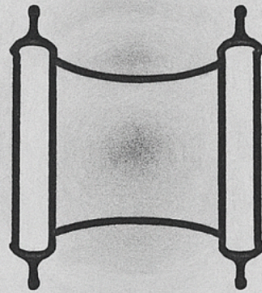


בס"ד

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Horodak
Parshas Bereshis**



Dedicated In Honor Of:

לע"נ

רבי לוי יצחק בן רבי מאיר

מברדיטשוב

To find more Maamarim and to dedicate one visit:

ChassidusNow.com

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Bereshis

Introduction

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok, one of the foremost disciples of the Maggid of Mezritch and an early leader of Chassidus in Eretz Yisrael, often illuminated the mysteries of creation through the prism of Divine service. In this teaching, he interprets the creation of the “two great luminaries” not as a mere cosmic event but as a map of spiritual consciousness. The sun and moon become symbols of revelation and contraction, of the interplay between the infinite and the finite, and of the tzaddik’s role in harmonizing these forces.

And G-d made the two great luminaries — the great luminary to rule the day and the small luminary to rule the night, and the stars.

וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים אֶת שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרוֹת הַגְּדֹלִים אֶת הַמְּאֹר הַגָּדוֹל לְמַמְשַׁלֵּת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת הַמְּאֹר הַקָּטָן לְמַמְשַׁלֵּת הַלַּיְלָה וְאֶת הַכּוֹכָבִים.

For behold, it is known that the Blessed One emanated the worlds and created something from nothing.

כִּי הִנֵּה יָדוּעַ שֶׁהַשַּׁי"ת הֶאֱצִיל הָעוֹלָמוֹת וּבָרָא יֵשׁ מֵאֵין.

And the main purpose was that the righteous person should make from “something” — “nothing,” and subdue all the traits to G-d,

וְעָקַר הָיָה כְּדֵי שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק יַעֲשֶׂה מֵיֵשׁ אֵין וַיִּכְנִיעַ כָּל הַמְּדוּת לַהַשַּׁי"ת

as it is written in the discourse “לָהּ ה' הַגְּדוּלָה” (Divrei HaYamim I 29:11), that he should elevate all the traits to their root.

כְּמָה שֶׁכְּתוּב בְּד"ה ע"ה לָהּ ה' הַגְּדוּלָה וַיַּעֲלֶהָ כָּל הַמְּדוּת לְשָׂרְשָׁן.

Then they will be sweetened in their root.

וְאֵז יִהְיוּ נִמְתָּקִים בְּשָׂרְשָׁן.

And this is what King David said: “When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers — the moon and the stars which You have established.” (Tehillim 8:4-5)

וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאָמַר דָּה"מ ע"ה: כִּי אֶרְאֶה שְׁמַיִךְ מַעֲשֵׂה אֲצַבְעוֹתַיִךְ יָרַח וְכּוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנָתָה

“What is man that You should remember him, and the son of man that You should take notice of him.” (ibid.)

מָה אָנוּשׁ כִּי תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּבֶן אָדָם כִּי תִפְקֹדֵנוּ

The explanation: “When I behold Your heavens” — these are the two Names Havayah and Adonai.

פִּירוּשׁ: כִּי אֶרְאֶה שְׁמַיִךְ — הֵם שְׁנֵי שְׁמוֹת הו"י אֲדָנָי.

For Havayah indicates the Cause of causes, before the emanation of the worlds,

כִּי הו"י מוֹרָה עַל עֵילַת הָעֵילוֹת קוֹדֵם אֲצִילַת עוֹלָמוֹת,

and Adonai indicates after the emanation of the worlds, as it is said, “The Lord of all the earth.” (Yehoshua 3:11)

וְאֲדָנָי מוֹרָה עַל אַחַר אֲצִילַת הָעוֹלָמוֹת, כְּמוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר אֲדוֹן כָּל הָאָרֶץ.

And the Blessed One contracted Himself from level to level until He reached the four colors, the four elements.

