

The 18 Principles of Sefer Likutei Moharan: R' Avraham ben R' Nachman (1848-1917)

Aside from the concealed meaning and the drushim contained within his holy statements in their richness which is drawn from elsewhere, or, from one teaching to another (and at times it appears that even the essence of the teaching is like an enigma, or a wondrous garment to what he grasped akin to the garbing of his understanding in the telling of his tales); even as they arrive in their revealed sense, they are wondrous and true in wisdom and in understanding- the beginning, the end and the middle of the teachings all clarify and elucidate each other, one towards the other and vice versa.

1. Through the measure and scale of his wisdom and *ruach ha'kodesh*, he counted and chose each and every statement, both written and spoken, what to lengthen and what to shorten, what to add and what to detract.
2. In a place where he includes numerous things and ideas, yet chooses one particular idea and utilizes it as a metaphor and example from which all the other ideas can be derived, it appears and it has been revealed numerous times that he had a specific intention in choosing this specific idea and not some other idea.
3. Similar to that which is explained and known regarding the *passuk* (*Devarim*, 6:8), "*and you shall tie them as a sign upon your hand*", the intention of the verse refers back towards itself and its paragraphs, that they should be tied as a sign etc., and even if only one letter is lacking from the commandment itself, that is "*and you shall tie*", then the tying has no essential value whatsoever. Furthermore, the Kabbalists emphasize the elevated *orot* and *mochin* contained within each and every letter of these paragraphs referred to as the "crown of the king" (*kitra d'malka*), and it is implicit within their words that even the letters of the commandment in and of itself, that is "*and you shall tie*", is contained within these *orot* and *mochin*; an example of this can also be found by the *passuk* (6:9), "*and you shall write*". This applies to his understanding and his holy statements as well, that within the utterance and disclosure itself, the very rectifications (*tikkunim*) contained therein were drawn forth and disclosed, (and so too now, through the learning of these teachings the rectifications contained within the teaching being studied are stimulated and revealed, see the end of teaching 87 in the second volume of *Likkutei Moharan*).

4. Any *passuk* or rabbinic statement that is partially employed to clarify an idea or detail, one must enter and elucidate the entire verse or rabbinic statement in all of its details according to that particular idea.
5. The idea behind the *passuk* (*Kohelet*, 7:14), “G-d has established this against that” as it is interpreted in the *sifrei emes*, that for everything that is found from the perspective of holiness and good, there is a parallel that can be found from the perspective of impurity and evil (like an ape in relation to man), and at times the side of good is inferred from its opposite on the side of evil.
6. All of the traits (*middot*) and aspects (*behinot*) that are referenced in each teaching contain within themselves every other particular trait and aspect that is referenced in the idea (akin to the description of the *sefirot* in the *sifrei emes*).
7. All of the stages that ascend from that which is without end (*ein-tachlis*) towards the unlimited (*ein-sof*) are considered as lights (*orot*) and vessels (*keilim*), for every preceding stage is considered as a vessel relative to the stage that proceeds it which is considered as a light that is received within a vessel.
8. Concerning his grasp and his declarations regarding the elevation of the “*tsaddik*” and his teachings, the essence of his intention is towards the unique ones of their generation (*yehidei ha-dorot*) (like *Shimon bar Yohai* and *R. Isaac Luria*), but in the vast majority his true intention is for none other than *Moshe/Mashiach* himself for whom we are waiting.
9. Concerning his interpretations of *pessukim* and rabbinic statements according to his holy grasp, his method is to firstly deliver and explicate the details of his understanding in all of its particulars. Afterwards he elucidates how all of this is contained and clarified in the *passuk* or the rabbinic statement; and if at times he appears to shift from this path you will find an explanation for this within his holy words (aside from the times where he simply starts with the *passuk* or the rabbinic statement that contains the entirety of the grasp that he will elucidate afterwards).
10. When a *passuk* or a rabbinic statement that encompasses the idea is brought after the full explication of his essential grasp and teaching, it is not his way to graft onto this verse or rabbinic statement a new idea that was not discussed previously. If at times it appears to the eye of the reader that there is a departure from this path, they should know faithfully that it contains an explanation of his holy words, and in the reader’s

investigation and effort they will discover and see the hints of his words contained therein, whether minor or important. Only then will you understand his wondrous intention that brought him to this [*passuk* or rabbinic statement].

11. Regarding the ideas that are known and explained within rabbinic statements and the *sifrei kabbalah*, at times he mentions nothing but the general idea (*roshei perakim*) relying on the reader to know them or to investigate them.
12. Regarding the interpretations of *pessukim* and rabbinic statements according to his holy grasp, he does not remove the *passuk* or statement from their plain meaning (*p'shutam*) – the opposite is true- his explanations are tied up and unified with the plain explanation, with each one completing and elucidating the other.
13. [To properly understand the teachings of Rebbe Nachman, one must always hold in mind] The simple faith (*emunah p'shuta*) in the supreme knowledge (*romemut daat*) of *Hashem* may His name be blessed which is unlimited (*ein-sof*) and unending (*ein-takhlit*) in its depths, to the extent that we find numerous things that appear to our human-knowledge as two opposites contained within one postulate (*shnei haphakhim b'noseh ehad*) but according to the limitless nature of *Hashem's* blessed knowledge and wisdom, they are not considered as opposites. The reverse is also true, that there are things which according to *Hashem's* knowledge are necessarily considered as two opposites while from our human perspective the reason for this necessity is utterly hidden and concealed.
14. Regarding the name of the “*shechinah*” described by the kabbalists- she represents the drawing forth of godliness into the totality of creation. As such she may be considered, *heaven forbid*, as a separate entity of sorts. In truth however, she is not considered as separate *heaven forbid*, for it is the thought and the mind of man that separates and detaches her explicitly and literally to the point that she is considered as an intermediary or *avodah zarah*, *heaven forbid*. This is not the case in the hearts of the wise ones who understand from within their own minds (by way of a knowledge that cannot be known or grasped according to our lowly knowledge). Because for them, even the speculation that sees her [the *shechinah*] as an intermediary or separate, *kevyachol*, is still within the framework of utter and complete unity with *HaKadosh baruch Hu*, for according to the truth of truth (*emes l'amiso*) “*there is nothing other than Him*”.

15. When it comes to explaining the *Torah* that emerges from the wisdom of the Infinite, may *His* name be blessed, there is no limit or end to the amount of *tzimtzumim* and tangents that are needed in order to explain [the ideas] and bring them down into the hearts of limited creatures. Because in truth drawing the infinite wisdom of G-d into the limited hearts of man are two contradictory concepts within a single postulate (*shnei haphachim b'nosei echad*). In truth, therefore, it is impossible to enter into these *tzimtzumim* and tangents except through *emunah* and the complete nullification of our own knowledge. And according to the level of our *emunah* in the suggestions and instructions of our great doctors (who are our *tzaddikim*) regarding the protection and the cleansing of our minds and thoughts, so too shall we merit to accomplish their suggestions which will ultimately lead to our own minds grasping the knowledge that was previously removed from us.
16. At times he will bring two or three proofs for a single idea, and for someone who reads the teaching carelessly, it will appear as if they are all part of a single proof. The reason for this is that [each teaching] is profoundly connected with itself to the point that each teaching is unified.
17. It is not his way to include a new and unique idea within the connections and associations expressed in his teaching unless there is a very specific reason.