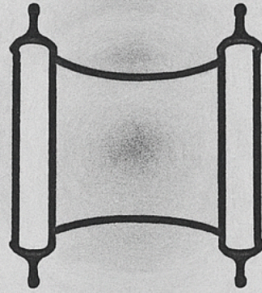


בס"ד

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel
of Horodak
Parshas Tazria**



Dedicated To:

אילנה דבורה בת שרה מרים

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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz Parshas Tazria

Introduction

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok (d. 5548 [1788]), a central disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch and a leading figure in early Chassidus, devoted his teachings to uncovering the inner mechanics of avodah, especially the transformative power of speech and inner alignment. In this maamar, he develops a profound framework showing how human speech is not merely communication, but the very interface between the Divine and creation, and how its misuse distorts the fabric of reality itself.

Rabbi Simlai said: Just as the formation of man came after all the animals, beasts, and birds, so too his Torah was explained after their Torah.

אמר רבי שמלאי: כשם שיצירתו של אדם אחר כל בהמה חיה ועוף, כך תורתו נתפרשה אחר תורתם.

Behold, the Baal HaAkeidah wrote in a clever way regarding what Rabbi Yannai proclaimed: "Who desires the elixir of life?" until he said, "Guard your tongue from evil."

הנה הבעל עקידה כתב דרך צחות על מקריז רבי ינאי מאן בעי סמא דחיי, עד שאמר נצר לשונך מרע.

And the wise man of blessed memory said, that the matter has been forgotten among people to the extent that it requires a proclamation, like a lost object, similar to what our Sages said regarding the verse, "Is it indeed silence that you speak righteously" what is the profession of man in this world? He should make himself mute; one might think even in matters of Torah, etc.

ואמר ההכם הנזכר לעיל, שהענין נאבד מבני אדם עד שצריך הכרזה כאבידה, כענין אמרם זכרונם לברכה האומנם אדם צדק תדבירו, מה אומנותו של אדם בעולם הזה, יעשה עצמו אדם, יכול אף בדברי תורה כו.

And behold, from the matter of "yakhol" ("could it be") in the Gemara it is understood that not study is the main thing, for the concept of speech is a language, one thing for a generation, meaning leadership and drawing forth and connecting many through one,

והנה מענין היכול שבגמרא מוכן כי לא המדרש הוא העקר, כי ענין הדבור הוא לשון, דבר אחד לדור שהוא לשון הנהגה והמשכה והתקשרות רבים על ידי אחד,

like the matter of a king, that all are conducted according to his word, for he is the lowest level that unites the higher with the lower, and he is the intermediary between them, grasping and comprehending both,

כענין המלך שכלם מתנהגים על פי דבורו, כי הוא המדרגה המתונהגת עליונים עם תחתונים, והוא הממוצע שביניהם המושג ותופס את שניהם,

therefore speech is called awe, for awe and fear are because of something above oneself; thus awe is the union of the higher and the lower.

לכן הדבור נקרא יראה, כי היראה והפחד הוא מפני דבר שלמעלה הימנו, נמצא שהיראה הוא יחוד העליון עם התחתון,

And so too, speech is the awe of the letters and the speaking power within it, as it is stated: "Who placed a mouth for man?" (Exodus 4:11),

וכן הדבור הוא היראה מן האותיות וכח המדבר בו, כמאמר מי שם פה לאדם,

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Tazria

for this is the matter of awe of the kingship due to the power of speech within it, and one is not in awe of it when the king is asleep.

שְׁהָרִי זֶהוּ עֲנִינוּ יִרְאַת הַמְּלָכוֹת מִפְּנֵי כַח הַמְּדַבֵּר בּוֹ
וְאֵינוֹ יָרָא מִמֶּנּוּ כְּשֶׁהוּא לָשׁוֹן

And since awe is what connects between the king and the people, and the king rules because of the awe that is drawn from him and all of this is through speech,

וְלִהְיוֹת הַיִּרְאַה הוּא הַמְּחַבֵּר בֵּין הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָעָם, וְהַמְּלֶכֶת
מוֹלֶכֶת מִפְּנֵי הַיִּרְאַה הַנִּמְשָׁכֶת מִמֶּנּוּ וְהַכֹּל בְּדִיבּוּר

for thought is not grasped by the people, therefore awe and speech are called "Kingship," which rules over all, as it is stated: "A righteous one rules through the awe of God" (II Samuel 23:3).