וְהַשַּׁי"ת צָמַצַּם מִמְדְּרָגָה לְמְדְּרָגָה עַד שֶׁבָּא לְאַרְבַּע גְּוִוּוּיִן אַרְבַּע יְסוּדוֹת

And this is the meaning of “the work of Your fingers,”

וְזֶהוּ מַעֲשֵׂה אֲצַבְעוֹתַיִךְ,

Menachem Mendel of Horodak
Pri Ha'Eretz
Parshas Bereshis

<p>“fingers” being an expression of colorings, i.e., the four hues.</p>	<p>לְשׁוֹן צָבַע אַנְוָנִין</p>
<p>“The moon and the stars which You established” — for the Blessed One diminished the moon,</p>	<p>יָרַח וְכוכְבֵּים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנַתָּ – כִּי הִשִּׁייתָ מֵעַט אֶת הַיָּרֵחַ,</p>
<p>meaning: He contracted from level to level until He came to the world of Asiyah, the physical world.</p>	<p>פִּירוּשׁ: צִמְצָמָה מִמִּדְרָגָה לְמִדְרָגָה עַד שֶׁבָּא לְעוֹלָם הָעֲשִׂיָּה עוֹלָם הַגִּשְׁמִי</p>
<p>And this is the “diminishing of the moon.”</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ מֵעוֹט הַיָּרֵחַ</p>
<p>For before it reached the level of attributes, there was no distinction of “wealthy before poor,” and there was no smallness at all — all was greatness.</p>	<p>כִּי קוֹדֵם שֶׁבָּא לְמִדּוֹת אֶז לֹא הָיָה נִכְרַ שׁוֹעַ לְפָנָי דָּל, וְלֹא הָיָה קָטָן כָּלֵל – רַק הָיָה הַכֵּל בְּגִדְלָה</p>
<p>And when it entered the attributes, there came to be “great and small.”</p>	<p>וּכְשֶׁבָּא לְמִדּוֹת נִעְשָׂה גְדוֹל וְקָטָן</p>
<p>And all this — why? So that the righteous one should make from “something” — “nothing,”</p>	<p>וְכָל כֵּךְ לְמָה? כְּדֵי שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק יַעֲשֶׂה מֵיֵשׁ אֵין</p>
<p>and elevate the physical traits back to their root, as mentioned above.</p>	<p>וַיַּעֲלֶה הַמִּדּוֹת הַגִּשְׁמִיִּים לְשָׂרְשָׁן כְּנִזְכָּר לְעֵיל</p>
<p>And this is the meaning of “What is man.” The explanation: there is [a purpose] so that the righteous person may come to the level of <i>mah</i> (what), and then he elevates everything.</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ מָה אָנוּשׁ, פִּירוּשׁ: יֵשׁ כְּדֵי שֶׁהַצַּדִּיק יָבֹא לְמִדְרֵיגוֹת מ”ה וְאֵז יַעֲלֶה הַכֵּל</p>
<p>And when this is so, vitality is brought by him to all the worlds.</p>	<p>וּבְהֵיחֹת כֵּן בָּא עַל יְדוֹ חַיּוֹת לְכֹל הָעוֹלָמוֹת</p>
<p>And this is the meaning of “that You remember him” — meaning, then he will be on the level of <i>zachar</i> (male).</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ כִּי תִזְכְּרֶנּוּ, פִּירוּשׁ: כִּי אֵז יִהְיֶה בְּמִדְרֵיגַת זָכָר</p>
<p>And “the son of man,” meaning, since he is in the level of <i>mah</i>, then he is called <i>adam</i>, the numerical value of <i>mah</i> (45).</p>	<p>וְכֵן אָדָם, פִּירוּשׁ: כִּינּוֹן שֶׁהוּא בְּמִדְרֵיגַת מ”ה, אֵז נִקְרָא אָדָם מִסְפֵּר מ”ה</p>
<p>And then “that You should visit him,” meaning he is worthy to be visited and remembered.</p>	<p>וְאֵז כִּי תִפְקְדֶנּוּ רְאוּי לְפָקוֹד אוֹתוֹ</p>
<p>And this is what is stated in the Gemara: “Bring for Me an atonement for having diminished the moon.” (Chullin 60b)</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ שֶׁאֵיתָא בְּגִמְרָא: הִבִּיאוּ עָלַי כְּפָרָה עַל שֶׁמְעַטְתִּי אֶת הַיָּרֵחַ</p>
<p>The explanation: bring up to Me all the attributes, above the level of speech, to their root,</p>	<p>פִּירוּשׁ: הִבִּיאוּ עָלַי כָּל הַמִּדּוֹת לְמַעְלָה מִן הַדְּבֹר לְשָׂרְשָׁן,</p>
<p>and then they will be sweetened in their root,</p>	<p>וְאֵז יִהְיוּ נִמְתְּקִים בְּשָׂרְשָׁן</p>
<p>and then there will be atonement for the diminishing of the moon, as mentioned above.</p>	<p>וְאֵז יִהְיֶה כְּפָרָה עַל מַעוֹט הַיָּרֵחַ כְּנִזְכָּר לְעֵיל</p>

