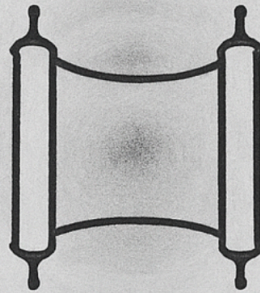


בס"ד

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Horodak
Parshas Ki Savo**

מֵאֲמָר ב



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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Ki Savo

מאמר ב

Introduction

This discourse by Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok (Horodaker), one of the foremost disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch and among the earliest leaders of Chassidus, explores the deep symbolism of *bikkurim* (first fruits), Torah, and the attributes of the soul. Rabbi Menachem Mendel (d. 1788) lived primarily in Horodok, White Russia, and later in Eretz Yisrael. He was renowned for his fiery avodah, inner refinement, and profound mystical teachings. In this maamar, he demonstrates how Torah and mitzvos are rooted in wisdom, how the attributes serve as vessels to guard Divine treasure, and how both rich and poor in daas (spiritual awareness) respond differently to this responsibility. The discourse weaves together parables, Midrashic insights, and verses to explain how wisdom and mitzvos shine through the medium of attributes, and how the ultimate goal is the elevation of all deeds into Hashem's treasury.

Parshas Ki Savo – Maamar 2. “Said (Rabbi Yochanan) Rav

Nachman: May it be my merit that I fulfilled three meals on Shabbos” (Shabbos 118b). The Rav opened: “And it will be when you come ... and you shall take from the first ...” upon the verse of David HaMelech, peace be upon him (Tehillim 19:11–12): “More desirable than gold and much fine gold ... also Your servant is careful with them, in keeping them is great reward.”

And it is explained in the sefarim with a parable: A mortal king who gives and hands over to a guard the choicest, the best, and the first of his treasuries to guard, so that they should be protected from damage and loss, in order that the treasury should shine forever, whenever they wish to make use of it. But if it is damaged – the illumination within is lost and will not shine, and certainly if it is lost completely.

Behold, even in a parable of a mortal, eyes that see will testify and declare the great favor that the guard finds with the king at the beginning – before he handed him the treasury and its illumination, for the guard enjoys its light, he goes to the king without hindrance (Sukkah 45b), and what more does he need. But in truth the parable is this: when the guard watches well and is careful in his guarding – the guard becomes the king's treasury, to hide in his hand all his delights. Certainly so.

פְּרִשְׁתָּ כִּי תָבוֹא – מֵאָמֵר ב' "אָמַר (ר"י) רַב נַחֲמָן :
 תִּיתִי לִי שְׂקִימָתִי שְׁלֹשׁ סְעוּדוֹת בְּשַׁבָּת" (שבת קיח,
 ב). פֶּתַח הָרַב: "וְהִנֵּה כִּי תָבוֹא וְכוּ' וְלָקַחְתָּ מֵרֵאשִׁית"
 וְכוּ', עַל פִּי מֵאָמֵר דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹמִים (תהלים
 יט, יא – יב): "הִנְחַמְדִּים מְזֻהָב וּמְפֹז רַב וְכוּ' גַם
 "עֲבָדְךָ נִזְהָר בָּהֶם בְּשֹׁמְרָם עֵקֶב רַב

וּמְבֹאֵר בְּסִפְרִים עֲנֵנּוּ הַמְּשַׁל, מְלֶכֶת הַדְּיוּט שְׁנוֹתָו
 וּמוֹסֵר לְשׁוֹמֵר מְבַחֵר וּמִיטֵב וְרֵאשִׁית גְּנֻזֵי אוֹצְרוֹתָיו
 לְשׁוֹמֵר, בְּכַדֵּי שִׁישׁוֹתָמָרוּ מִן הַהֶפְסֵד וְהַאֲבָדָה, בְּכַדֵּי
 שְׂאִיר הָאוֹצֵר לְעוֹלָם, כֹּל אֵימַת שְׂרִצּוֹ לְהִשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ
 עִמוֹ, מֵה שְׂאִין כֹּן כְּשֵׁיפֶסֶד - יֵאָבֵד הַמְּאֹר שָׁבוּ וְלֹא
 יֵאִיר, וְכָל שֹׁפֵן כְּשִׁיאֲבֵד מֵאִתּוֹ

