

Introduction

Menachem Mendel of Horodok (1730–1788), one of the foremost disciples of the Maggid of Mezeritch and later a Chassidic leader who settled in Tiberias, emphasized constant inner renewal, the struggle against the inclination, and complete attachment to Hashem. In this maamar he explains the blessing given to Avraham, the spiritual process of battling the yetzer, the concept of nullifying the middos, and the deep connection formed through emunah and yirah.

And Hashem blessed Avraham in everything. In the Midrash it says: it was because of the tithes, as it is stated: "And he gave him a tithe of everything" (בראשית י"ד:כי).	וְהַ־ה' בֵּרַךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בַּכּל. בַּמִּדְרָשׁ בִּשְׁבִיל הַמַּצְשְׂרוֹת, שֶׁנָּאֱמֵר וַיִּתֶּן לוֹ מַעֲשֵׂר מִכּל.
And the matter is according to the words of the Zohar on "And Avraham was old, coming in days" (בראשית כ"ד:אי); see there. And to explain the idea with pleasant expression: as our Sages said about Barzilai the Gileadite, who was eighty years old, and he said: "Can I discern between good and bad? Shall your servant taste what I eat?" (שמואל ב' י"ט:ל"ו). And our Sages said he was steeped in immoral desire, and old age leapt upon him.	וְהָעִנְיֶן הוּא לְפִי דִּבְרֵי הַוּּהַר עַל וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים (בראשית כ״ד:א׳) עַיֵּן שָׁם, וּלְהַסְבִּיר הָעִנְיָן עַל דֶּרֶף צַחוּת, כְּאָמְרָם ז"ל עַל בַּרְזִילֵי הַגּּלְעָדִי שֶׁהָיָה בֶּן שְׁמוֹנִים שָׁנָה וְאָמֵר הַאֶּדְעָה בֵּין טוֹב לְרָע אָם יִטְעַם אֲשֶׁר אֹכֵל (שמואל ב׳ י״ט:ל״ו). וְאָמְרוּ רַז"ל שָׁטוּף בְּזִמָּה הָיָה וְקָפְצָה עָלָיו זִקְנָה.
And behold, truly concerning all worldly desires it is said: "So is the way of an adulterous man: he eats and wipes his mouth" (משלי לי:כי), meaning that one who is addicted is never satisfied.	ְהָנֵה כֶאֱמֶת שֶׁעַל כָּל תַּאֲוֹת הָעוֹלָם נָאֱמֵר כֵּן דֶּרֶהְ (אִישׁ מְנָאֵף, מַשְׂבִּיעוֹ רָעֵב (משלי ל׳:כ׳).
And so our Sages said: regarding all desires, a person does not die with half his desire fulfilled. Therefore they age a person's mind, for his mind is never settled and he always desires. And Scripture says: "The desire of the slothful kills him" (משלי), and also the verse: "Hope prolonged makes the heart sick" (משלי ייג:ייב).	ְּוְכֵן אָמְרוּ רַז"ל עַל כָּל הַתַּאֲווֹת אֵין אָדָם מֵת וַחֲצִי תַּאֲנָתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ, וְלָכֵן הֵם מַזְקִינִין דַּעְתוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם, מֵהֶיוֹת אֵין דַּעְתוֹ נוֹחָה תָּמִיד וּמִתְאַנֶּה, וְהַכָּתוּב אוֹמֵר תַּאֲנַת עָצֵל תְּמִיתֶנּוּ (משלי כ״א:כ״ה), וְכֵן פָּסוּק (תּוֹחֶלֶת מְמֵשֶׁכָה מַחֲלַת לֵב (משלי י״ג:י״ב.
And behold, in this manner one may find in the service of Hashem that the word of Hashem is precious to attain, and it is impossible to be satisfied from it. For whoever is greater than his fellow perceives the depth of the exalted hiddenness beyond him, and all his attainments are considered as nothing and naught to him. As the verse says: "And wisdom shall be found from nothingness" (איוב כ״ה:״ב). For He, may He be blessed, is infinite, and likewise all His revelations are infinite.	וְהָנֵּה עַל דֶּרֶךְ זֶה אֶפְשֶׁר לְמְצוֹא בַּעֲבוֹדַת ה', לְהְיוֹת דְּבַר ה' יָקָר לְמְצוֹא, וְאִי אֶפְשֶׁר לְהָסְתַּפֵּק מִמֶּנוּ, דְּבַר ה' יָקָר לִמְצוֹא, וְאִי אֶפְשָׁר לְהָסְתַּפֵּק מִמֶּנוּ, שֶׁכָּל הַנָּדוֹל מֵחְבֵרוֹ מֵשִׂיג עֹמֶק רוּם הַנְּעְלָם מֵאִתּוֹ, וְכָל הַשָּׂגָתָיו מֵאַיִן וָאֶפֶּס נֶחְשָׁב לוֹ, כְּמַאֲמֶר וְהַחָּכְמָה מֵאַיִן תִּפְּבֵרְהְּ מֵאַיִן תִּפְּבֵרְהְ