שְׁהָרִי הַמְּחַשְׁבָה אֵינָה מוֹשָׁגָת לָעָם, לָכֵן נִקְרָאִים
הַיִּרְאַה וְהַדִּיבּוּר מְלָכוֹת שְׁמוֹשָׁל בְּכֹל, כְּמֵאֵמֶר צְדִיק
מוֹשָׁל בְּיִרְאַת אֱלֹהִים

And behold, speech together with awe because of the power of the speaker connects through speech and awe with the Master of all powers; this is called "one who speaks" and "man" (adam).

וְהִנֵּה הַדִּיבּוּר עִם הַיִּרְאַה מִפְּנֵי כַח הַמְּדַבֵּר וּמִתְקַשֵּׁר
עַל יְדֵי הַדִּיבּוּר וְהַיִּרְאַה עִם בְּעַל הַכֹּחוֹת כְּלָם, הוּא
הַנִּקְרָא מְדַבֵּר וְאָדָם

For speech and awe are the end of the higher level and its externality, which clothes the lower as well,

שְׁהָרִי הַדִּיבּוּר וְהַיִּרְאַה הוּא סוּף מְדַרְגַת הָעֲלִיוֹן
וְחִיצוֹנִיּוּתוֹ, הַמְּלַבֵּשׁ אֶת הַתַּחְתּוֹן גַּם בֵּן

as it is stated: "And it clothes him with humility and awe," which is like a garment and a spreading of wings over him, drawn from above in order to save him from others and to elevate him upward through the wings of awe, called "wings" love and awe, as is known.

כְּמֵאֵמֶר וּמִלְבָּשָׁתוֹ עֲנִיּוּה וְיִרְאַה, שֶׁהוּא כְּעֵין לְבוּשׁ
וּפְרִישׁוֹת כְּנָפַיִם עָלָיו הַנִּמְשָׁח מִן הָעֲלִיוֹן בְּכַדִּי לְהַצִּילוֹ
מֵאַחֲרִים וְלְהַעֲלֹתוֹ אֵלָיו עַל יְדֵי גְדָפֵי הַיִּרְאַה הַנִּקְרָא
כְּנָפַיִם, אֲהַבָה וְיִרְאַה בְּיָדוּעַ

And through such speech one is called "man" (adam), for he resembles the Higher and elevates all things,

וְעַל יְדֵי דִיבּוּר כִּזְוֵה נִקְרָא אָדָם, שֶׁמְדַמֶּה לָעֲלִיוֹן
וּמַעֲלָה הַכֹּל

for the entire world was created through speech, as it says: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made" (Psalms 33:6), and it is written, "In the beginning God created" (Genesis 1:1), that everything was created for the sake of the beginning.

שְׁהָרִי כֹל הָעוֹלָם כִּלּוֹ נִבְרָא בְּדִיבּוּר, כְּמֵאֵמֶר בְּדַבָּר
ה' שָׁמַיִם נַעֲשׂוּ, וּכְתִיב בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא, שֶׁהַכֹּל נִבְרָא
בְּשִׁבִיל רֵאשִׁית

And it is stated: "And God made so that they should fear before Him" (Ecclesiastes 3:14),

וּמֵאֵמֶר וְהִאֲלֹהִים עָשָׂה שִׁירָאוּ מִלִּפְנֵי

thus, awe which is the end of action was first in thought; therefore, through awe all creations are united and they have elevation through the speech of the Jewish person,

נִמְצָא שֶׁהַיִּרְאַה שֶׁהוּא סוּף הַמַּעֲשֵׂה בְּמַחְשָׁבָה תַּחֲלָה,
לָכֵן עַל יְדֵי מִתְיַחֲדִים כֹּל הַבְּרוּאִים וַיִּשׁ לָהֶם עֲלִיָּה
עַל יְדֵי דִיבּוּר אָדָם וְשִׁרְאֵל

for every word is letters, and through letters the heavens and the earth and their offspring were created and continue to be created similarly.

