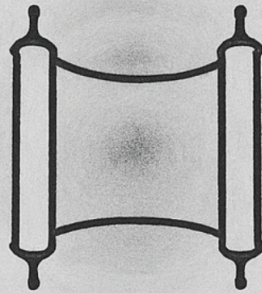


בס"ד

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

מֵאֲמָרָא



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Menachem Mendel of Horodak

Pri Ha'Eretz

Parshas Ki Savo

מאמר א

Introduction

This discourse from Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok (1730–1793), a leading disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch and one of the first Chassidic leaders to settle in Eretz Yisrael, explores the transformation of human middos (attributes) through teshuvah. Rabbi Menachem Mendel, known for his deep emotional avodah and fiery devotion, emphasizes how every aspect of the soul, even its most physical expressions, can be elevated when directed solely to Hashem. His teachings reflect the path of Chassidus: to refine the heart, to turn struggle into strength, and to reveal joy in Divine connection.

Rabbi said: Whoever overlooks his measures, they overlook for him his transgressions, as it is said: "He bears iniquity and passes over transgression" etc.

אמר רב, כל המעביר על מדותיו מעבירין לו על פשעיו, שנאמר: נשא עון ועובר על פשע כו'.

Behold, in this portion many of the commentators explain it as: "When you will come into the higher land," which is the World to Come, etc. And "and you shall place [it] in the basket" is expounded as an acronym for Taamim (cantillations), Nekudos (vowels), Osyos (letters).

הנה, בפירוש זה רבים מן המפרשים פותרים אותה כי תבוא אל הארץ העליונה, שהוא העולם הבא וכו'. ושמע בתנא, דורשין נוטריקון טעמים נקודות אותיות.

And the matter is the teaching of Rabbi Yehudah: "Prepare yourself in the vestibule in order that you may enter the banquet hall." He said this by way of analogy about this world, which is like a vestibule before the World to Come.

והענין הוא מאמר רבי יהודה: התקן עצמך בפרוזודור כדי שתכנס לטרקלין, שאמר דמילתא על העולם הזה, שהוא כפרוזודור לפני העולם הבא.

Although the vestibule is a place of passage before the entrance, not made to prepare oneself within it, nevertheless the passage through it itself is the preparation, for in the meantime he prepares himself.

אם אמנם הפרוזודור הוא מקום מעבר קודם הכניסה, ולא להתקן עצמו בתוכו עשוי, הנה המעבר דרך עליו הוא התקון, שבתוך כה מתקן עצמו.

For this is the matter of this world, which seemingly stands opposite to the World to Come, which is simple spirituality not comprehensible to those who grasp in this world.

כי זהו ענין העולם הזה, אשר לכאורה נגד לעולם הבא, שהוא רוחני פשוט שאינו מושג למשיגי העולם הזה.

And how can it be that this world, which is corporeal, be the passage of preparation and rectification for entering the World to Come?

ואיך יתכן היות מעבר העולם הזה תקון והכנה? לכניסת העולם הבא?

But in truth, it is written: "Fortunate is the man whose strength is in You, in whose heart are the highways"—the matter being that "the world is built with kindness," and there is no created being in the world except by means of the middos, the seven days of building, as is known.

אבל באמת כתוב: אשרי אדם עז לו בך, מסלות בלבבם, שהענין הוא: עולם חסד וינה, ואין שום נברא בעולם בלתי על ידי המדות, שבעת ימי הבנין פי'ודע.

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And this is the whole of man: not to use the middos for physical actions, for Hashem did not call them before him except to mention in the Name of Hashem and to cleave with them in their root until Ein Sof.

וזה כל האדם שלא להשתמש במדות לפעולות הגשם, כי לא הקרא ה' לפניו אותה כי אם להזכיר בשם ה' ולהתדבק עמה בשרשה עד אין סוף.

For after his knowledge that the middos of his soul are worlds and supernal lights whose value no man knows, hidden from the eye of every living being, how abundant is the goodness hidden in the soul of man and his middos—

כי אחרי ידיעתו שמודות נפשו הם עולמות ואורות עליונים אשר לא ידע אנוש ערכה, ונעלמה מעין כל חי, מה רב טוב הצפון בנשמת האדם ומדותיו.