Menachem Mendel of Horodak Pri Ha'Eretz Parshas Bereshis

For the main purpose of the emanation of the worlds was for this.

פי עיקר אצילות העולמות הנה בשביל זה.

And this is the meaning of “And G-d made the two great luminaries.”

וזהו ויעש אלקים את שני המאורות הגדולים.

Meaning: those luminaries which were great before the emanation of the worlds.

פירושו: אותן המאורות שהיו גדולים קודם אצילות העולמות.

For before the contraction there was no smallness at all — only two great luminaries, which are Chochmah and Binah.

פי קודם הצמצום לא הייתה קטנות כלל, רק שני מאורות גדולים שהם חכמה ובינה.

And when He contracted and they came into the realm of the attributes — as is written in the Zohar, “From her, judgments are aroused” —

וכאשר נצמצם ובאו למדות, כמו שנאמר בזהר: דמינה דינו מתערין

and descended into *Asiyah* (the world of action), there became “great and small.”

ובא לעשיה נעשה גדול וקטן.

And this is the meaning of “And G-d made” — that He contracted and brought into *Asiyah* those two great luminaries.

וזהו ויעש אלקים — שנצמצם ובא לעשיה אותן השני מאורות הגדולים.

And these are the well-known great luminaries, as mentioned above.

וזהו המאורות הגדולים הידועים בפ"ל

The great luminary to rule the day and the small luminary to rule the night — meaning, the main purpose of creation was that the righteous one should rule over the night.

את המאור הגדול לממשלת היום ואת המאור הקטן לממשלת הלילה, פירושו: עיקר הבריאה הנה כדי שהצדיק ימשול על הלילה.

And this is [the meaning of] “midnight” — meaning, that he divides and breaks the night.

וזהו “תצות לילה”, פירושו: שיתחלוק וישבור הלילה.

Then “I will arise to thank You.” (Tehillim 119:62)

”ואז אקום להודות לך”

And when he breaks the night and elevates the attributes and ascends to a level,

וכשמשבר את הלילה ומעלה המדות ובא למדרגה

then he understands that the contraction of the worlds was in His great kindness,

אז הוא מבין שמה שצמצם העולמות הוא בחסדו הגדול,

because the Blessed One is “ח"ס ד"ל” — compassionate and sparing — and had pity on the lower levels.

מפני שהש"י ח"ס ד"ל וחס על מדרגות התחתונים

as it is written, “For none shall be cast away from Him.” (II Shmuel 14:14)

”כמו שנאמר: “כי לא ידח ממנו נדח”

And this is [the meaning of] “Whoever engages in Torah at night — the Holy One draws upon him a thread of kindness by day.” (Avodah Zarah 3b)

וזהו “כל העוסק בתורה בלילה — הקדוש ברוך הוא מושך עליו חוט של חסד ביום”

