

# REBBE NACHMAN'S SOUL



*Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan*

A commentary on Sichos HaRan  
from the classes of  
Rabbi Tzvi Aryeh Rosenfeld z"l

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A commentary on Rebbe Nachman's Wisdom  
(Sichos Haran)

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## RABBI TZVI ARYEH ROSENFELD Z”L



Rabbi Rosenfeld z”l's lineage traces back to Reb Aharon, the Rav of Breslov, and Reb Shmuel Yitzchak, the Rav of Tcherin, both of whom were among the most prominent followers of Rebbe Nachman.

He received Smicha from Rabbi Avraham Sternhartz, recognized leader of Breslov Chassidus in Russia and Jerusalem and from Rabbi Avraham Yaffen, dean of the Bais Yosef yeshiva (Novardok) in Europe and America.

His penetrating mind and relentless zeal enabled him to achieve a mastery of all fields of Torah-learning including the Talmud, Shulchan Aruch, Chassidic teachings, and not least, the Kabbala.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein often discussed difficult questions in Jewish law with Rabbi Rosenfeld; these discussions would frequently continue throughout the night.

In December 1963 during the height of the Cold War, Rabbi Rosenfeld led the first group of Breslovers from America to Uman.

Rabbi Rosenfeld z"l left a legacy of over 1,000 recorded lessons and lectures from his vast knowledge of the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Kabbalah and Rabbi Nachman's teachings in classes attended by Sefardim and Ashkenazim alike.

He devoted himself to collecting funds to support needy families in Israel, build the Breslov Yeshivah in Jerusalem and publish Rebbe Nachman's works.

He pioneered the translation of Rebbe Nachman's teachings into English, starting with Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom, translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan.

He was very close with the Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe and learned together from 1951 until the year before Rabbi Rosenfeld passed away in 1978.

He made his over fifty trips to the Holy Land, and in his first trip in 1949, he met with Rav Avraham Sternhartz, who instilled in Rabbi Rosenfeld the burning need to spread Rebbe Nachman's teachings in America. This became his life's mission, and for thirty years he was a pioneer in the baal teshuvah movement in the United States -- all the while introducing more and more people to Rebbe Nachman's teachings.

He had an immense love for the Holy Land and wished to settle there himself. The one thing which always held him back was the new students that kept joining his classes each year. He once decided that should a whole year go by without a new student being attracted, he'd move to Jerusalem. Stricken with cancer at age 56, he finally moved to Jerusalem in the summer of 1978, thereby giving himself a few months to prepare for his passing.

The 11th of Kislev is the yahrzeit of Rabbi Zvi Aryeh Rosenfeld z"l. He brought many to the teachings of Rabbeinu Zal. He enriched every mitzva and every nuance of kedusha with down-to-earth excitement, total faith and bitachon. We are sincerely grateful for a rabbi who was one-stop source for amazing ruchnious and gashmious advice. So many years after his passing we still feel a deep void.

# SICHA 1

We now begin the sefer *Sichos Haran*, which means "The Sayings of Rabbeinu z"l", as recorded and written by his greatest disciple, Reb Noson. These are the wise sayings of Rabbeinu z"l on diversified topics, which we will try to expound on as much as possible.

## ***What and Who is the Tzaddik Emes?***

It is very fitting that the first topic deals with something that only Rabbeinu z"l can speak about, the topic of the *Tzaddik Emes*. According to the descriptive *sefira*, the *Tzaddik Emes* is the *sefira* of Yesod. Rabbeinu z"l is the *Tzaddik Emes*. He is the *Tzaddik Yesod Olam* - the *Tzaddik* who is the foundation of the world. He is the foundation of all of creation also known as '*kol*'. '*Kol*' means one that encompasses everything. We find this word '*Kol*' expressed by Dovid Hamelech who said "*Ki Kol Bashamayim Uva'aretz*". The *Tzaddik Emes* is the one who contains all that is in heaven and earth. But that is HaShem himself, therefore the *Tzaddik Emes* is *misdameh*, he models himself after HaShem. He is the closest to his Creator, to HaShem himself.

What is the meaning of "he has all that is in heaven and earth"? Rabbeinu z"l explains that the *Tzaddik Emes* is so great that he can actually rise up to the heights above our universe, above this earthly part of creation, and move on to the next world.

## ***The Tzaddik Emes can rise to Olam HaAtzilus***

There are four basic worlds.

