא אליו ה'".

ויתפרש הענין בהקדים תרין תמוהי דמדפר דכירי המפרשים למה הוזכר נסיון העקדה על שם אברהם ולא על שם יצחק שמסר את נפשו אליו ויתברך בפירוש רש"י ז"ל "אחר הדברים" הם דברי ישמעאל והשיבו יצחק שמסר עצמו על שמו.

והתמיהה השנית למה לא הוזכר נסיון אברהם באור כשדים.

אכל הענין ידוע מאמרם ז"ל כל הגדול מחבירו יצרו גדול ממנו ואמרו גם כן יצרו של אדם מתגבר עליו בכל יום אלמלא הקדוש ברוך הוא עוזרו לא היה יכול לו שנאמר "צופה רשע לצדיק ומבקש להמיתו". ה' לא יעזבנו.

והנה אמר בעל העקידה על פסוק "אעשה לו עזר כנגדו" יש שהתנגדות היא העזר שאלמלא ההתנגדות "את זה לעמת זה עשה האלהים" היה בטול הבחירה שזכר ועונש.

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Or, according to what we explained elsewhere, there would be no possibility of pleasure, for constant delight is no delight, or one could not bear the delight of perception without the movement of “running and returning,” which is the resistance.

The general principle: according to the measure of one's greatness in comprehension and service, so too is the measure of nullification and opposition made—small for the small, great for the great—so that through it he may reach the assistance mentioned above.

But with what is he helped through his fall into opposition, Heaven forbid? The main thing is through great and simple faith without any reason or logic at all, for in that very comprehension and service he already fell to its opposite. Therefore, he should strengthen himself with great and simple faith with firmness.

And this is the help that the Holy One, blessed be He, gives every person each day against the evil inclination—by granting him faith, to strengthen himself in Him, blessed be He, and through it he will rise upon his support.

With this, the question of “a righteous man who prospers, and a righteous man who suffers” is resolved. For Hashem, who examines hearts, knows that sometimes the opposing force to a person's level of comprehension and service is such that he cannot withstand it or rise from his fall within that opposition to strengthen himself in faith as mentioned.

Therefore, He prepares for him a cure before the wound—to harm or to benefit—and through that cause the faith will be strengthened. Or the opposition itself will not strike him harshly because of the suffering or poverty, which themselves become causes of the fear of Hashem and the nullification of lusts and false beliefs.

And behold, after we truly know that sin and distancing from Him are more bitter than death and suffering—for suffering and death cleanse sins and are the healing of the wound—it follows that the wound itself is worse than the pain of its remedy.

או לפי דברינו במקום אחר ה'ה בטול התענוג כי תענוג תמיד אינו תענוג או שלא ה'ה יכול לסבל תענוג ההשגה בלי רצוא ושוב שהיא ההתנגדות.

כלל דמלתא לפי ערך גדל ההשגה והעבודה כן הבטול וההתנגדות נעשים הקטן לפי קטנו והגדול לפי גדלו כדי שיבוא אל העזר הנ"ל.

אבל במה הוא נעזר מנפילתו בהתנגדות חס ושלום, העקר הוא על ידי האמונה הגדולה והפשטה בלי שום טעם וסברות כלל, שהרי באותה השגה והעבודה שהשיג כבר נפל לשכונגדה. לכן יראה להתחזק באמונה הגדולה והפשטה בחזקה.

ונתנו העזר שהקדוש ברוך הוא עוזר לכל אדם בכל יום נגד היצר הרע, בהשפעתו לאדם את האמונה הזאת להתחזק בו יתברך, ועל ידה יקום על משענתו.

ובנה יתרוצץ קשית "צדיק וטוב לו, צדיק ורע לו." שהרי בוחן לבבות ה' יודע, שפעם ההתנגדות "את זה לעמת זה" של השגה ועבודה אחת היא כל כך גדולה שלא יוכל לעמוד בה, ולא יוכל קום מנפילתו באותו ההתנגדות, ולהתחזק באמונה כנזכר.