No one but G-d makes for one who waits for Him. How then could he use them for physical pleasure and temporary life?

אלהים זולתו יעשה למחכה לו, איך ישתמש עמהם לנהנת גשמית וחי שעה?

As is known from the parable of a very precious pearl, that one would not give it for a trivial thing or even for a slice of bread, even if he were very hungry—after knowing its great value.

כידוע ממשל מרגלית יקרה מאד, שלא יתננה בדבר מועט או בפרוסת לחם, אפלו אם ירעב מאד, אחרי ידיעתו מגדל ערכה.

Only one who is foolish all his days and does not know its value would do such. And this is "Fortunate is the man whose strength is in You," for the middos are [numerically] 77 below and 70 above, as is known.

אלא מי שהוא שוטה כל ימיו ולא ידע ערכה. וזהו: אשרי אדם עז לו בך, כי המדות הם ע"ז למטה ז' וילמעלה ע' כידוע.

That below they are in units, and above they are in tens, more in expansion, that all the middos of his soul are only "in You," in Hashem may He be blessed.

שלמטה יחידות, וילמעלה עשרים יותר בהתרחבות, שכל מדות נפשו הם רק בך בה' יתברך.

And even all the physical middos that pass and vanish in his thought are only "highways in their heart," like a vestibule to a banquet hall, to pass through them in order to connect with their root in Him, may He be blessed.

ואפלו כל המדות הגשמים החולפים ועוברים במחשבתו, הם רק מסלות בלבבם, כמו פרזודור לטרקליון, לעבור דרך עליהם להתקשר בשרשה בו יתברך.

And behold, the explanation of "overlooking his measures" is that he is obligated to act according to the requirement of his middos, but he overlooks and changes his middos.

והנה פירוש מעביר על מדותיו, הוא שקל"מ לעשות כפי התחייבות מדותיו, אבל הוא מעביר ומשנה מדותיו.

This is the matter of the thought of teshuvah, which is still only a beginning and an acceptance in the heart to return, even though it has not yet been completed in its fullness and goodness.

שהוא ענין הרהור תשובה, שהוא עדיין התחלה וקבלה בלב לשוב, אפלו שעדיין לא נגמר במלואו וטובו.

For his original middos are still in their strength and power, for he only overlooks not to act according to his middos, but they are still within him.

שהרי מדותיו הראשונות הם עדיין בתקפן וגבורתן, שהרי הוא מעביר שלא לעשות כפי מדותיו, אבל עדיין ישנם בו.

And already we have written that the main thing is that a person should accustom his middos to be directed solely to Hashem alone, and to uproot after them.

וכבר פתבנו שהעקר שירגיל האדם את מדותיו, בלתי לה' לבדו, ולשרש אחריהם.

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As in the matter of uprooting idolatry, that one must uproot after it so that no root remains within him of gall and wormwood. For the root is everything, and all the branches spread after it.

כַּעֲנֵן הַעוֹקֵר עֲבוּדָה זָרָה, שֶׁצָּרִיךְ לְשָׁרֵשׁ אַחֲרֶיהָ, שֶׁלֹּא יִשָּׂאֵר בּוֹ שׁוּם שָׂרֵשׁ פְּרָה רֹאשׁ וְלַעֲנָה, כִּי הַשָּׂרֵשׁ הוּא הַכֹּל, וְכָל הָעֲנָפִים מִסְתַּעְפִּים אַחֲרָיו.

As in the matter of "throw a staff, its root stands"—and the rule of the matter is: if its end is not, its beginning is not.

כַּעֲנֵן "זָרוֹק חוּטְרָא פּוּ", אַעֲיָקְרָא קָאִי". וְכִלְלוּ שָׁל דְבָר: אִי סִיפָא לֹא, סִפְרָא לֹא.

For the Divine is not apprehended by those who grasp through the body, and as long as the middah is apprehended in the physical body, how can it apprehend the World to Come, which is Divine, simple, and spiritual?

