

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Naso

Introduction:

This discourse explores how *peace* is not only the highest ideal but the very **vessel through which Divine blessing flows**. Rooted in the teachings of Rabbi **Menachem Mendel of Horodok** (c. 1730–1788), a key disciple of the Maggid of Mezeritch and the spiritual leader who brought Chassidut to the Land of Israel, the teaching weaves together mystical psychology and practical avodah. Known for his deep introspection and fiery love for G-d, Rabbi Menachem Mendel guides us to recognize how every part of the self—our “Kohen, Levi, and Yisrael”—must be unified around one goal: to receive not in order to fill lack, but to cleave to the *Or Ein Sof* (Infinite Light) itself. The discourse challenges us to think beyond spiritual yearning as a response to deficiency, and instead root our desire in Divine connection. The famous phrase that “the Holy One, blessed be He, found no vessel to hold blessing except peace” becomes a launching point for understanding why **action, silence, intention, and surrender** form the only true path to transforming our inner world.

In the verse, “So shall you bless the Children of Israel, say to them” — our Sages expounded: “Say to them — face to face.”

בפסוק זה תברכו את בני ישראל אמור להם. ודרשו חז"ל אמור להם פנים בפנים.

The matter is as our Sages said: “Shimon his son says: All my days I grew up among the wise, and I found nothing better for the body than silence. And not study is the main thing, but action.”

הענין, אמרו רז"ל: שמעון בנו אמר: כל ימי גדולתי בין החכמים, ולא מצאתי לגוף טוב אלא שתיקה, ולא המדרש הוא העקר אלא המעשה.

In the manner of what our Sages said in chapter 3: “Anyone whose wisdom exceeds his deeds is like...” and it overturns him on his face. But anyone whose deeds exceed...

על דרך מה שאמרו רז"ל בפרק ג': כל שחכמתו מרבה ממעשיו דומה כו', והופכתו על פניו, אבל כל מי שמעשיו מרבים כו'.

The commentators noted carefully that the reason for “and it overturns him” is the abundance of wisdom — from the expression “whose wisdom is greater” — and it does not say that his deeds are lesser than his wisdom. Investigate this well.

דיקדקו המפרשים שסבת “והופכתו” הוא רבוי החכמה, מלשון “שחכמתו מרבה”, ולא אמר שמעשיו מעטים מחכמתו. ודו"ק

And the matter is: as is known, “In the beginning He created” — its Targum is “with wisdom,” which is the Torah, and “With the Torah the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world.”

והענין: כידוע, “בראשית ברא” — תרגומו “בחכמתא”, שהיא התורה, ובאורייתא ברא קב"ה עולמא.

And likewise, man is called a “small world,” consisting of 248 limbs which are the positive commandments, and 365 sinews which are the negative commandments.

וכן דרך האדם נקרא עולם קטן, מרמ"ח איברים שהם מצוות עשה, ושס"ה גידים שהם מצוות לא תעשה.

And because of the thickness of the physical body, its desires are drawn outward.

ומגדל עבות חמר הגוף, מאניו נמשכים אל החיצונית.

