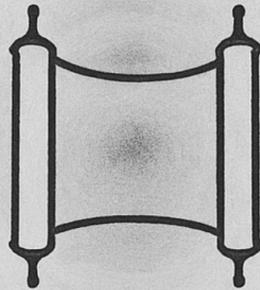


בס"ד

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Horodak
Parshas Yisro**



Dedicated To:

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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Yisro

Introduction

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok (circa 1730–1788), a leading disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch and one of the primary transmitters of early Chassidic thought, was known for articulating deep metaphysical ideas in a way that directly shaped avodah, lived divine service. In this maamar, he develops a comprehensive framework that weaves together tzimtzum, the first light, naaseh venishma, the Ten Utterances, and the inner meaning of action and hearing, showing how physical mitzvah performance becomes the vehicle for reaching the highest unity and true deveikus.

And God spoke all these words, saying. This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, said all the Ten Commandments in one utterance, which it is impossible for a human being to say in this way. If so, what is the meaning of additionally stating “I am” and “You shall not have,” for He then returned and explained each utterance individually.

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה לְאָמֹר מִלְּמַד
שֶׁאָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא כָּל עֲשֻׁרֵת הַדְּבָרוֹת בְּדַבְּוֹר
אֶחָד מֵה שְׂאֵי אֶפְשָׁר לְאָדָם לֹאמַר כֵּן. אִם כֵּן מֵה
תְּלַמִּיד לֹאמַר עוֹד אֲנֹכִי וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לָּהּ שְׁחִזוֹר וּפְרִשׁ כָּל
דְּבָוֹר בְּפָנָי עֲצֹמוֹ.

The rabbi opened with what our Rabbis of blessed memory said: at the time that Israel preceded “we will do” to “we will hear,” six hundred thousand ministering angels came to each individual of Israel and tied for him two crowns, one corresponding to “we will do” and one corresponding to “we will hear,” etc.

פְּתַח הָרַב בְּמֵאֲרָזֵי ל' בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁהִקְדִּימוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֲשֵׂה
לְנִשְׁמָע בְּאוֹר ס"ר מִלְּאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד
מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל וְקִשְׁרוּ לוֹ ב' כְּתָרִים א' כְּנֶגֶד בְּעֲשֵׂה וְא'
כְּנֶגֶד נִשְׁמָע וְכוּ'

There at Horeb they placed them upon them, and at Horeb they removed them, etc. Our Rabbis of blessed memory said, and all of them Moses merited, etc. Rabbi Elazar said: at the time that Israel preceded “we will do” to “we will hear,” a Heavenly Voice went forth and said, “Who revealed to My children this secret that the ministering angels use.”

שָׁם בְּחֹרֵב טֻעְנוּ וּבְחֹרֵב פָּרְקוּ כו' אֲרָזֵי ל' וְכוּלָן זָכָה
מִשָּׂה כו' אֲר"א בְּשַׁעַה שֶׁהִקְדִּימוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּעֲשֵׂה
לְנִשְׁמָע יִצְתָה בֵּת קוֹל וְאָמַר מִי גִלָּה לְבְנֵי רִז זֶה

That Moses uses it, as it is written: “Bless the Lord, His angels, mighty in strength, who do His word, to listen,” etc. First it states “who do,” and afterward “to listen.” There also is the statement of Rava to that heretic who said to him, “A hasty nation, for you preceded your mouths to your ears; you still persist in your hastiness.”

שְׁמִשָּׂה מִשְׁתַּמְשִׁין בּוֹ דְּכִתִּיב כָּרְכוּ ה' מְלֹאכֵי גְבוּרֵי
כַח עֲשֵׂי דְבָרוֹ לְשִׁמְעַ כו' בְּרִישָׁא עֲשֵׂי וְהִדְר לְשִׁמְעַ
גַּם שָׁם מֵאֲמַר רַבָּא לְהֵהוּא מִינָא

For he said to him: “You are a hasty people, for you preceded your mouths to your ears; you should first have listened, and if you were able you would have accepted,” etc. He said to him,

דְּקָא לִי הָ עֲמָא פְּזִיזָא דְּקַדְמִיתוּ פּוּמִיכוּ לְאוּדְנִיכוּ
אֲכִתִּי בְּפִחוֹתֵיכוּ קְאִימִיתוּ בְּרִישָׁא אִיבְעֵי לְכוּ
לְמִשְׁמַע אִי מְצִיתוּ קְבִילִיתוּ כו' א"ל כו' כְּתִיב כֵּן תִּם
יִשְׂרָיִם תִּנְחַם כו'

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etc., as it is written: "The integrity of the upright will guide them," etc.