הַנֵּה אֶפְלוּ בְּמִשְׁל הַדְּיוּט, קְעִידוֹ וְיִגִּידוּ עֵינַיִם הַרְוֹאוֹת
 אֶת גְּדֵל הַחֵן שֶׁמִּצָּא הַשׁוֹמֵר אֶצֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּתַחֲלָה –
 קִדְּם שֶׁמִּסֵּר לוֹ הָאוֹצֵר וְהַמְּאֹר שָׁבוּ, שֶׁהָרִי הַשׁוֹמֵר
 נִהְיָה לְאוֹרוֹ, יִלֵּךְ אֶצֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלֹא בַר (סוכה מה,
 ב) וּמֵה לוֹ עוֹד, וְאֵמַת מְשַׁל הוּא, כְּשִׁישְׁמֵר הַשׁוֹמֵר
 הֵיטֵב וְיִזְהָר בְּשֹׁמְרָתוֹ - הַשׁוֹמֵר נַעֲשֶׂה אוֹצֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ
 לְגִנּוּ בְּיָדוֹ כֹּל שֶׁעֲשׂוּעָיו. בְּרֹדָא

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And behold, in this way our Sages said (Bereishis Rabbah 1:6): “Bereishis – for the sake of Torah and for the sake of Yisrael and for the sake of the first fruits, which are called ‘first,’ for their sake the world was created.” And the matter is known: “All with wisdom You made” (Tehillim 104:24), which is called (Tehillim 111:10): “The beginning of wisdom is fear of Hashem – it is His treasure” (Yeshayahu 33:6). And our Sages, of blessed memory, said (Berachos 33b): “The Holy One, blessed be He, has nothing in His world except a treasury of fear of Heaven alone,” for the attributes are storehouses – to guard within them the treasure, which is wisdom.

For the attributes are limiters for the wisdom – in every attribute that guards it according to Torah. Without the attributes that guard to conceal it within them, it is impossible to use and to effect the activity of wisdom at all, for it does not become limited. As it is said (Iyov 11:9): “Longer than the land its measure, and broader ...” And anything that is not limited and endless has no handle by which to hold it and to use it. But the attributes are those that limit it.

The point: if indeed the attributes also are not limiters, for example, compassion in the heart has no boundary and end, and it is able truly to spread in a manner of without end. And so the attribute of kindness and the other attributes as well, because the attributes are also Divine essence, as is known. But they have a measure, a boundary, and a limit by the value of the recipient of that attribute – as much compassion as is needed when it fills him. And so with kindness and all attributes – they are limited by those below them and their recipients.

And in this way, “The beginning of wisdom” in any case certainly is affected and shines by means of the attributes, as is known, and it is impossible in any way without them. Therefore a person must guard his attributes, in order that he be able to act through the activities of wisdom, and the wisdom will shine within him: “When His lamp shone over my head” (Iyov 29:3), “And oil on his head will not be lacking” (Koheles 9:8). And by

והנה על דרך זה אמרו רבותינו ז"ל (בראשית רבה א, ו): "בראשית - בשביל התורה וישראל ובכורים שנקראים ראשית בשבילם נברא העולם", והענין דויע מאמר (תהלים קד, כד): "הפל בחכמה עשית", שהיא נקרא (שם קיא, י): "ראשית חכמה יראת ה' היא אוצרו" (ישעיהו לג, ו), ואמרו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה (ברכות לג, ב): "אין לו להקדוש ברוך הוא בעולמו אלא אוצר של יראת שמים בלבד", כי המדות הם בתי גנזים - לשמר. האוצר בתוכם שהוא החכמה.

כי המדות הם מגבילים לחכמה - בכל מדה ומדה שמשמרה על פי התורה, ובלתי המדות המשמרים להגנוז בתוכם אי אפשר להשתמש ולפעל פעלת החכמה כלל, שהרי אינה מתגבלת, כמאמר (איוב יא, ט): "ארצה מארץ מדה ורחבה" וכו', וכל דבר שאינו מגבל ואין סוף אין לו בית יד להחזיק בו ולהשתמש בו, אבל המדות המה מגבילים אותה.

