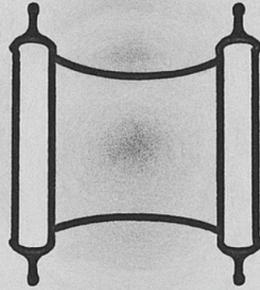


ד"חכ

**The Maggid of Mezritch**  
**Ohr Torah**  
**Parshas Mishpatim**



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## Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch

### Ohr Torah

### Parshas Mishpatim

### Siman #100

#### Introduction

Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezeritch (circa 1704–1772), known as the Maggid of Mezeritch, was the primary disciple and successor of the Baal Shem Tov and the central architect of early Chassidic thought. His teachings translate lofty mystical principles into the inner psychology of avodat ha-adam, revealing how Torah commandments mirror the soul's developmental stages and inner dynamics. In this maamar, the Maggid interprets the verse “ראשית בכורי אדמתך” as a directive for spiritual avodah across the human lifespan, focusing especially on the unique spiritual power of youth.

**The first of the first fruits of your land you shall bring to the House of the Lord your God (Exodus 23:19).** For in a person there are three periods in his years. The first is the years of youth, in which he goes after desires.

ראשית בכורי אדמתך תביא בית ה' אלקיך. כי יש באדם ג' זמנים בשנתי: א' שני נערוֹת שהולך אחר תאוֹת,

The second is the intermediate years of a person, in which there are not so many desires of this world. The third is the years of old age, in which he has no desires at all.

ב' שנים אמצעים של אדם שאין בהם כל כח תאוֹת עולם הזה, ג' שני הזקנה שאין לו תאוֹת כלל.

And the reason for this is that there are three partners in a person: father and mother and the Holy One, blessed be He. And this matter is the secret that a man has desire for a woman,

והטעם לזה לפי שג' שתפין יש באדם, אב ואם והקדוש ברוך הוא. ודבר זה הוא הסוד שאיש יש לו תאוֹת אשה

because there is in him the portion of the mother, which is female. And a woman has desire for a man because there is in her the portion of the father, which is male.

לפי שיש בו חלק האם שהיא נוקבא, ואשה יש לה תאוֹת איש לפי שיש לה חלק אב שהוא דָּכָר.

And this is the explanation of the verse, “And in sin my mother conceived me” (Psalms 51:7): that is, the portion of my mother that is within me brought me to this act.

וזהו פרוש הפסוק ובחטא יחמטני אמי (תהלים נא:ז), פרוש החלק של אמי שיש לי) [בי] הביאני לידי מעשה זו

And we return to the first matter, since there are in a person three partners as mentioned. Therefore, in the years of youth, a person has many desires because of the portion of the mother that is within him.

ונחזור לענין ראשון, לפי שיש באדם ג' שתפין הנזכרים. ולכן בשני הנערות יש [לו] לאדם תאוֹת רבות מצד חלק האם שיש בו

And in the intermediate years there are not in him so many desires, because the portion of the mother that is in him has already been consumed. But nevertheless, he still has desires from the side of the portion of the father that is in him.

ובשנים אמצעיים אין בו תאוֹת כל כח, לפי שפָּכָר כלה חלק האם שבו, אכל עם כל זה יש לו עוד תאוֹת מצד חלק האב שבו

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But in the days of old age he has no desires at all, because it is the portion of the Holy One, blessed be He. It follows that when a person separates from desires in the days of old age, this is not a novelty.

אָבֵל בַּיָּמֵי הַזְּקֵנָה אֵין לוֹ תַאֲוֹת כָּלֵל לְפִי שֶׁהוּא חֵלֶק הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא. נִמְצָא כִּי מֵה שְׂאֵדָם פְּרוּשׁ מִתַּאֲוֹת בַּיָּמֵי הַזְּקֵנָה אֵין זֶה רְבוּתָא.

But if a person separates from desires in the days of youth, at a time when there is still within him the portion of father and mother, this is a great level.

אָבֵל אִם אָדָם פְּרוּשׁ מִתַּאֲוֹת בַּיָּמֵי הַבְּחָרִית, בְּזִמְנ שֵׁשׁ בּו עֲדוֹן חֵלֶק אָב וְאִם, זוֹ הִיא מַעֲלָה גְדוּלָה.