And behold our Rabbis of blessed memory said: with the Torah the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, which is wisdom, as the Targum explains: "In the beginning God created," meaning, with wisdom He created. And behold the matter of creation, its explanation, that our Rabbis of blessed memory expressed in the clarity of their language, words of the living God.

והנה ארז"ל באורייתא ברא קב"ה עלמא שהוא
התקמה כפירוש התרגום בראשית ברא בתקמתא
ברא. והנה ענגן הכריאה פירוש דז"ל בצחות
דברייהם דברי אלהים חיים

And they said: before the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world, He and His Name alone existed. And from the light of His garment He created the world, like this finding of His garment, from it and within it.

ואמרו קדם שברא הקדוש ברוך הוא את העולם
היה הוא ושמו לבד ומאור לבושו ברא את העולם
כהדיו המצא דלבושיה מניה וביה

And in order to understand this in one's knowledge, "the depths burst forth like the dawn," meaning the matter of the contraction. And it must be known that the Infinite Light, blessed be He, contracted Himself in the creation of the world, as in the statement: when it arose in His simple will. And behold, the matter of the contraction is the ascent of the simple will.

ובכדי להבין זה בדעתו תהומות יבקע פשטר פירוש
ענגן הצמצום והוא להיות ידוע כי אין-סוף ברוך הוא
צמצם עצמו בכריאת העולם כמאמר כשעלה ברצונו
הפשוט והנה ענגן הצמצום הוא עלית הרצון הפשוט

And the human being proves this, for all the order of creation is included within him. And before the entry of thought into letters and a word and its comprehension, behold the thought roams without boundaries or limits, and it is neither grasped nor grasping, even though the power of comprehension is within it when it will desire and enter the limits of letters by its will.

והאדם יוכיח שנקלל בו כל סדר הכריאה וקודם
כניסת המחשבה באותיות ותיבה והקנתה הנה
המחשבה משוטטת בלי מצרים וגבולים ואינה
מושגת ומשגת אם אמנם היות ההשגה בכתה
כשתרצה ותכנס בגבולי אותיות רצונה

But before its entry, when it is abstracted from all limit, the comprehension has no grasp at all, like nothingness and nullity and darkness. And this is the matter of Keter, and afterward wisdom comes from nothing, for wisdom is the contraction from expansion.

אבל קדם כניסתה שהיא מפשטת מכל גבול אין
להשגה שום תפיסה כמו אין ואפס והשך והוא ענגן
כתר ואחריו התקמה מאין תמצא כי התקמה היא
הצמצום מן ההתפשטות

And it is in order to bring the thought into the boundary of letters and words and afterward the understanding. Thus, the beginning of the revelation of the light of comprehension is the contraction of oneself. But the essential vitality of the light of comprehension is the nothingness and the nullity.

ואין בכדי להכניס המחשבה בגבול אותיות ותיבות
ואחר כך התכנה הרי שתחלת התגלות אור ההשגה
הוא הצמצום עצמו אבל עיקר החיות של אור
ההשגה הוא האין והאפס

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And the proof is that when a person goes out from one matter to another in depth, it is impossible for him to enter himself to deepen into the second matter until he is astonished for a short while. And the matter of astonishment is that he elevates the thought to the beginning of its root, which is the nothingness and the nullity.

And he thinks nothing at all, until afterward it is possible for him to contract his thought into another matter and illuminate there. Thus, the essential truth of the power and vitality of comprehension is the nothingness and the nullity, which appears like darkness.

But this is because of the absence of the power of the limited to grasp without limit. Therefore, wisdom and contraction are the beginning of revelation and light, but the nothingness and the expansion before the contraction are the essential light that illuminates within the contraction.

But what is man that You should know him, a son of man that You should consider him. And it is impossible for a human being to think except through contraction, particulars by particulars. But not so the Infinite One, blessed be He, the Cause of all causes, before Whom everything is revealed, for all hidden depths and the orders of Creation are revealed before Him.

