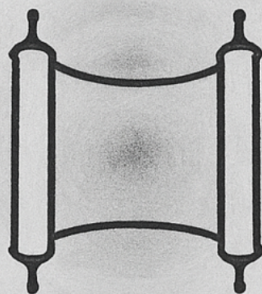


בס"ד

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Horodak
Parshas Toldos**



Dedicated To:

טנייה מלכה בת דינה דבורה
דפואה שלמה

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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz Parshas Toldos

Introduction

Menachem Mendel of Horodok (circa 1730–1788), a leading disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch and an early Chassidic master who later settled in the Holy Land, devoted his teachings to illuminating the inner ascent of the soul and its journey from spiritual constriction to pure divine unity. In this teaching, he guides the reader from the beginning stages of avodah, where a person must first negate evil, through the higher revelations of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, until reaching a state in which mitzvos themselves take on an entirely new meaning in the soul's perception.

And these are the generations of Yitzchak son of Avraham. Rashi of blessed memory explains: Yaakov and Eisav who are mentioned in the parashah.

The matter is in the manner of Hillel's answer to the convert who came to convert on condition that he teach him the entire Torah on one foot, and he accepted him and taught him: what is hateful to you do not do to your friend.

Rashi of blessed memory explains that this is the commandment "And you shall love your fellow as yourself" (ויקרא י"ט:י"ח). See there in the Maharsha, who asks why he did not say it in the language we were commanded, or even in Targum, at least in a positive form.

But the matter is as they said of blessed memory: with ten utterances the world was created, and they correspond to the Ten Commandments, as our sages said that He looked into the Torah and created the world.

And behold, the matter of the world's creation is known: that at the beginning He and His Name were one, simple unity without grasp, comprehension, or boundary, for He is without end.

And when it arose in His simple will to create, He contracted Himself, as is known. And the matter of simple unity and endlessness is the utterance "Anochi" and all the positive commandments; and the contraction, which is the severities, is the negative commandments, and the utterance "You shall have no other gods," with all their details.

ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם. פירש רש"י זכרוננו לברכה יעקב ועשו האמורים בפרשה.

הענין הוא על דרך תשובת הלל לגר שבא להתגייר על מנת שילמדנו כל התורה על רגל אחת וקבלו וילמדו מה דסני לך לתורה לא תעביד.

פירש רש"י זכרוננו לברכה שהוא מצות ואהבת לרעה כמוה (ויקרא י"ט:י"ח). עין שם במהרש"א שמקשה למה לא אמר לו בלשון שנצטוינו בתורה ואפילו בלשון תרגום על כל פנים בלשון עשה.

אבל הענין הוא אומרים זכרונם לברכה בעשרה מאמרות נברא העולם והם פנגד עשרת הדברות בארז"ל שהסתכל בתורה וברא את העולם.

והנה ענין בריאת העולם ידוע שהיה מתחלה הוא וישמו אחד אחדות פשוט בלי שום תפיסה השגה וגבול שהוא אין סוף.

וכשעלה בראונו הפשוט לברא צמצם את עצמו כידוע. והנה ענין אחדות פשוט ואין סוף הוא דבור אנוכי וכל המצוות עשה והצמצום שהוא הגבורות הוא הלא תעשה ודבור לא יהיה לך עם כל פירטי הלא תעשה.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz Parshas Toldos

From cause to effect in detailed particulars, behold all roots and branches, generals and particulars, that have a root above, produced fruit below in the performance of the commandments, and this is our holy Torah with all its commandments, statutes, and teachings.

And they said: "Because Avraham listened to My voice..." teaching that he fulfilled even *eiruv tavshilin*. This is puzzling: how did he know? Even if he grasped rational mitzvos, how did he grasp *chukim* like the red heifer, which have no rational cause?

But it is understood, for He said to Moshe: "To you I reveal the reason of the red heifer; to others it is a decree." All *chukim* have a root above, for creation followed the Torah—only not every mind can bear this, and therefore for others it is a *chok*.

But this is only possible if mitzvos cease to apply to him—for example the prohibitions of murder, adultery, theft—since he has broken physical desire and needs no warning, just as one needs no warning to avoid filth. So David said: "My heart is empty within me."

For such a person, mitzvos do not apply, so the reasons of *chukim* are revealed, and *chukim* become mitzvos. This is their saying that in the days of Mashiach the mitzvos will be annulled, for the world will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem, and a new Torah will be given: *chukim* will become mitzvos.