The first world is *Olam HoAsiyoh*, which not only refers to this earth, but to all earthly material creation. This refers to the earth and all the

planets around it. The sun, the moon, the stars, and to all other planets which we call 'the universe'. This would include the sky as well. The sky as we see it is part of *Olam HoAsiyoh*. The sky is not spiritual, the sky we see is material; it is the heavens of *Olam HoAsiyoh*, of this earthly universe. Above this part of creation, this universe, we come to the next world, *Olam Ha'Yetziroh* which is purely spiritual. This is the world of the angels. Just as on earth you have different types of beings, from the lowly animal to the intelligent human, so too in this part of heaven, the *Olam Ha'Yetziroh*, you have different levels of angels, from different sizes and of different greatness. The lowest one of them is far greater than anything that exists on earth.

Let's make this clearer. The Gemara says that compared to other planets, the earth is a small planet. When you take the infinite number of planets combined that we have in this universe, there are millions of light years and so forth in between. This entire space panorama is smaller than the toe of the smallest angel in the next world. Now imagine the size of the rest of this angel who is the smallest angel, it is very tiny compared to the larger angels in it's world. This gives us some idea as to how very small our chance of conceiving what is meant by size in the spiritual world. The question is, if this is spiritual, what's the difference whether the size is a mile or a million miles? If you would understand more about the spiritual world you would understand why there is very much of a difference. The difference is so great that even the smallest part of this angel is larger than the entire universe.

Now we are forced to use the term '*kavi'yachol*', which means 'so to speak', because we are forced to utilize something which we can('t?) understand in our mind - though it is not actually so. We are forced to use a physical term for something spiritual.

There are ten *sefiras* in every world, and there is a roof on top of every world. When we go beyond that roof, we come to the next world. The world which comes after *Olam Hayetizra* is *Olam Ha'Berioh*, a world which *kavi'yachol*, contains the Throne of HaShem. The greatest of the angels are still beneath this Throne of HaShem, also known as the

*Merkavah*, the chariot. The *Merkavah* is spiritually held up by Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya'akov, and Dovid Hamelech. The four parts of the *Merkavah* are also represented by the four types of 'Chayos' of the *Merkavah*, the four different beings in the form of angels.

Above this world we, *kivyachol*, come to the top world, *Olam Ho'Atzilus*. As far as we are concerned speaking about worlds, this is the top world. *Olam Ho'Atzilus* is a world above anything mentioned. It's above our conception and imagination, that which cannot be described.

These four worlds correspond to the four letters of HaShem's name. The letter 'yud' corresponds to the *Olam Ho'Atzilus*, the top world. The 'hei' to the *Olam Ha'Berioh*, the throne. The 'vav' is the *Yetziroh*, the world of angels. The final letter 'hei' represents this lowly part of the world, this creation.

Rabbeinu z"l says that the *Tzadik Emes* can travel beyond this world to the world of the angels. After that the *Tzaddik Emes* goes through the roof of that world where no angel can tread, going into the next world, the world of 'Berioh', the world of the throne of HaShem. The *Tzadik Emes* can go beyond that into *Olam Ho'Atzilus*. It's important to note that a trip to the moon or a trip to Mars is nothing compared to a trip to the upper heavenly world of the angels.

This is testimony by one who has made this trip, Rabbeinu z"l himself, but he was not the only one. The Baal Sham Tov and the Ariz"l did this too. The *tzadikim ha'amitim* have the power of going up to these heavenly worlds. It's only that Rabbeinu z"l said that he did not stop at the *Olam Ho'Atzilus*, because there is much more above and beyond that world. We cannot even discuss this top world of *Atzilus*. Rabbeinu z"l was so great, he could travel through these worlds, and go through the worlds that are above these four. These worlds exist because HaShem is infinite. There is no such thing as saying there is a limit, *chas v'sholom*. These four worlds mentioned are still four. Above this there is an endless and infinite amount to get to HaShem, which of course is impossible because that is infinity himself. 'Ein Sof' is only HaShem who is infinite.

***The Tzaddik Emes has the power to go down the depth and bowels of the earth...to bring back a person***

Therefore, the *Tzaddik Emes*, who has this power of *Ki Chol Bashamayim Uva'aretz* - he goes above all that is in the heavens. It would seem to us that this act of the *Tzaddik Emes* is the greatest act possible. However, Rabbeinu z"l says that this is not the greatest act possible. One can rise through these heavens into the upper areas of holiness, but there is something greater than that. The *Tzaddik Emes* has the power of going down, which is even greater than going up. No matter how low a wicked person has descended, the *Tzaddik Emes* can go down to that place as well. When a person commits a sin, he has lowered himself away from his closeness to kedusha, and from his closeness to HaShem. By performing an act against the will of HaShem he has fallen; it is called a *nephiloh* or a *yerida*, an act of descending. By committing more sins he goes further down. The more he goes down, the more difficult it is for him to come back. The more distant he finds himself from feeling close to HaShem, the less of a chance he feels within himself to go back. The more one descends, the more he is propelled down at a much faster pace, since *chaz"l* tell us that if one commits a sin - he is assisted. If you want to commit a sin the door is open for you, *chas veshalom*. However the person who has gone way down could still remind himself of the mitzvahs of the Torah. Despite the lack of faith, when one remembers that he is not going to live forever on this earth, something begins to change. That person is reminded that ultimately there must be a day when he will have to give judgment. This can draw him back to the reality of realizing the truth, thereby crying out to HaShem from the depth: "ממעמקים קראתיך ה'". HaShem, I am very far, very low, I call you from this deep pit. I call upon you to help me, elevate me, bring me back to you.