And everything that is more subtle, nothingness and nullity, and abstracted from limitation, is more attached to Him, may He be blessed, to His essence, without any garment. And everything that is more revealed are garments and screens that separate between the sacred.

And behold, when it arose in His simple will to create the world, the will is what contracts the contraction, which is wisdom. And with His will He created, which is "In the beginning He created," as its Targum explains, "With wisdom He created" (Genesis 1:1, Targum Onkelos).

And all the "And He said" statements that are in Scripture were already created in the first will, for from the beginning He willed all the creations. This is what our Rabbis of blessed memory said, that all of them were created in the first.

וְהָרְאִיָּה כְּשֶׁאָדָם יוֹצֵא מֵעֵנָן לְעֵנָן בְּעִמְקוֹת אֵי אֶפְשָׁר לוֹ לְהִכְנִיס עֲצָמוֹ לְהַעֲמִיק בְּעֵנָן הַשֵּׁנִי עַד שֶׁמִּשְׁתַּוְּיָם כְּשֶׁעָשָׂה חֲדָא וְעֵנָן הַהִשְׁתַּוְּיָמוֹת הוּא שֶׁמִּעֲלָה הַמִּתְשַׁבֵּה אֶל תַּחֲלַת שְׂרֻשָּׁה שֶׁהוּא הָאֵין וְהָאֶפֶס

וְאִינוּ חוֹשֵׁב כְּלוּם עַד שֶׁאֲחֵר כִּף בְּאֶפְשָׁרוֹתוֹ לְצַמְצֵם מִתְשַׁבְּתוֹ בְּעֵנָן אֲחֵר לְהָאִיר שָׁם הָרִי שֶׁעִיקָר אֲמִיתוֹת כִּפְ חִיּוֹת הַהִשְׁגָּה הוּא הָאֵין וְהָאֶפֶס הַנִּרְאָה כְּמוֹ חֲשׂוֹף

אֲבָל הוּא מִתְחַמֵּת הָעֵדֶר כִּחַ הַמִּגְבָּלִים לְהַשִּׁיג בְּלִי גְבוּל לְכֹן הַחֲכָמָה וְהַצְמִצּוּם הוּא רֵאשִׁית הַהִתְגַּלּוּת וְהָאִוֶּר אִם אֲמַנָּם הָאֵין וְהַהִתְפַּשְׁטוֹת שֶׁקֹּדֶם הַצְמִצּוּם הוּא עִיקָר הָאִוֶּר הַמְאִיר בְּצַמְצוּם

אֲבָל מָה אָדָם וַיִּדְעֵהוּ בֶן אָנוּשׁ וַיִּחְשַׁבְהוּ וְאִי־אֶפְשָׁר לְאָדָם לְחֻשֵׁב אֵלָא אִם בֶּן עַל־יְדֵי הַצְמִצּוּם פְּרָטִים פְּרָטִים מִשְׁאִין בֶּן אֵין־סוּף בְּרוּךְ הוּא עִילַת כָּל הָעִילוֹת אִם לְפָנָיו מִי גְלוּי לְפָנָיו נִגְלוּ כָּל תַּעֲלוּמוֹת וְסֻדְרֵי בְּרֵאשִׁית

וְכָל הַיּוֹתֵר דִּק אֵין וְאֶפֶס וּמִפְשָׁט מִגְבוּל הוּא יוֹתֵר דְּבִק בּוֹ יִתְבַרֵךְ עֲצָמוֹתוֹ בְּלִי שׁוּם מִלְבוּשׁ וְכָל הַמִּתְגַּלָּה יוֹתֵר הִמָּה מִלְבוּשִׁים וּמִסְכִּים הַמְבַדִּילִים בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ

וְהִנֵּה כְּשֶׁעָלָה בְּרִצּוֹנוֹ הַפְּשׁוּט לְבְרֹא אֶת הָעוֹלָם הַרְצוֹן הוּא הַמְצַמְצֵם אֶת הַצְמִצּוּם שֶׁהוּא חֲכָמָה וּבְרִצּוֹנוֹ בְּרֵא שֶׁהוּא בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרֵא כְּתַרְגוּמוֹ בְּחֲכָמָתָא בְּרֵא

וּכְבָר נִבְרָאוּ כָּל הַיֵּאֶמֶר שֶׁבְּמִקְרָא בְּרִצּוֹן הַרְאִישׁוֹן שֶׁהָרִי מִתְחַלָּה רִצָּה בְּכָל הַבְּרִיאוֹת זֶהוּ אֶרְז"ל שֶׁכָּלֶם בְּרֵאשׁוֹן נִבְרָאוּ

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But their revelation, according to the measure of the comprehension of the limited, was not possible except particulars by particulars. And this is "And He said, and He said." But the first "And He said" is "Let there be light," which is the beginning of revelation.

