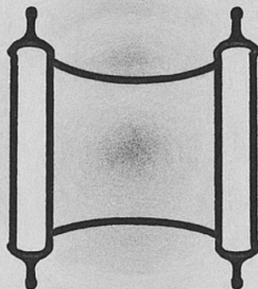


בס"ד

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Horodak
Parshas Shemos**



*Dedicated in Honor of the
Yahrzeit of the
Alter Rebbe 24th of Tevet*

לע"נ

רבי שניאור זלמן בן רבי ברוך

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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

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Introduction

Menachem Mendel Horodaker was among the senior chassidim of the Alter Rebbe and the Mittlerer Rebbe, known for his penetrating inner analysis of avodah, humility, and the dangers of subtle spiritual selfhood. In this maamar, beginning with Moses' anguished words, "And Moses returned to the Lord and said, 'My Lord, why have You done evil to this people, why is this that You sent me,'" he probes the inner psychology of leadership, speech, and faith. Rather than reading Moses' words as complaint, the Horodaker uncovers a profound self-critique rooted in extreme humility: a fear that imperfect inner cleaving to God can distort even holy speech and deepen exile instead of ending it. This introduction sets the stage for a searching exploration of why resistance, opposition, and apparent failure are not contradictions to redemption, but essential instruments through which true divine revelation emerges.

And Moses returned to the Lord and said, "My Lord, why have You done evil to this people, why is this that You sent me." (Exodus 5:22)

וַיָּשָׁב מֹשֶׁה אֶל אֲדֹנָי וַיֹּאמֶר אֲדֹנָי לְמָה הִרְעַתָּה
(לְעַם הַזֶּה לְמָה זֶה שָׁלַחְתָּנִי. (שמות ה:כב

And Rashi, of blessed memory, explains: and if you say, what concern is it of yours, I complain about the fact that You sent me.

וַיִּפְרֹשׁ רַשִׁי זְכוּרוֹנוֹ לְבִרְכָה: וְאִם תֹּאמַר מַה אֲכַפֵּת
(לָךְ, קוֹבֵל אֲנִי עַל שִׁשְׁלַחְתָּנִי. (רש"י שם

And behold, the ethical lesson is simple and clear, that no person should ask and insert himself into a matter that is not his.

וְהִנֵּה הַמוֹסֵר פְּשׁוּט וְהַשֶּׁכֶל שָׂאִין לְשׁוּם אָדָם לְשִׂאוֹל
וּלְהַכְנִיֵס עֲצָמוֹ בְּדַבָּר שֶׁאֵינוֹ שְׁלוֹ

And even Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, for whom it could be said that he suffered in the suffering of Israel, for he encompassed all, the entirety of Israel,

וְאֶפְלוּ מֹשֶׁה רַבְּנוּ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם, שֶׁהִיָּה אֶפְשָׁר לוֹמַר
שֶׁהוּא מְצַטְעֵר בְּצָרַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, כִּי הוּא הַכּוֹלֵל הַכֹּל
כָּלֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל

And nevertheless, what concern is it of yours, as in the statement: "Concerning My children and the work of My hands, you command Me." (Isaiah 45:11)

וְאֵף עַל פִּי כֵן מַה אֲכַפֵּת לָךְ, כְּמֵאמֶר: עַל בְּנֵי וְעַל
(פְּעַל יְדֵי תְצַוּוּנִי. (ישעיהו מה:יא

Which is like one who becomes involved in a dispute that is not his, what concern is it of yours.

וְשֶׁהוּא כְּמֵתְעַבֵּר עַל רִיב לֹא לוֹ, מַה אֲכַפֵּת לָךְ

But the truth is, behold, Scripture testifies about Moses our teacher: "And the man Moses was exceedingly humble." (Numbers 12:3)

אָבָל הָאֱמֶת, הִנֵּה הָעֵיד הַכְּתוּב עַל מֹשֶׁה רַבְּנוּ:
(וְהָאִישׁ מֹשֶׁה עָנּוּ מְאֹד. (במדבר יב:ג

And in the place where you find his greatness, there you find his humility. (Megillah 31a)

וּבְמָקוֹם שֶׁאֲתָה מוֹצֵא גְדוּלְתוֹ שָׁם אֲתָה מוֹצֵא
(עֲנֻתָנוּתוֹ). (מגילה לא ע"א