But the essence of the service is the bonding to Him, may He be blessed, in every trait and every situation that overpowers a person. For a person's inclination overpowers him every day. And even if yesterday it overpowered him and cast him down, and the spirit of Hashem rested upon him to connect to Him in that trait, nevertheless the inclination attacks him tomorrow in another way, even more difficult.

אָבֶל עִקַר הָעֲבוֹדָה הוּא הַהִּתְקַשְׁרוּת אֵלָיו יִתְבָּרֵהְ בְּכָל מִדָּה וּמִדָּה וּבְכָל אֹפֶן הַמִּתְגַּבֵּר עַל הָאָדָם, שֶׁהֲרֵי יִצְרוֹ שֶׁל אָדָם מִתְגַּבֵּר עָלָיו בְּכָל יוֹם, וְאִם אָתְמוֹל הִפִּילוֹ וְהִתְגַּבֵּר עָלָיו וְרוּחַ ה' נָחָה עָלִיו לְהָתְקַשֵּׁר בּוֹ יִתְבָּרֵהְ בְּאוֹתָה מִדָּה, אַף־עַל־פִּי־כֵן מִתְנַקִשׁ עָלָיו הַיֵּצֶר לְמָחָר בְּאֹפֶן אַחֵר וְיוֹתֵר קָשֶׁה.

And even if he defeats it every day "in the shadow of the Almighty" (תהלים צ"א:א") and "in the secret place of the Most High," nevertheless the inclination strengthens itself to cast him into its net forever. Unless the person strengthens himself so greatly that he goes free, not to use that trait for himself at all, and does not benefit from it except by using it for the service of his Creator, may He be blessed.

וַאֲפָלּוּ אָם יְנַצְּחֵהוּ בְּכָל יוֹם בְּצֵל שַׁדִּי (תהלים צ״א:א׳) וּבְסַתֶּר עֶלְיוֹן, אַף־עַל־פִּי־כֵן מִתְחַזֵּק עָלָיו הַיֵּצֶר לְהַפִּילוֹ בְּרִשְׁתּוֹ לְעוֹלֶם, אֶלֶּא אִם־כֵּן שֶׁהִתְחַזֵּק הָאָדָם כָּל־כָּף עַד שֶׁיֵצֵא לַחֵרוּת מֵהשְׁתַּמֵשׁ בְּאוֹתָה מִדָּה לְעַצְמוֹ כְּלָל, וְלֹא יֵהָנֶה בָּה כִּי־אִם בְּהִשְׁתַּמְשׁוֹ בַּעְבוֹדַת בּוֹרָאוֹ יִתְבָּרַף

As David HaMelech, peace be upon him, said: "And my heart is hollow within me" (תהלים קייט:כ"ב). Then the inclination rests from him, for with what can it ensnare him, if he has no enjoyment whatsoever to use that trait for himself, and on the contrary, he suffers from it? As our Sages said: the good of the wicked is evil for the righteous.