אבל התגלותם למדת השגת המגבלים לא הייתה באפשרות כי אם פְּרָטִים פְּרָטִים וְנִהוּ וַיֹּאמֶר וַיֹּאמֶר. אַבְל וַיֹּאמֶר הָרֵאשׁוֹן הוּא וְיִהְיֶה אוֹר.

For it is the beginning of revelation, which is the contraction. It is the light for the comprehension of the limited, for at first it is dark for their comprehension prior to the contraction.

שֶׁהוּא תְחִלַּת הַהִתְגַּלּוּת שֶׁהוּא הַצְּמָצוּם הוּא הָאוֹר לְהַשְׁגַּת הַמְּגַבְלִים שֶׁהֵרִי בְתַחֲלָה חֹשֶׁךְ הוּא לְהַשְׁגָּתָם קֹדֶם הַצְּמָצוּם.

And behold, the first light was also hidden away for the righteous for the future to come, and its hiding is in Binah, which is called "the future to come." For the contraction, which is Chochmah, is afterward en clothed in Binah and Daas and the attributes, and one does not make use of it except the righteous one who strips off form and all the matters of those garments from using them in the service of the Lord.

וְהִנֵּה הָאוֹר הָרֵאשׁוֹן גַּם כֵּן נִגְנוּ לְצַדִּיקִים לְעֵתִיד לְבֹא וּגְנִיזָתוֹ הוּא בְּבִינָה הַנִּקְרָא לְעֵתִיד לְבֹא שֶׁהֵרִי הַצְּמָצוּם שֶׁהוּא חֻקָּמָה מִתְלַבֵּשׁ אַחֵר כִּדְ בְּבִינָה וְדַעַת וּמַדּוּת וְאִינוּ מְשַׁתְּמֵשׁ בָּהּ כִּי אִם הַצַּדִּיק הַפּוֹשֵׁט צוּרָה וְכָל עֲנִינֵי הַמְּלַבּוּשִׁים הֵהֱם.

From making use of them in the service of the Lord, which is like the words of that heretic to Rava, "First you should have listened, if you were able you would have accepted," which is to estimate in his soul through the attributes and the garments. And in truth it is not so, but rather "the righteous shall live by his faith."

מִלְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ עַל יְדֵיהֶם בְּעֲבוּדַת ה' שֶׁהוּא כְּדַבְּרֵי הַהוּא מִינְא לְרַבָּא בְּרִישָׁא אִיבְעֵי לְכוּ לְמַשְׁמַע אִי מְצִיתוּ קַבִּילִיתוּ שֶׁהוּא לְשַׁעַר בְּנִפְשׁוֹ עַל יְדֵי הַמַּדּוּת וְהַמְּלַבּוּשִׁים וּבְאַמְתָּ אִינוּ כֵּן כִּי אִם צַדִּיק בְּאַמוּנָתוֹ יִחְיֶה.

In faith, which is Chochmah and the contraction, without any understanding to know between good and evil. Therefore, first is "we will do" simply because of faith, and afterward "we will hear." And as is known, the matter of action depends on Chochmah, as in the statement "all of them You made with wisdom," "with wisdom He founded the earth," which is action.

בְּאַמוּנָה שֶׁהִיא הַחֻקָּמָה וְהַצְּמָצוּם בְּלֵי שׁוּם הַבְּנָה לְדַעַת בֵּין טוֹב לְרָע וְלִכְן בְּרִישָׁא נַעֲשֶׂה סֶתֶם מִחֻמַּת הָאַמוּנָה וְאַחֵר כִּדְ נִשְׁמַע וְכִדְעוּ שֶׁעֲנָן הַעֲשִׂיָה תְלוּי בְּחֻקָּמָה כְּמֹאמֶר בְּלָם בְּחֻקָּמָה עֲשִׂית בְּחֻקָּמָה יִסַּד אֶרֶץ שֶׁהִיא עֲשִׂיָה.

