

THE QUEST FOR THE LOST PRINCESS IN RABBI NACHMAN OF BRASLAV'S
"BOOK OF STORIES FROM ANCIENT TIMES"

by

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SUMMARY

One of the most innovative and original Hasidic leaders and thinkers, Rabbi Nachman of Braslav (1772 — 1810), related thirteen long, complex fables during the final four years of his life. This doctoral thesis presents an analysis of the quest for the Lost Princess in Rabbi Nachman of Braslav's "Book of Stories in Ancient Times." The image of the Lost Princess and the quest to find and rescue her, which appear in four of these stories (including the first and the last ones), are central symbols in Rabbi Nachman's thought. The most important key to an analysis of this image and theme lies in understanding the symbols and concepts of the Jewish mystical tradition (the Kabbalah), as Rabbi Nachman himself suggested.

KEY TERMS

Rabbi Nachman of Braslav; Hasidism; Kabbalah; Jewish mysticism; redemption; Jewish literature; Hasidic literature; allegory; East European Jewry; Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov

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CHAPTER ONE:

Introduction

This introduction to my doctoral thesis will be divided into four parts. They are:

A) Preface

B) Biographical Background

C) The Literary Legacy of Braslav Hasidism

D) Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times" – an analysis of what motivated Rabbi Nachman to create and narrate these stories.

A) Preface

Rabbi Nachman of Braslav (1772 - 1810) was one of the most profound Hasidic thinkers and leaders. Living in the Ukraine all his life and basing himself on traditional Jewish sources and texts, Rabbi Nachman was nonetheless able to create a very unique and innovative approach to traditional Jewish values, and to produce an extremely original body of literature and thought. He succeeded in presenting many of the key concepts of the Jewish mystical tradition (the Kabbalah) in a new form of long, allegorical fairy-tales or fables that also bear the imprint of his own unique personality and creative imagination.

During the last four years of his life, from July 1806 till April 1810 (six months before his death), Rabbi Nachman related thirteen long fables to his followers orally in Yiddish. These stories were put down in writing and translated into Hebrew by Rabbi Nachman's scribe and most important disciple, Rabbi Nathan Sternherz of Nemirov (1780 - 1845). After Rabbi Nachman's death, Rabbi Nathan published them as "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times"

in 1816. The major theme of his first story is the quest to find and to rescue a lost princess. This theme returns, with important developments and variations, in three other stories, including the last one. The most important key to an analysis of this image and theme lies in

understanding the symbols and concepts of the Jewish mystical tradition (the Kabbalah), as Rabbi Nachman himself suggested. This is the subject of this doctoral thesis.

Throughout this thesis I will be using the Harvard Reference System. Therefore, the full names of all books and texts quoted will appear in the bibliography. I also wish to point out that all the translations of Hebrew texts into English are my own (unless otherwise specified). Regarding spelling, because most of the secondary sources that I will be quoting were written by scholars and researchers from the United States, I will be using the American spelling convention exclusively throughout this thesis, in order to prevent spelling discrepancies from occurring. In terms of transliteration, the Hebrew letter *he* will always be written as “h” if it is the first letter of the Hebrew word (like ‘Hasid’ = *Hasid*), and as “ch” if it is not the first letter (like ‘Nachman’ = *Nachman*); the Hebrew letter *tzade* will always be transliterated as “tz.” In addition, there is a glossary at the end of the dissertation that contains the Hebrew words (as well as the Kabbalistic and Hasidic concepts) that require clarification. These words or terms are usually transliterated and written in italics when they appear in the text.

The following outline presents the general structure of this paper:

1. Chapter One: Introduction
2. Chapter Two: Basic concepts of the Kabbalah which are relevant to understanding Rabbi Nachman’s stories
3. The quest for the *Lost Princess* in Rabbi Nachman’s story: “The Losing of the King’s Daughter”
4. The quest for the *Lost Princess* in Rabbi Nachman’s story: “The Merchant and the Pauper”
5. The quest for the *Lost Princess* in Rabbi Nachman’s story: “The Master of Prayer”
6. The quest for the *Lost Princess* in Rabbi Nachman’s story: “The Seven Beggars”
7. Conclusion
8. Glossary

9. Appendixes: there are four appendixes; each appendix is an English translation of one of the four stories that focus on the Lost Princess.

10. Bibliography

I would like to point out that the bibliography is divided into four parts. The first part consists of the primary sources in Hebrew composed (A) by Rabbi Nachman himself, (B) by his scribe Rabbi Nathan (whom I mentioned earlier), and (C) by the leaders and scholars of the traditional Braslav Hasidic community during the latter half of the nineteenth century, as well as the twentieth century. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov, who emerged as the leader of Braslav Hasidism after Rabbi Nachman's death and dedicated the remaining thirty-five years of his life to meticulously compiling, editing, and publishing Rabbi Nachman's remaining manuscripts, writings, oral traditions, homiletic teachings and sermons, as well as his biography. He was also the first important commentator and interpreter of Rabbi Nachman's legacy.

The second section of the bibliography includes classical Judaic texts in Hebrew that are frequently quoted in Rabbi Nachman's own works, and which provide the basis of his Kabbalistic and Hasidic world-view. The third part of the bibliography consists of the contributions of modern scholarship (in both English and Hebrew), as well as the academic and critical analysis and study of Rabbi Nachman, his literary and philosophical writings, and the larger milieu of mysticism, Hasidism, and Kabbalah. Finally, the last section is an addendum consisting of additional books which I consulted, but which are not quoted or cited from directly in this text.

Among the different authors whose works I consulted and studied while doing research for this dissertation, I feel that there are three scholars whose depth and sensitivity have been especially helpful in my attempts to understand Rabbi Nachman's stories more thoroughly. I believe that I owe these three writers a special debt and a special gratitude for their insights. They are:

- 1) Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz of Jerusalem (1938 -)
- 2) Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan of New York (1935 - 1983)

- 3) Hillel Zeitlin from Russia and Poland (1871 - 1942), who was killed in the Holocaust and whose major works have never been translated into English.

B) Biographical Background

Although the main thrust of this dissertation is an analysis of four of Rabbi Nachman's longest and most intricate stories, it is crucial to understand the life and background of Rabbi Nachman. Very thorough and detailed biographies of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav have been written by Green (1981), Greenbaum (1987), Kaplan (1980) and Steinman (1951), as listed in the bibliography. I will therefore present only the basic outline of his life in the framework of this introduction.

Rabbi Nachman was born to a very prestigious family on the first of Nissan 5532 (4 April 1772) in the town of Medzhibozh, the Ukraine, in the heartland of the Hasidic movement. His maternal great-grandfather was the actual founder of Hasidism, Rabbi Israel Baal-Shem-Tov (1700 - 1760), also known as the *Besht*. His paternal grandfather was Rabbi Nachman of Horodenka (1711 - 1780), an important disciple of the *Besht* and an influential figure in his own right in the early Hasidic movement.

In his early teens, a marriage was arranged for him with Sosia, the daughter of a respected tax-farmer who lived in a village two hundred miles (320 kilometers) further east. In later years, Rabbi Nachman always spoke with great warmth about those early years of his marriage spent close to the forests, lakes, and streams that surrounded the village. In 1792, even before he had reached the age of twenty, Rabbi Nachman began to function as a *rebbe* (a Hasidic leader) in the town of Medvedka. In the spring of 1798, Rabbi Nachman decided that the time had come to make a pilgrimage to the Land of Israel (which had been invaded at that time by Napoleon in his wars with the Turks). This long, arduous journey, together with the actual sojourn in the Holy Land (Rabbi Nachman resided mainly in the towns of Tiberias and Zefat [Safed] in the Galilee) lasted over a year, and seems to have been a pivotal turning-point in his spiritual development. Rabbi Nachman felt that he had achieved a degree of spiritual enlightenment there that enabled him to reach otherwise inaccessible spiritual heights. He wrote that "all holiness comes by way of the Land of Israel. Only there can one ascend the ladder of holiness to higher and higher levels" (*Likkutei Eytzot* 1979:19, section 7).

A year and a half after his return to the Ukraine, Rabbi Nachman decided to leave Medvedka and to settle in the larger town of Zlotopolye, in August 1800. It was there that a terrible controversy erupted concerning Rabbi Nachman's personality and teachings. I would like to discuss this controversy in some detail, since it proved to have a decisive impact on Rabbi Nachman's life and thought.

The opposition to Rabbi Nachman was led by a much older Hasidic leader, Rabbi Aryeh Leib from Shpola (1725 - 1811), usually called the *Zeide* (grandfather) of Shpola. This controversy haunted Rabbi Nachman for the rest of his life, and caused both him and his Hasidim great suffering. Indeed, this controversy surrounding Rabbi Nachman, and the severe persecution of Braslav Hasidim it engendered, continued well into the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Although the results of this terrible dispute are well-documented, it is very unclear what the actual accusations leveled against Rabbi Nachman were. Braslav literature and traditions are extremely reticent about this, and so attempts at uncovering the source of this controversy have engendered much discussion among twentieth century scholars.

Steinsaltz (1993:xi) seems to represent the main consensus among contemporary scholars when he writes: "Rabbi Nachman was accused of arrogance, of messianic pretensions, and of propagating semi-heretical doctrines akin to *Sabbatianism* and *Frankism*." It is worthwhile to examine each of these three accusations, and I would like to start with the third one. Two important scholars, Piekarz (1972:75) and Liebes (1995:238-261), have come across two documents that hint at a possible connection between Rabbi Nachman and certain ideas taught by the followers of *Shabbatai Zvi* (a false messiah of the seventeenth century who lived in Turkey) and *Jacob Frank* (a false messiah of the eighteenth century who lived in Poland). These documents have led Piekarz (but not Liebes) to suggest that what triggered the controversy was a suspicion that Rabbi Nachman might have been a secret follower of the *Sabbatean* movement. Green (1981:103, 126-128), however, proves conclusively that the documents that Piekarz has brought are forgeries and completely unreliable. Weiss (1974:5-34) too does not think that anybody, even the *Zeide* of Shpola, could actually have suspected Rabbi Nachman of being a secret *Sabbatean* or *Frankist*. Weiss, Liebes, and Green all show that Rabbi Nachman was familiar with the teachings of these two false messiahs only in order to combat them. In fact,

Liebes (1995:238-253) brings solid evidence to bolster his claim that he believes that Rabbi Nachman felt that part of his main mission in life was to struggle against, and rectify, the ideas and the sins of the *Sabbatean* movement.

Regarding the second accusation (of messianic pretensions), it is very worthwhile to pay close attention to one of Hillel Zeitlin's major articles that was first published in Warsaw, Poland, in 1936, and re-published in Israel in 1965. In my opinion, Hillel Zeitlin was the most perceptive and most penetrating scholar to study Braslav Hasidism before World War Two. Hillel Zeitlin (1965a:327) stresses that the yearning for messianic redemption was at the very heart of Rabbi Nachman's vision, and that the figure of the Messiah was of great significance to Rabbi Nachman. Although Rabbi Nachman never claimed that he was the Messiah, it is still possible that the *Zeide* of Shpola, or other of his opponents, may have misunderstood him or misinterpreted him. Liebes (1995:238) and Green (1981:182-231) both write that the dream of messianic redemption was a central factor in Rabbi Nachman's thought, more so than any other contemporary Hasidic leader or thinker. There is, in addition, one fascinating passage, in which Rabbi Nachman is quoted as having said, "What will become of me, I do not know. However, I have achieved this ... the Messiah will be one of my descendants" (*Hayei Moharan* 1974:2, section 13). The *Zeide* of Shpola might have suspected that Rabbi Nachman harbored messianic aspirations about himself (or his children), and was determined that the nineteenth century should not witness the emergence of another false messiah like *Shabbatai Zvi* or *Jacob Frank*.

Steinsaltz's first hypothesis about arrogance deserves close attention. Rabbi Nachman devoted much of his thought to the subject of *tzaddik ha-dor*, namely, the one righteous leader of each generation whose teachings provide the spiritual sustenance for that generation. There is little doubt that the Braslav Hasidim (and Rabbi Nachman himself) believed that Rabbi Nachman was the one true *tzaddik* (righteous leader) of their generation. Such an attitude would necessarily mean that other contemporary Hasidic leaders were of lesser stature. For an older man like the *Zeide* of Shpola, who was forty-seven years old when Rabbi Nachman was born and had been functioning as a *rebbe* for decades, it would have been very insulting and arrogant for a young upstart like Rabbi Nachman to assert that he was *tzaddik ha-dor* and to place himself at such a high level.

There are other theories too. Pietchnik (1990:95-96) believes that the controversy stemmed from different perceptions of the concept of redemption. By the year 1800, Hasidism was mainly occupied with the redemption of the individual and with bringing him closer to God; it no longer focused on the redemption of the world, or even of the Jewish people. Pietchnik (1990:96) writes that “the *tzaddikim* had turned their attention to the individual and away from the greater redemption of the people as a whole, in order to help each person rise spiritually... Rabbi Nachman did not agree with this new way, especially with the fact that his contemporary *tzaddikim* were busy setting up their own courts and dynasties; each *tzaddik* was concerned only with his own private group of Hasidim...” In contrast to his contemporaries, Rabbi Nachman insisted that redemption must occur on three parallel levels: the individual, the national (Jewish), and the universal.

Green suggests an additional possibility. He believes that the controversy centered on what path the Hasidic movement should take in the future. According to Green (1981:104), the *Zeide* of Shpola represented an older, much more conservative generation of Hasidic leaders who believed that Hasidism had achieved its goals: “The ways of intense piety and enthusiastic prayer as taught by the Hasidic masters had deeply influenced the lives of thousands of Jews. The *tzaddikim* were widely revered, and countless young men were flocking to their courts...” In contrast, Rabbi Nachman believed that Hasidism was becoming fossilized and was, in fact, concentrating on external manifestations of piety, rather than demanding true inner change and the demand that each person find his own way to truthfully serve God. Rabbi Nachman accurately foresaw that Hasidism, under the leadership of men like the *Zeide* of Shpola, was evolving into a rather rigid pattern of norms centered on the adulation of the *tzaddik*; Rabbi Nachman was totally opposed to this development.

There is no way to prove which of these different theories is the most accurate, unless or until additional historical documents or authentic texts are found.

The town of Zlotopolye was quite close to Shpola, and by 1802 Rabbi Nachman felt that he had to distance himself and his followers from the *Zeide* of Shpola. He moved westward to Braslav, where he resided for seven years. It was in this small city that he was able to develop and advance his religious and literary teachings. However, he also suffered great personal tragedy in this city which gave its name to his Hasidic movement: the deaths

of his first wife and four of his eight children (including his son Shlomo Ephraim who Rabbi Nachman had hoped was destined to have a great future), and his own contraction of tuberculosis. Knowing his death to be imminent, he moved to the larger and more important city of Uman in May 1810 in order to be buried in the cemetery of that city, close to the graves of the thousands of Jews who had been martyred there in 1768. He died in October 1810 (18 Tishrei 5571).

C) The Literary Legacy of Braslav Hasidism

Rabbi Nachman created an impressive body of literature and thought. His two most important works are “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” (which I will discuss at length in section D of this introduction) and “*Likkutei Moharan*” (- “The Collected Works of Rabbi Nachman”).

1. *Likkutei Moharan* is basically a collection of homilies and discourses delivered by Rabbi Nachman on Sabbaths and the festivals. This very large book is divided into two volumes. The first volume was first published in 1808 in Ostraha (Ostrog), Russia, by Rabbi Nachman himself and contains 286 sermons and discourses, ranging in length from a few paragraphs to more than twenty pages. The second volume was compiled and published after Rabbi Nachman’s death by Rabbi Nathan in 1811 in Mohilev (Mogilev), Russia, and contains an additional 125 sermons and teachings that were composed by Rabbi Nachman mainly between 1808 and 1810, but it does include earlier material as well. This book is the most fundamental source of Rabbi Nachman’s thought and philosophy.

2. *Sefer Hamiddot* (- “The Book of Moral Qualities”) is a short book of aphorisms and proverbs arranged alphabetically according to various subjects. It was published in Mogilev, Russia in 1811.

After Rabbi Nachman’s death, Rabbi Nathan worked unceasingly to collect as much as he could of Rabbi Nachman’s oral and written teachings and have them printed. In 1816 in Ostraha, at the same time and place in which he succeeded in publishing Rabbi Nachman’s stories, he also published two other important books, “*Sichot HaRan*” and “*Shivchei HaRan*.”

3. *Sichot HaRan* (- “The Discourses of Rabbi Nachman”) is a collection of shorter statements, quotations, and teachings of Rabbi Nachman. Some of these quotations refer to a larger sermon that appears in *Likkutei Moharan*, but in any case they

deal with many of the themes that occupied Rabbi Nachman's thought (especially redemption). An expanded edition which contained additional quotations and material was published in Zolkiev, Russia in 1850.

4. *Shivchei HaRan* (- "Praises of Rabbi Nachman") is the first biography of Rabbi Nachman, and contains a detailed description of Rabbi Nachman's pilgrimage to the Land of Israel in 1798.

5. *Hayei Moharan* (- "The Life of Rabbi Nachman") is a larger and more comprehensive biography that Rabbi Nathan wrote many years later and was first published in Lemberg (Lvov), Austria-Hungary in 1874.

Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov was not only a compiler of Rabbi Nachman's writings and oral traditions. He wrote several important works of his own; although they were all based on Rabbi Nachman's teachings, he tried to expand these teachings by giving them a different form, as I will immediately demonstrate.