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At the time when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "Go, and I will send you to Pharaoh, and take My people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt," (Exodus 3:10)

בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁאָמַר לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְמֹשֶׁה: לֵךְ וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֶל פַּרְעֹה וְהוֹצֵא אֶת עַמִּי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. (שמות ג:י)

Moses said: "Please, my Lord, I am not a man of words... please send by the hand You will send." (Exodus 4:10, 13)

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה בִּי אֲדֹנָי לֹא אִישׁ דְּבָרִים אֲנֹכִי כֹי שְׁלַח (נָא בְיַד תִּשְׁלַח). (שמות ד:י, יג)

For Moses was lowly in his own eyes to arouse the Children of Israel, knowing that redemption is impossible

שֶׁהָיָה מֹשֶׁה שָׁפֵל בְּעֵינָיו מִלְּעוֹרֵר אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּיָדוּעַ מִבְּלִתֵּי אֶפְשָׁרוֹת הַגְּאֻלָּה.

Unless there is an awakening from below, as in the statement: "So that they will believe that the Lord, the God of their fathers, has appeared to you." (Exodus 4:5)

אֲלֵא אִם כֵּן בְּאִתְעָרוּתָא דְלַתְתָּא, כְּמֵאמַר: לְמַעַן (יֵאמְרִינוּ כִּי נִרְאָה אֱלֹהֵי ה'). (שמות ד:ה)

For it is known that the essence of redemption is faith, and through the merit of faith they are redeemed. (Mechilta, Beshalach)

שְׁכִי יָדוּעַ שֶׁעֲקָרוֹ הוּא הָאֱמוּנָה, וּבְזָכוֹת אֱמוּנָה (נִגְאָלִים). (מכילתא דרשב"י, בשלח)

For the entire essence of exile is the absence of faith and its diminishment, for one looks only to nature, as is known from the matter of the Egyptian exile.

לְהִיּוֹת כָּל עֵיקַר הַגְּלוּת הוּא הַעֲדָר אֱמוּנָה וְשִׁבְחָתָהּ, כִּי אִם לְהִשְׁגִּיחַ עַל הַטִּבַּע, בְּיָדוּעַ מַעַנְנֵי גְלוּת מִצְרַיִם.

For they were sunk in their souls in the depths of the husks, and had the Holy One, blessed be He, not taken Israel out at that time, they would have been enslaved forever, Heaven forbid, "they shall serve them forever."

שֶׁהָיוּ נִטְבָּעִים בְּנַפְשׁוֹתָם בְּעוֹמְקֵי הַקְּלָפוֹת, וְאֵלּוּ לֹא הוֹצִיא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאוֹתָהּ שְׁעָה. הָיוּ מְשַׁעֲבָדִים חֹס וְשָׁלוֹם לְעוֹלָם, בְּהֵם יַעֲבֹדוּ.

For it is known that they were already at the ultimate depth of impurity, and redemption was impossible

בְּיָדוּעַ שֶׁכָּבֵר הָיוּ בְּתַקְלִית עוֹמְקַת הַקְּלָפָה, וְלֹא הָיְתָה אֶפְשָׁרוֹת הַגְּאֻלָּה.

Unless they would be transformed from one extreme to the other, from the forty nine gates of impurity to the forty seven gates of understanding, which is complete redemption,

אֲלֵא אִם כֵּן שִׁיתְהַפְּכוּ מִקְּצֵה אֶל קְצֵה, שֶׁהוּא מִמ"ט שַׁעְרֵי טְמֵאָה אֶל מ"ז שַׁעְרֵי בִּינָה, שֶׁהוּא הַגְּאֻלָּה הַשְּׁלֵמָה.

That they should believe in the Lord, to know Him, and after being a generation of knowledge they would succeed to redemption,

שִׁיאֲמִינוּ בֵּה' לְדַעַת אוֹתוֹ, וְאֶתְרֵי הָיוּתָם דּוֹר דָּעָה אֲזַי יִצְלִיחוּ לְגְאֻלָּה.