And the hearing depends on Binah, as in the statement "an ear understands for it," as in the statement "a heart to hear," which is understanding. And the matter of faith the Lord God did not give to the nations of the lands, but only after their intellect and the stubbornness of their heart and their understanding do they go.

וְהַשְׁמִיעָה תְלוּיָהּ בְּבִינָה כְּמֹאמֶר אֲנִן תְּבוּן לָהּ כְּמֹאמֶר לֵב לְשִׁמּוֹעַ שֶׁהוּא הַהִבְנָה וְעֲנָן הָאַמוּנָה לֹא נִתְּנוּ ה' אֱלֹהִים לְגוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ כִּי אִם אַחֲרֵי שְׂכָלָם וּשְׁרִירוֹת לָבָם וְהַבְּנָתָם יִלְכוּ.

Which are laws they do not know, without unity, for they are separated. But Israel are holy, and they believe in the Lord and in His Torah, which is the primordial wisdom. And after this faith, which immediately causes action, these commandments that a person shall do and live by them.

שֶׁהֵם מְשַׁפְּטִים בַּל יְדַעוּם בְּלֵי יְחִוּד כִּי נִפְרָדִים הֵמָּה מִשְׂאִין כֵּן יִשְׂרָאֵל קְדוּשִׁים הֵם וְנֶאֱמִינוּ בֵּה' בְּתוֹרָתוֹ שֶׁהִיא הַחֻקָּמָה הַקְּדוּמָה וְאַחֲרֵי הָאַמוּנָה זֶה הַגּוֹרָמַת תְּכַף הַעֲשִׂיָה אֵלֶּה הַמְּצִוּוֹת אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אוֹתָם הָאָדָם וְחֵי בָהֶם.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Yisro

In faith and wisdom he lives by them. And the entire essence of his intention in performing the physical commandment, or in the depth of Torah and prayer, is because of his faith in them, that they were drawn down from His will, may He be blessed.

בְּאֵמוּנָה וְחֻכְמָה תַּחֲזִיחַ בְּעֲלִיָּה וְכָל עֵיקָר מִגְּמָתוֹ
בְּעֲשִׂית הַמִּצְוָה הַגְּשָׁמִית אוֹ בְּעִמּוּק הַתּוֹרָה וְהַתְּפִלָּה
מִחֲמַת אֵמוּנָתוֹ בְּהֵם שְׁנֵשֶׁת לְשָׁלוֹ מִרְצוֹנוֹ יִתְפָּרֵד.

For He commanded and it stands from world to world, until they reached the level of action. And automatically, through the act of the commandment, he arouses from world to world until he reaches the future to come, which gathers everything and is the true unity.

כִּי הוּא צִוָּה וַיְעַמֵּד מֵעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם עַד שֶׁהִגִּיעוּ
לְמַדְרַגַּת הַמַּעֲשֵׂה וּמִמִּילָא נִהְפָּךְ הוּא בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּצְוָה
שֶׁמְעוֹרָר מֵעוֹלָם לְעוֹלָם עַד שֶׁמֵּאִיֵּעַ לְעֵתִיד לְבֹא שֶׁהוּא
הַמְאַסְפָּה אֶת הַכֹּל.

And the true unity, which is the place of hearing, as in the statement "let Me hear," which is a language of unity, and as in the statement "And Saul gathered the people," which is a language of gathering.

וַיַּחֲוֶה הָאֱמִתִּי שֶׁהוּא מְקוֹם הַשְּׁמִיעָה כְּמֵאמָר הַשְּׁמִיעִי
לִי שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן יַחֲוֶה וְכֵמֵאמָר וַיִּשְׁמַע שְׂאוּל אֶת הָעָם
שֶׁהוּא לְשׁוֹן אֲסִיפָה

Therefore He desires the deed, so that through his doing he will reach His simple will, in the performance of which he said "and we will do His will." And this is a matter from the lowest of the low and the most inferior that exist for a human king, and they are very, very distant from the king.