And when he goes from strength to strength, and it will be only higher and higher, until he will reach the root of all the Torah and the commandment, which is "I am Hashem your God" (שמות כ"ב), simple unity and without end, when standing there the wings of all the commandments and the statutes

and all of them are nullified, for behold it is the nullification of the evil inclination, because he is standing above and before the beginning of the creation, and from where is the evil inclination; and behold in truth that at the beginning and before creation

מעלה לעלול בפרטי פרטים הנה כל השרשים והענפים כללים ופרטים שיש להם שרש למעלה עשו פירי למטה במעשה המצוות וזו היא תורתנו הקדושה עם כל מצוותיה חקותיה ותורותיה.

והנה אמרו זכרונם לברכה עקב אשר שמע אברהם בקלי... מלימד שקיים אפילו ערובי תבשילין. ותמה מנן ידע. ואפילו אם השיג מצוות שהשכל מחייב, הרי החקים כמו פרה אדמה בלא טעם.

אבל לפי דברינו יובן כמאמרם זכרונם לברכה שאמר למשה לה אני מגלה טעם פרה ולאחרים חקה. כי כל החקים יש להם שרש למעלה, רק שאין כל מוחא סביל. לכן לאחרים חקה.

אבל דבר זה אי אפשר אלא בהתבטל המצוות ממנו, כגון לא תרצח לא תנאף לא תגנב, שאינם ראויים למי ששבר תאוותיו. וכל צרכיו מאוסים כטיט וצואה. וכך אמר דוד ולפי חלל בקרבי.

לאדם כזה שאין המצוות נהגות אצלו, מגלים לו טעמי החקים ונעשים החקים למצוות. וזהו מה שאמרו שבימי המשיח יתבטלו המצוות כי מלאה הארץ דעה את ה', ותהיה תורה אחרת שהחקים יהיו מצוות.

וכשהולך מחיל אל חיל והיה רק למעלה למעלה עד שיגיע אל שרש כל התורה והמצווה שהוא אנכי ה' אלקיך (שמות כ"ב) אחדות פשוט ואין סוף בעצמו שם תרפינה כנפי כל המצוות והחקקים

וכולם בטלים שהרי הוא בטול היצר הרע להיותו עומד למעלה וקודם התחלת הבריאה והיצר הרע מנן והנה באמת שבתחלה וקודם הבריאה

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz Parshas Toldos

it is the positive command “I am Hashem your God,” and afterwards the negative command; but in the attainment of the commandment it needs to be the opposite — first turn from evil, and afterwards do good, for behold a person at first is born a wild person,

and his level is low, low, and he needs to add from the weekday onto the holy, higher and higher, until “I am Hashem your God”; and this is that the convert who came to convert wanted to learn all the Torah

on one foot — meaning one standing and establishment; and behold in truth they taught him, that even though the root of everything is “I am Hashem your God,” as mentioned, nevertheless the convert could not understand

the attainment of “I am” except through the way of negation first — “You shall not have” (שמות כ"ג), because his level was first low, low; and this is that he said: and the other, explanation — go and learn; for the commandment “and you shall love,”

and the negation “what is hateful to you do not do to your friend,” is the commandment of “I am” and “You shall not have,” as Rashi understood; and this is “These are the generations of Yitzchak son of Avraham,” which is the order of creation —

meaning Yitzchak, who is contraction and severities, son of Avraham, who is kindnesses and simple unity, and from these all the earth was scattered; this is what Rashi explained that the generations are Yaakov and Esav mentioned in the portion,

and as Rashi explained about Esav, that he was made and completed in his hair on the day of his birth; and as the Zohar said on the verse “an ox or sheep or goat when it is born,” immediately on the day of its birth it is called an ox one day old because it is completed

on its day; not so a person; but in truth a person in his physical traits is completed on the day of his birth, as the saying “sin crouches at the opening” (בראשית ד"ז), “an old foolish king,” and therefore on the day of his birth he is called Esav;

הוא העשה אנכי ה' אלקיך ואחר כך הלא תעשה אבל בהשגת המצוה צריך להיות להיפך בתחלה סור מרע ואחר כך ועשה טוב שהרי האדם בתחלה פרא אדם יולד

ומדרגתו למטה מטה וצריך להוסיף מחל על הקדש למעלה מעלה עד אנכי ה' אלקיך וזהו שהגר שפא להתגבר רצה ללמד כל התורה

על רגל פירוש קיום והעמדה אחד והנה באמת למדוהו אם אמנם שרש הכל הוא אנכי ה' אלקיך כנזכר אבל הגר לא היה יכול להבין

השגת אנכי אם לא דרך שלילה תחלה לא יהיה לה (שמות כ"ג) מפני היות מדרגתו תחלה מטה מטה וזהו שאמר ואידך פירושא זיל גמור כי מצות ואהבת