As in the statement: "And this shall be your sign... when you take the people out of Egypt, you shall serve God on this mountain." (Exodus 3:12)

כְּמֵאמַר: וְזֶה לָךְ הָאוֹת כֹּי בְּהוֹצִיאָךָ אֶת הָעָם מִמִּצְרַיִם תַּעֲבֹדוּן אֶת הָאֱלֹהִים עַל הַהָר הַזֶּה. (שמות ג:יב)

And behold, Moses our teacher, who was able to place through his speech matters that emerge from the heart to enter their hearts with ultimate faith,

וְהִנֵּה מֹשֶׁה רַבְּנוּ עָלֵינוּ הַשָּׁלוֹם, שֶׁיְכוֹל לְהַכְנִים בְּדַבּוּרוֹ דְּבָרִים הַיוֹצְאִים מִן הַלֵּב לְהַכְנִים בְּלִבָּם הָאֱמוּנָה הַתַּקְלִיתִית.

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<p>Did not assess himself due to the magnitude of his lowliness, for he did not consider himself fit for all of them,</p>	<p>לא שער בנפשו מגדל השפלות, שלא היה מחזיק עצמו לכלם.</p>
<p>As our Sages said: one who has fear of Heaven, his words are heard. (Berakhot 6b)</p>	<p>כְּאָמְרוּ רבוֹתֵינוּ זְכוּרֵנוּם לְבָרָכָה: מִי שֵׁישׁ בוֹ יִרְאֵת (שְׁמַיִם דְּבָרָיו נִשְׁמָעִין. (ברכות ו ע"ב</p>
<p>And the matter of fear of Heaven is cleaving and complete, true unification of all attributes to Him, blessed be He;</p>	<p>וְעִנְיֵן הִירְאֵת שְׁמַיִם הוּא הַדְּבָקוֹת וְהִיחֹד גְּמוּר הָאֲמִתִּי, כָּל הַמַּדּוֹת אֵלָיו יִתְבָּרַךְ.</p>
<p>Fear is one attribute, and "Heaven" is the attribute of love, as is known,</p>	<p>שִׁירְאָה הִיא מֵדָה אַחַת, וְשְׁמַיִם הִיא מֵדַת אַהֲבָה כְּפִדּוּעַ.</p>
<p>And after the nullification of all ego traits to Him, blessed be He, "God answers him with a voice," and his words are heard. (I Kings 18:37)</p>	<p>וְאַחֲרַי בְּטוֹל כָּל הַמְהַגִּים אֵלָיו יִתְבָּרַךְ, הָאֱלֹקִים יַעֲנֵנִי (בְּקוֹל וּדְבָרָיו נִשְׁמָעִין. (מלכים א יח:לו</p>
<p>Therefore, even one who fears Heaven, when he is engaged in fear of Heaven his words are heard, and when he is not engaged, they are not.</p>	<p>לְכוּן אֶפְלוֹ יִרְאֵ שְׁמַיִם, בְּזִמְנוֹ שֶׁהוּא יִרְאֵ שְׁמַיִם דְּבָרָיו נִשְׁמָעִין, וּבְעֵידָנָא דְלֹא עָסִיק בָּהּ לֹא.</p>
<p>But Moses our teacher said: "And I supplicated the Lord," for he did not rely on good deeds but on a free gift,</p>	<p>אָבֵל מֹשֶׁה רִבְּנוֹ אָמַר: וְאַתְחַנֵּן אֵל ה', שְׁלֹא תִלָּה (בְּמַעֲשֵׂים טוֹבִים אֲלֵא בְּמַתְנַת חֲנָם. (דברים ג:כג</p>
<p>Due to the magnitude of his comprehension of Him, blessed be He, how He is infinite, and all are as nothing before Him,</p>	<p>מִגְדָּל הַשְּׂגָתוֹ אוֹתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ, אִיד הוּא אֵין סוּף וְכָלֵם כְּאֵין נִגְדוֹ.</p>
<p>And corporealities are turbid, even the crown is dark before Him, the Cause of causes. (Zohar I, 21b)</p>	<p>וְגִשְׁמִיּוֹת עֲכוּרָה, אֶפְלוֹ פֶתֶר חֲשׂוֹף הוּא קַמִּיהַ עֲלֵת (זוהר חלק א, כא ע"ב</p>
<p>And how is it possible to achieve cleaving and complete, true unification with Him, blessed be He, so that one's words will be heard,</p>	<p>וְאִיד אֶפְשָׁרוֹת הַדְּבָקוֹת וְיִחֹד גְּמוּר בוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ לְהִיוֹת דְּבָרָיו נִשְׁמָעִין.</p>
<p>when one is corporeal, for not only will his words not help them, but on the contrary, he may damage them,</p>	<p>וְלִהְיוֹתוֹ מְגוּשָׁם, לֹא דִי שְׁלֹא יוֹעִיל בְּדְבָרָיו אֲלֵיהֶם, אֲלֵא אַף כִּי יַפְסִידֵם.</p>
<p>by detaching their hearts toward materiality, causing his words themselves to become physical,</p>	<p>לְנַתֵּק אֶת לִבָּם אֵל הַגִּשְׁם, לְהִיוֹת דְּבָרָיו גִּשְׁמִיִּים.</p>
<p>For a physical matter is like poison: if it enters the heart, even the best and choicest words</p>	<p>וְדָבָר גִּשְׁמִי הוּא כְּאָרֶס, אִם נִכְנָס בְּלֵב, אֶפְלוֹ הַטּוֹב וְהַמְבַחֵר שֶׁבְּדַבּוּרִים.</p>
<p>can become materialized through them, producing false greatness and faith,</p>	<p>אֶפְשָׁר לְהִתְגַּשֵּׁם עַל יְדֵיהֶם בְּגִדְלוֹת וְאַמוּנָה כּוֹזְבוֹת.</p>
<p>and opposition grows stronger as a result.</p>	<p>וּמִתְגַּבְּרִים הַהֲתַנְגְּדוֹת עַל יְדֵי כָּךְ.</p>
<p>And behold, after the Holy One, blessed be He, compelled Moses and he spoke to them,</p>	<p>וְהִנֵּה אַחַר שֶׁהִקְרִיחַ הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא אֶת מֹשֶׁה וְדָבָר אֲלֵיהֶם.</p>
<p>Dathan and Abiram were standing and defiant against him,</p>	<p>וְהָיוּ דָתָן וְאַבִּירָם נֹצְבִים וּמִתְרִיזִים כְּנִגְדּוֹ.</p>