6. *Likkutei Tefilot* (- "Collected Prayers") was composed by Rabbi Nathan and first published in Lemberg (Lvov), Austria-Hungary in 1845. This book is based on a passage in *Likkutei Moharan* 2:25, where Rabbi Nachman wrote: "After learning or hearing a discourse from a true *tzaddik*, a person should try to turn it into a prayer. A person should ask God to help him attain everything that was taught in this discourse." Rabbi Nathan understood this literally, and composed personal prayers based on Rabbi Nachman's teachings in *Likkutei Moharan*. This book of prayers is divided into two parts, 152 prayers in Part One and 58 prayers in Part Two, with each prayer ranging in length from half a page to over ten.

7. *Likkutei Halachot* (- "Collected Laws") is Rabbi Nathan's *magnum opus* and most important original work. This eight-volume collection of Rabbi Nathan's own homilies and discourses uses the format of the *Shulchan Aruch* as the framework in which he comments on Rabbi Nachman's stories, discourses, lessons and teachings. Each volume was originally printed separately between 1841 and 1859 in Russia.

8. *Alim LeTrufah* (- "The Collected Letters of Rabbi Nathan") is a collection of about 450 letters that Rabbi Nathan wrote from 1821 till his death in 1845, mainly to his son. Many of these letters deal with his own insights and ideas concerning Rabbi Nachman's stories and teachings. It was first published in Berdichev, Russia in 1896.

9. Likkutei Eytzot (- “Collected Advice”) is a very concise and abbreviated anthology of different sayings and pieces of advice that Rabbi Nathan culled from all of Rabbi Nachman’s writings. These quotations are arranged according to subjects (like faith, prayer, repentance, holiness, music, etc.); the subjects themselves are arranged alphabetically. Rabbi Nathan began working on this book in 1826, but it was first published only in 1843. After Rabbi Nathan’s death, his most important disciple (Rabbi Nachman of Tcherin) re-edited this anthology and published it in Lemberg (Lvov), Austria-Hungary in 1874.

10. Yemei Moharnat (- “The Autobiography of Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov”) is Rabbi Nathan’s autobiography, from his childhood until the year 1835, but deals mainly with the years he spent with Rabbi Nachman (1802 -1810). The book was first published in 1856 in Lemberg (Lvov), Austria-Hungary.

In addition to all these primary sources composed by Rabbi Nachman and/or Rabbi Nathan, additional books were written and published by different leaders of the Braslav Hasidim during the nineteenth and twentieth century; these books appear in section (C) of Part One of the bibliography. It is important to note that some of these books contain authentic oral traditions or authentic written material that had been preserved in manuscript form and left unpublished for decades. This does not need to surprise us. It is important to remember that the controversy that surrounded Rabbi Nachman, and which I discussed earlier, did not cease with his death. It flared up again in the 1830’s when one of the most influential Hasidic leaders in the Ukraine during this period, Rabbi Moshe Zvi of Safran, decided to excommunicate Rabbi Nathan, and indeed, all the Braslav Hasidim. These opponents turned to the Czarist authorities and had Rabbi Nathan imprisoned; he was almost sent to Siberia. Furthermore, there was even an assassination attempt on his life. For more than fifteen years the Czarist government forbade any of Rabbi Nachman’s books to be published in Russia (this is the reason why the Braslav leaders decided to go to Lemberg, which was in the more tolerant Austrian-Hungarian Empire, in order to publish several of Rabbi Nachman’s and Rabbi Nathan’s books).

All these waves of persecution by the official Hasidic establishment, as well as by the Czarist authorities, caused the Braslav Hasidim to turn inward. There therefore existed two contradictory trends within the world of Braslav Hasidism during most of the nineteenth

century. They felt that it was absolutely imperative to publish and publicize Rabbi Nachman's teachings; on the other hand, historical reality and sociological considerations had shown them just how dangerous this was. All this caused the Braslav Hasidim (especially their spiritual leadership) to undertake a policy of self-censorship: they continued to print and publish, but not all the material that Rabbi Nachman had left behind him. They would also sometimes omit certain sentences or passages from the books that they did publish. Only towards the very end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century did this policy begin to relent. Thus, we find that an important story of Rabbi Nachman's (- "The Story of Trust in God"), was first published only in 1905 (in Jerusalem), although it had been originally told by Rabbi Nachman a century earlier in August 1806.

Till this very day, we know of at least two original manuscripts that are circulated only among the Braslav elders, and have not been allowed to be made public.

D) "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times": an analysis of what motivated Rabbi Nachman to create and to narrate these stories

This doctoral thesis focuses on the image of the Lost Princess in Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times." Before I begin a detailed analysis of the theme of the quest for the Lost Princess, I would first like to discuss this book in general, and specifically, what motivated Rabbi Nachman of Braslav to narrate these stories, and thereby create this unique literary genre.

The first of these thirteen stories, "The Losing of the King's Daughter" (), was told on the eleventh of Av, 5566 (25 July, 1806), two days after the fast day of *Tisha B'Av* (the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av). The last and longest story, "The Seven Beggars," was narrated about six months before his death, starting on 30 March, 1810, and told in installments during the first week of April. As I have previously mentioned, Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov published these thirteen stories (in both Hebrew and Yiddish) in Mogilev (Mohilev), Russia in 1816. By this time (six years after Rabbi Nachman's death), Rabbi Nathan had emerged as the undisputed leader of the Braslav Hasidim, who lived in small groups scattered in the different towns of the western Ukraine.

Although Jewish literature throughout the centuries abounds with parables, the thirteen long allegorical fables that Rabbi Nachman created are his own unique genre,

without precedent. Martin Buber (1956:44-45) writes that “Rabbi Nachman found an already existing tradition of Jewish folktales and joined with it. But he is the first real storyteller among the Jews. All earlier tales were anonymous creations; here there is present, for the first time, the person: personal intention and personal formation.”

Professor Dan points out (Band 1978: xiii-xiv) that “Hasidic literature — unlike Hasidic theology — is a very conservative literature in everything concerning its form. The teachers of Hasidism, the *tzaddikim*, chose as their main means of expression the form of homiletics, which was a central vehicle for expressing Jewish religious ideas for nearly two millennia and became the dominant literary form in Eastern Europe in the centuries preceding the appearance of Hasidic literature in the eighteenth century.... Rabbi Nachman of Braslav was no exception. His main ideas were expressed in his massive *Likkutei Moharan*, a collection of sermons and homilies written down by his faithful disciple, Rabbi Nathan.... When viewing the very large literary production of Rabbi Nachman’s school, one does not notice any new literary element which differs from the similar production of other Hasidic schools or even pre-Hasidic Jewish ethical and homiletical groups — that is, until one arrives at the tales of Rabbi Nachman ... These tales present a unique phenomenon, completely dissimilar to any previous Jewish mystical expression.”

First and foremost, the subject matter of Rabbi Nachman’s stories is unique, and different from other Hasidic stories. The vast majority of Hasidic stories are essentially hagiographic, focusing upon specific, historical individuals (specifically, the different leaders of the Hasidic movement) and relate their deeds, saintliness, and words of wisdom. Rabbi Nachman’s stories, on the other hand, deal with a host of characters like warriors, exchanged children, giants, paupers, merchants, emperors, and pirates. It is unclear (and irrelevant) when and where these stories were supposed to occur, and what nationality or religious group the characters were supposed to belong to. As Professor A. Green (1981:343-344, 338-339) wrote in his scholarly biography of Rabbi Nachman, “... there is no pretence that the events narrated actually ever took place. Nowhere is the name of any historic personage, place, or time, tied into the tale. There is not the slightest attempt at realism in the character, plot, or narrative sequence.... And yet the stories are hardly simple entertainments: they have about them an air of utter seriousness, and a sense that they contain a truth in them somehow other and higher than the truth of history.... The stories

take place in a dimension of reality other than our own. At the same time, this reality claims to have a higher status or represent a deeper truth than that world which is the object of our everyday experience.... [Rabbi] Nachman's tales did constitute a major innovation. In the early days of Hasidism, tales were told about the masters rather than by them. [Rabbi] Nachman is the author ... of the tales he tells. The vast majority of Hasidic stories concerned the lives of the *tzaddikim*; [Rabbi] Nachman's tales dealt rather with such figures as bewitched princesses, kings and heroes, wood-spirits and wizards, mysterious beggars, and the like. In most of his tales it seems unlikely that the characters are Jews; at least the issue never comes up These *Sippurei Ma'asiot* [which I have translated as 'Stories from Ancient Times'] are clearly distinguishable from the entire corpus of Hasidic hagiographic legends and parables. Nothing else is quite like them ”

Another important contemporary critic of Rabbi Nachman's literary works, Yoav Elstein, (1984:7) points out that “Rabbi Nachman is the first surrealistic writer in Hebrew literature.... His stories are unique in terms of their themes, language, the use of non-Jewish folk themes, structure, and the complexity of his ideas.” Perhaps the most apt comparison would be the stories of Franz Kafka written a century after Rabbi Nachman.

Steinsaltz (1993:viii) adds, “Of all Rabbi Nachman's works, the Tales ... may be considered the peak of his creative life, both for the originality of their form and content, and for the profundity of their underlying ideas.” Finally, I would like to quote the words of Pinchas Sadeh (1981:241), a non-Orthodox Israeli poet and literary critic: “I have come to the conclusion ... that it is possible that Rabbi Nachman is not only perhaps the greatest writer in modern Hebrew literature, but is one of the greatest creative writers in the history of world literature.”

It is essential to uncover the true reasons that motivated Rabbi Nachman of Braslav to create these allegorical fairy-tales which he narrated to his Hasidim, and which set him apart from all other Hasidic *rebbes*. To find the answer, it is best to turn to the explanations that Rabbi Nachman himself gives.

The first passage that I will bring is from *Likkutei Moharan* I:164 (which means Volume One, discourse 164). Rabbi Nachman writes:

“In regard to the stories told by the true *tzaddik*, I will use a parable of a folk-healer who had become ill, and had to be taken care of by a great physician. The folk-healer

would like to be given the folk-medicines and treatment with which he is familiar, like extracting a tooth or shaving him. However, the great physician has knowledge of truly valuable and effective remedies and treatments that are necessary to give him in order to heal him.

Similarly, a person may come into contact with a Torah scholar who is the true *tzaddik* of that generation (), who is a physician of ailing souls. That person wants the *tzaddik* to give him a medicine (namely, spiritual guidance and spiritual advice) according to what that person has knowledge of. However, the *tzaddik* has real medicines, remedies, and true guidance that can heal that person, and lead him to health.

It sometimes occurs that the *tzaddik* must give the sick person a certain potion; if he were to give it undiluted, that person would certainly die. Therefore the *tzaddik* must mix that potion with other compounds in order for it to be beneficial and not harmful.

In a similar fashion, there are [sick] people to whom it would be impossible to reveal the inner essence of the Torah [= the Kabbalah] which they require in order to be healed and become spiritually well. For the Torah is likened to medicine, as it is written in Proverbs 3:8: 'It shall be a medicine to your core.' And the Torah has two [contradictory] forces: a potion of life and a potion of death, as the Talmudic Sages teach us (Talmud, Yoma 72b): 'For a person who merits it, it [= the Torah] becomes a potion of life; for a person who does not merit it, it becomes a potion of death.'

Therefore, if the [inner essence of the] Torah were to be revealed to such a person in its pure, undiluted form, that person would undoubtedly die, because for a person who does not merit it, it would be a potion of death. Therefore, it has become necessary to disguise and wrap () the inner essence of the Torah [= the Kabbalistic teachings] for such a person with other words of Torah. And sometimes, this person cannot yet receive it, even if and when it is enwrapped in other words of Torah.

Therefore we must disguise the [inner essence of the] Torah in secular tales, in order to enable people to receive the hidden remedies that are contained within them. For even the Torah itself is enwrapped within stories and fables; otherwise, it would be impossible to administer [the medicine] as it is."

This teaching is highly significant. First of all, Rabbi Nachman accepts completely the very ancient tradition that the study of the Kabbalah (which he terms ‘the inner essence of the Torah’) can be dangerous for many individuals, as in the well-known Talmudic passage of four great sages who entered the *Pardes* (the orchard of mystical knowledge), and of whom only one (Rabbi Akiva) was able to enter in peace and emerge in peace, sane and well-balanced (Talmud, Hagigah 14b). Nonetheless, Rabbi Nachman firmly believes that it is precisely this mystical knowledge of the Kabbalah which can heal the spiritual afflictions of many people. His dilemma is how to administer this medicine (namely, the knowledge and teachings of the Kabbalah) without hurting these people. Rabbi Nachman’s conclusion is extremely innovative: he has decided to teach the Kabbalah not in its esoteric and philosophical terminology, but rather in an indirect manner by enwrapping and disguising () Kabbalistic concepts and ideas in the garments of stories, fables, and fairy-tales, thereby making the Kabbalah more palatable and comprehensive.

Commenting on Rabbi Nachman’s approach, Steinsaltz (1993:276) writes: “In order to absorb knowledge and a message from a well-constructed and direct Torah teaching [of the Kabbalah], one has first of all to be knowledgeable to a certain extent. More than that, one has to make a conscious effort to learn while one hears any direct statements. At the same time, one has to have a willingness to accept what one hears.... Rabbi Nachman avoids the possibility of evoking antagonism from the reader who might react to or be unable to accept direct statements. His stories seep in and later do their work. Because of that, even though the stories can be misunderstood, somehow the inner content does not get lost, and afterward, in one way or another, it has some impact on the reader.”

Rabbi Nachman offers an even more explicit explanation for, and justification of, the need of the *tzaddik* to relate stories. In *Likkutei Moharan* I:60 (section 6), Rabbi Nachman writes:

“There are people who sleep away their entire lives, and even though it seems to the world that they are serving God and are busy with Torah and prayer, still God is not pleased with their service, for their service remains below and they are unable to ascend spiritually.... There are people who have fallen asleep due to their lusts and evil deeds; and there are

[also] fine, decent people who have nonetheless fallen asleep due to what they have spiritually digested....

Such a person must be awakened from his sleep ... and when one wants to awaken such a person and to show him the inner essence of the Torah, one must disguise the inner essence of the Torah with stories ().... For there are 70 aspects of Torah, corresponding to 70 years [of a person's life-time, based on Psalms 90:10], each one being different and unique.

There are three reasons why the inner essence of the Torah must be enwrapped and covered over. The first reason is the same as when a blind person is being cured [of his blindness]. He must be kept in a darkened room to make sure that he will not [be exposed to, and] see the light suddenly; he must be exposed to the light gradually, because he can be hurt if he sees the light suddenly. In the same manner, when a person has been in the dark [spiritually] and asleep for a long time, and one wants to show him the inner essence of the Torah and awaken him, then one must enwrap the inner essence of the Torah in stories, to make sure that the light [of the Torah] will not suddenly hurt him....

This means that when one wants to reveal the deeper words of Torah, it is impossible to reveal them as they stand; they must be veiled in a lower and smaller form of Torah ... namely stories ... namely Stories from Ancient Times ().”

In this discourse, Rabbi Nachman does not compare the person who is in need of the inner essence of the Torah (in other words, the Kabbalah) to a sick person, but rather to someone who is blind or asleep. This person has to be enlightened or awakened spiritually, but Rabbi Nachman constantly stresses that this process of enlightenment and spiritual awakening must be gradual in order to be both effective and beneficial. The means to attain this is by revealing the inner, deeper meaning and the profundity of the Torah through the medium of “Stories from Ancient Times,” which are the ‘fairy-tales’ that Rabbi Nachman narrated to his followers.

It is very significant to point out that we know the exact date when Rabbi Nachman delivered this homily (*Likkutei Moharan* I:60), namely on 12 September 1806, less than two months after he told the first story, “The Lost Princess.” This discourse therefore

should be understood as Rabbi Nachman's own explanation to his Hasidim why he had initiated this new policy of narrating fantastic stories. In addition, it seems to be directly and specifically related to this particular story, which I will analyze in Chapter Three. The main character in this story is the king's chamberlain, who is seeking the king's daughter (the Lost Princess) who had been abducted by the forces of evil. In a central scene in the story, the viceroy drinks from a fountain of wine and falls asleep for seventy years, as Rabbi Nachman mentioned in this discourse. This viceroy needs to wake up in order to rescue the Lost Princess, but nobody in the story is able to awaken him from his seventy years slumber. Rabbi Nachman seems to be implying that only the narration of his fables could awaken such a person from his spiritual stupor.

The third passage I would like to bring in order to help clarify Rabbi Nachman's motivations for creating these stories was not written by Rabbi Nachman, but by his chief disciple, Rabbi Nathan. When Rabbi Nathan published his master's stories in 1816, he wrote a very important introduction. (He also wrote a second, longer introduction before his death, which was printed when the stories were published a second time in 1850). In the first introduction, Rabbi Nathan (*Sippurei Ma'asiot* 1996:5-7) wrote the following:

"...[Rabbi Nachman] wrapped and veiled the most powerful and sublime ideas that are found in the [thirteen] stories in a most awe-inspiring and wonderful fashion, just as it was done in ancient times 'through redemption and exchanging' (Ruth 4:7). [In ancient times,] when people wanted to speak about God's hidden secrets, they used to speak in parables and allegories, disguising and dressing () the secrets of the Torah from the treasure-house of the King with many diverse garments. Thus, after relating the story, 'The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged,' Rabbi Nachman said that in ancient times, when the sages discussed Kabbalah, they would speak in this manner [talking in parables and fables], for until the time of *Rabbi Shimon Bar Yohai*, one did not discuss Kabbalah explicitly....