נקדת אם אמנם המדות גם כן אינם מגבילים, שהרי על דרך משל - הרחמנות שבלב אין לה גבול וסוף, ויכולה היא להתפשט באמת על דרך אין סוף, וכמו כן מדת התקדוּת ושאר המדות גם כן, מפני שהמדות הם גם כן אלקות עצמית פידוע. אם אכל יש להם מדה וגבול ותחום על ידי ערך המקבל אותה המדה מה שצריך רחמנות לשמלא אותו, וכמו כן מדת התקדוּת וכל המדות - המה מגבילים על ידי שלמטה מהם ומקבליהם.

ועל דרך זה "ראשית חכמה" על כל פנים בודאי מתפעלת ומאיר על ידי המדות פידוע, ואי אפשר בשום אופן בלתי. ולכן צריך האדם לשמר מדותיו, בכדי שיוכל לפעל על ידי פעולות החכמה והחכמה תאיר בו "בהלה גרה עלי ראשו" (איוב כט, ג) "ושמן על ראשו אל יחסר" (קהלת ט, ח) ולאורו ילך עד בית אלקים חיים ומלך עולם (ירמיה י, י) בפמשל הנזכר לעיל.

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its light he will go until the house of the living God and King of the world (Yirmiyahu 10:10), like the parable mentioned above.

And so too the Torah is called “first,” for it is wisdom that is hidden within the attributes. And likewise Yisrael arose in thought first, as is known (Bereishis Rabbah 1:4), and are called “first” (Yirmiyahu 2:3).

And this is the matter of the first fruits, as it is said (Yeshayahu 28:4): “As the first fruit before the summer ... while still in his hand he swallows it,” for it is very desirable by being the first. And our Sages said (Bikkurim 3:1): “When a person enters his vineyard, he sees a fig that ripened, he ties a reed around it as a sign to guard it for the king.”

And this is the matter that we said, that he should guard the guarding of the first for the king – and enjoy its light also. And this is the matter of the reading of the first fruits and the whole section: “I declare today ...” (Devarim 26:3).

And this is what our Sages said (Bava Kama 92a) regarding the first fruits: “After the poor come the rich, who bring in baskets of silver and gold; they return the vessels to them. The poor, who bring in wicker baskets, the vessels also go to the Kohen.”

And it is like the matter of the attributes as well in this way: the wealthy, who are masters of knowledge, as our Sages said (Nedarim 41a): “There is no poor except in knowledge.” For daas is what connects the attributes to their root and to Him, may He be blessed.

And the attributes are called “silver and gold,” as is known. And therefore the wealthy, who guard the treasury of the King that He entrusted to guard, and He guards them in baskets of silver and gold – proper and faithful just as they are in themselves.

And the “first” is explained in the attributes. It is found that the vessels remain for themselves – explained as his attributes. And this is the matter of the remaining of the soul forever, and what it has profited – that it should not eat the bread of shame, for they are of the soul.

וקמו כן התורה נקראת "ראשית" - שהיא ההקמה
שהיא גנוזה בתוך המדות. וכן ישראל עלו במחשבה
תחלה פידוע (בראשית רבה א, ד) ונקראים
("ראשית" (ירמיה ב, ג).

ונהו ענין הבפורים, כמאמר (ישעיהו כח, ד):
"כבפורה (בתאנה) בטורם קיץ וכו' בעודה ככפו
יבלענה" - שהיא הדבר הנחמד מאד מפני היותו
ראשית, ואמרו רבותינו ז"ל (ביכורים ג, א):
"כשנכנס אדם בכרמו, ראה תאנה שבכרה, כורך
עליה אמי לסימן ולשמרה אל המלך".

והוא ענין שאמרנו שישמר שמירה אל הראשית
עבור המלך - ויהנה לאורה גם כן, ונהו ענין קריאת
(בפורים וכל הפרשה "הגדתי היום" וכו' (כו, ג).