ּכְּמַאֲמֵר דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶהְ ע"ה וְלִבִּי חָלֵל בְּקּרְבִּי (תהלים ק"ט:כ"ב), אָז יָנוּחַ הַיָּצֶר מֵאִתּוֹ, כִּי בַּמֶה יְלְכְדָנוּ אִם אֵין לוֹ שׁוּם הַנָּאָה שֶׁל כְּלָל לְהִשְׁתַמֵּשׁ בּוֹ לְעַצְמוֹ, וַהַדַּרְבָּא מִצְטַעֵר, כְּמַאֲמֵר רַז"ל טוֹכָתָם שֶׁל רְשָׁעִים רַעַה הִיא אָצֵל צַדִּיקִים.

And this manner is called redemption and the building of the Beis HaMikdash in his days, for "days" are called "middos." And now he is redeemed in this trait from the struggle with the inclination.

וְאֹפֶן זֶה נָקָרָא בְּשֵׁם גְּאֻלָּה וּבְנְיֵן בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּיָמֶיו, כִּי הַיָּמִים נִקְרָאִים מִדּוֹת כַּיָּדוּעַ, וְעַתָּה נִגְאַל בְּמִדָּה זוֹ מִקשִׁי עַבוֹדַת הַיָּצֵר.

And as long as there is no redemption, the inclination wrestles with him, with no difference between once, twice, or a hundred times. And if, Heaven forbid, his sins ensure him even on the tenth of one hundred and one, the earlier days fall.

ְוְכָל עוֹד שֶׁאֵין הַגְּאֻלֶּה, תִּהְיֶה לוֹ הַיֵּצֶר מִתְחַבֵּט עָלָיו, וְאֵין שׁוּם חִלּוּק בֵּין פַּעַם לִשְׁתַּיִם לְמֵאָה פְּעָמִים, וְאִם חַס וְשָׁלוֹם עֲוֹנוֹתָיו יִלְכְּדָנוּ אֲפִלוּ בָּעֲשִׂירִי בְּאֶחָד וּמֵאָה, מִמֵּילָא הַיָּמִים הָרָאשׁוֹנִים יִפְּלוּ.

Meaning: all the strength with which he overcame the inclination until then—by hidden intellect and holy inspiration—he places into the kelipah in that moment, and no standing remains from the earlier strength.

פֵּרוּשׁ כָּל מַה שֶׁנִּתְגַּבֵּר עַל הַיֵּצֶר עַד אוֹתוֹ פַּעַם בְּשֵׁכֶל הַנֶּצֶלָם וְרוּחַ הַּקֹּדֶשׁ, הַכֹּל הָכְנִיס בַּקְלִיפָּה בְּאוֹתוֹ פַּעַם, וְתְּקוּמָה לֹא הָיְתָה לוֹ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַשֵּׁכֶל וְתִגְבֹּרֶת הָרִאשׁוֹן הָרִאשׁוֹן

For now, after knowing great counsel and wisdom, and having ruled over his inclination, he now brings even these sparks of holiness into the kelipah; and how can he rise again by the same counsel?

שָׁבַּתְּחָלָּה עָמֵד כְּנָגֶד הַיֵּצֶר בְּאוֹתוֹ הִתְגַּבְּרוּת וַעֲצַת ה', וְעַכְשָׁו אַחֲרֵי יְדִיעָתוֹ גְּדוֹלַת הָעֵצָה וְתֻשִּיָּה, הִמְשִׁיל עַל עַצְמוֹ הַיֵּצֶר הָרָע וְהִכְנִיס נִיצוֹצֵי קְדָשָׁה אֵלוּ גַּם כֵּן בַּקְלִיפָּה.

As our Sages said: any generation in which the Beis HaMikdash is not built is as if it were destroyed, meaning: if it is not built through overcoming the inclination, then when the inclination defeats him it is destroyed—bringing holy sparks into the kelipah.

וְאֵיכָכָה יוּכַל לַעֲלוֹת מִשַּׁחַת הַחַּיּוּת הַנִּזְפֶּר לְעֵיל בְּאוֹתוֹ עֵצָה עַצְמָה, כְּאָמְרָם ז"ל כָּל דּוֹר שֶׁלֹא נִבְנָה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בְּיָמֶיו, כְּאִלּוּ נֶחְרַב בְּיָמֶיו... וּמִמֵּילָא בָּחָרָב, שֶׁהָרֵי מַכְנִיס נִיצוֹצֵי הַקְּדֵשָׁה בַּקְלִיפָּה. בָחָרָב, שֶׁהָרֵי מַכְנִיס נִיצוֹצֵי הַקְּדֵשָׁה בַּקְלִיפָּה.