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But the intent of creation is known: that it was for His glory, blessed be He — that the physicality be transformed into the seal of its Form-Maker.	וכוונת הבריאה ידועה שהיתה לכבודו יתברך — שיהפך החומר לחותם המצירו.
And behold, in order to refine the materiality of the body — it is through a person performing one of the commandments of Hashem which corresponds to a specific limb from the 248 limbs — and he accepts upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven upon that limb to begin with, and it becomes settled — that the entire creation of that limb is for the sake of this commandment, as is known: “With the Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world,” as mentioned.	והנה בכדי לזכך חמריות הגוף — הוא בעשות האדם אחת ממצוות ה' המיוחדת לאיזה אבר מרמ"ח איברים — ומקבל על מלכות שמים על אותו אבר מתחלה, ומתיישב, שכל בריאת אבר ההוא היא על דרך מצוה זו כידוע: באורייתא ברא קוב"ה עלמא כנזכר, שהיא התורה והמצוות.
If so, the commandment is the vitality of that limb, and it is impossible to deviate from it to the right or to the left — for if there is no commandment, there is no limb.	ואם כן, המצוה היא חיות אותו אבר, ואי אפשר לצאת ממנה חוץ ימין או שמאל, שאם אין המצוה — אין האבר.
And after accepting the yoke, he performs the act of the commandment in actuality, and he clothes the commandment onto the limb, and causes the holiness of the commandment and His blessed utterance to dwell upon the limb.	ואחר קבלת העול — עושה מעשה המצוה בפועל, ומלביש המצוה על האבר, ומשרה הקדושה של המצוה ומאמרו יתברך על האבר.
From this, the limb becomes refined — once, and again — until the light of Torah shines within the candle of the commandment.	מזה מנדכך האבר פעם ושתים — עד שיאיר אור תורה בגר המצוה.
And from there, all doers of iniquity are separated — for the material cannot be refined except through actual commandments — to habituate each limb with commandments specifically.	ומשם יתפרדו כל פועלי און, כי אין החומר מנדכך כי אם על ידי מצוות מעשיות דוקא — להרגיל כל אבר במצוות דוקא.
And to not go outside into matters of the permitted or desires, as much as possible — to not use it at all — and to silence the limb from its use in desire and permitted matters, only using it for action in commandments specifically.	ושלא לצאת החוץ בעניני הרשות והתאוות מה דאפשר — שלא להשתמש מזה כלל. ובהשתק האבר מהשתמשו בתאוות ורשות, כי אם במעשה המצוות — דוקא.
then, his light will break forth like the dawn — which is the hidden light, as it is said: “And G-d saw the light, that it was good” — for light is called “good.”	אז יבקע כשחר אורו — שהוא האור הגנוז, כמאמר: "וירא אלקים את האור כי טוב" — שהאור נקרא "טוב".
And this is [the meaning of]: “I have found nothing better for the body than silence” — its meaning is: that it shall shine — but [this refers to] silence from desires, and accepting upon the limb the yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is also called silence — and not using the limb except for performance of the commandments.	וזהו: "לא מצאתי לגוף טוב משיקה" — פירושו שיאיר — אלא שתיקה מן התאוות, ויקבל על האבר על מלכות שמים, הנקרא גם כן שתיקה — ולא ישתמש באבר כי אם במעשה המצוות.

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And this is [the meaning of]: "Not study is the main thing, but action."	"וזהו" לא המדרש הוא העקר אלא המעשה
Not so when the study and wisdom increase — to know — but not the action; his wisdom will be greater than his deeds.	מה שאין בן פשיטת המדרש והחכמה לדעת ולא המעשה — יהיה חכמתו מרבה ממעשיו
And not only will he not rectify [himself], but on the contrary — it will overturn him on his face, as mentioned.	ולא די שלא יתקן — אלא אדרבא, והופכתו על פניו כפזוק
And as the saying goes: "Whoever is greater than his fellow — his inclination is greater than his."	"וכמאמר: "כל הגדול מחבירו — יצרו גדול ממנו
And this was not said as a general principle, but even if he increases in knowledge of rebuke and ethics and wisdom and understanding of how to avoid that desire —	ולא דרך כלל נאמר, אלא אפילו אם ירבה לדעת תוכחות ומוסר חכמה ודעת איך להנצל מאותו תאוה —
but he does not increase in commandments with the limb that is specific to that desire — it also causes more harm.	ולא ירבה במצוות אותו האבר המיוחד לאותו תאוה — גם בן מזיק יותר
And this is the previously mentioned statement: "Why is the section of Sotah juxtaposed with the section of Nazir? Everyone who sees the Sotah in her disgrace should separate himself from wine."	והוא המאמר הנזכר לעיל: "למה נסמכה פרשת סוטה לפרשת נזיר? כל הרואה סוטה בקלקולה — יזיר עצמו מן היין
But not so if he does not see a Sotah in her disgrace and does not possess wisdom and understanding to rebuke so much — then he need not separate from wine.	מה שאין בן אם אינו רואה סוטה בקלקולה, ואין לו חכמה ודעת להוסר כל כך — אין צריך להזיר עצמו מן היין
And at first glance it appears to be the opposite — on the contrary, by seeing her, all women should be repulsive to him and he should not need to separate.	ולכאורה הוא להיפך — אדרבא, כי בראותו — נוסרו כל הנשים, ואין להזיר
And this is our aforementioned statement: for through his seeing [her] he becomes a Nazir, and understands more truthfully not to do so — to engage in that desire.	והוא דברינו הנ"ל — כי בראותו הוא נזיר, ומבין יותר באמת שלא לעשותו, להשתמש בתאוה זו
And from then on, he requires even greater guarding — for he still does not possess the deed to protect him, that his knowledge not be overturned upon him.	ומאז צריך שמירה יותר ויותר — כי אין לו עדין מעשה להגן עליו שלא תתהפך הידיעה על פניו
And the concept is that Torah is likened to water, which takes on the shape of the vessel it is in — whether square or round.	והענין הוא — שהתורה נמשלה למים — שמשתנים בצורת הכלי שהם בתוכו, אם מרבעת או עגולה
So too, Torah and wisdom change in a person — whether good or bad — according to his traits, which is how it spreads into the body through the <i>middot</i> .	כן התורה והחכמה משתנים באדם, אם טוב ואם רע במדותיו — שהוא דרך התפשטותו בגוף האדם על ידי המדות
And this is [the verse], "A small city and few people within it... a poor and wise child."	"וזהו: "עיר קטנה ואנשים בה מעט... ילד מסכן וחכם