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<p>as Rashi, of blessed memory, explains on the word “standing,” that they stood to confront him. (Exodus 5:20)</p>	<p>פְּרוּשׁ רַשִׁי זְכוּרוֹנוֹ לְבָרָכָה עַל מַלְת נִצָּבִים (לְקִרְאָתוֹ). (שְׁמוֹת ה:כ, רַשִׁי שֵׁם</p>
<p>Moses our teacher attributed the deficiency to himself, that through the words he spoke to them, he inserted within them the venom of opposition and an intensification one against the other.</p>	<p>וְהִתְנַגְּדוֹת. וְהִתְגַּבְּרוּת זֶה לְעִמָּת זֶה. שְׁעַל יְדֵי דְבָרָיו שֶׁדָּבַר אֲלֵיהֶם הִכְנִיס בָּהֶם אָרֶס הַהִתְנַגְּדוֹת.</p>
<p>Therefore he complained and said, “Why have You done evil to this people,” meaning that he had introduced more evil into them, and “why is this that You sent me,” meaning, through sending me,</p>	<p>לָכֵן הָיָה קוֹבֵל וַיֹּאמֶר לָמָּה הִרְעַתָּה לְעַם הַזֶּה. פְּרוּשׁ שֶׁהִכְנִיס בָּהֶם רַע יוֹתֵר. וּפְרוּשׁ לָמָּה זֶה שֶׁלַּחֲתַנִּי, כִּמְהָ שֶׁשֶׁלַּחֲתַנִּי.</p>
<p>since I am lowly and corporeal, they became materialized through my words.</p>	<p>וְאֶנְכִי שְׂפֵל וּמְגוּשָׁם, נִתְגַּשְׁמוּ הֵם בְּדַבְּרֵי.</p>
<p>And the Holy One, blessed be He, answered him: “Now you shall see,” meaning that vision and revelation must come through opposition, and without this it is not discernible, as is known from the order of Creation.</p>	<p>וְהַשִּׁיב לוֹ הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא: עֵתָּה תִּרְאֶה. (שְׁמוֹת א:ו) פְּרוּשׁ שֶׁהִרְאִיָּה וְהִתְגַּלְּגוֹת צְרִיכָה לְהִיּוֹת עַל יְדֵי הַתְנַגְּדוֹת. וּבְלִי זֶה אֵינוֹ נִפְרָד, כִּיזוֹעַ מִסֵּדֶר בְּרִיאַת הָעוֹלָם.</p>
<p>Therefore, “He hardened Pharaoh’s heart,” so that “you shall tell,” for the sake of publicizing the miracle. (Exodus 10:2; Shabbat 21b)</p>	<p>(לָכֵן: וַיְחַזֵּק אֶת לֵב פְּרַעֲוֵה. (שְׁמוֹת י:ב; שַׁבָּת לְמַעַן תִּסְפָּר, מְשׁוּם פְּרִסְיָמִי נִיֶּסֶא. (שְׁמוֹת י:ב; שַׁבָּת כֹּא ע"ב</p>

