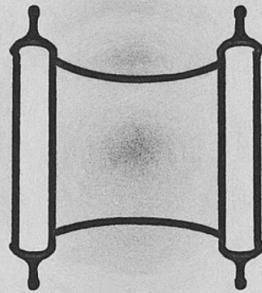


בס"ד

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



Dedicated To:

אילנה דבורה בת שרה מרים

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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'eitz

Parshas Ki Tisa

Introduction

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk, also known as Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok (Hebrew year 5490 [1730] – Hebrew year 5548 [1788]), was a leading disciple of Rabbi Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch, and one of the formative early Chassidic masters. In this maamar, he lays out a demanding, practical map for what deveikus really means: stripping away the “rust” of distractions and self-attachments so that Torah, mitzvos, and the entire inner life become a single, continuous bond with Hashem.

When you lift up, etc. The order of the verse. The matter is the knowledge of the essence of the soul; it is love and fear, which are the desires and all the matters of the world,

כי תשא וכוי סדר הפסוק, הענין הוא ידיעת מהות הנפש, הוא אהבה ויראה שהם התאות וכל עניני העולם,

as in the statement “for the blood is the soul” (Deuteronomy 12:23), and the blood is desire,

כמאמר כי הדם הוא הנפש (Deuteronomy 12:23), והדם הוא התאוה,

and our sages of blessed memory said from his exposition of that wicked one, that he was in attachment and longing with yearning; in this manner is the service to God,

ואמרו רז"ל מפרשתי של אותו רשע שהיה בדבקות, ונחפצה בהשיקה, על דרך זה היא העבודה לאלהים,

and the matter of attachment, its explanation is that there should not be any separation or possibility or capacity preventing attachment,

וענין הדבקות פירושו הוא שלא יהא שום מפסיק או אפשרות יכולת הדבקות,

as the parable of the Baal Shem Tov, that it is impossible to connect pieces of silver one to another by means of glue,

כמשל הבעל שם טוב שבלתי אפשרית החבור, ומתאיכות כסף אחת אל אחת על ידי הדבק,

rather, only when one scrapes from the essence of the silver at the place of attachment, then it adheres well,

כי אם כשגוררין מן עצמיות הכסף במקום הדבקה אז מתאחה יפה,

one says: to adhere well, and it becomes one;

אומר לדבק טוב ונעשה לאחד,

but when there is any rust or any separation, it is impossible to connect,

מה שאין פן כשיש איזה חלודה או שום מפסיק בלתי אפשרות להתחבר,

and this is “if you seek it like silver” (Proverbs 2:4); in this manner is the attachment to Him, blessed be He.

על דרך, (Proverbs 2:4) וזהו אם תבקשנה ככסף, זה הוא הדבקות אליו יתברך,

That one must scrape from his essence so that there will be no rust or separating barrier upon him.

שצריך לגרור מעצמותו שלא יהיה עליו שום חלודה, ומסך מבדיל,

For only with his essence is attachment possible.

כי אם עצמותו אז יכולת הדבקות,

And as long as he clings to anything else, he is not attached.

וכל זמן אחיזתו בשום דבר אחר אינו דבק,

As it is known that the matter of attachment in the physical is pleasure.

כידוע שענין הדבקות בגשמיות הוא התענוג,

And the intensity of pleasure does not allow his thoughts to wander to anything else, and his mind is solely focused on that matter.