...[Rabbi Nachman] also said that these stories are very awe-inspiring and wonderful innovations () and revelations; they contain pathways and secrets, and are very profound. They are worthy of being preached in public; one can stand in a synagogue and narrate each one of these stories, for they are very sublime and awesome revelations.

A whole-hearted person who is well-versed in the holy books, and especially in the *Zohar* and the writings of the *Ari*, will be able to comprehend and understand a small portion of the hints and allusions found in these stories, if he should put his heart and mind to it. Moreover, these stories possess a wonderful ethical effect which can cause, in many parts [of these stories], a spiritual awakening. A discerning person will comprehend them by himself, since nearly all of them cause the heart to draw closer to God. [These stories] cause one to sincerely repent, to engage solely in the study of Torah and divine service at all times, and to turn away completely from the vanities of this world....

Before he [Rabbi Nachman] began narrating the first story in this book, he said: ‘In the fables and stories that are told in the world, there are many hidden meanings and very sublime ideas. However, these stories have become impaired and imperfect; they are told in a confused and incorrect order, and what belongs in the beginning is put at the end, and vice versa. But the truth is that these tales that are narrated in the world contain very sublime, hidden concepts’ ... The *Rebbe* spoke further on this subject, and then began to relate the following story [‘The Losing of the King’s Daughter’]...

He [Rabbi Nachman] told these stories from his heart and his holy knowledge, according to the supreme perceptiveness he had attained through his holy spirit (). He would enwrap this perception in the garment [= through the medium] of a story; and the story itself is an awe-inspiring vision and an extremely sublime perception that he attained ... He would sometimes narrate a story that would be similar to a certain folk-tale, but he would make many additions and would change and rectify () the order....

When the *Rebbe* began relating these stories, he would say explicitly, ‘I am now starting to narrate stories;’ his intention in this was as if to say: [‘I have to relate stories because] my sermons and discourses have not been effective in bringing you to turn to God.’ All his life he labored with all his might to make us turn to God in truth, but when all of this was of little benefit, he started to engage in telling stories.”

I would like to summarize. According to the two passages from *Likkutei Moharan* which I quoted, Rabbi Nachman himself explained why he found the need to create his stories. In the first passage, he stated his belief that many people were in need of a spiritual cure to heal their spiritual ailments; the truths of the Kabbalah, given in the dosage or form of “Stories from Ancient Times,” have the ability and power to cure them. In a similar fashion,

in the second passage Rabbi Nachman writes that many people live in spiritual darkness or even blindness; the light of the Kabbalah can give them the gift of spiritual sight and insight, but this light must be exposed to them in a gradual and veiled fashion. These people may also be compared to someone who is in a deep, spiritual slumber; these stories can awaken such a person.

The third passage, written by Rabbi Nathan and taken from his introduction to the first edition of “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times,” adds some further observations. First of all, Rabbi Nathan seems to feel the necessity to “legitimize” these stories by saying that in ancient times, the great Jewish mystics of the Kabbalah used to relate similar kinds of allegories when they would teach the inner essence of the Torah. Secondly, Rabbi Nathan quotes Rabbi Nachman’s belief that these fables are a rectification () of ancient stories and truths that have somehow become garbled and mixed up. According to this perspective, Rabbi Nachman is re-arranging these folk-tales in the correct order and the proper fashion so that the true, profound intention of these stories can become apparent. Finally, Rabbi Nathan claims that these stories were created through the inspiration of the holy spirit (), and are thus akin to prophecy. Therefore, these fables are not the mere product of one person’s imagination, but stem from a much higher source and are indeed far more sacred.

Although Rabbi Nathan was convinced that these fables are a lofty manifestation and revelation of the truths of the Kabbalah, he believed that they could also benefit even people who were not well-versed in this area of study. Rabbi Nathan ended his introduction with these words: “In most cases, even the simple meaning of these stories can bring about a great awakening towards God. Even though they are in fact awe-inspiring mysteries, they have the power to inspire everyone [to turn] towards God.”

All serious scholars dealing with Rabbi Nachman’s legacy acknowledge that the basis for Rabbi Nachman’s “Book of Stories from Ancient Times,” both in terms of the symbols themselves and the ideas and concepts behind these symbols, are based on the Kabbalah. Professor Dan, one of the world’s leading experts in the field of Hasidic literature, writes explicitly (1975:137) that “the main materials which form the basic building-blocks for understanding the meaning of Rabbi Nachman’s stories are taken from the world

of the Kabbalah and its symbols.... There is no doubt about the centrality of the Kabbalistic sources that Rabbi Nachman used.”

It is important to clarify why Rabbi Nachman felt it was necessary for him to teach the ideas of the Kabbalah to his contemporaries. As I have shown, Rabbi Nachman writes that only the spiritual truths of the Kabbalah will be an effective cure for the spiritual ailments of his generation. Therefore, we must look carefully to understand and uncover in what way he believed his generation differed from previous ones, and why he was obligated to create the innovation of a new genre of religious literature like “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times.”

The answer, in my opinion, lies in the fact that Rabbi Nachman lived during the period of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars; he was a contemporary of the overthrow of the ‘Old Order’ (the *ancien regime*) which had dominated Western culture for centuries and he was a witness to the dawn of the Enlightenment, the Emancipation, the Industrial Revolution, and the processes of modernization and secularization which were to sweep over Europe. “Even today in the middle of the twentieth century, despite all that has happened in the lifetime of men not yet old, and even here in America or in any other part of the world in which the countries of Europe no longer enjoy their former commanding position, it is still possible to say that the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century was the great turning point of modern civilization” (Lefebvre 1947:v). This birth of the modern world was beginning to shake European civilization (and the Jewish communities of Europe) to the core. The leaders of the Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe during the first decade of the nineteenth century were divided in their attitude towards Napoleon and the values of the French Revolution which he was introducing throughout the continent, as documented in Professor Martin Buber’s book, “Gog and Magog”. Rabbi Nachman was among the most outspoken opponents among these Hasidic leaders; he believed that the key to a brighter future did not lie in the Revolution’s promises of a secular Enlightenment or the hope of an external Emancipation.

Among all the new intellectual currents of thought that were expanding all over Europe, the one that most alarmed Rabbi Nachman was the growing power of rationalism, which Rabbi Nachman feared would lead to secularism, atheism and heresy. This rationalism found expression in the assertion (typical of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment)

that man could and would achieve redemption without God, traditional religion, or religious faith. “In the domain of religion the autonomy of reason involved the rejection of all dogma, authority, and tradition, every individual being declared to be the sole judge of his beliefs.... The Enlightenment reached France where, assuming a violent form, it culminated in the Revolution which, with its declaration of the Rights of Man, broke down the barriers whereby the Church and State kept the Jews apart from their neighbors. From France the movement spread to Germany and other countries in Europe up to the Volga” (Epstein 1964:287). This rationalism and the conviction that mankind could redeem itself would give birth to the ‘isms’ that would dominate the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: liberalism, nationalism, socialism, communism, (and among the Jews) secular Zionism, Bundism, and radicalism. Rabbi Nachman warned his Hasidim, “A great wave of atheism and heresy () is going to engulf the world... Fortunate is he who will be able to retain his religious faith in these times... I am informing you of this in order to help you remain strong in your [religious] belief and faith. The small minority who will remain faithful to religion will have to endure great inner spiritual and intellectual turmoil...” (*Sichot HaRan* 36).

Rabbi Nachman understood, with amazing foresight, that new times demand new medicines, and that the simpler faith of the *Besht*’s generation decades earlier had to be reinforced by new methods to strengthen traditional belief in God. One method that could inspire and reinforce belief in God and God’s blue-print for the redemption of humanity would be the narration of “Stories from Ancient Times.” As Rabbi Nachman said succinctly, “Know that the stories told by *tzaddikim* are a very sublime thing. Through these stories the heart is awakened and yearns with the strongest possible yearnings for God” (*Likkutei Moharan* I:248).

Rabbi Nachman alludes to the unique nature of “Stories from Ancient Times” in an important homily that he gave in the summer of 1806. Quoting a verse from the prophet Habbakuk which he proceeds to expound, he writes (*Likkutei Moharan* I:60): “This is the meaning of the verse, ‘Lord, revive Your work in the midst of years []’ (Habbakuk 3:2). *Rashi* interprets ‘revive’ to mean ‘wake up;’ the words ‘Your work’ mean ‘stories ();’ and the expression ‘the midst of years’ refers to stories that take place during the seventy years [of a person’s lifetime] and to stories that relate to the seventy aspects of Torah. Thus, you can awaken a person by

means of telling him a story, namely a story [which occurs] in ‘the midst of years,’ namely a story that derives from the seventy aspects of Torah.

However, there are people who have fallen below these seventy aspects of Torah; they have fallen so low that they cannot be awakened by such means. It is possible to awaken them only by telling them ‘Stories from Ancient Times,’ from which all seventy aspects of the Torah and the seventy years [of a person’s lifetime] derive their sustenance... Thus, when a learned person narrates stories which happen ‘in the midst of years,’ he is doing an act of mercy. But when a learned person narrates a ‘Story from Ancient Times,’ he is doing an act of *great* mercy [my emphasis], since all seventy aspects of Torah and all acts of mercy receive their sustenance from there.”

This passage is seen by Green (1981:346) as an attempt to distinguish between two different categories of stories: (a) stories “in the midst of years” (), and (b) “stories from ancient times” (). Green (1981:346) writes that the first category contains stories that “are accounts of actual events, things which happened within the ‘seventy years.’ This designation, referring ostensibly to the lifespan of an individual, also has a hidden meaning, however. Seventy years, like seven days, is a way of referring to the seven lower *sefirot*, each of which contains ten aspects... It is through the seven lower *sefirot* that the divine takes on specific content and becomes the object of knowledge. The God of seventy years has some relation to the world of time and space; the God beyond these seventy is seemingly one of utter abstraction, nothing other than the primal process itself. But now [Rabbi] Nachman makes an important switch; some people, he says, are so deeply asleep that they cannot be awakened through any of the seventy faces; these people may be approached only by tales that themselves come from the realm beyond. But how is that realm, representing the hidden godhead [namely, the three highest *sefirot*], which is prior to space and time themselves, translated into stories? Such stories must be of a uniquely mysterious quality, representing *a narrative account of that which is itself beyond the very notion of event*. The God beyond the seventy manifestations cannot be known or described, indeed can hardly be reached at all – yet [Rabbi] Nachman claims both the need and the ability to turn it into story ... Surely it involves a stretching of the mind and of narrative language beyond where they ordinarily reach. And that is precisely what [Rabbi] Nachman sought – a way to achieve the impossible task of giving verbal expression

to the impossible depths. So he tells *sippurei ma'asiot mi-shanim kadmoniot*: of the innermost hidden rungs of divinity he fashions a prose narrative... If [Rabbi] Nachman's stories seem to speak of a different dimension in time and space, it is because they come from a realm that precedes both the spatial and temporal orders as we know them."

Green emphasizes here that the outstanding characteristic of this category of stories () is precisely this quality of belonging to a realm beyond the ordinary boundaries of time and space as we experience them; this is one of the reasons that no character is given a name and no dates are ever recorded in these fables.

It is necessary to remember that Braslav literature mentions 66 stories that Rabbi Nachman narrated to his followers during his lifetime. Most of these stories are in fact short parables ranging in length from a few paragraphs to a few pages. The large majority of them were written down and can be found scattered in the different works of Rabbi Nachman and Rabbi Nathan (although it should be noted that several of them have been preserved only in very fragmentary form).

Only thirteen stories were considered to belong to a unique class of literature which was termed "Stories from Ancient Times." I have brought Green's analysis in which he attempted to clarify what exactly distinguishes and defines this official canon of "Stories from Ancient Times," and separates them from Rabbi Nachman's other works. Another important scholar, Band, also grappled with this question, and reached conclusions similar to Green's, although he worked independently of him. Band (1978:34-35) writes that all of Rabbi Nachman's works of fiction should be divided into the following three categories: "(a) standard tales with no specific *Sefirotic* association; (b) tales classified as "in the midst of days," thus connected with the lower seven spheres [Sefirot]; (c) tales classified as "stories from ancient times," thus associated with the upper three spheres. Tales in the second group recount great acts of divine beneficence in the past, such as the stories of the Patriarchs or the exodus from Egypt; tales from the third group predict the great act of redemption in the future. Tales of the second group are connected with lower spheres since they present accounts of incomplete redemption, a fact attested to by our experience in this imperfect world. Tales of the third, redemptive group are logically associated with the upper three spheres, but since the final redemption has not yet taken place and the messiah has not

yet come, these stories are usually left unfinished, for example, ‘The Losing of the King’s Daughter’ and ‘The Seven Beggars’.”

Both Band and Green stress the difference between the official canon of the thirteen stories which comprise “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times,” and all the other literary works of Rabbi Nachman. This differentiation and division is strengthened, in my opinion, by a careful examination of Rabbi Nachman’s discourse in *Likkutei Moharan* I:60. Rabbi Nachman continues in this long homily to analyze a passage from the Talmud that speaks about Honi the Circle-Maker (), a semi-legendary rabbinical figure who is reputed to have lived in the Land of Israel at the beginning of the Second Commonwealth period; Rabbi Nachman comments on the following anecdote (Talmud, Ta’anit 23a):

“Rabbi Yochanan said: All his life this *tzaddik* [Honi the Circle-Maker] found it difficult to comprehend this verse: ‘A Song of Ascents. When God returned us to Zion, we were as dreamers’ (Psalm 126:1). He would say, ‘Is there really anyone who sleeps seventy years in a dream?’

One day Honi was walking along and saw a man planting a carob tree. He asked the old man, ‘How long will it take till this tree bears fruit?’ The old man answered, ‘Seventy years.’ Honi then asked, ‘Do you really believe that you will live another seventy years?’ The old man responded, ‘I found a world full of carob trees; just as my fathers planted them for me, I will plant them for my children!’

Honi sat down to eat bread. Sleep overwhelmed him. Rocks sprang up and enveloped him; he was [hidden and] unseen, and he slept seventy years. When he awoke, he saw a man picking carob fruit from the tree. Honi asked him, ‘Are you the man who planted this tree?’ The man answered him, ‘No, I’m his grandson.’ Honi responded, ‘I must have slept seventy years!’ He went to look for his donkey, and discovered it had given birth to [generations and] flocks of donkeys.”

Rabbi Nachman proceeds to analyze and interpret this Talmudic passage in a very original fashion. The man who was picking the carob-fruit from the tree, and whom Honi met after having slept for seventy years, was telling “Stories from Ancient Times,” according to Rabbi Nachman. Rabbi Nachman writes that the following dialogue ensued between them (*Likkutei Moharan* 1974:I:60):

“When Honi saw this man, he asked him, ‘Why are you telling ‘Stories from Ancient Times’? Is it not possible to awaken people by narrating stories ‘in the midst of years’, that is to say, stories that take place in the seventy years (of a person’s lifetime) and the seventy aspects of Torah?’ The man answered him, ‘No, it is incumbent upon me to relate ‘Stories from Ancient Times’.”

In my opinion, Rabbi Nachman is using this Talmudic anecdote in order to speak about the reason why he needed to relate “Stories from Ancient Times,” whereas earlier generations of Hasidic leaders (and specifically his great-grandfather, the Baal-Shem-Tov) did not. The Baal-Shem-Tov was born approximately seventy years before Rabbi Nachman, and is represented by the old man who planted the carob-tree at the beginning of the passage; Rabbi Nachman is portrayed by the grandson. Rabbi Nachman seems to be implying that the simpler Hasidic parables and stories narrated by the Baal-Shem-Tov and the earlier generations of Hasidim (namely the category of literature which he terms “stories in the midst of years” -) were potent enough to awaken people from their spiritual slumber in earlier generations. However, by Rabbi Nachman’s time, things had changed and now the simpler category of “stories in the midst of years” was no longer effective and would no longer suffice; Rabbi Nachman had no choice but to turn to the highest and most spiritual category of fables (“Stories from Ancient Times”), which stem from the highest spheres of the Kabbalah and deal with the secrets of redemption in order to arouse people to turn to God.

I said that by Rabbi Nachman’s time, things had changed; as I wrote earlier, when Rabbi Nachman began telling his long Kabbalistic fables in the summer of 1806, Europe was undergoing turmoil. If we look at European history, this was the peak of Napoleon’s success. Napoleon had become emperor of France on 28 May, 1804, and in the following years of the first decade of the nineteenth century, the armies of revolutionary France had conquered most of Europe. In October 1805 the French emerged victorious in the Battle of Ulm and the French army entered Vienna on 13 November 1805. One month later, on 2 December 1805, the French defeated the combined forces of the Austrians and the Russians in the Battle of Austerlitz. This decisive battle led Napoleon to establish a series of allied states based on the principles of the French Revolution: equality, fraternity, and liberty. Thus, in July 1806, all of western Germany was unified in the Confederation of the

Rhine, which granted freedom to the Jews of Germany and broke down the ghetto walls, both literally and figuratively. This was quite significant, because this brought the Emancipation not only to the relatively small Jewish community of France, but also to the larger and more influential Jewish population of western Germany. I therefore believe that it is no coincidence that Rabbi Nachman began relating the very first “Story from Ancient Times (The Losing of the King’s Daughter)” exactly at this time, July 1806. “Napoleon Bonaparte ... carried on the tradition of the French republican revolutionary armies, which had brought equality to Jews in the Netherlands, in Italy, and in German cities and principalities.... Emancipation was granted only to Jews as individuals—which, spelled out in practice, meant only to Jews ready and willing to leave their own culture and ... assimilate” (Ben-Sasson 1974:69). This attitude would prove to be extremely detrimental to traditional Judaism. “Within this vortex of social and economic change the Jews were caught unawares. A crisis of the first magnitude thereupon ensued for the Jewish people.... A large number solved the problem for themselves by deserting to the dominant faith [Christianity]. Many others, on the other hand, saw a solution in the process of assimilation which, conceiving Judaism as a merely abstract creed based on the three Mendelssohnian postulates, allowed for attachment to the Jewish religion and the Jewish religious community while, at the same time, carrying with it a denial of all distinctive national elements in Judaism. Even the name ‘Jew’ was to be rejected. They were no longer Jews as such but merely ‘Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen,’ etc., of the Mosaic persuasion. Assimilatory tendencies involving the renunciation of religious and national traditions thus developed with great rapidity” (Epstein 1964:290-291).