שֶׁאֵין הַאֱלֹהוֹת מוֹשָׁג לְמַשְׁיגֵי הַגּוּף, וְכָל זְמַן שֶׁהַמִּדָּה מְשֻׁגָּת בַּגּוּף גַּשְׁמִי, אֵיךְ תִּשְׁיַג עוֹלָם הַבָּא הַאֱלֹהִי פְּשׁוּט וְרוּחָנִי?

But the truth is that the beginning of the thought of teshuvah includes everything, and its end is bound in its beginning.

אֲבָל הָאֱמֶת, שֶׁתְּחִלַּת הַהֲרֹר תְּשׁוּבָה כְּלוּל מֵהַכֹּל, וְנִעוּץ סוֹפָה בְּתַחֲלָתָהּ.

For with a thought of teshuvah one becomes a tzaddik, as if...

...שֶׁהָרִי בְּהֲהֲרֹר נַעֲשֶׂה צַדִּיק, כְּמוֹ

As the words of our Sages: "Behold, she is betrothed." And the matter is, that the thought [of teshuvah] is a point in the heart and a beginning, like the point which is the beginning of all the letters and guides them, as is known.

כַּדְּבָרֵי חַז"ל: הָרִי זֶה מְקוּדָשׁוֹ. וְהַעֲנֵן כִּי הַהֲרֹר הוּא נְקוּדָה שֶׁבֵּלֵב וְהַתְּחִלָּה, כַּעֲנֵן הַנְּקוּדָה שֶׁהִיא הַתְּחִלָּה לְכָל הָאוֹתִיּוֹת וּמְנַהִיגָם כִּיְדוּעַ

Therefore, it is difficult only the beginning, as the saying goes: "All beginnings are difficult." But after the beginning, it leads and brings to the end of the deed, in the thought first, which is the delight from the completion of the will.

וְלָכֵן אֵינוֹ קוֹשֶׁה כִּי אִם הַתְּחִלָּה, כְּמַאֲמַר כָּל הַתְּחִלּוֹת קוֹשׁוֹת. אֲבָל אַחַר הַתְּחִלָּה הוּא מוֹלִיךְ וּמְבִיא לְסוֹף הַמַּעֲשֶׂה, בַּמַּחֲשָׁבָה תְּחִלָּה, שֶׁהוּא הַתַּעֲנוּג מֵהַשְּׁלֵמַת הַרְצוֹן.

And the matter of beginning is like birth, for even in the newborn man there are included all the roots of his powers that will come to him afterwards.

וְעַנְנֵן הַתְּחִלָּה הוּא כְּמוֹ הוֹלְדָה, שֶׁגַּם בְּהוֹלֵד הָאָדָם יֵשׁ בּוֹ כָּל שָׂרְשֵׁי כַּחוֹתָיו שֶׁיָּבֹאוּ לוֹ אַחַר כֵּן.

But they are not in revelation and differentiation in actuality, only in hidden potential, all included in one point, as is known.

אֲבָל אֵינָם בְּהַתְּגַלּוּת וְהַתְּחַלְקוּת בְּפַעוּל, כִּי אִם בְּכַח נִסְתָּר, כְּלוּלִים בְּנְקוּדָה אַחַת כִּיְדוּעַ

And there is a need for study and habit to divide his middos and to bring the matter from potential into actuality.

וְצָרִיכִין לִימוּד וְהִרְגָּל לְחַלֵּק מִדּוֹתָיו, וְלַהוֹצִיא הַדְּבָר מִכַּח אֶל הַפּוֹעֵל.

For although everything is included in the point, without study and habit it will not be completed, for the point can be changed into any letter and to any direction that one wishes.

כִּי אַעֲפִי שֶׁכְּלוּל הַכֹּל בְּנְקוּדָה, בְּלִמְתִּי הַלִּימוּד וְהִרְגָּל לֹא יִגְמֹר. כִּי הַנְּקוּדָה הִיא יְכוּלָה לְהַשְׁתַּנּוֹת לְכָל אוֹת וְלְכָל צַד שֶׁתִּרְצֶה.