ועוצם התענוג אינו מניח השוטטות מחשבתו בשום דבר ומחשבתו פנויה באותו הדבר,

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And so it is with every matter of pleasure.	וְכֵן כָּל דְּבַר תַּעֲנוּג,
There is a person for whom his wealth is precious to him, and all his thoughts are there.	יֵשׁ לָהּ אָדָם שֶׁמְמוֹנֵוּ חֲבִיב עָלָיו וְכָל מַחְשְׁבֹתָיו שָׁם,
And so it is with everything.	וְכֵן בְּכָל דְּבַר וְדְבַר,
The general principle is that all the Torah and mitzvos do not benefit a person, God forbid, if they are without the aforementioned attachment.	כָּלֵלָא דְמִלְתָּא שְׁכַל הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת אֵינָם מוֹעִילִים לְאָדָם חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם אִם הֵם בְּלִי דְבִיקוּת הַנִּזְכָּר,
And all the possible ability within human attainment stems from his attachment to the physical.	וְכָל יְכוּלַת הָאֲפָשָׁרִי בְהַשְׁגַת הָאָדָם מִדְּבִיקוּתוֹ בְּגִשְׁמִים,
There is a person, and there is a person.	יֵשׁ לָהּ אָדָם וְיֵשׁ לָהּ אָדָם
Everything is according to how he is in that very attachment.	הַכֹּל לְפִי מַה שֶׁהוּא בְּאוֹתוֹ הַדְּבִיקוּת עֲצָמוֹ,
He is obligated in the service of the Creator, blessed be He, and must cleave to Him.	מִחֻיֵּב בְּעִבּוּדַת הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ וְבוֹ יִדְבַק,
For this is the entirety of man—intellect, attributes, and attachment.	כִּי זֶה כָּל הָאָדָם—הֵם הַשְּׂכָל, הַמַּדּוֹת וְהַדְּבִיקוּת,
For the body is called the flesh of man.	לְשִׁהְרֵי הַגּוּף נִקְרָא בְּשֵׁר הָאָדָם,
Therefore, he is obligated to be a man in all his aforementioned attainments toward the eternal Creator, blessed be He.	לְכֵן מְחֻיֵּב הֵיחֻתוֹ אָדָם בְּכָל הַשְּׂגוּתָיו הַנִּזְכָּרוֹת לְעֵיל אֶל הַבּוֹרָא יִתְבָּרַךְ הַנִּצְחִי,
In order that he may have the continuity of the name "man" after his passing and his departure from the body.	בְּכַדֵּי שִׁיְהִיָּה לּוֹ הַשְּׂאָרוֹת שֵׁם "אָדָם" אַחַר פְּטִירָתוֹ וְהַתְּפִשׁוּט מִן הַגּוּף,
To use all his aforementioned attainments in his eternity.	לְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ בְּכָל הַשְּׂגוּתָיו הַנִּזְכָּרוֹת לְעֵיל בְּנִצְחוֹנוֹ,
Then he will delight in Hashem	...אָז יִתְעַנֵּג עַל ה'
However, it is not so if he does not accustom himself to the aforementioned attainments and his delight while he is still alive, but only in perishable physical vessels.	מִלְשָׂאִין בֶּן אִם לֹא יִרְגִיל הַשְּׂגוּתָיו הַנִּזְכָּרוֹת לְעֵיל וְתַעֲנוּגוֹ בְּעוֹדוֹ חַי, כִּי אִם מִן הַגִּשְׁמִים כְּלִים נִפְסָדִים,
Then, after he separates from the physical and the body perishes and is lost,	א"כ אַחֲרֵי הַתְּפִשׁוּט מִן הַגִּשְׁמִים וְהַגּוּף יִכְלָה וְיִפְסֵד,
what blessing remains after him?	מָה יִשְׁאָר אַחֲרָיו בְּרָכָה
And how will he begin the beginning of his delight and the use of his aforementioned faculties,	וְאִיךָ יִתְחִיל תְּחִלַת שְׂעֻשׂוּעָיו וְהַשְׁתַּמֵּשׁ כַּחוֹתָיו הַנִּזְכָּרוֹת לְעֵיל,
if he did not know the way of Hashem, the eternal living God, while he was still alive?	אִם לֹא יָדַע דְּרַךְ ה' אֱלֹקִים חַיִּים נִצְחִי בְּעוֹדוֹ חַי
And this is [the meaning of] "that soul shall be cut off"—	"וַיִּזְהוּ" וְנִכְרְתָה הַנֶּפֶשׁ,
that it perishes with the body, since it has no grasp or hold in the spiritual and eternal.	שֶׁיִּכְלָה עִם הַגּוּף אַחֲרֵי שִׂאִין לּוֹ שׁוּם אַחֲזִיזָה וְתִפְסָה בְּרוּחָנִים וְנִצְחִים,