שֶׁכֹּל דִּיבּוּר הֵם אוֹתִיּוֹת וּבְאוֹתִיּוֹת נִבְרָאוּ שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ
וְתוֹלְדוֹתֵיהֶם כְּיוֹצֵא בָהֶם

For the matter of letters is the comprehension and revelation of the desire, whereas before letters there is no revelation at all;

כִּי עֲנִינוּ הָאוֹתִיּוֹת הוּא הַשְּׂגָה וְהַתְגַּלּוּת הַתַּחֲפִּיז, מֵה
שֶׁאִינוּ בֵּן קִדְּם אוֹתִיּוֹת אֵין שׁוּם הַתְגַּלּוּת

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Tazria

thus, all creations were revealed through letters according to their familial root and their combinations according to the order of their creation,

נמצא הרי כל הברואים נתגלו באותיות לבית אבותם
ונצירופם כסדר בריאתם

and this is what our Sages said, that the world was created with the Holy Tongue, for every name in the Holy Tongue corresponds to the order of its creation, its formation, and its drawing forth from the higher holiness and life;

וזהו אמרם זכרונם לברכה שהעולם נברא בלשון
הקדש, שכל שם מלשון הקדש הוא סדר בריאותו
ונצירופו והמשכתו מן החיים והקדש העליון

however, a man who uses his speech and the breadth of his mouth according to his own will, and for ways of self-gratification in physicality,

מה שאין כן אדם המשתמש בדיבורו והרחבת פיו
כרצונו, ואופני הנאת עצמו בגשמיות

in such a person the words and names are not true within him, but only a borrowed name from the truth of his root and the unity of the worlds and the order of their creation;

אין במלת דברי השמות אמתים בו, כי אם שם
מושאל מאמתת שרשו ויחוד העולמות וסדר
בריאתם

and such speech is not called "speech" at all, but rather a chirping of birds, and the speech and conduct of evil and of the klipah (husk), their vitality and their unity.

ודיבור כזה אין נקרא דיבור קלל, כי אם צפצוף
עופות ודיבור והנהגת הרע, והקלפה וחיותם ויחודם

And this is "Guard your tongue from evil" (Psalms 34:14),

וזהו נצר לשונך מרע

and this is the matter of a "metzora" (leper), for plagues come upon one who brings forth an evil name and speaks lashon hara (evil speech).

וזהו מצורע שהנגעים באים על המוציא שם רע
ולשון הרע

And this is what our Sages said, that a metzora is considered as dead,

וזהו אמרם זכרונם לברכה מצורע חשוב כמת

as the verse states: "And man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7), and its Targum (Aramaic translation) is "a speaking spirit," thus, the translation of "life" is "speech" meaning speech is the life;

כמאמר ויהי האדם לנפש חיה, תרגומו לרוח
ממלא

and if the speech is not proper, then he brings forth evil and plagues come upon him, for he is not a living soul, but rather a leper, as if dead,

הרי שהתרגום של חיים הוא ממלא שהיא הדיבור
שהוא החיות

as it is said: "Please do not let her be as one dead" (Numbers 12:12).

ואם אין הדיבור בתקונו, הרי הוא מוציא רע ונגעים
באים, כי אינו נפש חיה כי אם מצורע כמת

שנאמר אל נא תהי כמת

And this is "Just as man's formation was after all beasts, animals, and birds," because the end of action was first in thought, and this is the unification of all,

וזהו פשם שיצירתו של אדם אחר כל בהמה חיה
ועוף, ומפני סוף מעשה במחשבה תחילה, והוא היחוד
לכולם

so too his Torah was explained, for the Torah is the letters of His speech and the order of His formation,

כך תורתו נתפרשה, כי התורה הם האותיות דיבורו
וסדר יצירתו

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Tazria

and "was explained" is an expression of "spreading out the garment," which is the unification and connection.