Until after the habit, with the continuation of time, that for each part all the roots of the points will go out, to expand each middah separately, growing and increasing from smallness to greatness.

עַד אַחַר הַהִרְגָּל, בְּהַמְשָׁךְ הַזְּמַן, אֲשֶׁר לְחַלֵּק יֵצֵא כָּל שָׂרְשֵׁי הַנְּקוּדוֹת לְהַתְּפַשֵּׁט כָּל מִדָּה בְּפִרְט, הוֹלֵךְ וְגוֹדֵל מִקְטַנּוּת אֶל הַגְּדוּלָה.

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Each middah goes and builds for itself a structure until it becomes very great, for the needs of a complete structure, as the saying "And Hashem built the rib," and it became a complete stature.

כל מדה הולך ובונה במה לעצמו, עד כי גדל מאד לצרכי בנין שלם, כמאמר: ויבן ה' את הצלע, ונעשה קומה שלמה.

Whose boldness of face will not be altered. Just as the point can be changed into whatever one wishes, so is the matter of the thought of teshuvah.

אשר עז פניו לא שיונה. כמו הנקודה שיכולה להשתנות למה שתראה, כן ענין ההרור תשובה.

Which is a beginning and a point in the heart, that includes all the middos of teshuvah. But afterwards one must always draw himself in this middah until he draws forth great middos from the point.

שהיא התחלה ונקודה שפלב הפלולה מכל מדות התשובה. אבל אחר כך צריך להמשיך עצמו תמיד במדה זו, עד כי ימשיך מדות גדולות מן הנקודה.

And after his middos have grown in all their need to be changed from how they were in the manner of the point, this is called "letters."

ואחר שיתגדלו מדותיו כל צרכם, להשתנות ממה שהיו על אופן הנקודה, הוא הנקרא אותיות.

And from the letters one comes to the delight, which is the taamim, which is the joy of the mitzvah.

ומן האותיות יבוא אל התענוג, שהוא הטעמים, ושהיא השמחה של מצוה.

And certainly, also in the point the joy was included in concealment, and it is to make nachas ruach for his Creator, as it is said: "And a candle of Hashem," but it is not felt like from the great middos, whose feeling of joy from them is the matter of comprehension.

ובנדאי, שגם בנקודה הנה כלול השמחה בהעלם, והוא לעשות נחת רוח ליוצרו, שאמר: ונר ה'. אבל אינו מורגש כמו מן המדות הגדולות, שהרגשת השמחה מהם הוא ענין השגתה.

And the order of using them in the World to Come with greater force. This is the matter of "Prepare yourself in the vestibule, in this world, in order that you may enter the banquet hall, the World to Come," when he changes his taam (flavor) and middos entirely, that their feeling is not in corporeality at all.

וסדר השתמש עמם בעולם הבא, בירת שאת. זהו ענין: התקן עצמך בפרוזודור בעולם הנה, כדי שתכנס לטרקלין, עולם הבא, בשנותו את טעמו ומדותיו מכל עיקר הרגשתם שלא בגשמיות כלל.

And this is the matter of what our Sages said: Ezra instituted for Israel to read the first admonition before Shavuos and the second before Rosh Hashanah, saying: "Let the year and its curses end."

וזהו ענין ארזו"ל: עזרא תקן להם לישראל לקרות התוכחה הראשונה קודם עצרת, והשנית קודם ראש השנה, באמרו: תכלה שנה וקללותיה.

For Shavuos is also a Rosh Hashanah for the tree, as is known. For in the higher worlds, above time, the matter of "year" in them is an expression of change.

פי עצרת גם כן ראש השנה לאילן, כידוע. שבעולמות עליונים שלמעלה מן הזמן, ענין "שנה" בהם לשון שנוי.

And likewise "chodesh" is from the expression of renewal, from world to world, and from matter to matter, which is the matter of the two thousand years that preceded the Torah.

וכן "חדש" מלשון חדוש, מעולם לעולם ומענין לענין, שהוא ענין אלפים שנה שקדמה התורה.