לכן מקדים לו רפואה למכה להרע או להיטיב, ועל ידי אותה סיבה תתחזק האמונה. או שההתנגדות עצמה לא תחול עליו בדרך כל כך מפני היסורים או העני, שהם בעצמם סיבת יראה ה' ובטול התאוות והאמונות הכוזבות.

והנה אחר ידיעתנו באמת שהעבירה וההתרחקות מאתו יתברך היא רעה ומרה ממון ויסורים, שהרי היסורים והמיתה ממרקים העבירות והם רפואת המכה, ממילא ידוע שהמכה גרועה מיסורי הרפואה.

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Thus, “a righteous man who suffers” can mean that his suffering and pain are his debt and the healing of his wound—the opposition to his service and comprehension—perhaps in a way he could not stand against it, and without the suffering and poverty that weaken the opposing force, he could not rise.

But “a righteous man who prospers” is one for whom the opposing force corresponding to his intellect, service, and path does not require the reinforcement of suffering—for without them, he can still stand firm against it.

And this is a matter that no creature can estimate, for each one is scorched by the canopy of his fellow; but before Him, blessed be He, all is revealed and known—“He who fashions their hearts together, Who understands...” (Tehillim 33:15).

And as our Sages said concerning the extreme poverty of Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas, when it was asked before Heaven whether his fortune might be changed, even through a re-creation of the worlds, perhaps it would coincide with an hour of sustenance.

And the matter is as we have said—that corresponding to the comprehension and service of Rabbi Elazar ben Pedas, the opposing force was proportionate. Whether one can stand against that opposition without suffering, or whether it can only be with the afflictions of poverty.

And behold, the trial of the Akeidah, as brought in the Midrashim and Rashi, was that Avraham could have questioned His ways. As Rabbi Abba said: Avraham said, “I will lay out my plea before You—yesterday You said, ‘For in Yitzchak shall seed be called to you,’ and You turned and said, ‘Take your son’; and now You say, ‘Do not send your hand.’”

This appeared as a change of will in the Creator, Heaven forbid—which is the root of heresy, Heaven forbid—and likewise all the questions of “a righteous man who suffers,” contrary to what seems just or promised by the Torah, and all false beliefs.

ומעשה "צדיק ורע לו" אפשר לומר שהרעה והיסורים הם חובתו ורפואת מכתו שהיא ההתנגדות ועבודתו והשגתו "את זה לעמת זה" אולי באופן שלא היה יכול לעמד נגדם ובנפלו לא יוסיף קום, אם לא על ידי היסורים והדלות שמת'שים כח ההתנגדות בנזק.

ו"צדיק וטוב לו" הוא כי "את זה לעמת זה" שפגגד שכלו ועבודתו ודרכו אינו צריך חזיק היסורים ובלתם יכול לעמד פגגד.

וזהו דבר שאין שום בריה יכולה לשער, שהרי כל אחד נכה מחפתו של חברו, אבל לפניו יתברך גלוי וידיוע, "היוצר יחד לבם המבין" וגו'

וכאמרם ז"ל על גדל העניית של רבי אלעזר בן פדת, שהשיבו לו בספיקא קמי שמא, אפלו על ידי חזרת פריאת עולמות מחדש אולי יתרמי בשעתא דמזוני.

והענין הוא פדברינו, שפגגד השגת רבי אלעזר בן פדת שכלו ועבודתו, ההתנגדות מזה, אשר "את זה לעמת זה", אם אפשר לעמד פגגד בלי יסורין, או אולי שאי אפשר אם לא על ידי יסורי עני

והנה נסיון העקדה הובא במדרשים וברש"י ז"ל, שהנה לו לאברהם להרהר אחר מדותיו, והוא שאמר רבי אבא, אמר אברהם "אפריש לפניך את שיתי, אתמול אמרת לי כי ביצחק יקרא לה זרע, וחזרת ואמרת קח נא את בנך, ועכשו אתה אומר לי אל "תשלח ידך".