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And a person who justifies himself excessively, and engages in Torah and mitzvos in large quantities, but without enthusiasm and any attachment, and has succeeded in never encountering any test that would reveal his inferiority—	וְלִהְיוֹת הָאָדָם הַמְצַטְדֵּק הַרְבֵּה וְעוֹסֵק בַּתּוֹרָה וּמִצְוֹת חֻבִּילוֹת חֻבִּילוֹת בְּלִי הַתְּלַהֲבוֹת וְשׂוּם דְּבִיקוֹת וְהִצְלִיחַ שְׁלֵא בָּא לִיְדֵי נִסְיוֹן שׂוּם דְּבָר לְהִבִּין פְּחִיתוּתוֹ,
for he is incapable of withstanding a trial, and all his faculties are bound to the physical, and he is ready and prepared to transgress any evil matter when it comes to his hand.	שְׂאִינוּ יָכוֹל לַעֲמֹד בְּנִסְיוֹן וְכָל כַּחוֹתָיו קְשׁוּרִים בְּגִשְׁמִים וּמִכֵּן וּמִזְמַן לַעֲבוֹר עָלָיו כָּל דְּבָר רַע בְּהִגִּיעַ לְיָדוֹ
Besides the fact that trials have not come to his hand, therefore, sometimes an act of wickedness befalls him, as it is said, "And there are righteous ones to whom it happens like the deeds of the wicked,"	מִלְּבַד שֶׁהַנִּסְיוֹנוֹת לֹא הִגִּיעוּ לְיָדוֹ לְכֵן לְפָעֲמִים מִזְדַּמֵּן לוֹ מַעֲשֵׂה רָשָׁע כְּמֵאֲמַר "וַיִּשׁ צְדִיקִים שְׂמָגִיעַ אֲלֵיהֶם כְּמַעֲשֵׂה הָרָשָׁעִים"
in order that he should take it to heart and understand that he is not complete with Hashem, and be inspired to repent, returning all his faculties and delights to Hashem.	'בְּכַדֵּי שְׂיִתּוֹ לֵב לְהִבִּין שְׂאִינוּ שְׁלֵם עִם ה' וַיִּתְּלֵהוּ לְתִשׁוּבָה לְהַשִּׁיב אֶת כָּל כַּחוֹתָיו וּתְעֻנּוּגָיו עַל ה'
As the holy Maggid explained on the verse, "How long will you lie down, O sluggard?"	"כַּדְּבָרֵי הָרַב הַמַּגִּיד עַל פְּסוּק "עַד מָתַי עֲצַל תִּשְׁכַּב
By way of analogy: when a person sleeps a fixed sleep, after several hours, when his sleep is sufficient, he wakes up and rises with added strength and clarity of mind.	עַל דְּרָף מְשָׁל, כְּשֶׁאָדָם יָשׁוּן שְׁיֵנַת קִבֵּעַ אַחֲרֵי כַּמָּה שָׁעוֹת שָׁדִי לוֹ בְּשִׁנָּתוֹ, וּמִתְעוֹרֵר וְקָם בְּתוֹסֶפֶת כַּחוֹ וּמוֹחַ
However, one who is in a state of neither fully asleep nor fully awake,	מִשְׂאִין בֵּן מִי שֶׁהוּא נִים וְלֹא נִים
can lie that way for many hours without it being truly restful.	אֲפָשָׁר לוֹ לִשְׁכַּב כַּד כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה שָׁעוֹת וְאִין מְמַשׁ בְּהֵן
And even when he eventually gets up, his mind is confused and he lacks strength.	שְׂאֵף עַל פִּי כֵן הוּא עוֹמֵד וְקָם מְבֻלְבֵּל הַמּוֹחַ וְאִינוֹ תִּזְק
The reason for this is that his sleep was not a fixed sleep.	וְהַסִּיָּבָה לָזֶה שְׁלֵא הִיָּתָה הַשְּׁנָה קִבֵּעַ
And this is [the meaning of] "How long will you lie down, O sluggard?"	"וְזֶהוּ "עַד מָתַי עֲצַל תִּשְׁכַּב
Meaning, that you lie down in laziness, neither fully asleep nor fully awake.	פִּירוּשׁ, שֶׁתִּשְׁכַּב בְּעֲצָלוֹת נִים וְלֹא נִים
So too in the study of Torah and mitzvos—if they are performed lazily, without enthusiasm and attachment.	וְכֵן בְּעֵסֶק הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת, שֶׁהֵם בְּעֲצָלוֹת בְּלִי הַתְּלַהֲבוֹת הַדְּבִיקוֹת