וְלָכֵן רוֹצֵה בְּעֲשִׂיתָהּ כְּדִי שִׁיגִיעַ לְרְצוֹנוֹ הַפְּשוּט
בְּעֲשִׂיתוֹ שֶׁאֵמַר וְנַעֲשֶׂה רְצוֹנוֹ וְהוּא דָּבָר תָּם מִן
הַשְּׂפֵלִים שֶׁבְּשְׂפֵלִים וְהַפְּחֻתִים שֶׁיֵּשׁ לְמֶלֶךְ בְּשֹׁר וְדָם
וְהִמָּה רְחוּקִים מְאֹד מְאֹד מִן הַמֶּלֶךְ.

Nevertheless, the entire essence of their action is the command of the king, perhaps that through their performance of this lowliness it will branch forth that they will enter into the thought of the king, after he said "and we will do His will."

אֲף עַל פִּי כֹן כָּל עֵיקָר עֲשִׂיתָם פְּקוּדַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אוֹלִי
מִחֲמַת עֲשִׂיתָם הַפְּחֻתוֹת הַזֹּאת יִסְתַּעַף שֶׁהִמָּה יִגִּיעוּ
בְּתוֹךְ מַחְשַׁבַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲרֵי שֶׁאֵמַר וְנַעֲשֶׂה רְצוֹנוֹ.

So too is the matter with the performance of the physical commandments. The essential point is his reaching attachment and the true unity, which is a "listening heart." And this is "we will do" and afterward "we will hear."

כֹּן הַעֲנִין בְּמַעֲשֵׂה הַמִּצְוֹת הַגְּשָׁמִיּוֹת הָעֵיקָר הוּא הִגִּיעוּ
אֶל הַדְּבָקוֹת וְהִיחֹד הָאֱמִתִּי שֶׁהוּא לֵב שׁוֹמֵעַ וְזֶהוּ
נַעֲשֶׂה וְאַחֲרָיָה נִשְׁמָע.

And this is "Bless the Lord, His angels," that the righteous, mighty in strength, do His word in order to hear the voice of His word. As is known, the righteous are called angels through the Torah and the commandment that were given at Sinai.

וְזֶהוּ בְּרַכּוֹ ה' מִלְּאֲכוּי שֶׁהַצְּדִיקִים גְּבוּרֵי כַח עֲשִׂי
דְּבָרוֹ כְּדִי לְשִׁמּוֹעַ בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ כִּיְדוּעַ שֶׁהַצְּדִיקִים
נִקְרָאִים מִלְּאֲכִים עַל יְדֵי הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוָה שֶׁנִּתְּנָה
בְּסִינֵי.

Which is its numerical value "a ladder set upon the earth," and they ascend and descend upon it and unify all the worlds with the vitality that shines within them. And this is the meaning of "to hear the voice of His word," which is like to unify with the vitality of His word.

שֶׁגִּימְטָרֵיא סְלָם מְצַב אַרְצָה וְהִמָּה עוֹלָם וַיּוֹרְדִים בּוֹ
וּמִיַּחֲדִים כָּל הָעוֹלָמוֹת עִם הַחַיּוֹת הַמְּאִיר בְּתוֹכָם וְזֶהוּ
פִּירוּשׁ לְשִׁמּוֹעַ בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ שֶׁהוּא כְּמוֹ לִיַּחַד בְּחַיּוֹת
דְּבָרוֹ.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Yisro

For the voice is the vitality of speech, through the deed, the act of the commandments. For one who comes to purify himself from below is assisted, until he reaches the first light and uses it to unify all the worlds.

And he uses it to unify all the worlds, which is the answer of Rava: "We who walk in wholeness," it is written about him, "the integrity of the upright will guide them," from the deed to the hearing which is in the heart.

But the hearing of the ear certainly precedes the deed, for how can any action be possible before hearing. However, this is not called hearing, except the hearing that is in the point of the heart, which is the unity and the understanding called "King of the world."

And this is "before the world was created, He and His Name alone existed." And the matter of "He and His Name" is that He is the Infinite One, blessed be He, and His Name is the contraction, which is the first light and the beginning of revelation, like the concept of a name which serves to indicate to a person.

And this is that the world was created from the light of His garment, which is the luminous contraction, and He enclothes Himself within it, like this example of a garment that is from him. For the will is the contraction, and through it He is.

And behold, the matter of the Ten Utterances are the Ten Sayings of the creation of the world. And with the Torah the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world. And this is Rashi's explanation on "all these words, saying," that the Holy One, blessed be He, said all the Ten Commandments in one utterance.