And this is the explanation of the verse, “The first of the first fruits of your land,” meaning, in the days of youth, “you shall bring to the House of the Lord your God.”

וְזֶהוּ פְּרוּשׁ הַפְּסוּק רֵאשִׁית בְּכוּרֵי אֲדָמָתְךָ, רִצְה לֹאמַר בַּיָּמֵי הַבְּחָרִית, תָּבִיא בֵּית ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ.

“You shall not cook a kid.” “Kid” is letters ג"ד, meaning by the milk of its mother, that is, through the portion of the mother that is within him, he separates from desires.

לֹא תִבְשֵׁל גְּדִי, (גְּרִי) הוּא אוֹתִיוֹת גִּי"ד, בְּחֵלֶב אִמּוֹ, רִצְה לֹאמַר עַל יְדֵי חֵלֶק הָאֵם שָׁבוּ פִּרְשׁ מִתַּאֲוֹת.

And even though there is no continuation to these matters that I will write, nevertheless I will write the language as I heard it. And in this as well is the secret of meat with milk as mentioned.

וְאִף שֶׁאֵין הַמְּשֻׁךְ לְדַבְרֵים הָאֵלּוּ [שְׂאֵכָתֵב], עִם כָּל זֶה אָכָתֵב הַלְּשׁוֹן [נ"א: וּבְלִשׁוֹן] שֶׁשְׂמַעְתִּי זוֹ הִיא. וְגַם בְּזֶה הוּא סוּד בְּשָׂר בְּחֵלֶב בְּנִזְכָּר.

For the sinew has in it only meat. And this is also that the covenant of the tongue and the covenant of the membrum are one secret, since in both of them there is only meat.

לְפִי שֶׁהִגִּיד אֵין בּוֹ רַק בְּשָׂר. וְזֶהוּ גַם כֵּן שְׂבָרִית הַלְּשׁוֹן וּבָרִית הַמְּעוֹר הֵם סוּד אֶחָד, לְפִי שֶׁבִשְׁנֵיהֶם אֵין בָּהֶם רַק בְּשָׂר.

And this is the secret of what is mentioned many times, “a covenant in your flesh,” since in the covenants mentioned there is only meat. But the true secret alluded to in the verse mentioned, this I do not remember.

וְזֶה סוּד מֵה שְׂנִזְכָּר כַּמָּה פְּעָמִים לְשׁוֹן בְּרִית בְּבִשְׂרָכֶם, לְפִי שֶׁאֵין בְּבָרִיתוֹת הַנִּזְכָּר רַק בְּשָׂר (פְּדָאבֵל הַסוּד הָאֶמְתִּי הַמְּרוּמָז בַּפְּסוּק הַנִּזְכָּר זֶה אֵינִי זוֹכֵר).

**[NOTE Summary:**

The Maggid returns to the foundational principle that there are three partners in a person: father, mother, and the Holy One, blessed be He. This tri-partite partnership expresses itself not only in a person’s origin but throughout the stages of life.

During youth, a person experiences powerful and numerous desires. These desires stem primarily from the “portion of the mother” within the human being, the feminine aspect that gives rise to physical inclination and emotional pull. In the middle years of life, the intensity of desire lessens, because the maternal portion has been largely exhausted. Nevertheless, desire does not disappear entirely, for the “portion of the father” remains active and continues to generate inclination, though in a more moderated form.

In old age, however, desires fade almost completely. This is not a personal achievement, but rather the natural dominance of the divine portion, the aspect of the Holy One, blessed be He, within the person. Therefore,

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separation from desire in old age is not considered a great spiritual accomplishment, since it comes about naturally.

True spiritual greatness lies elsewhere. If a person is able to separate from desires during youth, when both the paternal and maternal portions are still fully active, this reflects a profound inner avodah and an elevated spiritual level.

This understanding reframes the verse “ראשית בכורי אדמתך תביא בית ה' אלקיך.” The “first fruits” are not agricultural alone, but symbolic of the earliest strength and vitality of a person’s life. The Torah calls upon a person to bring the vigor of youth into the service of the Holy One, blessed be He.

The Maggid then interprets “לא תבשל גדי בחלב אמו” on a symbolic plane. The “kid” is read as גי"ד, hinting to the sinew, and “in the milk of its mother” alludes to the maternal portion that generates desire. The verse thus points to refraining from nurturing desire through its own source, choosing instead separation and refinement.