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<p>The intent and commandment is certainly not, God forbid, to commit a transgression in order to become inspired, Heaven forbid!</p>	<p>ואין הפונה והצווי חס ושלוש לעשות עבירה חלילה בְּכַדִּי שִׁיתְלַחֵב</p>
<p>Rather, "When will you arise from your sleep?"</p>	<p>"אֵלָא" מְתֵי תְקוּם מִשְׁנַתָּה</p>
<p>Meaning, that for this reason, you must rise.</p>	<p>פִּירוּשׁ, לְשַׁעַל בְּנֵי אֶתְהָ צָרִיךְ לְקוּם</p>
<p>And if so, "How long, O sluggard?"</p>	<p>"וְאֵם כֵּן, "עַד מְתֵי עֲצַל</p>
<p>And so our Sages, of blessed memory, said: "The Israelites were not worthy of that act except to teach repentance."</p>	<p>וְכֵן אָמְרוּ רַבֵּי: "לֹא הָיוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל רְאוּיִים לְאוֹתוֹ מִעֲשֵׂה אֵלָא כְּדֵי לְהוֹרוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה"</p>
<p>Meaning, they already needed repentance for several prior matters,</p>	<p>פִּירוּשׁ, שֶׁכִּבְרָה הָיוּ צָרִיכִים לְתְּשׁוּבָה עַל כְּפֹה דְבָרִים לְשִׁקְדָמוֹ</p>
<p>such as "And they rebelled at the sea, at the Sea of Reeds."</p>	<p>"כִּמוֹ וְיִמְרוּ עַל יָם סוּף</p>
<p>However, they did not feel it within themselves, therefore, it came upon them like the aforementioned act.</p>	<p>אֵלָא שְׁלֵא הִרְגִישׁוּ בְעַצְמָם לְכֵן הִגִּיעַ אֲלֵיהֶם כְּמִעֲשֵׂה הַנִּזְכָּר לְעֵיל</p>
<p>Similarly, King David, peace be upon him, due to his great righteousness and confidence in himself,</p>	<p>וְכֵן דָּוִד הַמֶּלֶךְ עָלָיו הַשְּׁלוֹם, מִגְדֵּל צְדָקוֹתָיו וּבִטְחוֹנוֹ בְעַצְמוֹ</p>
<p>since he had already returned all his faculties to cleave to Him, blessed be He,</p>	<p>שֶׁכִּבְרָה הִתְחַזֵּיר אֶת כָּל כּוֹחֹתָיו לְדָבְקוֹ בּוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ</p>
<p>he said, "Try me, Hashem, and test me."</p>	<p>"אָמַר: "בְּחַנְנֵי ה' וְנִסֵּנִי</p>
<p>And even though they told him that he would be tested, nevertheless, after Hashem removed His protection from him, he stumbled.</p>	<p>וְאֵף עַל פִּי שֶׁאָמְרוּ לוֹ שֶׁהִנְסִינּוֹ וְנִסְהוּ אֵף עַל פִּי כֵן, אַחֲרֵי הִסְרַת שְׁמִירַתוֹ יִתְבָּרַךְ מֵאֲתוֹ, נִכְשָׁל</p>
<p>This was in order to make him understand that there is no possibility of a person relying on his own confidence while he is still in the body,</p>	<p>בְּכַדִּי לְהִבְהִינוֹ שֶׁאֵין שׁוּם אִפְשָׁרוּת לְהִבְטִיחַ אָדָם בְּעַצְמוֹ בְּעוֹדוֹ בַּגּוּף</p>
<p>as it is stated: "The Holy One, blessed be He, does not associate His name with the righteous during their lifetime."</p>	<p>כְּמֵאמַר: "שֶׁאֵין הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מִיַּחַד שְׁמוֹ עַל הַצְּדִיקִים בְּחַיֵּיהֶם</p>
<p>And as it is said: "Do not believe in yourself."</p>	<p>"וְכֵמֵאמַר: "אַל תִּאֲמֵן בְּעַצְמָךְ</p>
<p>And as it is said: "Were it not that the Holy One, blessed be He, helps him, he would not be able to withstand it."</p>	<p>וְכֵמֵאמַר: "אֵלּוּלָא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עוֹזְרוֹ, אֵינּוּ יָכוֹל</p>
<p>And this is [the meaning of] "David was not worthy of that act except to teach repentance."</p>	<p>וְנִהוּ: "לֹא הָיָה דָּוִד רְאוּי לְאוֹתוֹ מִעֲשֵׂה אֵלָא כְּדֵי לְהוֹרוֹת תְּשׁוּבָה</p>
<p>And to walk with Hashem always, without interruption.</p>	<p>וְאֵת הָאֲלֻמִּים הַתְּהִלָּה תְּמִיד בְּלֵי הַפְּסֵק</p>
<p>For had he averted his eyes... etc.</p>	<p>שֶׁאֵלּוּלָא הוּא הִעִיף עֵינָיו... וְכוּ</p>