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And the wonder is — why is he called “poor”?	".וְהִתְמַיָּה — עַל מַה שֶּׁקָּרְאוּהוּ "מִסְכֵּן"
The author of <i>Akeidat Yitzchak</i> , of blessed memory, explains: that the body and the evil inclination constantly stream forth their influence, and through it they perform this evil —	מִיֵּשֵׁב בְּעַל הָעֲקֵדָה ז"ל — שֶׁהַגּוֹף וְהַיֵּצֵר הָרַע נוֹזְלִים — תָּמִיד אֶת שָׁלוֹ, וּבְשָׁלוֹ עוֹשִׂים אֶת הָרָעָה הַזֹּאת
and they turn judgment into wormwood and say about evil that it is good, and about good that it is evil —	וּמִהִפְכִּים לְלַעֲנָה מִשְׁפָּט, וְאוֹמְרִים עַל רָע — "טוֹב", ".וְעַל טוֹב — "רָע"
referring to optional actions and desires — despite the known truth to the contrary.	שֶׁהוּא מַעֲשֶׂה הַרְשָׁוֹת וְהַתְּאוּוֹת — מְלַבֵּד הָאֲמִת הַיְדוּעַ לְהִיפֹךְ
But even if one tried once or twice to taste the flavor of a commandment action with that limb in this world — he would be utterly nullified from ever using that limb again for desire or permitted use —	אָבֵל אֶפְלוּ אִם הָיָה מְנַסֶּה פַּעַם וּשְׁתֵּימָּה לְטַעֵם טַעַם מַעֲשֶׂה הַמִּצְוָה שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ הָאֵבֶר בְּעוֹלָם הַזֶּה — הָיָה מִתְבַּטֵּל לְגַמְרֵי מִמֶּשׁ מִהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ עוֹד בְּאוֹתוֹ הָאֵבֶר מַעֲשֶׂה — הַתְּאוּוֹת וְהַרְשָׁוֹת
except in necessity, and it would be a commandment — as it says, “And you shall live through them.”	".כִּי אִם הִכָּרַתָּ, וְהוּא מִצְוָה — כְּמֵאמַר: "וַחַי בָּהֶם"
And so he should do in a manner of request — when asking or praying for some lack — the occurrence should not result merely from the arousal of prayer or from elevation and attachment —	וְכֵן יַעֲשֶׂה דְרֹךְ בִּקְשָׁה, כְּשֶׁמְבַקֵּשׁ וּמִתְפַּלֵּל עַל אִיזָה חֶסְרוֹן — לֹא יִהְיֶה הַמְּאֹרֵעַ מִתּוֹךְ הַתַּעֲוָרוֹת הַתְּפִלָּה — וְהַעֲלִיָּה וְהַדְּבָקוֹת
but rather, after he becomes aroused — he should attach to his Source, that the desire for attaining the deficiency be nullified from him —	אֲלֹא אַחֵר שִׁיתַּעֲוִיר — יִדְבֹּק אֶל שָׁרְשׁוֹ, שֶׁיִּבְטֵל מִמֶּנּוּ חֶפֶץ הַשָּׁגַת הַחֶסְרוֹן
for he himself desires only what is absolutely necessary —	שֶׁהָרִי גַם הוּא אֵינוֹ חֶפֶץ כִּי אִם מַה שֶּׁהוּא מִן הַהִכָּרַת
and then, as he draws near to his Root — the hidden light within him will flow forth, and the deficiency will be filled on its own.	וְאֵז, בְּהִתְקָרְבוֹ אֶל שָׁרְשׁוֹ — מִשְׁפִּיעַ הָאוֹר הַגָּנוּז בְּתוֹכוֹ, וְיִתְמַלֵּא הַחֶסְרוֹן מֵעַצְמוֹ
And this is [the meaning of]: “The Holy One, blessed be He, found no vessel that holds blessing except peace.”	וְזֶהוּ: "לֹא מִצָּא הַקָּב"ה פְּלִי מִחֲזִיק הַבְּרָכָה אֲלֹא ".הַשָּׁלוֹם"
As is known, peace is the bonding of the light of the Infinite — which shines and gives life to all.	כִּידוּעַ, שֶׁהַשָּׁלוֹם הוּא הַתְּקַשְׁרוֹת אוֹר אֵין-סוֹף הַמֵּאִיר וּמְחִיָּה לְכָל
It is the hidden light within the vessel, that fully and completely transmits.	הוּא הָאוֹר הַגָּנוּז שֶׁבְּתוֹךְ הַכְּלִי — מִשְׁפִּיעַ מְכַל וְכָל
Therefore, the Holy One, blessed be He — His name is Peace — for He makes peace.	וְלָכֵן הַקָּב"ה שְׁמוֹ שָׁלוֹם — שֶׁהוּא עוֹשֶׂה שָׁלוֹם
And therefore, no vessel holds blessing except through connection to the Source and the hidden light — which is the flow — which is peace.	וְלָכֵן אֵין פְּלִי מִחֲזִיק בְּרָכָה אֲלֹא עַל-יְדֵי הַתְּקַשְׁרוֹת אֶל הַשָּׁרֵשׁ וְאוֹר הַגָּנוּז — שֶׁהוּא הַשֹּׁפַע, הוּא הַשָּׁלוֹם
And therefore, it flows into the lack and fills it.	וְלָכֵן נִשְׁפָּע אֶל הַחֶסְרוֹן וּמִתְמַלֵּא