But there are people who have fallen so far, Rabbeinu z"l calls this *Hastara betoch Hastara*, a concealment upon a concealment. When this happens to a person, he ceases to realize that he has left kedusha.

He doesn't realize there is such a thing as *kedusha* anymore. He thinks he is living in a normal world where there is no faith and no religion. A person like that is so far down that no one can help him. It is impossible for a normal person on this earth to help him anymore. This can only be accomplished by the *Tzaddik Emes* who on the one hand can rise up above into the upper heavens, and also have the power to go down to this low point of descent, to bring the wicked man up again. This is the meaning of Ki Chol Bashamayim Uva'aretz, there is no limit to the Shamayim, to the heights the *tzadik* can reach. As well, there is not limit to the Aretz, to the depth and bowels of the earth, to where the *tzadik* can descend in order to elevate and bring back a person who has gone so far.

### ***"I know" and cannot transmit this knowledge***

Therefore Rabbeinu z"l begins this Sefer Sichos HaRan with words that encompass both the heavens and the earth. Dovid Hamelech says: כִּי "אני ידעתי כי גדול השם", because I know that HaShem is great.

What is meant by "I know that HaShem is great"? What is it that a person knows? And why is the word 'I' used? I know and no one else knows? Rabbeinu z"l says that every person says these words and means it, because each person says "I know and I cannot transmit this knowledge; I cannot pass it on to anyone else." A person might say that he knows HaShem but his words are meaningless. If he begins to meditate, if he begins to ponder over his knowledge of the existence of HaShem, he will find that the thought that he reaches is something that cannot be brought out into words. It's impossible to transpose this thought to words. So 'I know' but I cannot speak about this. This point of 'I know' means that I am unique because there are no two people on the same level. The degree that I know means it is only I that knows this. When it comes to the topic of knowing, each person knows only a limited amount. The more a person has performed mitzvos, the closer they are to HaShem. The closer one is to HaShem, the more they can say 'I know' to a greater degree.

### ***Inadequate to describe the greatness of HaShem***

As much as we know that HaShem is great, what can we truly say about the greatness of HaShem? Is it a compliment if one would say 'I know HaShem is so great that he is even richer than the richest man on earth'? It is not at all a compliment, because to say it about HaShem is a very base statement. If someone were to say 'HaShem is so strong that he can uproot mountains', that too is a very low statement to say about HaShem, because all this is meaningless. So how then does one speak about HaShem's greatness? King David says the way to speak about it is: "Lecha Dum'ya Tehila, the greatest tribute you can pay to HaShem is silence, because any word you say will subtract from his greatness. Silence is the only tribute possible: Lecha Dumya Tehila , silence is the true praise for HaShem. If that's the case, we understand why 'Ki Ani Yad'ati' , I know but I cannot speak. What I may say will come out in a physical form, and it is detracting from the true praise of HaShem's greatness. I can only think it - but I cannot speak it. Now, despite this fact, we come to the point where we say HaShem is so great that it is unmentionable. Even the greatest *tzadik* will say " אני ידעתי", I know but I cannot speak about it. This means that we get to the point of beyond conception.

### ***Despite HaShem's greatness, His pleasure is derived from the service of lowly human being***

Rabbeinu z"l says in addition to this fact, HaShem is so great, so far above the ordinary type of creatures in this world. HaShem is so far above the angels in the upper heavens where the toe of the smallest angel is larger than the entire universe with all its planets. When we get to the next angel above him, that angel's toe is larger than this entire angel below plus this universe till we go higher and higher, to

an extent that it is unmentionable. Above all reigns supreme HaShem himself over all this, over such a mighty host of heavenly angels.