שהוא כאלו שנוי רצון אצל הבורא יתברך חס ושלום, שהוא שרש הפירה חס ושלום, וכן כל הששיות "צדיק ורע לו" הפך מן הראוי והבטחת התורה או שאר קשיות ואמונות הפוזבות

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For “this opposite that” God made—against every attachment and comprehension of His truth and wisdom. And as Rashi said: concerning the serpent, “More cunning than all”—cursed more than all. According to his cunning and greatness was his downfall.

אשר "את זה לעמת זה עשה האלהים", נגד כל דבקות והשגת אמיתותו בהכמתו, וכמאמר רש"י ז"ל על הנחש "היה ערום מכל", ארור מכל, לפי ערמתו וגדולתו היתה מפלתו.

But Avraham our father, peace be upon him, stood firm in the test and did not doubt the faith in his comprehension of His words, though they seemed reversed. He strengthened himself in the truth of the great and mighty faith in His simple will.

אבל אברהם אבינו עליו השלום עמד בנסיון ולא הרהר אחר האמונה בהשגתו את דבריו ותברך שמים מהפוכים, והתחזק באמת האמונה הגדולה והתחזקה בראיונו הפשוט ותברך.

For His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways; we do not understand His words or His governance at all. And all apparent evils from Him are true goods, and all that seems reversed—everything goes to one place.

פי "לא מחשבותיו מחשבותיכם ולא דרכיו דרכיכם", ואין הבריות מבינים דבריו והנהגתו כלל, וכל הרעות הנדמיות מאתו ותברך הן טובות אמיתיות, וכל דבריו הנראים מהפוכים הפל אל מקום אחד הולך.

They are all without any change or alteration, Heaven forbid; what is not understood stems from us, for no comprehension can grasp His words or the meaning of His expressions.

והן המה בלי שום שנוי ותמורה חס ושלום, ומה שאינו מובן הדבר רק הוא מכם, שאין שום השגה יכולה להשיג דבריו ותברך ופרוש מלותיו.

They call evil good and good evil—and all the more so His thoughts are not understood, and even more so His simple will.

אומרים לרע טוב ולטוב רע, וכל שכן שאין מובנות מחשבותיו, וכל שכן ראיונו הפשוט.

And with this faith, Avraham our father, peace be upon him, strengthened himself and did not rely on his own understanding. He stood firm in the test, not questioning Him, blessed be He. The general principle is that the essence of all tests lies in faith, as it is said, “To test you, to know what is in your heart.”

ובאמונה זו התחזק אברהם אבינו עליו השלום ולא סמך על השגתו ועמד בנסיון שלא להרהר אחריו ותברך, כלל לא דמלתא עיקר הנסיונות הם באמונה, "כמאמר" לנסותה לדעת את אשר בלבבך.

All the tests that Avraham our father, peace be upon him, experienced were in this manner, such as the famine: at first He said, “Go forth,” and afterward it appeared as though there was a change of will when famine came upon that very place, as Rashi explains—and so with them all.

וכל הנסיונות שהיו לאברהם אבינו עליו השלום היו על דרך זה, כמו הרעב, שאמר בתחלה "לך לך", ואחר כך נתדמה שנוי רצון בהביאו רעב למקום ההוא, כפירוש רש"י ז"ל וכן כלם.

But the test of self-sacrifice for His sake, after knowing that He is the Creator—He said and it came to be; He commanded to give one's life and to offer oneself for Him—who would not listen or desire to obey? Though this too is a test, it is not on the level of our holy forefathers.

אבל נסיון מסירת נפש עבורו ותברך אחר הדיעה פי הוא הבורא, הוא אומר ויהי, והוא צוה למסור נפשו ולזבח עצמו עבורו ותברך—מי לא ישמע ומי לא יאבה לו ותברך, אם אף גם הוא נסיון, אבל לא לפי ערך אבותינו הקדושים.

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Likewise, the questions of the world—even the slightest ones—if the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself had told a person to sacrifice himself for Him, and he knew with certainty that these were the words of Hashem, surely he would obey. Therefore, the two tests mentioned above are not recorded in the Torah.