In October 1806, the Prussians were defeated in the Battles of Jena and Auerstadt, and the Russians were defeated yet again in June 1807 in the Battle of Friedland. This led to the extremely important Treaty of Tilsit in July 1807 in which both Russia and Prussia became allied with revolutionary France, and which created the French vassal states of the Kingdom of Westphalia in northern Germany, and more importantly, the Grand Duchy of Warsaw in Poland. The establishment of the Grand Duchy of Warsaw was especially significant, from Rabbi Nachman’s point of view, since this brought the values of the French Revolution to the heartland of East European Jewry. The principles and values of the

French Revolution seemed invincible, and this caused Rabbi Nachman to search for new ways to fortify traditional faith.

We have clear proof that links the historical figure of Napoleon and his military success to the narration of one of Rabbi Nachman's most important stories in "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times," namely Story Number Eleven, "The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged." Rabbi Nathan testifies that on Saturday night, 14 October 1809, he and his good friend Rabbi Naftali had gone to visit Rabbi Nachman who asked them to tell him the current news. Rabbi Naftali began relating the news about Napoleon's latest military and diplomatic victories, and his negotiations with the Austrians. After this conversation, Rabbi Nachman began to narrate his story (*Yemei Moharnat* 1962:30b and *Hayei Moharan* 1974:15d).

This date is highly significant. It was on that very day (14 October 1809) that the Austrians and the French signed the Treaty of Schonbrun, which awarded all of Austrian-controlled Poland to Napoleon; negotiations had been going on between diplomats from France and Austria ever since Austria's defeat on 11 August (De Meneval 1910:585). Thus the ideals and values of the French Revolution, which had already brought the Emancipation to the Jews of France and Germany, were now meant to be implemented among the Jews of Eastern Europe, in an area very close to the Russian Ukraine where Rabbi Nachman and the majority of Hasidic Jews resided; furthermore, it was expected that sooner or later the victorious French would invade Russia itself.

Only after Rabbi Nachman's death in 1810 did Napoleon's downfall begin (starting with his disastrous invasion of Russia in 1812 and ending in the Battle of Waterloo in 1815). In the years 1806 — 1810, it seemed that the values of the French Revolution would indeed dominate not only Western Europe, but would also infiltrate all of East Europe as well.

Rabbi Nachman believed deeply that a better future depended upon a spiritual renaissance within Judaism based upon the insights and teachings of the Jewish mystical tradition, the Kabbalah. Rabbi Nachman thought that only the knowledge of the Kabbalah could heal the spiritual ailments of his time. However, his dilemma was how to administer this "medicine" (to use the term he himself employed when he referred to the knowledge of the Kabbalah) in the correct dosage and in the correct manifestation that would most benefit his generation.

Due to his recognition that new historical realities demand new ways of coping with these new challenges, Rabbi Nachman decided to teach the Kabbalah not in its esoteric and philosophical terminology, but rather to convey the ideas of this tradition in an indirect manner by “enwrapping” Kabbalistic concepts and ideas in the “garment” of allegories and fables, thereby making the Kabbalah more accessible and comprehensive to his contemporaries.

I wish to emphasize that in order to understand Rabbi Nachman’s stories, it is crucial to understand how each one is illuminated and enriched by comparing it to the others. Although these thirteen stories were composed over a four year period and narrated on different occasions, each story throws light upon the others; only an analysis that attempts to show how each fable interrelates with the others, thereby presenting a comprehensive but detailed overview, allows the reader to fathom Rabbi Nachman’s message and meaning. “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” should be approached as an integral whole in order to better comprehend its different components.

We do not need to be surprised by this. The literary legacy of all great writers should be analyzed and understood as one integral unit. One of the greatest Shakespeare scholars of the twentieth century, Professor Harold C. Goddard (1967:viii) wrote that “Shakespeare deserves to be considered as a whole.... I mean that his plays and poems deserve to be considered integrally, as chapters, so to speak, of a single work. And there again, I do not have in mind just finding passages in *Henry V*, for example, that illuminate *Julius Caesar*, or vice versa. That practice, while valuable, has long been indulged in. I mean treating Shakespeare’s works as an organism. No one would dream of pretending to understand the fifth act of *Antony and Cleopatra* without taking the other four into account. If, as I believe, Shakespeare is one, it will be just as useless to try to understand *Antony and Cleopatra* as a whole without catching its relation to, say, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Othello*, and *King Lear*. Not to imply that Shakespeare planned or was fully conscious of this deeper unity. The imagination does not work that way.... Nonetheless, that deeper unity is there.”

What Goddard wrote about Shakespeare is relevant for Dickens, Dostoevsky, and Thomas Mann. And it is true of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav as well.

I think it is relevant to point out that this approach is the same approach that the Sages of the Talmud had to the Bible. A good example can be found on the very first pages of the Talmud. The first Mishnah opens by discussing from what time the *Shma* may be recited in the evenings, and in the Gemara (*Berachot* 2a), the Sages of the Talmud bring verses from Deuteronomy 6:6 and Genesis 1:5. A little while later in their discussion (*Berachot* 2b), the Sages bring two verses from Nehemiah 4:15-16 to show that the evening begins with the appearance of the stars in the night-sky, even though Book of Nehemiah was written many years after the Book of Genesis and the Book of Deuteronomy. All the books of the Bible were believed to be divinely inspired and to possess a sacred unity and integrity; therefore, it is necessary to refer to all or any of them in order to clarify or elucidate a particular point or concept.

I believe it is fitting to end this introduction to my doctoral thesis by quoting Steinsaltz (1993:viii, xvi, and xix):

“These stories, which are essentially fairy-tales dating from [Rabbi] Nachman’s last years, are a mixture of intellectual and poetic imagination, simplicity of form, and complexity of content. On the one hand, any child can read them as one would a tale of ancient days, as the author himself put it; and on the other hand, one can as an adult read them again and again, analyze and study them, and constantly discover in them layer upon layer of hitherto unrevealed symbol and meaning.... [Rabbi] Nachman’s stories include highly compressed and clearly defined Torah teaching — just as do his other works — expressed in literary and poetic form.... [Rabbi] Nachman himself has said that they try to ‘express the seventy faces of Torah;’ and indeed, in many instances, one may discern more than one meaning and even several layers of meaning.”

CHAPTER TWO:

Basic concepts of the Kabbalah which are relevant to understanding Rabbi Nachman’s stories

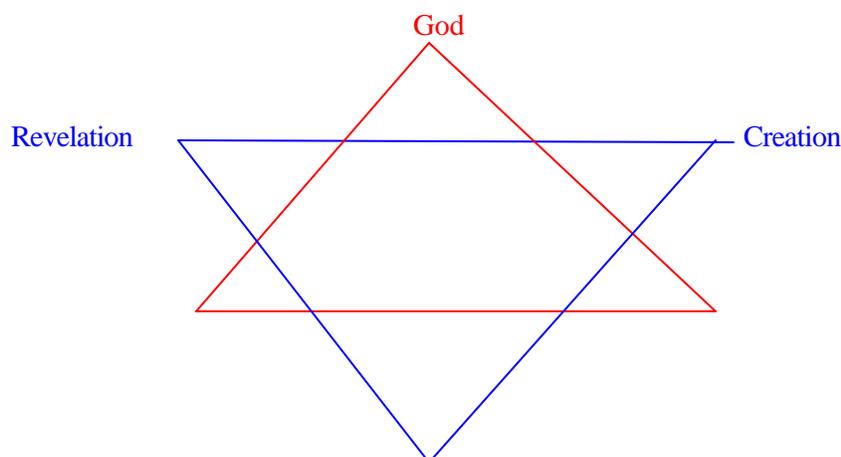
In this chapter, I will present those basic concepts of the Kabbalah that will prove crucial in our attempt to delve into, decode, and decipher Rabbi Nachman’s “Book of

Stories from Ancient Times.” This is not meant to be a comprehensive and all-inclusive summary of Kabbalistic teachings, which of course would require a book in itself. However, because all of Rabbi Nachman’s thirteen “Stories from Ancient Times” are themselves an effort to “enwrap” () the inner essence of the Torah in a different form, as I have shown in Chapter One of this thesis, I do feel that it is critical and necessary to clarify those key ideas of the Kabbalah which are most relevant for understanding and analyzing both the content and the symbols found in Rabbi Nachman’s stories.

In Franz Rosenzweig’s monumental work, “The Star of Redemption” (first published in German in 1919), Rosenzweig (1886 - 1929) presents his theory that Judaism is based on three primary concepts (God, world, and man) and three primary relationships: the relationship between God and the world being Creation; the relationship between God and man being Revelation (the Torah); and the relationship between man and the world being Redemption. “Creation, Revelation, Redemption; these are the ‘paths’ that link the ‘elements’ Man, World, God Pictorially, God, World, and Man are represented by one triangle; Creation, Revelation, and Redemption by another. Combined they form a six-pointed star” (Rosenzweig 1972:xv-xvi).

As Rosenzweig suggests, his theory concerning the six foundations of Judaism may be presented pictorially (as can be seen in the diagram on the next page).

Although Rosenzweig’s deep involvement with, and immersion in, Judaism did not stem from a study in Hasidism *per se*, I think that his insight that Judaism focuses on these six points is not only extremely perceptive, but also valid and accurate for the mystic trends in Judaism as well. Therefore, in this chapter I will use the framework of Rosenzweig’s six-pointed star as my frame of reference when I focus on these six



Man

World

Redemption

primary concepts of Jewish mystical thought which form the basis for an analysis of Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times." This chapter, in consequence, will be divided into six sub-sections, as well as a seventh sub-section which will deal with the one central image of the *Shechinah*. At the beginning of each sub-section I will bring a quotation from a classical Kabbalistic text, and then clarify that concept which appears in the text. The classical Kabbalistic sources I will quote from will be "The *Zohar*," "*Pardes Rimmonim*," and "*Eytz HaChaim*."

"The *Zohar*" (- 'The Book of Splendor') is the most important and fundamental text in the Kabbalah. It first became public in manuscript form in Spain around the year 1300, although it is attributed to Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai (a very important rabbi and mystic who lived in the Land of Israel in the second century) and his disciples; many modern scholars believe that it was edited and redacted in its present form by Rabbi Moses de Leon (1240 - 1305), a mystic who lived in Spain. "*Pardes Rimmonim*" (- 'The Orchard of Pomegranates') by Rabbi Moshe Cordevero (1522 - 1570), and "*Eytz HaChaim*" (- 'The Tree of Life') by Rabbi Haim Vital (1542 - 1620), were written at the end of the sixteenth century in the city of Zefat (Safed) in the Galilee in the Land of Israel. Rabbis Moshe Cordevero and Haim Vital were the outstanding colleagues and disciples of Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (1534 - 1572, usually called the *Ari*), who was the most important Jewish mystic in the sixteenth century. He himself wrote very little, and it was mainly through the writings of his two main associates that his ideas became so widespread and influential.

Concept Number One: The World

"The world, from its primal point to its deepest depth, was created level after level, by the Holy One, blessed be He. The universes began when the essence of the King of kings made a wondrous descent ... and all creation was divided into four [universes]. The

highest is the world of the *sefirot*, and is called [the world of] emanation (). Below this is the second universe, “the Chariot” or “the Throne,” which is more sublime and spiritual than [the world of] the angels.... This [world of the] Throne is called [the world of] creation (). Below this lies ... the world of the angels, which is more material and substantial than the Throne; therefore the angels are they that support the Throne.... This world of the angels is called [the world of] formation (). And below this is the physical universe, [the world of] action ()” (Cordevero 1974:Sixteenth Gate, Chapter Nine).

The Kabbalah teaches that there are three ‘higher’, additional dimensions of existence beyond the physical universe of molecules and atoms which can be perceived by us through our five senses and the instruments which mankind has invented, from microscope to telescope. “The physical world in which we live, the objectively observed universe around us, is only a part of an inconceivably vast system of worlds. Most of these worlds are spiritual in essence; they are of a different order from our known world. This does not necessarily mean that they exist somewhere else, but means rather that they exist in different dimensions of being” (Steinsaltz 1980:3).

I would now like to describe these four dimensions of being, from the lowest to the highest. The universe which we inhabit is called “the world of action” (), and includes not only the physical universe of matter, but also the realms of ideas and concepts based on the laws of nature.

Above the world of action we find “the world of formation” (), which is a world of emotion, inhabited by what we call angels. “The world of formation may be said to be, in its essence, a world of feeling. It is a world whose main substance, or type of experience, is emotion.... The living beings in it are conscious manifestations of particular impulses.... The living creatures of the world of formation, the beings that function in it as we function in the world of action, are called... ‘angels’ The real difference between man and angel is not the fact that man has a body, because the essential comparison is between the human soul and the angel. The soul of man is most complex ... while the angel is a being of [a] single essence [emotion]” (Steinsaltz 1980:7 -9).

Above this world is “the world of creation” (), which is a universe of thought, “a world of pure mind. This mind quality of the world of creation is not a merely intellectual essence but rather expresses itself as the power and capacity to grasp things with

a genuine, inner understanding; it is, in other words, the mind as creator as well as that which registers and absorbs knowledge” (Steinsaltz 1980:17). Another name for the world of creation is the world of the [Divine] Throne, or Chariot, based on the vision found in the first chapter of the Book of Ezekiel. The Chariot “is the focal point at which the plenty rising from the lower worlds and the plenty descending from the higher worlds meet and enter into some sort of relation with each other. Hence an understanding of the “way of the Chariot” [] – that is, an understanding of the way the Divine Throne operates –is the highest secret of the esoteric doctrine” (Steinsaltz 1980:18). The beings that inhabit this higher universe or dimension of being are called *seraphim* (), and they are beings of pure intelligence, pure thought.

The fourth and highest world is “the world of emanation” (), which is the dimension of being ‘closest’ to God Himself, or as the Kabbalists frequently call Him: the Infinite One, blessed be He (). This realm of existence is not inhabited by creatures with a sense of self (be they people, angels, or *seraphim*), since it is impossible for any sense of selfhood or separate ego to exist when so close to the infinite presence of God’s light. Instead, this realm of existence is defined by divine manifestations called the ten *sefirot* (), which can perhaps be understood as the vehicles of expression through which God reveals His will and His attributes. I will discuss the world of emanation in greater detail later on, in the sub-section of Concept Number Three: God.

Concept Number Two: Man

“And Noah begot three sons ...(Genesis 6:10).

Rabbi Hiyyah said to Rabbi Yehudah: I will tell you what I overheard said about this verse. We can compare this to a man who entered the depths of a cave, and two or three children came out, having different characteristics.... Similarly, there are three threads of spirit, which move in different directions and are drawn from three different worlds. The *neshama* () emerges and goes among the mountain paths, where it is joined by the *ruach* (). Then it descends further below, and the *nefesh* () joins the *ruach*; the three are linked together.... The *nefesh* stands close to the body, sustaining it and supporting it; [the *nefesh*] is the first awakening. If it is worthy, it becomes the throne upon which the *ruach* may rest ... When these two [the *nefesh* and the *ruach*] have prepared themselves

sufficiently, they may become worthy to receive the *neshama* The *neshama* is supreme, but cannot be perceived” (*Zohar* I.62a and I.83b).

Man is a fusion of body and soul. However, according to the traditions of the Kabbalah, the human soul itself is quite complex since it is composed of different components, with each component being linked to each of the four worlds which I discussed earlier in this chapter. Freud divided the human psyche into the id, the ego, and the superego; in contrast, the Kabbalah teaches that each of the different forces within a person is anchored in a different world (that is to say, a different dimension of being).

The lowest and most basic component of the human psyche is labeled the *nefesh* () and is sometimes termed the animal-soul; it is rooted in the world of action (). According to Steinsaltz (1980:56), “... it is parallel to the souls of other living creatures and functions, thinks, and is aware of itself as being concentrated in a particular vessel, the vessel of the body. At the same time, as we have seen, this soul, the primary, natural, animal soul of man [the *nefesh*], is not necessarily connected only with animal needs or with physical aspects of life, being as it is the source of those aspects or qualities peculiar to one as a person.”

The second and higher component of the human soul is called *ruach* (), and stems from the world of formation (). The *ruach* is considered by the Kabbalah to be pure spirit, “a spark of a higher perception, of a superior aspiration” (Steinsaltz 1980:56), and is basically a manifestation of emotion. This level of the human psyche, the *ruach*, is of course not directly linked to the physical reality of the world of action, and in order to make contact with physical reality, it must first influence the *nefesh*, which will then in turn function in the world of action. Although the *ruach* is pure spirit, there is a subtle distinction between it and the next higher level (the *neshama*). The *ruach* influences a person to express and direct his emotions towards a non-physical goal, but not necessarily towards God. The *ruach* therefore is the force within us that creates music, art, and poetry, but not necessarily religion.