ונהו שאמרו רבותינו ז"ל (בבא קמא צב, א) בענין
בפורים "ביתר עניא אלא עשירים שמביאים
בקלות של כסף וזהב, מחזירים עניותא להם
הכלים, עניים שמביאין בסלי נצרים, הכלים גם כן
לכהן".

שהוא כענין המדות גם כן על דרך זה, עשירים שהם
בעלי דעה כמאמר רבותינו ז"ל (נדרים מא, א):
"אין עני אלא מן הדעת" - כי הדעת היא המקשר
המדות אל שרשם ואליו יתברך.

והמדות נקראים "כסף וזהב" פידוע, ולכן העשירים
שמשמרים אוצר המלך שמסר לשמרו, והוא
משמרים בקלות של כסף וזהב כשרים ונאמנים כמו
שהו בעצמם.

והראשית פרוש במדות נמצא נשארים הכלים -
לעצמן - פרוש מדותיו, והוא ענין השארת הנפש
לעולם - ומה שהרויחה שלא לאכל נהמא דכסופא כי
הם של הנפש.

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And after he was careful in guarding the treasury – it becomes forever the treasury of the King, that the King stores with him, and He searches in His treasuries as His soul desires, since they are hidden with Him.

ואחר שנוזהר בשמירת האוצר – נעשה לעולם ועד אוצר המלך שהמלך גנוז אצלו, ומחפש באוצרותיו כפאות נפשו היותם גנוזים אצלו.

But not so the poor man who has no daas, and he does not guard the “first,” the precious things of the King, but only in baskets of reeds. Nothing remains for him, for some tzaddik must raise them up, or they must be clarified and whitened through various means, and they are not called by his name at all.

מה שאין כן העני שאין בו דעת - ואינו משמר הראשית חמודות המלך כי אם בסלים ונצרים, אינו נשאר לו כלום, כי איזה צדיק מתייב להעלותם - או שיתברר ויתלבן על ידי אפנים שונים, ואינם נקראים על שמו כלל.

And this is (Mishlei 10:7): “The name of the wicked shall rot” – rottenness will rise in their names. But their actions will certainly be elevated and clarified and whitened and refined, as it is written (Yeshayahu 42:8): “I am Hashem, that is My name, and My glory I will not give to another,” and as it says (Malachi 3:21): “And you shall trample the wicked,” for they will be made as dust under the feet of the righteous (Rosh Hashanah 17a).

וזהו (משלי י, ז): “ושם רשעים ירקב” רקבון תעלה בשמותם, אבל פעלתם בודאי יתעלו ויתבררו ויתלבנו ויתצופו, כמו שכתוב (ישעיהו מב, ח): “אני ה' הוא שמי וכבודי לא אחר לא אתן”, וכמאמר (מלאכי ג, כא): “ועסותם רשעים” - כי נעשה מהם. עפר תחת פפות רגלי הצדיקים (ראש השנה יז, א).

And this is (Devarim 3:23): “And I pleaded to Hashem” – which is a language of supplication, and it is the initial charm, that the Holy One, blessed be He, gave him His good treasure to guard. And this is “You have begun to show Your servant ...” And with this charm that he found before the attributes, at first, and before he guarded them in the attributes – Moshe beseeched that He would grant him through that very charm, which is above the attributes, and it is the nullification of the attributes in their root.

וזהו (דברים ג, כג): “ואתחנן אל ה'” - שהוא לשון חנון, והוא החן הראשון שמסר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא אוצרו הטוב לשמר, וזהו “אתה החלות להראות את עבדך” וכו', ובזה החן שמצא קדם המדות בתחלה וקדם לשמרו במדות, הואיל משה לבקש שיחנן עליו באותו חן שהוא למעלה מן המדות, והיא בטול המדות בשמרו.

And this is what David HaMelech, peace be upon him, said: “More desirable than gold and much fine gold.” For the “first,” which is Torah, is more desirable than the attributes, which are called gold, as mentioned above. For the attributes are guardians of the treasure. And this is: “Also Your servant is careful with them, in keeping them there is great reward.”