For when it arose in His will to create all the created beings, that is the contraction and that is the creation, and all of them were created in the first. But their revelation to the comprehension of the limited was still not possible.

And this is Rashi's explanation, "that it is impossible for a human being to say so." If so, what is the meaning of additionally stating "I am" and "You shall not have," for He is the one that includes everything and is the absence of comprehension.

כי הקול הוא החיות של הדבור על ידי העשייה מעשה המצות כי הכא לטהר מלמטה מסייעין לו עד שמגיע אל האור הראשון.

ומשפמש בו ליחד כל העולמות שהוא תשובת רבא אנו דמשגיגין בשלימותא כתוב בו תם ישרים תנחם מן העשייה אל השמיעה שהיא בלב.

אבל שמיעת האזן בודאי תקדים לעשייה כי איך יתכן שום עשייה קדם השמיעה ברם אין זה נקרא שמיעה כי אם השמיעה שבנקודת הלב שהוא היחוד וההבנה הנקרא מלך העולם.

ונהו קדם שנקרא העולם הנה הוא ושמו לבד וענין הוא ושמו שהוא איך-סוף ברוף הוא ושמו הוא הצמצום שהוא האור הראשון ותחלת ההתגלות כענין שם שהוא להוראות האדם.

ונהו שהעולם נברא מאור לבושו שהוא הצמצום המאור והוא מתלבש בו כהדין קמצא דלבושא מניה שיהי הרצון הוא הצמצום וביה הוא.

והנה ענין י' הדברות המה י' המאמרות של בריאת העולם ובאוריתא ברא קוב"ה עלמא ונהו פירוש רש"י על את כל הדברים האלה לאמר שאמר הקדוש ברוך הוא כל י' הדברות בדבור אחד.

שהרי כשעלה ברצונו לברוא כל הנבראים הוא הצמצום והיא הבריאה שכלם בראשון נבראו אבל התגלותם להשגת המגבלים צדין לא היתה אפשרות.

ונהו פירוש רש"י מה שאי אפשר לאדם לומר בן אם בן מה תלמוד לומר עוד אנכי ולא יהיה שיהי הוא הכולל הכל והוא העדר ההשגה.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Yisro

And he answered that He returned and explained, for afterward, in His return from below to above, from “we will do” one reaches “we will hear,” which is unity and attachment to the One who said “and we will do His will,” blessed be He, forever.

And this is the matter of the two crowns, one corresponding to “we will do,” which is direct light, and one corresponding to “we will hear,” which is unity, returning light. And all of them Moses merited, for he is the knowledge that connects everything.

[NOTE Summary:

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok begins by grounding the discussion in the primordial state before creation, when “He and His Name alone existed.” “He” refers to the Infinite One, blessed be He, while “His Name” refers to the tzimtzum, the first light and the initial point of revelation. Just as a name functions as a means of indication and disclosure, so too the first light serves as the minimal revelation through which creation can later emerge. The world itself is created from the “light of His garment,” meaning that creation arises not from essence directly, but from the luminous tzimtzum that enclothes the Infinite, similar to a garment that both reveals and conceals.

This framework explains why the entire creation was, in essence, brought into being at once. When it arose in His simple will to create, that very will was the tzimtzum and the act of creation itself. In that first will, all beings were already created, as the Sages state that everything was created in the first utterance. However, their revelation to the comprehension of limited beings was not yet possible. The infinite content of the first will could not be grasped by finite consciousness, and therefore required gradual disclosure.

This is the deeper meaning of the Ten Utterances of creation and their correspondence to the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are not merely legal directives but are identical in root to the Ten Creative Sayings through which the world came into being. Creation itself is accomplished through Torah, as the world was created with the Torah. Accordingly, Rashi explains that God spoke all Ten Commandments in a single utterance, something impossible for a human being. That single utterance corresponds to the original, undifferentiated divine will, which includes everything but remains beyond human comprehension.

The question then arises: why were “I am” and “You shall not have” stated explicitly afterward? The answer is that the initial utterance represents total inclusion and the absence of graspable differentiation. Only afterward did there occur a return from below to above, from naaseh to nishma. Through this return, the undifferentiated will becomes accessible as unity and deveikus. The divine speech is then unpacked into particulars so that finite beings can relate to it.