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And so it is relevant to continue the statement of the Talmud:

"And it is necessary to teach repentance for an individual, for a community, etc."

וכן שייד המישף מאמר הש"ס: "וצריכה להורות
, "תשובה ביהיד, בצבור וכו

The general principle is that every person needs a refining agent for wisdom,

,כללא דמלתא, שכל אדם צריך מצרף להקמה

to refine and purify all his attainments, attributes, faculties, and delights for Hashem,

לצרף ולזכך כל השגותיו, מדותיו, כחותיו ותענוגיו
,על ה

and to use them in the Eternal, the Living, and the Everlasting One,

,ולהשתמש עמהם בנצחי, חי וקיים

to serve Him with them forever, even after his departure from the perishable body.

לעולם בהם יעבדו, אפלו אחר פטירתו מן הגוף
הכלה.

And he should not rely on the fact that he never transgressed a sin in his life,

,ולא יסמוך במה שלא עבר עבירה מיו

for surely all his faculties are bound to his being.

,הרי מסתמא כל כחותיו קשורים בו יתברך

That is not proof, for perhaps he never faced a trial,

,שאין ראיה לדבר, כי אולי לא בא לידי נסיון

or perhaps due to other factors that prevented him,

,או מפני שארי דברים המונעים אותו

such as shame or whatever else it may be.

,כמו הבושה או מה שיהיה

If so, what difference does it make that he did not commit a written transgression,

,מעתה, מה בנה שלא עבר עבירה הכתובה

if the very root of the sin itself is not erased from his heart—

,אם שרש העון עצמו אינו נמחק מלבו

for behold, he is still bound to it?

!הרי קשור הוא בו

As it is said, "One who is angry is as if he worships idolatry."

"כמאמר: "שהכועס כאלו עובד עבודה זרה

And arrogance is the root of immorality.

.נהגדלות שרש לעריות

And this is [the meaning of] "The thoughts of sin are worse than the sin itself,"

"וזהו: "הרהורי עבירה קשים מעבירה

because they are the vitality of the sin.

.מפני שהם החיות של העבירה

And if a person himself contains a "root that bears gall," which is idolatry,

ואחרי שהוא בעצמו "שרש פרה ראש", שהיא
עבודה זרה

as it is said: "And David came to the head," and "Let us appoint a head,"

"כמאמר: "נדוד בא עד הראש", ו"נתנה ראש

then what does it matter if he did not commit the act itself,

,ואם כן, מה בנה אם לא עבר

if the root itself remains?

!אם השרש בעצמו הרי הוא הוא

But if a person desires to know what is in his heart—whether Hashem is with him or not—