In fact, it is the third level of soul, the *neshama* (), which is rooted in the world of creation () and which is totally focused on God and yearns only for sanctity and holiness. The *neshama* is in its essence pure thought; it can perhaps be defined as a

thought of God that is (hopefully) linked to, and guiding, the two lower components, *ruach* and *nefesh*. I again quote another passage from the *Zohar* (I.206):

“The *nefesh* is the lowest of them; *ruach* exists in order to control the *nefesh*, and is on a higher level; [but] the *neschama* is supreme over both, and rules both of them. These three levels exist among human beings who have purified themselves to serve their Master.... When God sees that a person is striving to purify himself and redeem himself, then God enwraps that person with *ruach*.... When that person ascends further in the service of his Master through [both] his *nefesh* and his *ruach*, then God will justify enwrapping him with a *neschama*, which is a level of supreme holiness, to rule them and to reign over them.”

Hillel Zeitlin (1965a:174) clarifies the relationship between these three levels when he writes: “A person’s primary service is in his *nefesh*; with it and through it he must refine and purify all his thoughts, words, and deeds. After a person has perfected and redeemed his *nefesh*, the upper worlds give him *ruach* as a gift, through the overflowing of the divine grace and the divine plenty. This *ruach* is like a crown or halo that envelopes such a person. If that person guards this divine crown in sanctity and in purity, an even more precious gift is given to him: the *neschama*.”

It is important to emphasize that for most people, the levels of *ruach* and *neschama* are completely dormant, and exist only as a potential that is rarely, if ever, realized or manifested in their lives. One of Rabbi Nachman’s aims in narrating his stories was to awaken these dormant elements in the souls of his listeners, and to teach them how to re-structure the relationship between the *nefesh-ruach-neschama* within themselves in a more positive fashion.

However, there is yet greater potential within the human soul. Above the *neschama* is still another, higher level called *haya* (חַיָּה), which is rooted in the world of emanation (עוֹלָם הַשְׂפָּרָה).

(חַיָּה). And finally, there is the fifth, holiest, and purest form of soul which is called *yechida* (יְחִידָה), which is anchored in the highest *sefirah* in the world of emanation and which has hardly ever been attained by any human being.

I would like to suggest that one possible way of understanding the Kabbalistic perception of the human soul is by comparing it to a transistor radio. The box and wires within it are like the *nefesh*; the batteries are parallel to the *ruach*, and the antenna is similar to the *neschama*. A transistor radio that has batteries within it, as well as an antenna that is

properly aligned, can pick up and let one hear the radio waves which are present around us but which one would otherwise be completely unaware of. In a similar fashion, God's divine presence is constantly "broadcasting" to humanity, but most of us are unaware of His presence; not only do we not hear the message being broadcast to us, but we are not even aware that a message is being sent. However, if a person does have his *nefesh-ruach-neschama* in proper working order, then it is possible for that person to "pick up," and become aware of, God's presence addressing itself to each human being.

Concept Number Three: God

"The Holy One blessed be He (), concealed beyond all concealment, separate and remote, unlike anything else; yet He cleaves to everything: for all cleave to Him and He cleaves to all and He is in everything. He is ancient beyond all ancients, unknowable beyond all unknowables, enveloping Himself in everything and yet not enveloped at all. He enwraps Himself in order to sustain all existence, yet He is not enwrapped by anything because He cannot be perceived or grasped at all.

When He enwrapped Himself, He emanated ten shining lights to be His 'garments.' These lights shine and burn from Him, dispersing in all directions like a candle whose rays of light disperse in all directions. When one tries to perceive these rays of light, one can perceive nothing except for the candle. The Ancient Holy One, the Sublime Candle, concealed beyond all concealment; - His essence cannot be perceived at all, but rather He is revealed only by the [ten] lights that emanate from Him, both the hidden and the revealed [lights]" (*Zohar* 3.128, from the *Idra Zutra*).

According to the *Zohar* and the classical teachings of the Kabbalah, God Himself is beyond human perception, as Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi (1760-1813, the first Lubavitcher *Rebbe* and a contemporary and colleague of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav) wrote in his most important book, the *Tanya* (1979:2:9, 86b): "Just as a [physical] hand cannot grasp a thought, so too a human thought cannot grasp God." The *Zohar* itself states the same idea, "No thought can grasp You" (*Tikkunei Zohar* 17a). This is one reason why the Kabbalah often terms God as "the Infinite One, blessed be He" (-); just as we cannot grasp infinity, so too we cannot comprehend God.

Yet there is another side to the coin. According to Hillel Zeitlin (1965b:95), one of the fundamental pillars of the Kabbalah is the principle that “the light of the Infinite One saturates everything [as well as] and encompasses everything” ().

. If one tries to comprehend this paradox, one concludes that on the one hand, God is understood to be completely transcendental (=); He is totally above and beyond us and our universe. On the other hand, He is also immanent; that is to say, He fills and indeed saturates the universe and everything it contains (=).

In contrast to the earlier Kabbalistic emphasis on the transcendental aspect of God, Hasidic thought in general, and Rabbi Nachman in particular, stressed the immanence of God and how close He is to all who call upon Him. God’s presence (the *Shechinah*) dwells in this world, and therefore gives meaning to our lives. “The world would be an illusion, unreal, if it were not grounded in God, the source of all being. But the universe is no illusion. By being grounded in God, every thing or event, even the most trivial, mirrors God ... all reality is in God” (Bergman 1963:126, 124).

I have earlier discussed in the first sub-section of this chapter how the Kabbalah posits four different but parallel worlds of dimensions of being (action, formation, creation, and emanation), and how each world is progressively higher in the sense that it is less veiled or less concealed from the light of God’s essence. In this context I wish to elaborate upon the world of emanation in greater detail. It is absolutely crucial to emphasize at the outset that God Himself is above this world of emanation, just as He is above and beyond the other three lower worlds. However, while we are completely unable to fathom or know His essence even in the world of emanation, it is in the world of emanation where His essence is the least veiled and thus it is possible (at the level of this world) to comprehend, to some degree at least, His attributes, or what Steinsaltz terms “divine manifestations.” In order to clarify this, we can say that this world of emanation is not “inhabited” by separate beings with a sense of self (like people or angels); for how can there be a sense of separate selfhood when being bathed in the overwhelming divine light? Rather, the divine light of the Infinite One is channeled, as it were, into different “containers” or orbs (spheres), each of which manifests a different aspect of the divine plenty () and the divine will. These ten basic manifestations, or containers, of the divine light are called in the Kabbalah the ten *sefirot* (). These ten *sefirot* “are in the nature of an instrument or a vehicle of

expression.... Just as a man's true soul, his inapprehensible self, is never revealed to others but manifests itself through his mind, emotions, and body, so is the Self of God not revealed in His original essence except through the ten *sefirot*. The ten *sefirot* taken together constitute a fundamental and all-inclusive Reality; moreover, the pattern of this Reality is organic; each of the *sefirot* has a unique function, complements each of the others, and is essential for the realization, or fulfillment of the others, and of the whole" (Steinsaltz 1980:37, 38).

At this point I will list the ten *sefirot*, according to their order:

	Keter ()	
Binah ()		Hochmah ()
	[Da'at ()]	
Gevurah ()		Hesed ()
	Tiferet ()	
Hod ()		Netzach ()
	Yesod ()	
	Malchut ()	

The nature of each one of the ten *sefirot* and the relationship between them are a major area of study in the classical Kabbalah; literally hundreds of books have been written about the *sefirot*. "Most if not all Kabbalistic speculation and doctrine is concerned with the realm of the divine emanations or *sefirot*, in which God's creative power unfolds.... Insofar as God reveals Himself, He does so through the creative power of the *sefirot*" (Scholem 1970:35).

However, it is essential to point out that there is a vast difference between the earlier Kabbalistic texts and later Hasidic literature. Most Hasidic literature was much less involved or interested in defining the esoteric and detailed relationships between the *sefirot* in the world of emanation, and much more emphasized the problems that human beings encounter here in the world of action (). This is in contrast to the older Kabbalistic texts, where the mystics and scholars of the traditional Kabbalah tried to unfathom the secrets of the world of emanation, namely the ten *sefirot*, even though they too acknowledged that

human beings are incapable of seeing God or perceiving His true essence. The ten *sefirot* were held to be the key to understanding God's attributes and His relationship to the world, and above all, the key to redemption.

Concept Number Four: Creation

“Know that before the *sefirot* were emanated and anything at all was created, the light of the Infinite One filled everything and there was not any empty space whatsoever. All was filled with the infinite light; it had no beginning and no end....

When it arose in God's will to create the worlds, ... He then contracted Himself.... He contracted the light, and it was withdrawn.... Thus there was left an empty space ... [this means that] an empty space was formed, in which it would be possible to create [the worlds of] emanation, creation, formation, and action” (Vital 1972: Chapter 1, p.8).

The very important school of Kabbalistic thought founded by the *Ari* in Zefat (Safed), Israel in the 1500's and known as the Lurianic Kabbalah tried to resolve a very difficult dilemma: if God is truly infinite and His light pervades all, then how and where did God create a finite world? If God is truly infinite and omnipresent, then how is it possible in fact for anything else to exist at all?

The solution proposed by the *Ari* and his colleagues is the concept of *tzimtzum* (), which is God's contraction or self-withdrawal into Himself in order to create an 'empty space' void of His presence into which something else (namely, the created universe) could be placed and formed. Steinsaltz believes that the concept of *tzimtzum* is crucial in order to understand the process of creation. He (1980:37) writes: “God hides Himself, putting aside His essential infiniteness and withholding His endless light to the extent necessary in order that the world may exist. Within the actual divine light nothing can maintain its own existence; the world becomes possible only through the special act of divine withdrawal or contraction. Such divine non-being, or concealment, is thus the elementary condition for the existence of that which is finite.” Seen in this manner, the act of *tzimtzum* is an act of God's grace and of supreme loving-kindness. God's concealment allows the world(s) to emerge and to be revealed.

I have thought about an analogy that may help us understand how the concept of *tzimtzum* clarifies the important Kabbalistic principle I quoted earlier on page 39, namely

that “the light of the Infinite One saturates everything as well as encompasses everything.” This analogy is based on nuclear physics. It is known that within each atom there is a void between the nucleus at the center and the shells of electrons which orbit the nucleus. In addition, there is absolutely nothing between the different atoms of each molecule; and again, there is a total vacuum between the molecules which constitute the matter of every object in the physical universe (). In fact, modern physics teaches us that “solid” matter is actually more than 99% emptiness and vacuum.

This being the case, let us imagine that what we perceive to be vacuum is actually God’s (hidden) presence filling and dwelling in every molecule of our existence. Thus, on the one hand, God’s presence does indeed fill and saturate all existence (), while on the other hand, since His presence is undetectable for us, He indeed transcends our world and is beyond our world of matter and our perception (). In this fashion, the paradox of God’s immanence and His transcendence is resolved through the concept of *tzimtzum*. From God’s point of view, as it were, the protons, electrons, and neutrons of our world are actually islands of empty space surrounded and encompassed by an “ocean” of God’s immanence and His presence. “... When the divine plenty is manifested in its complete fullness there is no room for the existence of anything else. A world can exist only as a result of the concealment of its Creator” (Steinsaltz 1980:21).

There is another important doctrine of the Kabbalah which is very prominent in the teachings of the *Ari* and recurs over and over again in Rabbi Nachman’s stories. This is the concept of “the breaking of the vessels” (). After the process of *tzimtzum* had come into effect and there was now a “void” in which to create the worlds, God’s light was still too overwhelming for the created world to interact with, just as a human eye is too fragile to stare at the sun. God’s light filled creation, but creation (namely, the “vessels” intended to contain His light) “broke.” Professor Bokser (1993:18) summarizes the concept of “the breaking of the vessels” as follows:

“Into the realm of ‘emptiness’ formed by the withdrawal of the *Ein Sof* [], the divine light which was to engender creation began to stream in great profusion. But the ‘vessels’ that were to effectuate the particularization of finite existence could not contain that light, and they broke, begetting a state of disorder in which ‘holy sparks’ were everywhere surrounded by *kelipot*, husks of gross substance of a lower order which impeded the light.

This cosmic disorder is the root of all human problems. The exile of the Jewish people is a phase of this disorder. But it is not only they who are in exile. God Himself, and the holy sparks of divine light, are also in exile. It is the vocation of the Jew ... to redress this condition, to effect restoration, or *tikkun*, perfection.”

The two theories of *tzimtzum* and “the breaking of the vessels” allow us to understand how evil was created and how evil continues to exist in a universe created by the God of mercy and loving-kindness. Because God withdrew and contracted Himself and His light, there is now room for darkness and for evil. Sparks of holiness are therefore held captive, as it were, by the forces of evil and impurity, and need to be redeemed. It is the job of mankind to redeem these sparks of holiness which have fallen into the realm of evil.

The crucial question is clear: how? How is it possible to redeem the fallen sparks of holiness and thereby to return all the worlds to a state of *tikkun* (), which is a key word that means simultaneously restoration, repair, perfection, and redemption?

The answer to this question is also unequivocally clear. God has revealed the way for humanity to bring about the world’s *tikkun*; this way has been revealed by God through, and in, the Torah. Because the Torah is the guidebook on how to redeem the world, the Jewish people (as the national community which received and accepted the Torah) is perceived by the Kabbalah to be not only the custodians of this guide-book, but also to be the central actor in the cosmic drama of the world’s redemption.

I will therefore now turn to the fifth central concept in the next sub-section, the concept of Revelation (Torah).

Concept Number Five: Revelation (Torah)

“Rabbi Shimon said: ‘Alas to the man who says that the Torah has come [merely] to relate stories and everyday matters. If such were the case, even we today would be able to compile such a “*torah*” treating with everyday matters, and indeed even a better one! If its purpose were just to relate mundane matters, even the secular books and man-made collections contain higher values; should we go after these books and make a “*torah*” out of them? Rather, the Torah and all its words are [in reality] sublime matters and supreme secrets....

The world could not have endured the Torah if it had not enwrapped and disguised itself in the garments of this world. Therefore, the stories related in the Torah are only its outer garments. If a person thinks that this outer garment is the real Torah and that there is nothing else – alas for such a person, and he has no portion in the World -to-Come” (*Zohar* III.152a).

“Come and look: when the Holy One, blessed be He, decided and made His will [manifest] to create the world, He looked into the Torah and then He created it [the world]. In every single act of creation that He did in the world, the Holy One, blessed be He, looked into the Torah and then created it.... The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the world in the hour in which He created man: ‘Oh world, oh world, you and all you contain exist only by merit of the Torah. For that reason I have created Man, in order for him to engage in Torah. If he does not do that, then I [will] return you to chaos.... Every person who engages in Torah causes the world to exist ...’” (*Zohar* I.134a)

One of the most basic and fundamental pillars of Jewish thought (in all periods of Jewish history and wherever the Jewish people have found themselves, in the Diaspora as well as in the Land of Israel) is the belief that God reveals His will to humanity, and this revelation is found in the Torah. In its more narrow sense, the word Torah refers to the five Books of Moses in the Bible. However, the concept of Torah usually has a much wider connotation and includes not only the entire Bible, but also the whole, vast realm of the Oral Law, which includes the Mishnah, the Babylonian Talmud, the Jerusalem Talmud, and the collections and anthologies of the Talmudic Sages like Midrash Rabbah, Midrash Tanchuma, and Yalkut Shimoni, etc.. In fact, the term “Torah” has come to encompass the entire wealth of Jewish religious literature, although of course the heart of the Torah is indeed the five Books of Moses.

Moreover, the Kabbalah insists that there are different layers of depth and meaning in the text of the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. The first passage which I quoted from the *Zohar* (*Zohar* III.152a) stresses this belief that people should not think that the simple reading of the text of the Torah is its main meaning and its main purpose. Rather, people must strive to read deeper into the text in order to uncover its profound significance and its depth. The Kabbalah teaches that the Torah has in fact four different levels of meaning. For example, in the *Zohar Hadash* 83a, in the section entitled the *Midrash Ha-*

Ne'elam, we read: “The words of the Torah are likened to a nut. How is this to be understood? Just as a nut has an outer shell and a kernel, so too each word of the Torah contains *ma'aseh* [or *peshat*:], *midrash* [or *derash*:], *haggadah* [or *remez*:] and *sod* [], each one of which is deeper in its meaning than the previous [level].” The first letters of these four words spell out the word “Pardes” (), which means ‘orchard’ but is also the root word for ‘paradise.’ This is connected to the very important and famous passage in the Talmud (*Hagigah* 14b) which I referred to earlier (in Chapter One, on page 17), concerning four great rabbis who lived in the second century in the Land of Israel; they entered the *Pardes* (the orchard of mystical experiences or mystical knowledge) and this Talmudic passage relates what happened to them afterwards: “One saw and died; the second saw and became insane; the third destroyed the young plants [lost his faith or became a heretic]; only Rabbi Akiva entered in peace and came out in peace.” Professor G. Scholem (1970:57) explains that the *Zohar* “... employed this highly suggestive term [*Pardes*], so rich in shades of meaning, as a cipher for the four levels of interpretation. Each consonant of the word *PaRDeS* denotes one of the levels: P stands for *peshat*, the literal meaning, R for *remez*, the allegorical meaning, D for *derash*, the Talmudic and Aggadic interpretation, S for *sod*, the mystical meaning. The *Pardes* into which the four ancient scholars entered thus came to denote speculations concerning the true meaning of the Torah on all four levels.”