וזהו שאמר דוד המלך עליו השלום: “הנחמדים מנקה ומפז רב”, כי הראשית שהוא התורה נחמדת מן המדות הנקרא זקב כנזכר לעיל, שהרי המדות הם שומר לאוצר, וזהו: “גם עבדך נוהר בהם”. בשמרום עקב רב.

And this is what (Rabbi Yochanan) Rav Nachman said: “May it be my merit that I fulfilled three meals.” For the “first” is what sustains all. And so too it is in all the mitzvos – for the intellect that performs the mitzvah is what sustains and gives life to the mitzvah. And this is “that I fulfilled,” etc.

וזהו שאמר (ר"י) רב נחמן: “תיתי לי שקימתי שלש סעודות” - הראשית הוא המקנים את הכל, וכן על דרך זה בכל המצוות - כי השכל הפועל המצוה הוא המקנים ומחנה את המצוה, וזהו: “שקימתי” וכו'.

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[NOTE]

Summary

The discourse begins with a teaching from Rav Nachman about the merit of fulfilling the three Shabbos meals, and connects this to the verse “And it will be when you come... and you shall take of the first” (*Parshas Ki Savo*). Rabbi Menachem Mendel compares this to a king entrusting his choicest treasures to a guard. If the treasures are preserved, they shine forever; if not, their light is lost. Similarly, Hashem entrusted His treasures—Torah, Yisrael, and bikkurim, all called *reishis* (first)—into the world. These are guarded within the attributes, for without attributes wisdom cannot be applied or grasped. The attributes act as vessels that both limit and express the infinite wisdom, much like storehouses preserving treasure.

Torah is thus the hidden wisdom clothed within attributes, and Yisrael, who are also called *reishis*, embody this role. Bikkurim symbolize the first and most precious offering, requiring careful guarding for the King. The Mishnah’s description of tying a reed around the first ripe fig shows that one guards the first fruit for Hashem, paralleling the guarding of attributes as vessels for wisdom.

The rich, who bring their bikkurim in silver and gold baskets, symbolize those with daas (knowledge), for daas connects attributes to their Divine source. The poor, who bring simple reed baskets, represent those lacking daas, who cannot guard the treasure properly. For them, their deeds must be elevated through tzaddikim or external refinements. This reflects the teaching that “there is no poor except in daas.”

The discourse continues with Moshe’s plea “Va’eschanan el Hashem” (*Devarim 3:23*), where he requests Hashem’s grace beyond the realm of attributes, tapping into the primordial charm that existed before attributes were clothed in vessels. David HaMelech expresses this same idea: “More desirable than gold and much fine gold,” meaning Torah, the true *reishis*, is more precious than the attributes (gold), for Torah sustains all. Thus, Rav Nachman’s statement, “May it be my merit that I fulfilled the three Shabbos meals,” reveals that the first—the intellect that enlivens the mitzvah—is what sustains and gives life to all mitzvos.

Practical Takeaway

One must safeguard their attributes, ensuring they are aligned with Torah and daas. Without this, wisdom cannot shine in daily life. Guarding one’s attributes transforms them into vessels for Divine wisdom, making a person into a living treasury of Hashem. Torah, mitzvos, and avodah then become enduring treasures stored eternally by the King. Practically, this means refining one’s middos, approaching mitzvos with conscious awareness, and striving for daas so that one’s service is not superficial but connected to the inner Divine source.

Chassidic Story

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok, after leading his community in White Russia, moved to Eretz Yisrael with a group of Chassidim in 1777, settling in Tiberias. There he lived with great simplicity, devoting himself entirely to avodah. The story is told that when asked why he left behind comfort and stability to live in such

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poverty, he replied that he wanted to dwell in the King's palace, even if it meant eating from cracked vessels. For him, being in the land where the Shechinah rests was worth any sacrifice. This reflects the teaching of his maamar: true wealth is not in silver or gold vessels but in guarding the Divine treasure with daas and turning even simplicity into a vessel for Hashem's light. (Source: *Igros Kodesh Chassidei Chabad*, letters about the aliyah of R. Menachem Mendel of Horodok and his followers)

END NOTE]