And since the inclination now overpowers him, he must seek and strengthen himself in another way, with new counsel and might for battle, for the inclination no longer quiets through the former counsel

וְכֵיוָן שֶׁמִּתְגַבֵּר עָלָיו לְעֵת כָּזֹאת, מִמֵּילָא צָרִיהְ לַחֲכּּשׁ וּלְהִתְחַזֵּק בְּאֹפֶן אַחֵר וּבְעֵצָה וּגְבוּרָה לַמִּלְחָמָה, שֶׁהְרֵי לֹא נִשְׁקַט הַיָּצֶר בַּעֲצַת ה' כִּתְמוֹל שִׁלְשׁוֹם.

But the essential matter is faith in that which no eye sees and no ear hears and no intellect grasps, for Hashem alone is exalted; and afterward comes strengthening of awe, which follows faith, for they are one simple unity.

אֲבָל כְּלָלָא דְמִלְתָא הִיא הָאֱמוּנָה בְּמֵה שֶׁאֵין עַיִן רוֹאָה וְאֵין הָאֹזֶן שׁוֹמַעַת וְאֵין שֵׂכֶל מַשִּׁיג, וְנִשְׂגָּב ה' לְבַדּוֹ, וְאַחַר כָּךְ הִתְחַזְּקוּת הַיִּרְאָה... שֶׁשְׁנֵיהֶם דָּבָר אֶחָד וְאַחָדוּת כַּשׁוּט.

And this is what brings connection to Him in every trait, for these matters stand at the height of the world and break all desires and all kelipos.

וְזֶהוּ הַמֵּבִיא הָתְקַשְׁרוּת בּוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ בְּכָל מִדֶּה וּמִדֶּה, כִּי דְבָרִים אֵלוּ הֵם הָעוֹמְדִים בְּרוּמוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם וּמְשַׁבְּרִים בָּל הַתַּאֵוֹת וְכַל הַקּלִיפּוֹת.

And when he strengthens these within himself, all workers of iniquity scatter like wax melting before fire, and he rules his spirit and is not captured.

וּבְהָתְגַּבְּרוֹת אֵלּוּ עַל עַצְמוֹ, יִתְפָּרְדוּ כָּל פּעֲלֵי אָוֶן בָּהָמֵס דוֹנֵג מִפְּנֵי אֵשׁ, וִיהִי מוֹשֵׁל בְּרוּחוֹ מְלֵכָּד.

And this is the meaning of "And Avraham was old, coming in days," meaning: in the *middos* he entered old age. And the meaning of old age is the nullification of childhood and youth, which are emptiness, like in the physical world—through using his senses all his life, in his old age they weaken, and the more one uses them, the more old age leaps upon him.

וְזֶהוּ וְאַבְרָהָם זָקֵן בָּא בַּיָּמִים, פֵּירוּשׁ בְּמִדּוֹת בָּא אֶל הַזָּקְנָה. וּפֵירוּשׁ הַזִּקְנָה הוּא בִּטוּל הַיַּלְדוּת וְהַשַּׁחֲרוּת הָהֶבֶל כְּדֶרֶהְ הָעוֹלָם הַגַּשְׁמִי, מֵרוֹב הִשְׁתַּמְשׁוֹ בְּחֻשִּׁיו כָּל יָמִיו בְּזִקְנָתוֹ מִתְבַּטְלִים, וְכָל הַמִּשְׁתַּמֵשׁ יוֹתֵר קוֹפֶצֶת עָלָיו זִקְנָה יוֹתֵר.

So is the path of Hashem: after one strengthens himself in his *middos* to use them for His service and not for any personal pleasure at all, he goes out from the *middos* and they nullify, binding himself to Him always without interruption.