Furthermore, one can say that these four levels of interpreting and perceiving the Torah correspond to the four different, parallel worlds discussed in the first sub-section of this chapter. *Peshat* is the level and the manifestation of the Torah in our world of action; *derash* is the way the Torah manifests itself in the world of formation; *remez* is the manifestation of the Torah in the world of creation; and *sod* is the deepest, most profound perception and manifestation of the Torah, rooted in the world of emanation.

Scholem (1970:73) explains this in the following manner: “... [The Kabbalah] spoke of four worlds which constitute such a spiritual hierarchy, the world of divine emanation, ‘*atsilut*, the world of creation, *beri'yah*; the world of formation, *yetsirah*; and the world of activation, ‘*asiyah*. These worlds are not successive but exist simultaneously and form the different stages by which the creative power of God materializes. The revelation of the Torah as the organ of Creation must necessarily have come to all these worlds in some form,

and indeed we learn certain things about its structure in these stages. Texts originating in the school of Israel Saruk (c. 1600) develop the following idea: in the highest world, the world of *'atsilut*, the Torah was merely a sequence of all the combinations of consonants that can be derived from the Hebrew alphabet. This ... contained the germs of all the possibilities included in this linguistic movement. It is only in the second [highest] world that the Torah is manifested as a sequence of holy names of God.... In the third world the Torah appears as a sequence of angelic names and powers, in accordance with the law of this world that is inhabited by angelic beings. Only in the fourth and last world could the Torah appear as it does to us.”

It can thus be said that the written words of the Torah which people see and read are only the tip of the iceberg. The Kabbalah teaches that mankind must work hard to uncover the deeper, hidden levels of Torah, which are in fact the most essential. There is even an extremely strong tradition that there are invisible parts of the Torah that are as yet unrevealed. Scholem (1970:81-82) writes that “this notion of invisible parts of the Torah which will one day be made manifest endured for centuries in a number of variants and was taken into the Hasidic tradition. Rabbi Levi Isaac of Berdichev [1740 - 1809], one of the most celebrated mystics of this movement, gives a particularly daring and impressive formulation of this idea. He starts by feigning surprise at the Midrashic interpretation of Isaiah 51:4: ‘A Torah will go forth from Me,’ taking it to mean: ‘A new Torah will go forth from Me.’ How is this possible when it is an article of Jewish faith that there is no other Torah beside the one given to Moses, which cannot be exchanged for any other? Why, it is even forbidden to change so much as a single letter. ‘But the truth is that also the white, the spaces in the scroll of the Torah, consist of letters, only that we are not able to read them as we read the black letters. But in the Messianic Age God will also reveal to us the white of the Torah, whose letters have become invisible to us, and that is what is meant by the statement about the ‘new Torah’.”

Rabbi Levi Isaac of Berdichev was not only a contemporary of Rabbi Nachman, but he was also one of his closest friends and supporters in the controversy that surrounded Rabbi Nachman and his teachings. Rabbi Nachman’s stories were an attempt to make visible parts of the hidden, unseen essence of the Torah.

The second quotation that I brought from the *Zohar* at the beginning of this subsection of Concept Number Five: Revelation (*Zohar* I.134a, on page 44) stated that when God created the world, He first looked into the Torah. This concept that the Torah is the blueprint of the world is intrinsic to Rabbi Nachman's thought, and is in fact a very ancient and deeply-rooted idea in traditional Judaism. The Sages of the Talmud () had stressed the centrality of the Torah by describing it as the blueprint of the world, as can be seen in the very first passage in *Midrash Rabbah*, which contains this parable:

“The Torah says: I was the blueprint () for God. It is customary in the world, that when a king of flesh and blood builds a palace, he does not construct it by himself alone (), but only after consulting a craftsman. The craftsman, too, does not construct it by himself alone, but he has his blueprints and diagrams instructing him how to build the rooms and corridors. Similarly, the Holy One, blessed be He, looked into the Torah and created the world” (*Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1).

This idea (that the Torah is the blueprint of the world) means that not only does the Torah explain how the world was created, but also implies that the Torah contains all of human history as well as the secrets of how the world will be redeemed. One of the final aphorisms in *Pirkei Avot* (perhaps the most well-known and popular tractate of the Mishnah) alludes to this belief: “Ben Bag-Bag says: Delve into it [into the Torah] over and over again, for all is in it” (*Pirkei Avot* 5:22). This belief, so crucial to the Kabbalah of the *Ari*, finds clear and bold expression in Rabbi Nachman's stories. The most explicit and most detailed example can be found in his story, “The Master of Prayer,” where the king (who represents God) has a map of the world in the form of a hand with five fingers, which is an allusion to the Torah (composed of the five Books of Moses). This hand-shaped map reveals not only every place in the world, but all events that have ever happened and that ever will happen. A detailed analysis of this image can be found in Chapter Five of this thesis, where I analyze this story in detail.

As Rabbi Nachman understands it, the Torah not only prescribes how a Jew should live his life (by following the commandments of the Torah), but also constitutes the key to deciphering the secrets of creation () and the secrets of the redemption (). This key is understood when learning and analyzing the Torah in its higher levels of *sod* and *remez*.

In the previous sub-section (Concept Number Four: Creation), I have shown that the Kabbalah teaches that through God's withdrawal from the world (in order to create it), the sparks of holiness have become lost and are in need of redemption; evil holds dominion over part of the world. Fortunately, there is the Torah, which is perceived to be the map and the guide which can reveal how to remedy this situation and bring redemption to the world. Because the Jewish people received the Torah and have become the custodians of the map, they are the key players in the world's redemption. This all leads to the next sub-section: Redemption.

Concept Number Six: Redemption

“Think of a king who in his anger against his queen expelled her from his castle for a period of time. After that period of time was over, she was able to return to the king. This happened a few times. But then there happened a period of time when the king expelled her from his castle for an extremely long period of time. The king said, ‘This time is not like the previous times when she was able to return to me. [Therefore,] I will now go out to look for her, taking all my followers.’ And when he found her, she was [sitting] in the dust.” (*Zohar* III.6a)

Mankind's mission is to bring about the redemption of the world. Of all God's creatures, he alone inhabits all four dimensions of being, since his body and *nefesh* are rooted in the world of action whereas the higher levels of his soul are anchored in the higher worlds. He alone is capable of restoring the fallen sparks of holiness to God; he alone can perform the task of *tikkun olam* (: the redemption of the world). Professor Y. Jacobsen of Tel-Aviv University (1985:45-47) writes that according to the Kabbalah: “The whole world is now in a state of chaos, a state of chaotic intermingling, for nothing is in its place: the divine sparks whose natural place should be above, in the upper worlds, in the more divine dimensions – these sparks have been captured and broken asunder and have fallen below to a place where they should not be. At the same time, impurity, which kidnapped the sparks of holiness, has been continuously increasing its strength, expanding and overreaching its limits. The upper forces have descended and the lower forces have ascended, and all of existence is in a state of being topsy-turvy; — and the process of *tikkun* is intended to rectify this condition....

The task of humanity is to rescue the sparks of holiness that have been taken captive by the *kelipot* [: the external, outer husks of impurity] and to return them to their rightful place in the upper worlds.”

We can find this same idea in the words of Rabbi Haim Vital (1963:32): “It was necessary to create Man, for he would include all of creation and all of the emanations. Man would link all the worlds, to the lowest parts of the earth.... When he acts according to perfection, he can transfer the abundance of the ten *sefirot* to himself; and from himself to the angels; from there to the *kelipot*, in order that the sparks of holiness there may be sifted out.”

This task is incumbent upon all humanity; but according to the Kabbalistic world-view, it is above all the duty of the Jewish people, for they were given the Torah. Since the Jewish people is perceived as the custodians of the map of the world, they must not only learn the Torah, but they must also follow its instructions. These instructions, which are in fact guidelines for redeeming the world and raising the fallen sparks of holiness, are the *mitzvot*, the positive and negative commandments which encompass all spheres of life. “The Torah provides guidance on correcting or mending the divine throne and makes it clear that only small adjustments are required, not destroying and remaking. These small symbolic adjustments, the minor changes in reality, are the *mitzvot*. Each individual *mitzvah* is only a minute part of the whole process, but when all the *mitzvot* are performed properly and at the right time, the whole world can be perfected” (Steinsaltz 1979:72).

The Kabbalah traditionally saw the task of uplifting the fallen sparks of holiness as incumbent upon every Jew. Professor Jacobsen (1984:47) stresses that “this task of searching [for the sparks of holiness] was placed upon every Jew as an earth-shattering task of monumental consequences. This great mission is given to every member of the Jewish people – and not only to unique individuals or the spiritual elite ...” In this respect, Hasidism departs from traditional Kabbalah. While the general trend of Hasidic thought acknowledges that the task of redemption is theoretically the duty of every Jew, the emphasis is nonetheless that the task of redemption is in fact the duty and mission of the *tzaddikim*, the righteous. Basing itself on the Biblical verse: “The righteous person is the foundation of the world – ” (Proverbs 10:25), Hasidism in general and Rabbi Nachman in particular greatly enhanced the centrality of the *tzaddik* in the task of

redemption. As I have already emphasized, redemption itself lies on three parallel planes. First of all, there is the plane of the individual. Every person experiences pain, sorrow, and distance from God; most people feel inner conflicts, and are psychologically divided and pulled in different (and often opposing) directions; it is difficult for most human beings to focus their lives squarely on God. The first task of the *tzaddik*, therefore, is to help each individual to find the right balance between his *nefesh-ruach-neshama*, and to assist each individual to focus his life on God.

In *Likkutei Moharan* I:65, Rabbi Nachman composed a beautiful parable in which he compared the *tzaddik* to a gardener or a master of a field, whose job is to take care of the different trees and plants growing in the field.

“Know that there is a field, in which grow trees and plants of great beauty. It is impossible to describe the beauty and preciousness of this field and its plants. Happy is the eye that sees it. These trees and plants – they are the holy souls. [However,] there are many naked souls that wander outside of the field, waiting and expecting their *tikkun* [rectification or redemption], so that they will be able to return and come to their proper place. Even a great soul, on whom other souls are dependent, sometimes stays outside of the field and finds it difficult to return. They all yearn and wait for the master of the field to come and engage in the task of their *tikkun*....

Whoever wants to gird his loins and to function as the master of the field must be a person of great stature, brave, courageous, wise – and a very great *tzaddik*; he must be a great, exceptional person.... Much suffering and affliction may befall him, but due to his exceptional qualities and his greatness he will overcome them all, and will take care of the field as it should be [taken care of].

This master of the field watches over, and always makes sure to water the trees and to raise them, as well as to attend to the other needs of the field.... And know, that when the souls do the will of God, they bear fruit; and the eyes of the master of the field shine ... but when they do not do the will of God, then his eyes become darkened.... When his eyes shine, he [the master of the field] can look into each and every soul, and bring that soul to realize and fulfill its goal.”

The first plane of redemption, then, which the *tzaddik* must deal with is the redemption of the soul of each individual person. Most Hasidic *rebbe*s emphasized this

plane of redemption, and this one alone. The Hasidic *rebbe* (who was also termed the “*tzaddik*”) would concentrate on helping his followers attain a higher spiritual level. It seems to me that at least part of the controversy surrounding Rabbi Nachman might have been due to the fact that he saw his role as being greater than this, and that he dealt with the two additional planes of redemption.

The second level of redemption is the redemption of Israel. The people of Israel are in exile; exile means not only living in the Diaspora, but also means that there is no sacred Temple in Jerusalem, no prophecy, and no kingship of the lineage of the House of David. Exile means that the Jews, dispersed throughout the world without a permanent home or homeland, are mocked at, and are often oppressed and persecuted. The task of the true *tzaddik*, therefore, is to help bring about the concrete redemption of the Jewish people as a whole, and not only to assist individuals in attaining a higher, more spiritual life.

The third level, of course, is the redemption of the entire world.

In an article originally printed in Warsaw in 1936 (and which, in my opinion, is exceptionally perceptive), Hillel Zeitlin (1965a:327) wrote: “It is widely accepted by all who investigate and learn Hasidic literature — be they people for whom Hasidism is a way of life, or be they researchers and historians — that the most basic, main point in the books of Rabbi Nachman is the *tzaddik*.... But I dare to declare, after having studied in great depth and with great attentiveness all the ideas and innovations in the writings of Rabbi Nachman, that the crux of the matter, the most elementary and primary concept in the thought and world-view of Rabbi Nachman is not the *tzaddik* — but rather the Messiah.... The *tzaddik*, for all his importance and greatness, is important for Rabbi Nachman only because he [the *tzaddik*] is a transit point on the way to the Messiah, ... or to phrase it more accurately, is an early manifestation of the Messiah himself.”

I believe that Hillel Zeitlin hit the nail on the head. Rabbi Nachman, far more than most other Hasidic leaders, was extremely concerned with redemption on the two highest planes: the redemption of the Jewish people; and that which is very connected to this, the redemption of the world (indeed, of all the worlds). The *tzaddik* (or more correctly, Rabbi Nachman uses the term : the *tzaddik* of the generation) comes to pave the way for the Messiah. “The true *tzaddik*, or the *tzaddik* of the generation, is the one who opens new

gates in the upper chambers, ... revealing holy splendor which was hidden during many generations. The *tzaddik* is the key to all the worlds from beginning to end.... According to Rabbi Nathan, Rabbi Nachman himself was the last of the path-finders who would pave the way before the coming of the Messiah. There would be no additional *tzaddik* of the generation of his caliber till the Messiah himself would arrive” (Zeitlin 1965a:326).

There is no question that Rabbi Nachman writes a great deal about the *tzaddik*. Using Hillel Zeitlin’s insight, one can conclude that the concept of the *tzaddik* is so central in Rabbi Nachman’s thought because the true *tzaddik* is indeed a precursor of the Messiah. Rabbi Nachman wrote: “In every true *tzaddik* there is a manifestation of the Messiah, a quality of the Messiah which is [in fact] an aspect of Moses, namely that he is very modest and knows his unworthiness in comparison to the grandeur and importance of Israel, to such a degree that he would be ready to die as a martyr for Israel.... Every *tzaddik* of the generation is an aspect of Messiah-Moses, who reveals new concepts in the Torah; ... and just as the Messiah suffers for the sake of Israel and for the sake of the world, so does the *tzaddik* of the generation.... Just as on a superficial level, people see no difference between the way the Land of Israel appears and the way all other countries appear – this despite the fact that the Land of Israel is so intensely holy; so too is the *tzaddik* different from all other people. People see no physical difference between a *tzaddik* and other human beings. On a superficial level, the *tzaddik* appears to be no different physically; yet in point of fact, the *tzaddikim* are totally and completely different from other people” (*Likkutei Eytzot* 76:17, 77:35).

The *tzaddik* has a task that is crucial and unique: he must assist in bringing redemption to Israel and to the world. Rabbi Nachman taught that “the Holy One, blessed be He, is not like flesh and blood. If a person has a garment, when it is new it is important for him; as it gets older and worn out, it becomes unimportant and is discarded. But the Holy One, blessed be He, is different. He created the world but almost immediately, in the very beginning, it became disfigured (). Only afterwards, slowly but surely, did the world become mended and become more important in His esteem. This is due to the appearance of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and after they died came Moses, etc.; and each time there came [additional] *tzaddikim*. They have been rectifying the world more and

more, until in the end, the Messiah will come and complete the redemption of the world” (*Sichot HaRan* 58:2).

In one of his earliest studies on Rabbi Nachman (first printed in Warsaw in 1910), Hillel Zeitlin (1965a:294-325) demonstrated his belief that Rabbi Nachman’s goal was “to prepare the ground for the Messianic redemption, the complete and total redemption for which the soul of Rabbi Nachman, the seer of Braslav, yearned.” I believe that Rabbi Nachman unfolds his search for redemption more clearly in his “Book of Stories from Ancient Times” than in any of his other works. One way this search for redemption is portrayed in this book is the quest for the Lost Princess.

Concept Number Seven: The *Shechinah*

“Commenting on the verse: ‘I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys’ [Canticles 2:1], Rabbi Shimon said: ‘The Holy One, blessed be He, has great love for the Community of Israel (), which is the *Shechinah*. He is always praising her, while she constantly sings His praises from the store of hymns and songs she keeps for the King. Because she flowers so beautifully in the Garden of Eden, the Community of Israel is named ‘the rose of Sharon.’ Because she yearns to be watered from the deep river which is the source of all the spiritual rivers, she is called ‘the lily of the valleys.’ The *Shechinah* is called ‘the lily of the valleys’ also due to the fact that she is found in the deepest place. In the beginning she is a rose with yellow petals, and only afterwards does she become a lily of two colors, white and red, going from one color to the other. She is designated ‘rose’ when she is going to join with the King, and afterwards, when she has come to Him with her kisses, she is designated ‘lily of the valleys.’ (*Zohar* III.107a)

I have already touched upon the concept of the *Shechinah* on page 39 where I wrote that the *Shechinah* represents the immanence of God; in other words, God’s presence that dwells in this world with His creatures. Indeed, the word *Shechinah* comes from the root word ‘to dwell’ .

The *Shechinah* is a fundamental concept in Kabbalistic thought, but it is a term that was often used in the Talmud and throughout Rabbinic literature. In earlier Rabbinic thought, “the *Shechinah* is an expression used to denote the presence of God Himself in the world and is no more than a name for that presence” (Scholem 1974:31). In his magnum

opus, Prof. Urbach (1987:40) writes that for the Sages of the Talmud, “the designation *Shechinah* connotes the personification and hypostasis of God’s presence in the world, that is, of God’s immanence...[it alludes to] His manifest and hidden Presence.” Although Professor Urbach (1987:43) stresses that “in Tannaitic literature the term *Shechinah* is used whenever the manifestation of the Lord and His nearness are spoken of,” he also emphasizes (1987:42) that all references to the *Shechinah* in Rabbinic literature “contain no feminine element ... figurative expressions like Princess, Matron, Queen, or Bride are absent.... The concept of the *Shechinah* does not aim to solve the question of God’s quiddity, but to give expression to His presence in the world and His nearness to man.”