He adds that this symbolism aligns with the deeper secret of meat and milk, and with the idea that the covenant of the tongue and the covenant of the flesh are fundamentally one. Both are described as “covenants in the flesh,” because in their physical expression they involve only flesh, yet they conceal profound spiritual bonds. The Maggid notes that although he does not fully recall the ultimate inner secret alluded to in the verse, the framework itself reveals how physical commandments encode deep truths about human desire, restraint, and divine partnership.

#### **Practical Takeaway:**

The highest form of spiritual discipline is not restraint that comes with age or diminished appetite, but conscious holiness practiced at a time of strength, desire, and vitality. Bringing one’s “first fruits” means dedicating youthful energy, passion, and drive to the service of Heaven, transforming inclination itself into a vessel for avodat Hashem.

#### **Chassidic Story:**

It is told that a young chassid once came to the Maggid of Mezritch, distressed by the strength of his inner struggles. He complained that his thoughts were restless, his desires strong, and his focus inconsistent. The Maggid listened and then said softly: “If you came to me without these fires, I would be more worried.”

Seeing the student’s confusion, the Maggid explained: “A lamp without oil does not burn, but oil without a flame gives no light. The עבודה is not to wait until the oil dries up, but to learn how to use the flame.”

The young chassid later recalled that this teaching reshaped his entire approach to avodah. Instead of resenting his youthful impulses, he learned to redirect them, understanding that the very intensity of his inner world was the raw material through which true divine service could be built.

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## **Therapeutic Psychological Integration**

### **The Inner Landscape of Desire**

The Maggid is mapping something very precise about human development. Desire is not a flaw to be erased but a phase-specific expression of how the soul is structured. In youth, desire is loud because the inner system is still weighted toward the parental forces, the emotional, relational, and identity-forming drives. From a psychological lens, this is the stage where impulse, attachment, and curiosity are strongest. Trying to eliminate desire at this point often backfires, producing repression rather than growth.

The Maggid's move is subtle. He does not praise desire, but he also does not demonize it. Instead, he reframes the question: not whether desire exists, but what a person does while desire is active. That distinction is everything.

### **Why Restraint Later in Life Is Not the Benchmark**

Aging naturally reduces intensity. Hormonal shifts, emotional fatigue, and life experience all quiet the inner noise. Spiritually, this aligns with the divine portion becoming more dominant. Psychologically, this is a reduction in drive. The Maggid is clear that this kind of calm is not a spiritual achievement. It is a biological and structural outcome.

This matters because many people judge themselves retroactively. They say, "I am more spiritual now," when in truth they are simply less driven. The Maggid gently dismantles that illusion. Growth is not measured by how little desire you have, but by how you relate to desire when it is still strong.

### **Youthful Energy as Sacred Material**

The phrase "bringing the first fruits" is psychologically radical. It means offering your strongest, most volatile inner energies to something larger than yourself. In modern terms, this is the difference between impulse suppression and impulse integration. Desire redirected toward meaning becomes motivation. Passion disciplined by values becomes purpose.

The Maggid is teaching early self-mastery, not self-denial. He is saying that holiness built under pressure is more real than holiness that emerges once pressure is gone.

### **Body, Speech, and Boundaries**

The connection between the covenant of the flesh and the covenant of the tongue is strikingly modern. Both are about boundaries. Both involve restraint not because the body or speech are bad, but because they are powerful. Words can bond or destroy. Physical intimacy can sanctify or fragment. When boundaries are conscious, desire becomes relational rather than compulsive.

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This is why the Maggid emphasizes that both covenants involve “only flesh.” The work is not abstract. It happens in real moments, real urges, real conversations. Integration happens in practice, not in theory.

**A Contemporary Illustration**

A young professional once described feeling ashamed that even while pursuing a meaningful career, distractions and urges still pulled at him constantly. He believed that maturity should have erased these struggles. A mentor told him something simple: “If the engine is still loud, it means the vehicle is moving. Your task is steering, not shutting it off.”

Over time, he stopped measuring growth by inner quiet and started measuring it by choice. He learned that the presence of desire did not mean failure. It meant opportunity. That shift allowed him to mature without losing vitality.

This is exactly the Maggid’s point. The highest level is not silence. It is direction.

**END NOTE]**