ומתפרשת הוא לשון פרישת שמלה שהוא היחוד
נהתקשרות.

[NOTE Summary:

The maamar opens with the teaching that man was created last, yet his Torah was explained after all, revealing that he is the culmination and unifier of creation. This is not merely chronological but structural: man's role is to integrate and elevate all levels beneath him. The Baal HaAkeidah's interpretation of Rabbi Yannai's proclamation, "Who desires life... guard your tongue from evil" (Psalms 34:14), highlights that the essential key to life itself lies in speech. This truth has become so obscured that it requires rediscovery, like a lost object.

Speech is not secondary to thought; rather, it is the primary vehicle of leadership and connection. From the concept of "yakhol" in the Gemara, we learn that not study alone is the essence, but the ability to express, unify, and draw others through speech. This parallels kingship: a king rules through his word, serving as the bridge between higher and lower realms. Speech therefore embodies awe, because awe emerges from encountering something beyond oneself, and speech is precisely what binds transcendence to immanence.

Thought alone cannot govern or connect people, as it remains internal and inaccessible. Speech, however, creates קשר (connection), and this is why מלכות (kingship) operates through awe and speech together. As it says, "A righteous one rules through the awe of God" (II Samuel 23:3). Speech, when aligned properly, connects the speaker to the Master of all powers and elevates him to the level of אדם (man), one who resembles the Divine.

This is because speech is the external expression of the higher level that clothes and elevates the lower. Through proper speech, a person becomes a vehicle for Divine expression, paralleling creation itself, which came into being through Divine speech: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made" (Psalms 33:6). Every word consists of letters, and these letters are the building blocks of reality, continuously sustaining creation.

Letters represent the revelation of רצון (will). Before letters, there is no manifestation; through them, all existence is articulated and structured according to its root. The Holy Tongue reflects this perfectly, as each name corresponds precisely to the essence and formation of the thing it describes.

However, when a person uses speech for selfish, physical indulgence, he disconnects from this truth. His words no longer express Divine reality but become distorted, empty imitations. Such speech is degraded to the level of "chirping of birds," belonging to the domain of קליפה (impurity), devoid of true unity and vitality.

This degradation of speech leads directly to the spiritual condition of the מצורע (leper), who is afflicted for evil speech. Since "man became a living soul" (Genesis 2:7), translated as "a speaking spirit," speech is synonymous with life itself. When speech is corrupted, life itself is diminished, and the person is considered as dead.

Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Tazria

Thus, the initial teaching returns with deeper clarity: man, created last, is the unifier of all, and his Torah, the articulation of Divine speech, is the mechanism of that unification. The phrase “was explained” is understood as “spreading a garment,” meaning the extension and connection of all levels into a unified whole through proper expression.

Practical Takeaway:

A person must begin to see speech not as casual or neutral, but as a creative force that either builds or destroys worlds. Every word spoken should be aligned with truth, purpose, and elevation. Before speaking, one should ask: Is this connecting, elevating, and expressing something real, or is it self-serving noise? By refining speech, one transforms not only oneself but the entire reality one is part of.

Chassidic Story:

It is related about Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok that he once encountered a chassid who was known for his sharp tongue and frequent involvement in gossip. Instead of rebuking him directly, the Rebbe asked him a simple question: “Tell me, when you speak, do you feel that your words are alive?”

The chassid was confused. “Alive? What does that mean?”

Rabbi Menachem Mendel explained gently: “When Hashem created the world, His words gave life. When a Jew speaks properly, his words also carry life. But when speech is misused, it loses its soul. It becomes like a body without life.”

The chassid was deeply shaken. From that day on, he became extremely careful with his speech. Over time, people noticed that when he spoke, his words carried weight, warmth, and clarity. Eventually, others began seeking his advice, sensing that his words were not empty, but alive.

The Rebbe later remarked that this transformation was greater than many acts of fasting or self-denial, because it restored the very essence of what it means to be a “living soul.”

END NOTE]