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And behold, the trait of Aharon the Kohen — who pursued peace in actuality, between a person and his fellow and between a man and his wife, as is known —	וְהִנֵּה מִדַּת אֶהְרֹן הַכֹּהֵן — שֶׁהָיָה רוֹדֵף שְׁלוֹם בְּפועֵל, — בֵּין אָדָם לְחֵבֵירוֹ וּבֵין אִישׁ לְאִשְׁתּוֹ כִּידוּעַ
it was because his trait was to pursue only the hidden light that gives life to everything — which is the root of all — which is the Infinite.	מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָיָתָה מִדַּתוֹ לְרֹדֵף רַק אַחֵר הָאוֹר הַגָּנוּז וּמִחִינָה כָּל דָּבָר, שֶׁהוּא הַשְּׂרֵשׁ לְכָל — שֶׁהוּא א"ס
Therefore the commandment was upon him: “And there He commanded the blessing.”	".וְלָכֵן הַמִּצְוָה בּוֹ: "וְשָׂם צִוָּה ה' אֶת הַבְּרָכָה
“Aharon and his sons shall bless the Children of Israel.”	".אֶהְרֹן וּבָנָיו יְבָרְכוּ אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל"
And therefore: “Say to them” — face to face — that both be aligned to one matter:	וְלָכֵן: "אָמַר לָהֶם" — פָּנִים בְּפָנִים — שֶׁיְהִיוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם מְכֻנָּה לְדָבָר אֶחָד
the speaker and the listener — only to attain the supernal light — the pure commandment of Hashem.	הַשּׁוֹמֵעַ וְהַמְשָׁמֵעַ — רַק לְהַשִּׁיג הָאוֹר הָעֲלִיוֹן — מִצְוַת ה' בְּרָה
Not so when the intention of the recipient is to attain his lack — that is the “backside.”	מֵה שְׂאִיִן כֵּן — כּוֹנֵת הַמִּקְבֵּל — לְהַשִּׁיג חֲסָרוֹנוֹ — שֶׁהוּא הָאֲחֻרָיִים
And so is the way of every person, who includes all — he is Kohen, Levi, and Yisrael.	וְכֵן דָּרָךְ כָּל אָדָם — הַכּוֹלֵל מִן הַכָּל — שֶׁהוּא כֹהֵן לְוִי וְיִשְׂרָאֵל
Behold, the <i>Yisrael</i> -trait within him — he should stand on his position, which is complete faith in individual Divine providence.	הִנֵּה מִדַּת יִשְׂרָאֵל נִשְׁבָּה — יַעֲמֹד עַל מַעֲמָדוֹ — שֶׁהִיא אַמּוּנָה שְׁלִימָה בְּהַשְׁגָּחַת פְּרִטִּית
And the <i>Levi</i> -trait within him — which is the lack — should only be to arouse closeness.	וּמִדַּת הַלְוִי נִשְׁבָּה — שֶׁהוּא הַחֲסָרוֹן — יִהְיֶה רַק לְעוֹרֵר הַתְּקַרְבוֹת
And the <i>Kohen</i> -trait within him — “they shall bring close.”	".וּמִדַּת הַכֹּהֵן נִשְׁבָּה — "יִקְרִיבוּ
And when he draws near, he says: “face to face” — meaning with no intention of filling the lack —	וּבְהַתְּקַרְבוֹ — אוֹמֵר: "פָּנִים אֶל פָּנִים" — שֶׁהוּא בָּלִי — שׁוֹם כּוֹנֵת מְלוֹי הַחֲסָרוֹן
for the desire to attain [it] has already been nullified — only the inner light [remains].	שֶׁכָּבֵר נִתְבַטֵּל חֲפֵץ הַשְּׂגָתוֹ — רַק אוֹר הַפְּנִימִי
Then, “She” (Knesset Yisrael) will bless you — that blessing and life and peace will be drawn forth.	אִזְ תְּבָרְכֶךָ כְּנֶסֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל — שֶׁיִּשְׁפַע שְׁפַע בְּרָכָה וְחַיִּים וְשְׁלוֹם
And this is their saying, of blessed memory: “Whoever engages in the Torah of the burnt-offering — it is as if he brought a burnt-offering” — and so for all offerings.	וְהִיא אֲמִירָתָם ז"ל: "כָּל הַעוֹסֵק בְּתוֹרַת עוֹלָה — כְּאִילוֹ הִקְרִיב עוֹלָה", וְכֵן כָּלֵם
Because nonetheless, when one’s soul is aroused to cleave to its root —	מִפְּנֵי שֶׁמִּכָּל מְקוֹם — שֶׁתִּהְיֶה הַתְּעוֹרְרוֹת נִפְשׁוֹ לְהִדְבֵּק — אֶל שְׂרָשׁוֹ
that light is aroused in the entirety of the worlds — until the Infinite —	אוֹתוֹ הָאוֹר מִתְעוֹרֵר בְּכָלֵל הָעוֹלָמוֹת — עַד הָאֵין־סוֹף