As our Sages said, the Torah should not have begun except from “This month shall be for you,” but “He told His people the power of His deeds.” For the Torah is eternal and applies in every generation and every person who contemplates and reflects upon the actions described in the Torah—His attributes and His governance of the lower world through supreme wisdom.

To bring forth the pure from the impure and the good from the bad, for all severities are kindnesses, and all flows to one place. The root of all is His simple will, in His great and steadfast faith.

Through this, all severities are sweetened in kindnesses, for by this faith one pierces to the depths, joining all the attributes into oneness. From there, blessing and flow extend—through His firm faith—and afterward one perceives His words revealed as not reversed.

As Hashem answered Avraham there, according to Rashi's interpretation, from the source of blessings all worlds are automatically blessed, even down to the lowest world and the smallest creature of the sea.

And this is the opening of Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha: “In every place where I cause My Name to be mentioned.” For the word “Name” refers to the feminine, the Shechinah, and the word “I cause to be mentioned” is masculine.

The meaning is: in every place where the names—the feminine and masculine, the severities and kindnesses—are united, “I will come to you and bless you”: a blessing and flow in spiritual comprehension, and the physical blessing follows naturally.

וכן קשיות העולם אפלו קלות, אם השם יתברך היה אומר לו בעצמו שיזבח את עצמו עבורו, והיה יודע שהם דברי השם יתברך, בודאי היה שומע לו. ולכן לא הוזכרו בתורה שני הנסיונות הנזכרים לעיל.

באמרם ז"ל שלא היתה צריכה להתחיל את התורה אלא מ"החדש הזה לכם", אבל "פח מעשיו הגיד לעמו". כי התורה לעולם עומדת ונוהגת בכל דור ודור ובכל אדם על ידי הסתכלותו והתבוננותו במעשה הכתוב בתורה, מדותיו יתברך והנהגתו בעולם השפל בהכמה העליונה.

לתת טהור מטמא ומרע טוב, וכל הגבורות הם חסדים, והכל אל מקום אחד הולך, ושרש כלם רצונו הפשוט באמונתו הפשוטה הגדולה והחזקה.

ובזה מתמקמים כל הגבורות בחסדים, שהרי באמונה זו נוקב עד התהום ומשלב כל המדות ליחד לאחד, ומשם מתברך ונשפע אמונתו יתברך החזקה, ואחר כך מבין דבריו יתברך בהתגלות שאינם מהפוכים.

כמו שהשיב השם יתברך לאברהם אבינו שם בפירוש רש"י ז"ל, וממקור הברכות ממילא מתברכים כל העולמות עד העולם השפל והשלישול הקטן שבים.

וזהו פתיחת רבי יצחק נפתא, שאמר "בכל המקום אשר אזכיר את שמי", פידוע שמלת "שם" היא נוקבא ושכינה, ומלת "אזכיר" היא לשון זכר.

ופירוש: בכל המקום שמתקדים השמות הנוקבא בזכר והגבורות בחסדים, "אבוא אליך וברכתך"—ברכה והשפעה בהשגה, והגשמיית ממילא מתברכת.

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And what it says, “Avraham, who offered himself,” refers to the test of faith mentioned above—the most bitter trial, worse than death and offering. And this is what is meant by “And Hashem appeared to him”: the revelation and partial understanding of His ways.

ומה שנהזכיר לשון "אברהם שזבח את עצמו" הוא פירוש נסיון האמונה הנזכר לעיל, הגרוע והמרממות וזכייה, וזהו שאמר "וירא אליו ה'."—בהתגלות ובהבנת קצת דרכיו יתברך.

[NOTE Summary

The Maamer begins with Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha's Midrash: “An altar of earth you shall make for Me.” It explains that when a man offers sacrifices to God, He promises, “In every place where I cause My Name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.” If this is true for one who merely offers an animal, how much more so for Avraham, who “offered himself.”

From here, Rabbi Menachem Mendel explains two puzzling points. Why is the test of the Akeidah attributed to Avraham, not Yitzchak, who actually gave his life? And why is Avraham's test in the fiery furnace of Ur Kasdim not mentioned in the Torah? The answer: the greater the person, the greater the opposition he faces—“Whoever is greater than his fellow, his evil inclination is greater than he.” This resistance is not merely an obstacle; it is the “help opposite him” created by God to preserve free choice and deepen divine pleasure. Without resistance, there would be no joy, no reward, and no meaning in faith or service.