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And it is known concerning the curses, in what our Sages said: at first the serpent was cursed, for it was the root. And all the ninety-eight curses are branches extending from him.

וידוע מענין הקללות, באמרם חז"ל: תחלה נתקלל נחש כי הוא שרשה, וכל הצ"ח קללות פלם הם. הסתעפות לגמשה אחריו.

And whoever separates from Him, may He be blessed, is prepared in his teshuvah to be uplifted to Him, until his middos are changed from their root to be solely for Hashem.

ומתפרד מאתו יתברך, יוכן בתשובתו הרמטה אליו יתברך, עד כי ישתנו מדותיו משרשם, בלתי לה לבדו.

Certainly He will exchange and transform that evil into good, and all the curses will be transformed into blessing—language of a pool and drawing down.

בודאי יתליפנו וימיר אותו רע בטוב, ויתהפכו כל הקללות לברכה, לשון ברכה והמשכה.

And it will be transformed from the serpent to a staff, which is drawing down. And this is what he instituted, to read the admonition at the end of the year, which is the completion of the change.

ויתהפך מנחש למטה, שהוא המשכה. וזהו שתקן לקרות התוכחה בצאת השנה, שהוא גמר השנוי.

For then, surely the year and its curses will end, for the curses in the Torah are the rectification of the serpent.

פי אז בודאי תכלה השנה וקללותיה, פי הקללות שבתורה הם תקון הנחש.

And by their reading in the Torah, the end of the primordial year of two thousand years, they changed their middah to be transformed into blessing, and to do kindness to thousands.

ועל ידי קריאתם בתורה, סוף שנה הקדומה אלפים שנה, שנו את מדתם להתהפך לברכה, ועושה חסד לאלפים.

And this is "vehayah," which is an expression of joy: "When you come into the higher land," which is the joy of mitzvah, to attain and to take from the first.

וזהו "והיה", שהוא לשון שמחה: פי תבוא אל הארץ העליונה, שהיא שמחה של מצוה, להשיג ולקחת מראשית.

Which is the matter of beginning and the thought of teshuvah, which was a point; and joy in "basket" is interpreted as taamim, nekudos, osiyos.

שהוא ענין התחלה וההרור תשובה, שהיתה נקודה. ושמחה בט"א, הוא פירוש טעמים נקודות אותיות.

That is, to draw the point until it reaches the middos, and from there you will attain the joy, delight, and taamim.

שהוא להמשיך הנקודה, עד שיגיעו למדות, וממנה תשיג השמחה והתענוג והטעמים.

If indeed the taamim are even before the point, and certainly before the letters, but it is known that the end of deed is first in thought.

אם אמנם הטעמים הם קודמים אפלו לנקודה, וכל שכן לאותיות. אבל ידוע סוף מעשה במחשבה תחלה.

And this is what our Sages said: "Whoever overlooks his middos, they overlook his transgressions." For "ma'avir" means first, first, our Sages said.

וזהו אמרו רז"ל: כל המעביר על מדותיו, מעבירין ממנו על פשעיו. שכן בלשון "מעביר" ראשון ראשון ארו"ל.

And the transgression itself is not erased, for it is still only a beginning, and he overlooks his middos not to do according to

ועון עצמו אינו נמחק, מפני היותו עדיין מתחיל, ומעביר על מדותיו שלא לעשות כמעשיהו, אבל עדיין המדה עצמה לא נמחקה מאתו לשרש אחריה.

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them. But the middah itself has not yet been erased from him to uproot after it.

Therefore, measure for measure, they overlook for him his transgressions. But the transgression itself is not erased until he completes his teshuvah, uplifting it to uproot the middah from its root, not to use it in corporeality, but only for Hashem alone.

לכן מדה כנגד מדה, מעבירין לו פשעיו. והעון אינו נמחק עד שיגמור תשובתו, הרמתה לעקור המדה מעיקרה, מהשתמש בה בגשמיות, בלתי לה' לבדו.