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and from there it returns and is awakened — with a flow of great goodness stored away.

ומנשם חוזר ונעזר בהשפעה רב טוב הצפון.

[NOTE: Summary

The discourse begins with the idea that G-d did not find any vessel capable of holding blessing, except for *shalom*—peace. Peace here is not simply the absence of conflict, but the mystical **interconnection between the hidden Divine light (Or HaGanuz) and the vessel that receives it**. Peace is the state in which the *Or Ein Sof* can dwell and flow into the created realm. Therefore, all true blessing is dependent on aligning with this source through peace.

Aaron the Kohen is the prototype of one who channels this energy. His practice of pursuing peace between people is not just emotional harmony—it reflects his pursuit of the infinite light that vitalizes all. Because of this, he and his sons are chosen to **bleed the Jewish people face to face**. That “face-to-face” condition, the discourse explains, must be met both by the speaker and the listener: both must be aligned not toward their own needs, but toward the supernal light of the mitzvah itself.

Within every Jew there are dimensions of Kohen, Levi, and Yisrael. The Yisrael aspect stands in unwavering faith. The Levi aspect is the experience of lack, which exists only to arouse yearning. The Kohen aspect draws near and offers—**not to fill lack, but to cleave to the root**. Only when all three are in harmony, and the intention is pure, does true blessing descend.

Even Torah study is not exempt: one who learns about a korban is considered as though he offered it—because the core is the *hisorerus* (soul arousal) that reaches all the way to the Infinite, and from there awakens **tremendous spiritual abundance** that returns down as tangible blessing.

Practical Takeaway:

To become a vessel for blessing, you must cultivate peace—not only with others, but within yourself. Stop relating to mitzvot or prayer as ways to “get” something. Realize instead that your deepest blessings come when your desire itself becomes quiet, when you want only to cleave to your source. Every mitzvah you do with full presence transforms the very limb of the body performing it, making it a container for light. When you align your inner Kohen, Levi, and Yisrael, you become a true receiver—not of lack, but of infinite good.

True Chassidic Story:

When Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok was living in Tiberias, a distraught man once approached him seeking advice. He had prayed and fasted for many years to overcome a particular craving but found himself still haunted by it. The Rebbe told him, “You are focused on the darkness. But the craving is only a shadow. Instead of battling it, begin doing acts of light with that very limb. Let it hold a mitzvah. Not once, but again and again. Then you will see: the

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light itself will do the work.” The man took on the daily mitzvah of giving quietly with his hand before Shacharit. After some weeks, he returned and said, “I still remember the craving, but it does not pull me anymore.” The Rebbe smiled and said, “Because now, your hand remembers something deeper.”

Source: Based on *Pri Haaretz*, letters from Tiberias, and preserved oral traditions from students of Horodok. **END NOTE]**