והשלילה מה דסני לה לחברך לא תעביד הוא מצות אנכי ולא יהיה לה ובהבנת פירוש רש"י זכרוננו לברכה וזהו ואלה תולדות יצחק בן אברהם שהוא סדר הבריאה

ופירוש יצחק שהוא צמצום וגבורות בן אברהם שהוא חסדים ואחדות פשוט ומאלה נפצה כל הארץ זהו שפירש רש"י זכרוננו לברכה תולדות הם יעקב ועשו האמורים בפירוש

וכפירוש רש"י זכרוננו לברכה על עשו שנעשה ונגמר בשערותיו ביום הולדו וכמאמר הזהר על פסוק שור או פשב או עז כי יולד ... נקרא שור בן יומו מפני היותו נגמר

ביומו מה שאין בן אדם אבל באמת אדם במדותיו הגשמיים ביום הולדו נגמר כמאמר לפתח חטאת רבץ (בראשית ד"ז) מלך זקן וכסיל ולכן בהולדו נקרא עשו

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Toldos

and afterwards Yaakov — “his hand grasping Esav’s heel,” meaning his hand is his grasp, which is lower wisdom, which is the yud, and this is his hand; and afterwards from it he will reach higher wisdom and the commandment of “I am,” simple unity, and the understanding person will understand.

ואחר כך יעקב ידו אחזת בעקב עשו ופירוש ידו היא
התפיסה שלו שהיא חכמה תמאָה שהיא יו"ד וזהו ידו
ואחר כך ממנה יגיע לחכמה עילאה ומצות אנכי
אחדות פשוט והמבין יבין

[NOTE Summary:

The maamar explains that as a person ascends *meichayil el chayil*, ever upward, he gradually reaches the root of all Torah and mitzvos, the level of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*—absolute, simple, infinite unity. At that point, the “wings” of mitzvos and *chukim* fall away, not because they cease to be true, but because the evil inclination itself is nullified. One who stands at the level prior to creation—before the existence of the evil inclination—experiences divine unity in its primal form.

Though the primal order places the positive command *Anochi* before the prohibitions, the human path in avodah works in reverse: first “turn from evil,” then “do good.” Man begins at the lowest level, born as a “wild ass,” and must rise gradually until reaching the point of divine unity. Thus, the convert who sought to learn the entire Torah “standing on one foot”—in a single foundational principle—was taught that although the root is *Anochi*, he cannot grasp it except through the path of negation, *Lo yihyeh lecha*, because he begins from a low rung. Hillel’s teaching “what is hateful to you do not do to your fellow” expresses this gateway.

The maamar then explains the verse “These are the generations of Yitzchak son of Avraham.” Yitzchak represents *gevurah* and *tzimtzum* emerging from Avraham’s *chesed* and simple unity. From this interaction, all of existence spreads forth. Therefore, Rashi says the “generations” are Yaakov and Esav: Esav, fully formed at birth like an animal, signifies man’s natural state—complete only in physicality, with the evil inclination crouching. Yaakov, grasping Esav’s heel, symbolizes the soul’s ascent from lower to higher wisdom, rising until it reaches *Anochi*, pure unity.

Practical Takeaway

One’s avodah must begin with refining the self—avoiding harm, restraining impulses, and purifying the heart—before reaching higher states of divine love and comprehension. Yet the goal is not merely self-control but ascending beyond oneself entirely, until the soul perceives the unity behind all mitzvos. Every step upward—from restraint, to goodness, to deep understanding—moves a person toward the inner *Anochi* that underlies all creation.

Chassidic Story

In his later years in the Holy Land, Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok was renowned for his extraordinary purity of perception. Once, a simple villager approached him, distressed that despite performing mitzvos, he felt distant from Hashem. Rabbi Menachem Mendel listened quietly and then said: “When a child begins to walk, he does not start by running. First he must learn not to fall. Only afterward does he walk toward his father.” The man looked puzzled, and the Rebbe continued: “So it is in avodah. First a person must learn to ‘not fall’—to

Menachem Mendel of Horodak**Pri Ha'Eretz****Parshas Toldos**

hold himself back from harm, from anger, from cruelty. Then, step by step, he begins to walk toward his Father in Heaven. Do not be ashamed of beginning with the small steps; they are the foundation of the great ones.”

The villager later testified that this teaching transformed his life. He had believed that spiritual greatness required instant illumination. But the Rebbe showed him that true ascent begins with humility, restraint, and slow, steady climbing. In time, the man grew joyful in his mitzvos, sensing that each act—however small—was drawing him upward. When asked years later what taught him the deepest understanding of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, he would answer: “The day Rabbi Menachem Mendel taught me not to be afraid of beginning at the bottom. From that day, I understood that even the heel of Yaakov can rise to the highest place.”

END NOTE