This dynamic is mirrored in the structure of divine service. Action precedes understanding. Naaseh comes before nishma because action, rooted in simple faith, connects directly to the divine will. Nishma, hearing and

וְתָרַץ שְׁחֹזר וַיִּפְרָשׁ כִּי אַחֲרַי כִּדְבַר אֲחֵרֵי מִתְמַא
לְעֵילָא מִנְעֻשָׁה יִגִּיעַ לְנִשְׁמָע שֶׁהוּא הָאֲחֻדוֹת וְהַדְּבָקוֹת
אֶל שְׁאֵמֵר וְנִעֻשָׁה רְצוֹנוֹ בְּה' לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

וְזֶהוּ עֲנִינוֹ הֵב' כְּתָרִים אֲחֻד כְּנִגְדַּי נִעֻשָׁה אֹרֶן יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲחֻד
כְּנִגְדַּי נִשְׁמָע שֶׁהוּא הַיְחֻד אֹרֶן חוֹזֵר וְכָלֵם זְכָה מִלְּשָׁה
שֶׁהוּא הַדְּעָת הַמְחַבֵּר הַכֹּל.

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understanding, represents unity and inward attachment that emerges only after action. This is symbolized by the two crowns given to Israel: one for naaseh, representing direct light, and one for nishma, representing returning light and unity. Moses, who embodies daat, merits all of them because daat is the faculty that unifies and connects all levels.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel emphasizes that physical mitzvot, though seemingly lowly and distant from divine majesty, are precisely the means by which one reaches the highest attachment. Just as the lowest servants of a human king may, through faithfully carrying out his commands, ultimately enter the king's inner thought, so too the performance of concrete mitzvot enables the soul to ascend to the divine will itself. The ultimate goal of mitzvah action is not the action alone, but the attainment of true unity and a "listening heart."

This also clarifies the verse "Bless the Lord, His angels, mighty in strength, who do His word, to hear the voice of His word." The righteous are called angels because through Torah and mitzvot they ascend and descend the ladder set upon the earth, unifying all worlds with the divine vitality within them. Hearing the voice of His word means uniting with the life-force of divine speech itself. Through action below, one is assisted from above, ascending level by level until reaching the hidden first light, which then becomes the means of unifying all worlds.

The distinction between ordinary hearing and true hearing is crucial. Physical hearing with the ear necessarily precedes action in a technical sense, but it is not called true hearing. True nishma is the inner hearing of the heart, the point of unity and understanding that emerges only after faithful action. This inner hearing is the level called "King of the world," where multiplicity is gathered into oneness and divine sovereignty is fully revealed.

In this way, the entire process of creation, revelation, mitzvah performance, and spiritual ascent is shown to be one continuous movement: from simple will, to concealed light, to differentiated action, and finally back to unity, deveikus, and true hearing.

Practical Takeaway:

The maamar teaches that one should not wait for full understanding, emotional clarity, or spiritual inspiration before acting. The primary avodah is faithful action rooted in emunah. Through sincere performance of mitzvot, even when they feel dry, mechanical, or distant, a person connects directly to the divine will itself.

Understanding, inner unity, and spiritual illumination come afterward, as a gift that emerges from action. The task is to act first, trust the process, and allow the deeper hearing of the heart to unfold in its proper time.

Chassidic Story:

It is told of Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok that during his years of leadership, students would sometimes approach him distressed, claiming that their mitzvah observance felt empty and uninspired. One such student lamented that he performed every commandment meticulously, yet felt no inner awakening or understanding.

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Rabbi Menachem Mendel listened quietly and then asked the student whether he had ever watched a craftsman building a ladder. The student answered yes. The Rebbe explained that no one begins a ladder at the top. Each rung is placed one at a time, starting from the ground, even though the purpose of the ladder is to reach higher places. If someone refused to place the lower rungs because they seemed too close to the dirt, the ladder would never stand.

He then told the student that mitzvot are those rungs. Even when they feel low, simple, or heavy, they are the only way to ascend. "If you keep placing the rungs," he said, "one day you will find yourself standing higher than you ever imagined, and you will realize that the ladder itself carried you."

The student later testified that this teaching transformed his avodah. He stopped measuring his service by feeling and understanding and instead devoted himself to steady action. Over time, he found that clarity, warmth, and inner hearing emerged on their own, exactly as the Rebbe had described. **END NOTE]**