With all these mighty angels in the heavens, HaShem derives no pleasure from their service. HaShem's pleasure *kavi'yachol*, is derived from the service of this lowly little human being on earth. Why so? Because the pleasure takes place when you have one who has free choice and chooses to serve HaShem, to believe in HaShem. This is much greater than the mightiest of angels who has no choice. Why does he have no choice? Because the angel sees that which we cannot see. If we were given the privilege for the heavens to open up and we could see what's going in heaven, we could see Gan Eden. If we would see the marvels, the wonders of heaven, we would have no choice to serve or not because we would know the absolute truth without any need to be believe. However, the fact that we elect to serve HaShem without seeing this, with faith alone, is truly serving HaShem. Even though HaShem is so far exalted above and beyond all these levels of creation, HaShem still wants the service of the mortals on earth. From the Jew who puts on Tefillin, who davens to HaShem, who says a bracha. From the Jew who goes to shul, who avoids the temptations that are forbidden. This is the service to HaShem that HaShem desires. Although we cannot speak about the greatness of HaShem, in mind and in heart we can serve HaShem. How so? By serving HaShem with desire, with a passion and a desire to come close to HaShem. This burning desire is the true service to HaShem.

Rabbeinu z"l says that a Jew should strive to be an Eved HaShem. When we recall the life story of Rabbeinu z"l, all his hisbodedus and tefillos were basically asking HaShem, I implore you, I beseech you, I beg of you, bring me closer to your service. Bring me closer to you, elevate me higher and higher. This was the life of Rabbeinu z"l, rising higher and higher through these heavens because he became holier and purer. This should be the service of every Jew. We don't expect to go above the moon and the sun, the higher heavens, but we should at least try to serve HaShem in purity.

Every word of the Torah Ha'Kedoshah is the word of HaShem. Every single word of the Torah is pure, holy and true. No matter how great one may think they are, no matter how big a scientist one is, or a medical expert one has become, one can never dare to contradict one word of the Torah. If someone *chas veshalom* does, we know his word is false. He lost his only one truth and that is the word of HaShem.

### ***Seriousness of speech about HaShem***

Now we find an item of great danger, so much so that the Gemara says it's danger is above all other acts. If there is punishment for an act of a sin, none can compare to this punishment. Which sin is that? The simple act of making a joke about HaShem. Let's understand this deeper. A mighty angel is created by a Jew's act of doing a mitzvah. Nothing can destroy that angel because that mitzvah remains with him for a while. If he commits a sin, he is punished but his mitzvah still remains. A sin cannot extinguish in itself. There is one thing that can *kavyachol* extinguish a mitzvah, and that is making fun about something holy. There is a mitzvah to be *b'simcha*, to be happy and rejoice. It is a mitzvah to avoid sadness, to avoid a depressive state of mind. Now as much as it is a mitzvah to be *b'simcha* at all times, cracking a joke, making fun, or making jest about HaShem or about the Torah, is such a serious sin that the Gemara says nothing a Jew does can erase something which he creates.

I recall in my very young years, as a small child, my father was very stern and very pure. He had the countenance of a true *tzadik*, especially at the Shabbos table he looked like a true prince. When it came to anything which had to do with joking, he would say, 'be careful, no *katoves* pertaining to anything close to HaShem, *chas veshalom*'. *Katoves* is the Yiddish word for jokes. It was engrained from childhood to know the danger that is involved so that the person who does act frivolously must be very careful to avoid the fatal hazard of making a joke about HaShem or about HaShem's words. That is one thing that must be kept serious at all times.

***Conclusion: The first step must be faith***

This holds true according to the rules of Kabbalah, according to the ten *Sefiros*. There are three upper *Sefiros* that pertain to the mind, to wisdom. The seven lower *Sefiros* pertain to action. Now the lowest of the seven is called Malchus, referring to Malchus Peh, the power of speech. The three upper ones, *Chochmah, Bina and Da'as* are very different than the lower ones. This lowest *sefira, Malchus Peh*, is also called *Emuna*. There is no connection between the top *sefira* to the lowest one in the actual sense. They are not the same; they are in fact very far one from another. An entire gamut must be crossed to get from one to the other. Even though one is derived from the other, they are completely different. *Yedi'ah*, knowledge, means a person actually knows a certain something. *Emuna* is something a person does not know. Once he knows it, it is no longer faith. Here Rabbeinu z"l quotes King David who said :I know that G-d is great". The part that I know is only in my mind, I cannot speak it. Why can't I speak it? Because *Malchus Peh* is *Emuna*. The Zohar HaKadosh says that this '*yedi'ah*' of HaShem is an item that a person can appraise and evaluate only in their heart and mind. It is impossible to transfer this to someone else and discuss it. A person should strive to increase his knowledge of HaShem, to go higher and higher through the stepping-stone of *Emuna*. The first step must be faith, and only then a person goes to the next level to reach this knowledge.