This is called complete teshuvah: in that very time, in that very place, all aspects of warmth, desire, and his middah that was physical at first, he returned to Hashem its entire essence.

זהו הנקרא תשובה שלימה: באותו פרק, באותו מקום, כל אופני חמימות חשק מדתו, שהיה מגושם תחלה, השיב לה' את כל עיקרה.

Not only that, but he increased his middah for Hashem, with force and warmth, the strength of the fire of love to Him, until his love to Hashem extinguishes the sin, the fire of the evil inclination.

ולא עוד, אלא שהגדיל מדתו לה', ותוקף וחימיות חזק אש האהבה אליו ותברך, עד פי אהבתו ותברך. מכבה עבירה, אש אהבת היצר הרע.

So that even if he encounters it at that very time, in that very place, he has no desire in it, because of his love to Hashem. This is teshuvah from love, that intentional sins become like merits.

שאפילו אם יזדמן לו באותו פרק, באותו מקום, איני חושק בה, מפני אהבתו ותברך. זו היא תשובה מאהבה, שזדונות נעשו כזכויות.

Certainly Hashem will not consider for him the sin that he sinned, and the iniquity itself is erased from its root.

בדאי לא יחשב ה' לו עון אשך חטא, והעון עצמו נמחק מעיקרו.

[NOTE Summary

The discourse begins with the teaching of Chazal: “Whoever overlooks his measures, they overlook for him his transgressions” (Rosh Hashanah 17a). Rabbi Menachem Mendel explains that this does not mean one passively suppresses or ignores his middos, but rather that he actively transforms them. At the beginning stage, a person may only succeed in restraining his natural tendencies—this is the “point” of teshuvah, a hidden spark in the heart. Like a single dot from which letters and words emerge, this initial thought of return includes all the potential of teshuvah, even though it is not yet manifest.

Through study and habituation, the point unfolds into structured middos, like letters expanding from a single dot, and eventually into “taamim,” the flavor and delight of mitzvah. True teshuvah requires uprooting the middos from their misuse in gashmiyus and redirecting them to Hashem alone. This process parallels the removal of avodah zarah, which must be destroyed from its root so no remnant remains.

Ezra HaSofer’s enactment to read the admonitions before Shavuot and Rosh Hashanah embodies this transformation. The curses represent the “serpent,” the root of disconnection, yet through teshuvah they are turned into blessings, channels of Divine flow. Just as the year ends with “let the year and its curses conclude,” so too does a person conclude an old pattern of misused middos, replacing it with renewed Divine service.

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Complete teshuvah—teshuvah me'ahavah—occurs when a person not only resists temptation but transforms his very desires. In that same place and time where he once sinned, he now feels no pull toward it because his love for Hashem burns more strongly than the passion of the yetzer hara. In such a state, his former sins become merits, for they catalyzed an even deeper love for Hashem. This is the fulfillment of “prepare yourself in the vestibule in order to enter the banquet hall”: this world refines and transforms middos into vessels of spiritual joy that are revealed fully in the World to Come.

Practical Takeaway

Teshuvah is not merely an act of regret or restraint but a total redirection of the heart. Even a fleeting thought of return contains infinite potential—it is a point that can unfold into an entire structure of Divine service. The key is consistency: through learning, habit, and awareness, one can gradually transform his middos from selfish drives into burning love for Hashem. When we channel even our strongest passions toward holiness, every past failure becomes a stepping-stone, and the very force of sin is converted into the fire of merit.

Chassidic Story

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Horodok, when he first settled in Tiberias, was known for his intense avodah of tefillah. Once, as he prayed with fiery emotion, his voice carried across the town. A Jew who had been bitter and cynical about Chassidim heard him cry out during Shema: “Hashem Echad!” and was struck with trembling. Later, he confessed to the townspeople that in that moment, his lifelong attachment to physical pleasures seemed empty, and his heart turned entirely to Hashem. Rabbi Menachem Mendel explained that this is the essence of teshuvah: when the fire of love for Hashem is so strong that it uproots every trace of worldly craving, transforming even a hardened heart into a vessel of joy.

END NOTE]