Menachem Mendel of Horodak Pri Ha'Eretz Parshas Bereshis

<p>Meaning, when he comes to the level of “something,” he understands the kindness within the contraction of the worlds.</p>	<p>פירושו: כְּשֶׁבָא לְמִדְרִיגַת יֵשׁ – אִזּוּ מוּבָן הַחֶסֶד בְּצִמְצוּם הָעוֹלָמוֹת.</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] “And the Lord G-d planted a garden in Eden from the east.” (Bereishis 2:8)</p>	<p>”וְזֶהוּ” וַיִּטַּע ה' אֱלֹקִים גֶּן בְּעֵדֶן מִקְדָּם</p>
<p>Meaning: “And the Lord G-d planted” — He contracted the worlds.</p>	<p>פירושו: ”וַיִּטַּע ה' אֱלֹקִים” – שְׁצִמְצָם עוֹלָמוֹת.</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] “the Lord G-d” — the combination of mercy and judgment.</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ ”ה' אֱלֹקִים,” שִׁיתוּף רַחֲמִים לְמִדַּת הַדִּין</p>
<p>“A garden in Eden” — for originally there was Eden, a delight beyond comprehension,</p>	<p>”גֶּן בְּעֵדֶן” – שְׁמִתְחַלָּה הָיָה עֵדֶן תַּעֲנוּג שְׁלֵא בְהַשְׁגָּה</p>
<p>and afterwards it was contracted into the attributes.</p>	<p>וְאַחַר כֵּן נְצַמְצָם לְמִדּוֹת</p>
<p>And this is the drawing down from <i>Binah</i> into the attributes, as it is said in the Zohar, “From her, judgments are aroused.” (Zohar I, 65b)</p>	<p>וְהִינּוּ הַמְשַׁכָּה מִבִּינָה לְמִדּוֹת ”כִּמוֹ שְׁנֵאָמַר בְּזוֹהַר: ”דְּמִינָה דִּינִין מִתַּעֲרִין</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] “Gan” — from <i>Binah</i>, which is fifty, there is drawn down <i>Gimel</i>, meaning beneficence,</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ ”גִּין” – מִבִּינָה שֶׁהִיא נ', נְעֻשִׁית הַמְשַׁכָּה שֶׁהִיא ג', לְשׁוֹן גּוֹמֵל חֶסְדִּים</p>
<p>for the contraction of the worlds is through His great kindness.</p>	<p>מִפְּנֵי שְׁצִמְצוּם הָעוֹלָמוֹת הוּא בְּחֶסֶדוֹ הַגָּדוֹל</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] “And there was no man to work the ground” — meaning, he was still in the level of “nothing.”</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ ”וְאָדָם אֵין לַעֲבֹד אֶת הָאֲדָמָה,” פִּירוּשׁ: שֶׁהָיָה עֵדֶן בְּמִדְרִיגַת אֵין</p>
<p>And afterwards, when he came to the attributes, which is <i>Malchus</i>, he became man.</p>	<p>וְאַחַר כֵּן כְּשֶׁבָא לְמִדּוֹת שֶׁהִיא מְלָכוּת – נְעֻשָׂה אָדָם</p>
<p>And at first he was “א”ד,” and when he came to the lower level, <i>Malchus</i>, he became “אדם.”</p>	<p>וּמִתְחַלָּה הָיָה א”ד, וְכִשְׁבָּא לְמִדְרִיגַת הַתַּתְּחוּנָה שֶׁהִיא מְלָכוּת – נְעֻשָׂה אָדָם</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] “And a mist ascended from the earth, and man was formed.”</p>	<p>”וְזֶהוּ” וַיֵּאָד יַעֲלֶה מִן הָאָרֶץ וְנִעְשָׂה אָדָם</p>
<p>“And it watered all the face of the ground.” (Bereishis 2:6)</p>	<p>”וַהֲשִׁקָה אֶת כָּל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה”</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] “In the beginning G-d created” — “in the beginning,” before the contraction,</p>	<p>וְזֶהוּ ”בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא” – ”בְּרֵאשִׁית,” קוֹדָם הַצְּמִצּוּם</p>
<p>“He created” — was in <i>berius</i> (health), like “so-and-so is healthy,” meaning completeness.</p>	<p>בְּרָא” הָיָה בְּבְרִיאוֹת, כִּמוֹ הַבְּרִיא פְּלוּנִי – לְשׁוֹן” שְׁלֵמוֹת</p>
<p>“And the earth was chaos and void” — this is the breaking.</p>	<p>וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תוֹהוּ וָבוֹהוּ, ”וְזֶהוּ הַשְּׁבִירָה”</p>
<p>And afterwards, “And G-d said, ‘Let there be light’” — “let there be” with a <i>yud</i>,</p>	<p>וְאַחַר כֵּן ”וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹקִים יְהִי אוֹר” – ”יְהִי” בְּיוֹד</p>
<p>because it was only a point.</p>	<p>לְפִי שְׁלֵא הָיָה רַק נִקּוּדָה</p>

Menachem Mendel of Horodak Pri Ha'Eretz Parshas Bereshis

“And there was light” — “there was” with a *vav*, which denotes drawing forth.