[NOTE Summary:

This maamar addresses a deep paradox in the mission of Moses our teacher. On the surface, Moses appears to complain: “Why have You done evil to this people.” Rashi explains this as a protest over being sent at all. Yet the inner meaning is not rebellion, but radical humility and spiritual responsibility.

The Horodaker explains that the core of exile is not physical bondage, but the erosion of faith, when people relate only to nature and material causality. This was the essence of the Egyptian exile, where Israel had sunk to the lowest depths of spiritual impurity. Redemption was impossible unless there was a total reversal, a transformation from the forty nine gates of impurity to the gates of divine understanding and faith. Redemption depends on belief, on knowing God, and becoming a generation of awareness.

Moses understood that words which do not emerge from complete inner cleaving to God can have destructive effects. If a speaker is still bound by materiality, his words, even holy ones, may enter the listener’s heart in a

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distorted way. Instead of elevating faith, they can strengthen resistance, ego, and false religiosity. Spiritual speech, when tainted by subtle selfhood, can become like poison.

When Datan and Aviram stood defiantly against Moses, Moses did not blame them. He blamed himself. He believed that his own humility, his sense of smallness, and his fear that he lacked complete inner unity with God caused his words to be received in a corrupted form. This is why he cried, "Why have You done evil to this people," meaning, I have harmed them by speaking. "Why did You send me," meaning, my very sending caused spiritual damage.

God's response, "Now you will see," reveals a fundamental principle: revelation comes through opposition. Resistance is not a failure of the process, but a necessary stage. Just as creation itself emerged through concealment and tension, so too redemption requires confrontation, hardened hearts, and struggle. Pharaoh's resistance was strengthened not despite redemption, but in order to make revelation unmistakable and public. Only through darkness can light be clearly recognized.

Thus, Moses' complaint is transformed into reassurance. His humility was not a flaw, but his greatest virtue. The opposition he encountered was not proof of failure, but evidence that the process of redemption had truly begun.

Practical Takeaway:**

Spiritual influence demands inner integrity. Teaching, guiding, or inspiring others requires continual self examination. When resistance appears, the response is not to blame others, but to deepen one's own inner alignment. At the same time, opposition should not lead to despair. Struggle often signals that something real is unfolding. Faith grows not only through harmony, but through perseverance in the face of resistance, trusting that concealment itself is part of revelation.

Chassidic Story:

In the years after the Second World War, a small group of Holocaust survivors settled in a displaced persons camp in Europe. Among them was a young man who had once been deeply religious, but after everything he endured, he wanted nothing to do with faith. When a Chassidic teacher arrived to give classes and encouragement, this young man became openly hostile. He mocked the prayers, challenged every idea, and publicly attacked the teacher's sincerity.

Others urged the teacher to remove him from the gatherings. Instead, the teacher insisted he remain. Privately, the teacher was deeply shaken. He wondered whether his own inner state was flawed, whether his words were causing harm rather than healing. He spent nights in self reflection, prayer, and quiet work on himself, without confronting the young man directly.

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Months passed. One evening, after another heated outburst, the young man stayed behind. He broke down and said, "I fight you because you do not run away. Everyone else gave up on me. Your calm makes me angry because it reminds me of what I lost."

Years later, that same man rebuilt a life of faith, slowly and painfully. He later said that the teacher's willingness to endure opposition without ego, and without abandoning him, saved his soul.

This story embodies the teaching of the maamar. True influence is not measured by immediate success, but by the ability to remain inwardly aligned while standing firm through resistance. Opposition is often the hidden doorway through which redemption enters.

END NOTE]