בֵּן דֶּרֶךְ ה'. אַחֲרֵי הִתְגַּבְּרוּתוֹ בְּמִדוֹתָיו לְהִשְׁתַּמֵשׁ לַעֲבוֹדָתוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ וְלֹא לְשׁוּם הֲנָאַת עַצְמוֹ כְּלָל, יוֹצֵא מִן הַמִּדוֹת וּמִתְבַּשְּׁלִים לְהִתְקַשֵּׁר בּוֹ יִתְבָּרֵךְ תָּמִיד בְּלִי שׁוּם הַפְּסָק רָגַע.

And this is "And Hashem blessed Avraham in everything," for connection is called "everything," for it joins two into one, as in the saying "For everything is in the heavens and the earth." וְזֶהוּ וַה' בֵּירֵךְ אֶת אַבְרָהָם בַּכּּל, כִּי הַהִּתְקַשְׁרוּת נִקְרֵאת כּל, שֶׁהוּא כּוֹלֵל שְׁנַיִם לְאֶחָד, וּכְמַאֲמָר כִּי הַכּּל בַּשָּׁמַיִם וּבָאֶרֶץ.

And the Midrash said: "Because of the tithes," as it says, "And he gave him a tithe of everything" (Genesis 14:20). For it is known that fear is called the tithe, for it is the final hei, and it is the tithe of all—meaning a tithe from the connection. And from fear and faith he merited the connection.

וְאָמֵר הַמִּדְרָשׁ בִּשְׁבִיל הַמַּצְשְׂרוֹת שֶׁנֶּאֲמֵר וַיִּתֶּן לוֹ מַצְשֵׂר מִכּל (בראשית י"ד:כי). כִּי יָדוּעַ הוּא שֶׁהַּיִּרְאָה נָקְרֵאת מַצְשֵׂר, שֶׁהִיא הַ"א אַחַרוֹנָה וְהוּא מַצְשֵׂר מִכּל, פֵּירוּשׁ מַצְשֵׂר מִן הַהִּתְקַשְׁרוּת כַּיָּדוּעַ, וּמִן הַיִּרְאָה וְהָאֱמוּנָה זָכָה אֶל הַהִּתְקַשְׁרוּת כַּנִּוְכָּר לְעֵיל.

[NOTE Summary:

The maamar opens with "And Hashem blessed Avraham in everything," which the Midrash attributes to the merit of tithes. The teaching explains that Avraham's blessing of "everything" ("kol") refers to deveikus that unifies opposites into oneness. This comes through refining the middos so completely that they no longer serve personal pleasure but only the service of Hashem.

The maamar describes the daily battle with the yetzer. Even after many victories, if one stumbles even once, the spiritual gains of earlier days can fall into the kelipah—just as any generation in which the Beis HaMikdash is not built is considered as if it were destroyed. Therefore, one must constantly seek new strategies and renewed strength, because old methods may no longer quiet the yetzer.

True ascent begins with emunah in what cannot be seen or grasped, followed automatically by yirah, which is a "tenth," the "maaser" drawn from the whole. From this union of emunah and yirah one merits the connection called "kol," the blessing Avraham received. This connection breaks all kelipos, scattering them like wax melting before fire.

Practical Takeaway

A person cannot rely on yesterday's spiritual victories. The yetzer changes its tactics daily, and the same spiritual tools do not always work twice. Renewal comes from fresh emunah and yirah, from rejecting personal pleasure within one's middos, and from using them solely for Hashem. When one does so, deveikus becomes constant, and all obstacles dissolve before the fire of holiness.

Chassidic Story

After settling in Tiberias, Menachem Mendel of Horodok faced poverty, harsh conditions, and great challenges. One Shabbos, a fierce windstorm threatened to destroy the small homes the Chassidim had built. Many panicked, but the Rebbe walked outside wrapped in his tallis and began singing Shabbos zemiros with fiery joy. His holy voice rose above the storm, and the winds suddenly weakened as if retreating from his presence.

After Shabbos he explained, "When a wind of confusion rises, it means the yetzer has found a new way to attack. Yesterday's counsel will not silence it. One must find new connection—a deeper emunah—and then the wind cannot stand before it."

This story reflects the essence of the maamar: the yetzer's attacks shift constantly, but renewed emunah and yirah disperse all kelipos like melting wax and restore full spiritual mastery.

END NOTE