אבל אם רצון האדם לדעת את אשר בלבו אם יש ה'
,אתו אם לא

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he should examine his mind and understand with his intellect	יבחינו בדעתו ויבין בשכלו
whether it is possible for him to cleave to Him, blessed be He, without any interruption	אם אפשרות לדבוק בו יתברך בלי שום הפסק
and to delight in Hashem with the same pleasure and attachment	וילהתענג על ה'
that he experiences in the physical thing to which he is most attached.	כאותו התענוג והדביקות שמשגי בגשמי היותר דבוק אליו.
And this is [the meaning of] "And you shall love... with all your might."	"וזהו" וְאָהַבְתָּ וְגו' בְּכָל מְאֹדָה
There is a person, etc.	'יש לה אדם וגו'
And so, with every attribute, he should connect to Him, blessed be He,	וכן בכל מדה ומדה להתקשר אליו יתברך
with the same connection that he has to the physical.	כאותו ההתקשרות שיש לו בגשמי
In this way, all his attributes are elevated to Him, blessed be He,	בזה נתעלים כל מדותיו אליו יתברך
and the very root of sin is erased from his heart,	ושורש העון עצמו נמחק מלבו
and all his attachments to the physical are elevated,	ומתעלים כל התקשרותו בגשמיות
as it is said: "The lower waters weep, saying: 'We, too, desire to be before the King.'"	כמאמר: "מים תחתונים בוכים, גם אנן בעינן למקוה" קדם מלכא
And this is why Hashem makes peace regarding the division	וזהו שהקדוש ברוך הוא עושה שלום על הבדלת
between the upper and lower waters through the tzaddik,	מים עליונים מן התחתונים על ידי הצדיק
through his attachment to Hashem,	בדבקותו בהקדוש ברוך הוא
as he grasps both, and all becomes one.	ואוחז בשניהם וכלו חד
And this is [the meaning of] "When you raise up the head"—	—"וזהו" כִּי תִשָּׂא אֶת רֹאשׁ
which is the root of idolatry and all other roots within the attributes.	שהוא שורש עבודה זרה, וכן כל השרשים שבמדות
If you desire to "lift them up," meaning to elevate them,	אם תרצה לשא, פירוש להעלותם
and the meaning of "for their count" (לפקודיהם) is from the language of sin and deficiency,	ופירוש "לפקודיהם" לשון חטא וחסרון
the test is "and every man shall give a ransom for his soul to Hashem,"	"הבחינה היא ונתנו איש כפר נפשו לה
meaning, a ransom for the soul, like "in place of the soul,"	"פירוש, כפר הנפש, כמו "תחת הנפש
which is desire—he should give atonement to Hashem, as mentioned above.	שהיא המאנה—יתן כפרה לה' כנזכר לעיל
"This they shall give" refers to the half-shekel,	זה ותנו" שהוא מתצית השקל"

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for all creations in the world are like a half-shekel,

שְׁכֶל הַנְּבִרָאִים בְּעוֹלָם הֵם כְּמוֹ מִחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל

since the soul is a part of Hashem from above.

כִּי הַנְּפֹשׁ הִיא חֵלֶק אֱלֹהִים מִמַּעַל

And so it is with everything—matter and form.

וְכֵן בְּכָל דָּבָר—חֹמֶר וְצוּרָה

And after giving his half-shekel to Hashem, everything is elevated.

וְאַחֲרֵי תִיתּוֹ הַמִּחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל לַה'—יִתְעַלֶּה הַכֹּל

And this is [the meaning of] "And He gave to Moshe when He finished"—

—"וַיְהִי וַיִּתֵּן אֶל מֹשֶׁה כְּכֹלֹתוֹ"

"כְּכֹלֹתוֹ" is written (instead of "כְּכֹלֹתוֹ"), like a bride to a groom,

"כְּכֹלֹתוֹ" כְּתִיב, כְּכֹלֶה לְחֹתָן

which is the place of memory and the union of the giver with the receiver,

לְשֵׁהוּא מְקוֹם הַזְכָּרוֹן וְחִבּוּר הַמְשַׁפֵּיעַ עִם הַמְקַבֵּל

which is the essence of pleasure.

לְשֵׁהוּא עֵיקַר הַתַּעֲנוּג

For every pleasure is remembered for a very long time, even forever.

לְשֵׁקֶל דָּבָר תַּעֲנוּג נִזְכָּר לְזְמַן אָרוּךְ מְאֹד, וְלְעוֹלָם

Therefore, he was able to receive it in a short time. And examine well.

וְלָכֵן הָיָה יָכוֹל לְקַבֵּל בְּזְמַן מוֹעֵט. וְדוּק

[NOTE Summary:

The maamar opens with the claim that avodas Hashem requires knowing the soul's essence, and that this "essence" expresses itself through love and fear, meaning the entire engine of human desire and attachment. Desire is tied to the blood, "for the blood is the soul" (Deuteronomy 12:23), so the inner life we call "spiritual" is not floating above the person; it is embedded in the very force that drives what a person wants and clings to. From here he reframes "service of God" as the redirection and purification of attachment itself: the same intensity that can bind a person to something worldly must be redirected into binding to Hashem.