In mystic and Kabbalistic thought, however, the concept of the *Shechinah* undergoes a profound development. First of all, the *Shechinah* becomes identified with the lowest *sefirah*. In the array of the ten *sefirot*, the tenth *sefirah*, *Malchut*, (which means Dominion or Sovereignty), is the ‘lowest’ of the ten and therefore the closest to the three lower worlds. As such, *Malchut* is considered to be synonymous with the *Shechinah* (), the divine presence which descends from the upper worlds to dwell with us in the world of action; *Malchut* (or the *Shechinah*) represents the immanence of God.

The *Shechinah* is also considered, on another level, to be *Knesset Yisrael* (), the sum totality of the Jewish people on a spiritual plane. Thus, the exile of the Jewish people is interlocked and interwoven with the exile of the *Shechinah*; one of the main aspects of the concept of redemption is the redemption of the *Shechinah* and everything that the *Shechinah* alludes to. Consequently, the image of the *Shechinah* (and the need to save or redeem her) is the among the most dominant Kabbalistic images in Rabbi Nachman’s stories.

The *Shechinah* is always represented in Rabbi Nachman’s stories as a feminine figure, and especially as the King’s daughter. The *Shechinah*, God’s presence that dwells among men and women, personifies divine love and compassion, thereby evoking the associations of mother, daughter, bride, beloved wife, or sister. In contrast to much of the rather impersonal or even mechanical description of the *sefirot* in a large portion of the older, more classical Kabbalistic literature, the *Shechinah* is portrayed in Rabbi Nachman’s stories with tenderness.

Steinsaltz devotes much attention to the concept of the *Shechinah*. He writes (1993:xxxiv - xxxvi) "... the *Shechinah* is the immanence of the divine power in this world and that which vivifies it. The *Shechinah* is the divine emanation that pours forth on the world, the inner breath of life of the universe.... In the Kabbalah, the *Shechinah* is the emanation usually called 'Sovereignty' [], because she is the sovereign power of God in the world and therefore, as well as being a female figure, is the recipient of divine abundance. She is called the 'King's Daughter.'

[The *sefirah* of] Sovereignty, or the *Shechinah*, has another side: it is also the Community of Israel in its spiritual sense – the source of all the souls of Israel, ... the communal soul of Israel.... The fall of the world, and its receding from the awareness of its link to the divine and to the exile and fall of Israel, are the exile of the *Shechinah*; and redemption is 'raising the *Shechinah* from the dust' [as can be seen in the passage from the *Zohar* III.6a quoted on page 48]."

The exile, sufferings, and persecutions of the Jewish people are tightly bound with the exile of the *Shechinah*. There can be no redemption of the Jewish people without the redemption of the *Shechinah*, and vice versa. "In the Kabbalah in general, and the Kabbalah of the *Ari* in particular, there is an emphasis on the deep inter-relationship between the *Shechinah* - the *sefirah* of *Malchut* - the Jewish people. The people of Israel are in a state of exile, and so is the *Shechinah*. According to the Kabbalah of the *Ari*, the world in general is in a state of exile, is not whole, and awaits redemption.... The spiritual elements have broken and fallen, and the sparks of holiness that have always been present in these forces are held in captivity by the forces of evil. The redemption of these sparks is the main purpose of man in general, and of the Jewish people in particular" (Oron and Haidenberg 1986:17).

I would like to summarize. The Kabbalah believes that the suffering and the exile of Israel are a mirror of the disharmony of the upper worlds, and of the exile of the *Shechinah*. The redemption of the world (indeed of all the worlds) is inseparable from the redemption of Israel. The Kabbalah clearly acknowledges that the world which we inhabit is far from perfection and far from redemption. Braslav Hasidism too does not attempt to white-wash the evil that pervades the world by a false piety or a false optimism. Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov (*Alim LeTrufah* 1965: Letter Number 205) writes explicitly: "This world, this

downcast world, the world of action () is a world in which all creatures must go through and suffer what they need to suffer and to endure. Every day and every second calamities await each person and there is no way to avoid them.”

Before proceeding to analyze the symbols of the Lost Princess and the quest to find her, it is important to clarify the nature of literary symbols in general. “Defined broadly, a symbol is a sign that does not exist for its own sake, but instead points to a meaning beyond itself.... A literary symbol is a thing (or an event, a person, a quality, or a relationship) that functions simultaneously in two ways: as itself and as a sign of something outside itself” (Main and Seng 1965:133-134). The symbol of the Lost Princess and the search to rescue her became one of the most important and most intricate themes in Rabbi Nachman’s “Book of Stories from Ancient Times.” It also incorporates and evokes the Kabbalistic concepts of redemption, revelation, and creation. This can be seen in the very first story in the book, “The Losing of a King’s Daughter,” which I will now proceed to analyze in Chapter Three of this thesis.

An English translation of this fable can be found in Appendix One, pages 292-295.

CHAPTER THREE:

“The Losing Of The King’s Daughter”

“The Losing of the King’s Daughter” is the first, and one of the shortest, of the thirteen stories that comprise “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” by Rabbi Nachman of Braslav, and as Kaplan (1983:31) points out, it is also “one of the most transparent of all the stories.” Yet at the same time, it is “a religious allegory of deeply human significance” (Steinsaltz 1979:9). This story introduces the reader to the central symbol of the “Lost Princess,” which will return over and over again in additional stories that Rabbi Nachman composed. In this respect, “The Losing of the King’s Daughter” is truly a

fitting introduction to the entire book. Indeed, additional themes (such as the quest, or the castle-fortress where she is kept captive) and literary devices (such as the use of different metaphors to symbolize the Torah), which are first introduced in this story and which accompany the image of the Lost Princess, will likewise come back, develop and evolve in later stories.

Rabbi Nachman of Braslav himself seems to have been aware of the power of this story. Before he began relating it, he prefaced it with these words: “While I was on my journey, I told a story. Whoever heard it had thoughts of repentance” (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:23).

The story begins by telling of a king who had six sons and one precious daughter. The king, in this story and in nearly all of Rabbi Nachman’s stories, represents God. It is noteworthy that the king appears only in the very beginning of the fable and then “disappears” from the rest of the narrative. This seems to signify Rabbi Nachman’s recognition of the fact that we do not see God in the world. Regardless of our belief (or disbelief) in His existence, there is no way we can actually perceive Him tangibly. Human beings can perhaps comprehend the idea that God created the world, but they cannot truly grasp nor fathom His true inner essence. Rabbi Nachman seems to be confirming the idea put forth by his contemporary, the first Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, in his most important book, the Tanya (1979:2:9, 86b): “Just as a [physical] hand cannot grasp a thought, so too a human thought cannot grasp God.” God Himself, in His essence, is unapproachable and unknowable for humanity.

Steinsaltz (1993:xxxiii) writes that “in most of Rabbi Nachman’s stories, the king (or emperor) symbolizes God ... [and] it is a paradoxical fact that He is almost always portrayed outside the actual framework of the plot itself. The King, with whom so many of the tales begin, is not the hero of the story and may even be the ‘king who died’ or ‘the king who was.’ This fact need not surprise us. According to the reality characteristic of the subject Rabbi Nachman deals with, God is not actively revealed within the world. The Creator who is the Prime Cause of all life is not revealed within the ugly world of exile and fall, and the very fact that the world is in a state of exile derives from God’s not being revealed in it. On the contrary, the world in which the king is revealed as King of the

Universe, and which He actively rules, is the world redeemed: the perfected world. The creation of the world, and the giving of free will to man are, in a certain sense, the beginning of ... divine withdrawal, until it seems that God 'has forsaken the earth' (Ezekiel 8:12)... Thus, in most of the stories, the king creates the basic situation; and from that point on, the hero is charged with bringing about the *tikkun*, or repair, of the world."

This idea, which is only hinted at in the opening of "The Losing of A King's Daughter," is expanded upon and elucidated in Story Number Six ("The Modest King") in Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times." In this story, the king's servant is commanded to draw a portrait of the king who is always concealing himself; when the king's servant finally succeeds in having the king pull back the curtain which had concealed him, all that the king's servant can see is Nothing. Although it is impossible to see the King, Rabbi Nachman stresses the point that it is possible to make contact with the King's daughter, as happens in our story. Thus, the quest to know God becomes transformed into the quest for the King's daughter. While the King reveals Himself only at the very beginning of the story and then no longer plays an active role in the unfolding of the plot, the Lost Princess does appear from time to time and does communicate with the king's chamberlain. It therefore becomes imperative to seek her, to make contact with her, and ultimately to aspire to redeem her. Consequently, it is essential to decode and decipher what the Lost Princess represents.

The image of the King's Daughter is in fact multidimensional and contains several layers of meaning. At the most basic level, the King's Daughter is the *Shechinah*, which I discussed at length in the seventh subsection of Chapter Two. Rabbi Nathan writes explicitly and unequivocally in his introduction to the second edition of "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times" which was first printed only in 1850 (*Sippurei Ma'asiot* 1996:8-9): "It is well known throughout the Book of *Zohar* and the *Tikkunei Zohar*, as well as in all the writings of the *Ari*, that the [symbol of the] King's daughter alludes to the *Shechinah* and to *Knesset-Yisrael*. We have been given permission to use this kind of allegorical language from our earliest teachers.... The whole Book of The Song of Songs [Canticles], which is so holy that the world was never as worthy of merit as on the day it was handed down to Israel, is based on this very foundation.... We find this in many places in the

writings of the *Ari* and in the books of the *Zohar*. [For example] it is written, ‘he who kills the Snake is given the King’s daughter’ [*Tikkunei Zohar* 13 (29b)]. It is even more explicit in the teachings of the Grandfather in the Book of *Zohar* [II.95a], which speaks about ‘the Beautiful Maiden without eyes.’ There are so many examples that it is impossible to count them all.”

It is noteworthy to point out that in this story, Rabbi Nachman introduces the Lost Princess as having six brothers, and she seems to be her father’s favorite child. Professor Dan (1975:137-138) states categorically that “there is no doubt that the King’s daughter represents the *Shechinah* and the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, and her six brothers are the six *Sefirot* directly above her.” Kaplan (1983:32), too, writes that this alludes to “the lower seven of the ten *Sefirot*,” and “the Lost Princess clearly refers to last *Sefirah*, *Malchut*, which is seen as being feminine. Like the womb of the female, it is seen as the power to receive and hold (and eventually give back something more perfect)... The *Sefirah* of *Malchut* is the means by which the people receive their direction and guidance from the King.... When the King is in his chambers, he has no interaction with his subjects.” In other words, “the King” at this point is only an abstract embodiment of authority and sovereignty. However, a king sometimes leaves the throne-room of his palace; when he exits his castle, he can descend to the people and intermingle with them, or at least maintain direct contact with them. This is the meaning of the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, the aspect of God’s closeness to the world and to humanity.

In an important book published after his death, Kaplan (1990:222) wrote: “since the word *Shechinah* comes from the word *shachan*, meaning ‘to dwell,’ *Shechinah* denotes that God appears to be ‘dwelling’ in a certain place.... When we say that God ‘dwells’ in a certain place or situation, we really mean that people can have an additional awareness of God there.... [In this context] the exile of the *Shechinah* is the complete concealment of the Divine and man’s inability to experience God in his life.” Rabbi Nathan, too, in the second introduction (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:10), says “the losing of the King’s daughter alludes to the exile of the *Shechinah* and of *Knesset-Yisrael* ().”

I think a parallel way of understanding this can be found through the use of the philosophical terms of transcendence and immanence. In most of the classical texts of the Jewish tradition, both Biblical and Rabbinical, the stress is placed on the transcendence of

God. God is perceived as being holy, awesome and omniscient, the creator of the universe, the divine ruler who gives commandments and demands obedience of his subjects. The *sefirah* of *Malchut*, however, emphasizes the other side of the coin; God is close to humanity as a whole and to every human being who turns to Him. God not only commands, but also listens in compassion and in love to His creatures, the way a mother listens to her child, or a wife to her distressed husband.

I have already said that I believe that these stories in general and the image of the Lost Princess in particular are multidimensional and possess different layers of meaning and interpretation that do not contradict each other but rather complement each other. Steinsaltz agrees; he writes (1993:xxx-xxxi) that these stories, and the images that they employ, “were intended from the onset to have several dimensions” and many of the central images allude to parallel interpretations “belonging to a different meaning level or to different viewpoints.”

Thus, while the Lost Princess alludes primarily to the *Shechinah*, this image has additional connotations. For example, Kook (1994:71) makes the suggestion that the six sons and one daughter parallel the six weekdays and the Sabbath, as does Kaplan. “The Sabbath gives us the power to hold on to the original forces of creation and integrate them into our lives. The Sabbath is also the central point, where instead of looking outward, we look inward, and integrate holiness into ourselves” (Kaplan 1983:32).

Another significant allusion can be found in the Biblical story of Dinah, the daughter of Jacob and Leah (Genesis 34). Dinah was Leah’s youngest child and was born only after six brothers. Like Dinah, the Lost Princess was abducted to a place of evil (in the Biblical narrative, to the city of Shechem) and needed to be rescued. The process of saving Dinah was complicated and dangerous, paralleling the chamberlain’s quest to find and save the Lost Princess.

This analogy actually opens up a whole realm of Biblical parallels from the Book of Genesis because in addition to Dinah, each of the matriarchs relived a similar situation. Sarah (whose name in Hebrew actually means princess!) was abducted by Pharaoh into his harem (Genesis 12:10-20) as well as by the Philistine king of Gerar, Abimelech (Genesis 20). In contrast to Rabbi Nachman’s story (and in what happened to Dinah), however, in order to save Sarah, God reveals Himself in both cases and intervenes directly. In the following generation, Rebecca (Genesis 26:6-11) is not actually abducted by the king of

Gerar, but she is nearly taken by force to his harem and is definitely in a perilous situation. In the third generation, neither Rachel nor Leah are kidnapped but they are raised in an idolatrous environment, and even more importantly, they have a negative father who becomes hostile to their husband; in order to leave their father's home, they are spirited out in secret by Jacob. This, in fact, closely parallels the next story of Rabbi Nachman which I will analyze in Chapter Four of this thesis. Thus, out of all these precedents in the Book of Genesis, the story of Dinah seems to be the most appropriate model for Rabbi Nachman's story of "The Losing of a King's Daughter." I will return to the Biblical figure of Dinah a little later in this chapter.

As Rabbi Nachman relates his story, the king seems to be particularly attached to this daughter, and spends much time with her. "The special bond that exists between God and the *Shechinah* is clearly established in the description of the king's affection for his daughter. The first passage recalls the time when the *Shechinah* resided in the Temple in Jerusalem, and Israel lived in its land in close connection with God" (Steinsaltz 1979:10). Steinsaltz believes that the king's flash of anger against his daughter cannot be explained. Other scholars, however, do try to understand this point. One traditional commentary (*Biur HaLikutim* 1967:60) believes that this is a reference to the concept of *tzimtzum*, which I discussed in Chapter Two, Concept Number Four: Creation. Band agrees with this interpretation; he writes (1978:285) that "the king's anger and the princess's exile are narrative correlatives of the process of *tzimtzum* [self-contraction] and *shevirat hakelim* ['the breaking of the vessels'] by which God created the world.... Lurianic Kabbalah argued that God, in His will to create a world, contracted His being in order to make room for the world to be created. This contraction (*tzimtzum*) involved a violent cataclysm, an internal struggle within the Godhead (*shevirat hakelim* = the breaking of the vessels) in which at least one part of the sefirotic structure, the lowest of the ten spheres (called the *Shechinah*) is, in effect, exiled. The act of restoration (called *tikkun*) is thus the attempt to restore the primordial harmony."

The dual concepts of *tzimtzum* and *shevirat hakelim* seem to have greatly occupied Rabbi Nachman and he grapples with them extensively in his main work, *Likkutei Moharan*. For example, Rabbi Nachman (*Likkutei Moharan* 64:1) writes that "we must say that there is a basic paradox regarding the concept of *tzimtzum*. This revolves around

[the question of] existence and non-existence. For as a result of God's self-contraction (*tzimtzum*), there came into existence an empty space () in which God's essence is absent. For if God's essence were to be present there, this would no longer be an empty space. If this were true, then there could not be a universe because there would not be an empty space into which a universe could be placed and created. Yet the truth is that God's essence somehow must also be there, because we know for sure that God's vital force pervades everything and nothing could maintain its existence without His vital force."

As I have already mentioned, the concept of *tzimtzum* is closely related to the concept of 'the breaking of the vessels,' which in turn tries to answer, at least partially, one of the most difficult questions a religious person can ask: if God is indeed both good and all-powerful, and He alone created the universe, how did evil come into being?

First, let us look at Rabbi Nathan's introduction to the second edition of "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times" published in 1850, where he writes (*Sippurei Ma'asiot* 1996:11) that "the first story, 'The Losing of a King's Daughter,' deals with the secret mystery of the exile of the *Shechinah*. This exile of the *Shechinah* started even before the universe was created, and this is the secret mystery of the 'breaking of the vessels.' This is the deep meaning of the verse, 'These are the kings who ruled in Edom before any king ruled in Israel.'" Kaplan (1983:16) clarifies: "At the very beginning, God created vessels to hold the power (light) of His creation. (These lights were the *Sefirot*). These vessels, however, were not strong enough to hold the light, and shattered and fell to a lower level, forming the realm of evil. These vessels were the earliest manifestation of *Malchut* and the *Shechinah*. The shattering and falling of these vessels were thus the first manifestation of the exile of the *Shechinah*."