בְּיְהִי אוֹר – “וַיְהִי” בְּוָו, שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן הַמְּשַׁכֵּה

Moreover, the numerical value of *vav* is thirteen, for the main purpose of creation was that the thirteen attributes of mercy be revealed.

וַיְעוֹד שֶׁמְסַפֵּר וָו הוּא י"ג

And this was the rectification of the worlds — and understand this well.

לְפִי שֶׁעִיקַר הַבְּרִיאָה הָיָה שִׁתְּגַלּוֹ י"ג מִדּוֹת הַרַחֲמִים

וְזֶה הָיָה תִּיקוּן הָעוֹלָמוֹת – וְהִבֵּן

[NOTE Summary

The discourse opens with the verse, “And G-d made the two great luminaries, the great luminary to rule the day and the small luminary to rule the night.” Rabbi Menachem Mendel explains that the entire purpose of creation is that the tzaddik should “rule over the night”—to illuminate darkness and refine the world. “Midnight,” he teaches, means dividing and breaking the night; through this act the tzaddik elevates the attributes (*middos*) and recognizes that the contraction (*tzimtzum*) of the worlds was itself an expression of G-d’s kindness. The Divine contraction was not punishment or concealment, but compassion — “for He does not cast away any being” (II Shmuel 14:14).

When one learns Torah at night, a “thread of kindness” is drawn upon him by day, because through engagement with darkness, the soul reveals the hidden kindness within constriction. This is reflected in the verse, “And G-d planted a garden in Eden.” The “planting” represents Divine contraction: *Havayah Elokim* signifies the joining of mercy and judgment, while the “garden in Eden” refers to delight (*Eden*) being enclosed within the vessels of emotion (*Gan*). The letter value of “Gan” (גן) alludes to the descent from *Binah* (fifty) to *Gimel* (three), from comprehension into kindness and beneficence.

Man’s creation follows this same pattern. “And there was no man to work the ground” — before descent into *middos*, man was still in the state of *ayin* (nothingness). When the soul descends into the attribute of *Malchus* (sovereignty), he becomes *adam* — from *aleph-dalet* (א"ד) to *adam* (אָדָם) — embodying Divine presence within form. The “mist rising from the earth” and “watering the ground” symbolize this elevation: physicality ascending to its spiritual root and then nourishing creation from above.

The narrative of “Bereishis bara Elokim” encapsulates this entire dynamic. “Bereishis” (in the beginning) refers to the primordial completeness before contraction, while “bara” (created) implies perfection — as in “healthy” or “whole.” “The earth was chaos and void” corresponds to the breaking of vessels (*shevirah*), and “Let there be light” begins rectification. The *yud* in “yehi” (let there be) signifies a point, an initial spark of creation, while the *vav* in “vayehi” (and there was) represents drawing forth and extension. The numerical value of *vav* (6) multiplied through the Divine attributes yields thirteen — the Thirteen Attributes of Mercy — showing that the world’s purpose is to reveal G-d’s infinite compassion through finite existence.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak
Pri Ha'Eretz
Parshas Bereshis

Practical Takeaway

Confronting darkness is not merely endurance — it is rulership. The tzaddik, and by extension every Jew, is charged with mastering the “night” by breaking its hold and transforming concealment into illumination. When one studies Torah or prays during inner or outer “night,” he reveals the thread of kindness within Divine constriction and participates in G-d’s creative compassion. Every descent, every concealment, is an opportunity to discover that *tzimtzum* itself is mercy — the Creator contracting His light so that we may find Him even in limitation.

Chassidic Story

Once, while Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok lived in the Holy Land, his disciples complained of the oppressive heat and the dryness of the soil. The Rebbe smiled and said, “If you will thank G-d in the heat as in the cool, the same sun that burns will begin to warm your souls.” The students began to sing and learn Torah under the blazing sun. Soon, a gentle breeze rose, the air cooled, and the Rebbe said, “Now you see — when you rule the night and the heat with joy, nature itself becomes your servant.”

(Source: *Pri Ha'aretz*, Letters of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok, Letter 3)

END NOTE]