He then defines deveikus in a strict way: deveikus means there is no barrier, no interruption, no inner "something" wedged in the connection. To make that tangible, he brings the parable attributed to the Baal Shem Tov: two pieces of silver do not truly fuse through external glue alone; for a real bond, you must scrape down to the silver's very substance at the point of contact so it can grip and hold. If there is rust, corrosion, or any separating layer, the bond cannot happen. So too spiritually, the person must "scrape from his essence" until the connection is with who he really is, not with layers of habit, ego, or mixed motives. That is the meaning of "if you seek it like silver" (Proverbs 2:4): the search is not just for information or inspiration, but for a cleansed, direct bond where nothing intervenes.

He expands the psychology of this: attachment in physical life shows up most clearly in pleasure. When pleasure grips a person, the mind naturally stops wandering and becomes absorbed in the object of attachment. Therefore, the test of deveikus is not whether one can think lofty thoughts for a moment, but whether the person can cultivate a steady, pleasure-like absorption in Hashem, such that the mind does not keep slipping away into

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whatever it is most attached to. The entire project becomes brutally honest: whatever you are attached to is where your mind lives, and whatever your mind lives in is what you are truly serving.

From this he argues that Torah and mitzvos without deveikus do not “benefit” a person in the intended way, because the person remains fundamentally bound to the physical root of desire. He distinguishes between people: one person’s inner powers remain tethered to the body and perish with it, while another person trains his intellect, emotions, and attachments toward the Eternal Creator so that “man” continues after the soul’s departure. Without this training, even large quantities of Torah and mitzvos can coexist with a deeply physical inner life, and then when separation from the body arrives, the person has no developed capacity to delight in Hashem, because he never practiced that delight while alive.

He then addresses a painful spiritual phenomenon: sometimes a person who appears righteous is brought into a stumble, not as a license for sin, but as a shock that forces self-recognition and teshuvah. The goal is to return all faculties and delights to Hashem, and to stop relying on the illusion of personal righteousness without continuous dependence on Divine help. This expands into the broader principle that every person needs ongoing inner refinement, not only avoidance of formal transgression. If the roots of sin, like arrogance, anger, or inner idolatry of the self, still live in the heart, then the “root” remains even if the outward act never happened. Therefore, the true check is whether a person can cleave to Hashem without interruption with the same intensity and pleasure he experiences in whatever physical attachment most rules him.

Finally, he connects all of this back to “When you lift up the head.” The “head” is the root, the source-point of attachment and of misplaced devotion. To “lift it up” means to elevate those roots themselves, transforming desire from a physical tether into a ransom and atonement “for his soul” to Hashem. The half-shekel becomes a symbol of all created being as “half,” because the soul is a portion from above. When a person gives his “half” back to Hashem, the split between matter and form, upper and lower, becomes reconciled, and the person becomes a living point of peace that binds everything into one attachment to Hashem.

Practical Takeaway:

Pick the single strongest “attachment” that most captures your mind (money, honor, comfort, control, distraction, approval) and treat it as your diagnostic tool. Then do the avodah of “scraping the silver”: remove one concrete layer of “rust” that makes your Torah, tefillah, and mitzvos external (mixed motives, phone noise, rushing, doing it to be seen, doing it without feeling), and replace it with one practice that creates uninterrupted presence (two minutes of quiet before davening, one paragraph of learning with full focus, one mitzvah done slowly with the intent of cleaving). The goal is not more quantity. The goal is a bond with no intervening layer, where your mind learns to “live” in Hashem the way it naturally lives in what you already love.

Chassidic Story:

A story is told about a chassid who came to a Rebbe complaining that he could not hold onto a single thought in davening. The Rebbe asked him, “When you think about your business, does your mind also run away every ten seconds?” The chassid admitted that when money was on the line, his mind could stay locked in for hours. The

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Rebbe said, "So your problem is not concentration. Your problem is attachment. Where your desire is, there you are. If you want deveikus, you must work on what your heart clings to, not only on what your lips say." The chassid left with a new definition of avodah: not fighting the mind directly, but scraping away the rust that keeps the heart bonded to the wrong thing, until the bond can finally hold.

END NOTE]