The Maamer reveals that the essence of all trials is *emunah peshutah*—simple faith. When intellect and understanding collapse, faith alone sustains man. This is the true assistance that God grants each person daily: the inner power to stand firm against his yetzer hara through faith. Even the questions of “Tzaddik v'ra lo” (why the righteous suffer) are rooted in this. Suffering and poverty, he explains, are not punishments but mercies. They weaken the overpowering resistance that might otherwise crush a soul. What appears as “evil” is in fact the medicine for one's spiritual ailment—the “opposite” force that drives deeper reliance on God.

In the example of Rabbi Elazar ben Peda, whose poverty was legendary, Heaven revealed that his suffering could not be removed—not even by recreating the worlds anew—for it perfectly balanced his immense spiritual comprehension. Every person's challenge, every concealment, is precisely tailored to the soul's light.

Avraham Avinu embodies this. His greatest test was not physical self-sacrifice, but the trial of faith. When commanded to offer Yitzchak, it appeared as if God had contradicted His own promise—“for in Yitzchak shall your seed be called.” This seeming change of divine will is the root of all heresy, for it challenges reason itself. Yet Avraham stood unwavering. He did not question; he did not rely on understanding. Instead, he drew upon *emunah gedolah ve'chazakah*—the great, steadfast faith in God's simple will—trusting that “His thoughts are not our thoughts.” He knew that what appears reversed or cruel is, in truth, good, that all contradictions flow to one place, the unified purpose of divine kindness.

Thus, the ultimate test is not martyrdom but maintaining faith when intellect falters. Self-sacrifice is natural once God is clearly known; faith in the face of confusion is infinitely higher. That is why the Torah omits

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Pri Ha'Eretz

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certain trials—because it is eternal and meant for every soul in every generation. Its purpose is not to recount history but to awaken divine perception within each person: to see that all forces, even severity and darkness, are rooted in His kindness and oneness.

When a person learns to perceive that “all gevurot (judgments) are chasadim (kindnesses),” the opposites within him are unified, and the channels of blessing open. Through faith, one “pierces to the depths,” integrating all divine attributes into harmony, until the seeming contradictions of life reveal their hidden good. From this unified source, all worlds—from the highest heavens to the smallest creature—are blessed.

This is the meaning of Rabbi Yitzchak Nafcha’s verse: “In every place where I cause My Name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you.” “Name” (shem) alludes to the Shechinah, the feminine, while “I will cause to be mentioned” (azkir) is masculine. When the masculine and feminine unite—when kindness joins judgment—God says, “I will come to you and bless you.” The very merging of opposites brings blessing.

The final insight: when the Torah describes Avraham as “one who offered himself,” it refers not to physical sacrifice but to the trial of faith—the hardest of all tests, “more bitter than death itself.” And when it concludes, “And Hashem appeared to him,” it signifies that after faith is tested and proven, God grants understanding—He reveals that what once seemed reversed was never contradictory at all.

Practical Takeaway

Faith is not blind surrender; it is the soul’s deepest vision. When your life feels contradictory—when what God asks seems to oppose His own promises—remember Avraham. The highest service is to believe through confusion. Every concealment, every hardship, is perfectly measured to help you discover your own divine resilience. Trusting beyond comprehension is what transforms pain into light.

Chassidic Story

It is told of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok that once, during his exile in Tiberias, he lived in great poverty. His students saw that he had nothing to eat and wept. When they finally brought him a piece of dry bread, he lifted his eyes and said joyfully, “How sweet is this gift from the Creator! The very hunger was His kindness—to let me taste how faith alone can sustain the soul.”

In that moment, he began to sing softly, tears shining in his eyes: “Master of the world, Your sweetness hides in Your concealment.” His students later said that from that day, their teacher’s face radiated a light that words could not capture.

END NOTE]