It is quite important to analyze the exact phrasing used in our story when the King is angry with his daughter; he exclaims, "May the evil one take you." The Hebrew original reads , which translates literally as "May the 'no good' take you." According to the *Mishnah* (*Pirkei Avot* 5:1), the world was created in ten utterances; however, if one looks carefully at the exact wording of the verses in the first chapter of Genesis that describe the creation of the universe, the phrase, "And God said," appears only nine times. The tenth time that this phrase, "And God said," occurs is in Genesis 2:18, where it is written: "And God said, 'It is not good () for man to be alone.'" According

to the Kabbalistic book *Shiur Komah* (Cordevero 1885:55) composed by an important disciple of the Ari, Rabbi Moshe Cordevero, in Zefat (Safed) in the sixteenth century, this verse is in fact the last utterance of creation, and represents the realm of evil.

The story continues that the King's daughter goes up to her room at night, and in the morning no one can find her. Night is considered to be the period when the powers of evil have gained ascendancy (*Biur HaLikutim* 1967:60,21); in my opinion, night here should be understood metaphorically.

Another of the Ari's most important disciples, Rabbi Haim Vital, says that night is connected to 'the breaking of the vessels.' In his important book, *Eytz Haim*, in the section entitled *Sha'ar Derushei Nekudot* 6 (1972:116), it is claimed that the purpose of 'the breaking of the vessels' was to permit the existence of free-will. It would be impossible to choose between good and evil unless there would be a true reality of evil. Rabbi Nachman points out (*Likkutei Moharan* 21:4) that the concept of divine omniscience seems to contradict the concept of free-will. Since the principle of free-will is so basic in Judaism, the concepts of *tzimtzum* and 'the breaking of the vessels' are invoked in order to elucidate the rather daring idea that God must constrict () His knowledge of what will occur in the future in order to allow free-will to humanity. And if free-will does exist, this means that although some people will choose good, other people will choose evil. Thus it is inevitable that sometimes evil will gain the upper hand. This idea is expressed in Rabbi Nachman's story by the disappearance of the King's daughter, or to use more Kabbalistic terminology, the exile of the *Shechinah*.

Professor Dan (1975:137-138) summarizes the opening scene of this story when he writes that "the king's daughter is clearly the *Shechinah* and the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*. Her six brothers are the six lower *Sefirot*, from (Mercy, Compassion) to (Foundation). Her falling into the captivity of the forces of evil represents the story of the breaking of the vessels ().... The entire story is built on the background of the Lurianic Kabbalah ()."

It is at this point that Rabbi Nachman introduces the figure of the royal chamberlain, who is in fact the most active character in the story. In Hebrew the chamberlain is called

(“the second in sovereignty”) and can also be translated as viceroy or prime-minister.

There are different ways of defining who the chamberlain alludes to. Rabbi Nathan, in the second introduction, writes (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:13) that “the chamberlain represents Israel as a whole.” Steinsaltz (1979:10) too believes that “the king’s chamberlain is symbolic of the people of Israel or, more specifically, of its spiritual leaders. The efforts to save the king’s daughter, and the various failures are a tragic and poetic depiction of the historical struggle of the Jewish people — externally with the world and internally with its members.”

However, the chamberlain symbolizes not only the Jewish people as a whole, and not even the great spiritual leaders of each generation (). Rabbi Nathan (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:12) writes in the second introduction that “this story also alludes to each person at all times. Every human being goes through almost each stage of this story. For every Jewish person must continually be involved in the task of *tikkun* (restoration), raising the *Shechinah* from her exile and from the dust; he must be involved in redeeming the sacred majesty (*Malchut*) from the forces of the Other Side (= of Evil) where she has been taken captive. This is the secret mystery of everything that we perform in the service of God, all the commandments, good deeds and study of the Torah to which we dedicate our lives. All our service of God centers on this very point, as the sacred books teach us. This is true even among the most humble and simple Jewish folk, even those who do not have deep understanding; for they too can be worthy of walking along the straight and narrow path of righteousness, according to their level. The simplest person, ‘if his eye looks straight ahead [Proverbs 4:25],’ does know what the Torah does not permit, and is capable of choosing good and turning away from evil. If he acts in this correct fashion, then he is able to perform all the restorations () of the higher worlds, and he merits raising the *Shechinah* from the low point where she has fallen. It will depend on to what degree he has consecrated and purified himself. Consequently, every Jewish person is actively involved in seeking the King’s daughter in a quest to return her to her Father, just as it was in the beginning. This is the secret mystery of the verse: ‘She shall go back to her father’s house as in her childhood, and then she is able to eat of her father’s bread’ [Leviticus 22:13].”

Rabbi Nathan's commentary here is very important because he stresses the multidimensional aspect of the quest for the Lost Princess. This quest is incumbent upon humanity, on the Jewish people as a whole, on the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people, and on every individual.

In her analysis of the story, Kook writes that the chamberlain is intended to symbolize each individual person most of all. She (1994:71) writes that "the chamberlain is each human being who has freedom of choice.... Each person must search for the captive princess.... The losing of the King's daughter symbolizes simultaneously both the exile of the *Shechinah* and the wanderings of the Jewish people among the nations of the Diaspora; at the same time, it also symbolizes how each person has fallen spiritually when he moves away from God."

Steinsaltz (1979:10-11) makes an interesting observation when he says, "After the banishment of the *Shechinah*, the Jewish people, too, must go into exile. Here, in fact, Rabbi Nachman has inverted the order of the traditional account in which the *Shechinah* follows the Jews into exile—that is, the physical banishment precedes the spiritual. As Rabbi Nachman tells it, the chamberlain makes a voluntary decision to seek out the king's daughter. Two tasks lie before him as leader of the people: to help the Jews find their collective soul, and to reunite daughter and father. To attain these goals, he is willing to suffer all the tribulations of an almost endless quest."

When the chamberlain begins his quest, he takes with him only the barest necessities: a servant, a horse, and money for expenses. When this story is interpreted on the level of the individual (the quest each person undertakes in search of holiness and pure faith), I believe that the chamberlain represents the *neshamah* (the higher, spiritual soul which I discussed in the second subsection of Chapter Two), whereas the servant symbolizes the lower level of the human personality, the *nefesh* (the animal soul). The horse will then represent the human body. Indeed, in Rabbi Nachman's eleventh story in "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times" (the very important and intricate story of "The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged"), this is exactly what these figures represent.

Steinsaltz suggests a parallel dimension of interpretation. For him, the chamberlain represents most of all the spiritual leader of the Jewish people in each generation (whom

Rabbi Nachman would designate as (). When such a great spiritual leader embarks on his quest, “he is accompanied by a servant, symbolic of the simple, innocent people of Israel who seek redemption together with their spiritual leaders” (Steinsaltz 1979:11). In the story “The Merchant and the Pauper” which I will analyze in Chapter Four, the simple people of Israel (represented there by one of the most important characters in the story) play a major role in the quest for redemption and restoration (), but in this story they are not very active.

It is very important to pay close attention to the original Hebrew phrase used in this story for what has been translated as ‘chamberlain,’ namely (), which means literally ‘the second to the king.’ The one Biblical figure who is explicitly designated ‘second to the king’ in the text of the Torah itself is Joseph (Genesis 41:40, 43 and 44). In Rabbinical literature (as well as in the Book of *Zohar* and Kabbalistic tradition), Joseph is termed simply ‘the *tzaddik*,’ that is to say, the righteous person *par excellence*. In the Kabbalah, Joseph represents the *Sefirah* of *Yesod* (Foundation — ()), which is always linked to the figure of the righteous, according to the verse: “The righteous person is the foundation of the world” (Proverbs 10:25). Kaplan (1983:36) points out that the *Sefirah* of *Yesod* “usually denotes the concept of penetration; hence, the chamberlain must penetrate the realm of evil in order to free the princess. This is very much like Joseph, who penetrated the defilement of Egypt to become a *tzaddik* [as well as] ‘the second to the king.’

In my opinion, it is possible to further develop Kaplan’s insight about how the chamberlain’s penetration into the palace-fortress where the King’s daughter is being held captive parallels Joseph’s penetrating the defilement of Egypt. When we examine the Biblical narrative, we see that after Joseph becomes the viceroy of Egypt, he is given Asnat the daughter of Poti-Phera as wife (Genesis 41:45).

Who exactly is Asnat? In the important medieval Bible commentary called *Hezkuni* (), composed by Rabbi Hezekiah ben Rabbi Manoach, it is written (*Torat-Haim, Genesis* 1987:192) that Asnat was actually the daughter of Dinah, Jacob’s daughter. According to this commentator, Dinah gave birth to a daughter after she had been raped by Shechem. Jacob gave this granddaughter a special amulet; this child eventually arrived in Egypt and was adopted by Potiphar and his wife. When Joseph saw this girl’s amulet, he realized that she was of Jewish origin and married her. Thus, according to this midrash

which *Hezkuni* brings, Asnat the daughter of Dinah is a lost princess who is redeemed by a royal viceroy () and chamberlain, Joseph the *tzaddik*. Furthermore, in the Kabbalah there is usually a very close association between the *Sefirot of Malchut* and *Yesod*.

It is highly significant, too, that the chamberlain encounters the princess in the desert. Kaplan (1983:37) points out that “the desert is a place of isolation, where one is alone. Hence, the desert refers to *hitbodedut*: individual, isolated prayer and meditation.” Kaplan refers here to one of the most important innovations in the service of God initiated by Rabbi Nachman, and which has become one of the most distinctive features of Bratslav Hasidism, namely the practice of *hitbodedut* (). Rabbi Nachman himself constantly stressed the centrality of *hitbodedut*, and after Rabbi Nachman’s death, Rabbi Nathan (as well as his successors) reiterated over and over again its importance, which became a hallmark of Bratslav Hasidism.

First of all, it is imperative to see how different scholars understood this key term. Green (1981:3) translates *hitbodedut* as “the lone outpouring of the soul before God.” He (1981:145-146) later explains that “the most essential religious practice of Bratslav, and that which [Rabbi] Nachman constantly taught was to be placed above all else in his disciples’ hierarchy of values, was this act of *hitbodedut*, lone daily conversation with God. The *hasid* was to set aside a certain period of time each day, preferably out of doors if possible, and always alone when he was to pour out before God his most intimate longings, needs, desires, and frustrations. [Rabbi] Nachman emphasized the need to do this aloud, to bring those usually unspoken inner drives to the point of verbalization. He also insisted that one do so in one’s native language (in his case Yiddish).

Here [Rabbi] Nachman has been struck by that same insight known to the Reformers in the history of Christianity: the vernacular has a power of direct access to the heart that no liturgical language, however beloved, can attain; this power must be harnessed for the purpose of a more intimate life with God.

... This lone act of *hitbodedut* was depicted as the single most important activity of both *tzaddik* and *hasid*. There is simply no other way to be close to God, [Rabbi]

Nachman taught, and nearness to God was the single ultimate goal that a Braslav *hasid* was to allow himself....

This claim – that the core of religion lay in the inner life of the individual and in the impassioned outpouring of his innermost thoughts before God is quite unique in the history of Judaism.... Without rebellion against law or theology, there is something dramatically new and daring about it, something almost ‘Protestant’ and almost modern.”

Kaplan too presents a penetrating analysis of Rabbi Nachman’s concept of *hitbodedut*. He (1985:52) defines it as “self-isolation,” and not merely seclusion or isolation. He states that “there are two types of isolation, external self-isolation and internal self-isolation. External self-isolation simply involves being alone physically – going off to fields, woods, or caves, anywhere away from other people. This, however, is only the first step; external self-isolation is the doorway to internal self-isolation.

Internal self-isolation consists in isolating the mind from all outward sensation and then even from thought itself.... It is a state in which the mind is isolated, standing alone, without any sensation or thought.”

Although Rabbi Nachman placed an unprecedented importance on the idea and practice of *hitbodedut*, it had actually been used centuries earlier by medieval Jewish mystics. The son of Rabbi Moses Maimonides, Rabbi Abraham (1186 - 1237), was a mystic who lived in Egypt and wrote about his experiences in a book originally written in Arabic and later translated into Hebrew as (“The Book of Sustenance for the Servants of the Lord”); a critical edition of this book was published in Israel in 1965. Regarding *hitbodedut*, he (1965:177-186) wrote that “... a person should seclude himself in unpopulated areas like forests, deserts, and mountains ... he should contemplate on nature. This person should meditate concerning the greatness of the sea, contemplating in wonder the many living creatures which inhabit the sea.... A person can look at the night sky when it is clear, permitting his thoughts to dwell on the splendor of the stars.... The best time to devote to *hitbodedut* is in the middle of the night or before dawn...”

Finally, perhaps it would be best and most beneficial to quote Rabbi Nachman himself: “The practice of *hitbodedut* is on a very high level; it is higher than anything else.... This is the correct way to practise *hitbodedut*: one must set aside at least one hour a day, if not more, to be alone in a field or a grove, and one should speak directly to God in one’s

own mother-tongue. One must speak to God as if He were a friend or companion, directly and from the heart....

Hitbodedut must take place in a special place – that is to say, outside the city or town, in an isolated location where one will not be disturbed. It is best to perform *hitbodedut* at night, because the essence of *hitbodedut* is related to night, when the world is able to rest. During the daytime, people are preoccupied with pursuing things of this world, and are thus prevented from cleaving to God....

It is best to pray and to perform *hitbodedut* in a forest or a field, among the trees, bushes, and blades of grass. For when a person prays or talks to God there, then all the trees and bushes and blades of grass merge into prayer and help him, by giving him the power to meditate and pray.

The practice of *hitbodedut* is the most vital of all the ways to serve God and to worship Him, and indeed includes all the other ways of service to God. Through it, one merits good both in this world and in the world to come.... There is no way to overcome one's own evil desires and lusts, and to come closer to God, other than through *hitbodedut*....” (*Likkutei Eytzot* 1979:56-62).

I believe that the chamberlain's entering the desert is a metaphor for the experience of *hitbodedut*. According to Rabbi Nachman, the practice of *hitbodedut* helps a person to overcome his faults, lusts, evil desires, and weaknesses. Only after a person has tried to perfect himself spiritually is he able to make true contact with the higher realms of sanctity and spirituality represented by the Lost Princess. This seems to be linked to the symbol of the desert. This image of the desert, a wilderness far from the habitations and settlements of civilization and which is the place where the Lost Princess can be encountered, will manifest itself again in other stories in Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times." Kaplan's insight that the desert is a metaphor for _____ is therefore a valuable key to understanding how the quest for the Lost Princess should be accomplished. We can reach the conclusion that according to Rabbi Nachman, the quest to find the Lost Princess is above all an inner journey to the deepest wellsprings of a person's consciousness. The path to redemption is not something external but must be achieved and reached within oneself. It is of course no coincidence that the Torah itself was given to the Children of Israel in the

desert 49 days after the Exodus from Egypt. In this level of meaning, the Lost Princess can be perceived as a personification of the Torah, especially the deeper levels of understanding the Torah. Indeed, in the next story to be analyzed (“The Merchant and the Pauper”), we will see that this is one of the major representations that the Lost Princess symbolizes. In any case, the encounter of the Children of Israel with the Torah on Mt. Sinai (which indeed was often compared to a wedding by the Sages of the Talmud) was and is not only an external revelation. Rabbi Nachman seems to be implying the profoundest level of the Torah (), portrayed as the Lost Princess, is attainable only by *hitbodedut* or a parallel inner, spiritual odyssey.

It is interesting, too, that in the desert itself, the chamberlain saw a side-path, and it was this side-path which lead him to the place of the Lost Princess. At the time, he could not have been sure that this path would bring him to the Lost Princess, but it was clear to him that she could not and would not be found on the main highway used by most people, but only on a road not taken and not trod on by most.

Interestingly, one of the most influential American poets of the twentieth century, Robert Frost, came to a similar conclusion. In one of his best-known poems, “The Road Not Taken,” Frost writes (Gibson and Arms 1962:658):

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —

I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

In my opinion, Rabbi Nachman would certainly agree with the conclusion contained in the last two lines of the poem concerning the path chosen by the chamberlain in the desert:

“I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.”

When the chamberlain first arrived at the castle, he “was afraid that the guards would not let him in.” However, he decided to take the risk, and because he entered without fear or hesitation, “no one hindered him.” This phenomenon of being able to enter a heavily-guarded fortress (on condition of not being afraid) also appears in the Rabbi Nachman’s story “The Master of Prayer,” which I analyze in Chapter Five of this thesis. In both fables, a righteous person is able to penetrate the dominion of wickedness if that person is able to overcome his fear of evil and his belief that evil can truly threaten him; thus, the chamberlain (as well as the master of prayer) “can enter unhindered since evil has no power over him.... The *tzaddik* does not fear the realm of evil, as it is written [Psalm 23:4]: ‘Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me’.... [On the other hand,] it is easy to enter the realm of evil, and no one questions him” (Kaplan 1983:38).

It is interesting to note that before the chamberlain enters the fortress-castle, he leaves the horse behind. As I wrote on page 66, the horse symbolizes the body, in this and in other stories by Rabbi Nachman as well. “This indicates that this was a completely spiritual experience [entered by]... meditation [] and prayer” (Kaplan 1983:38).

The castle found by the chamberlain is not only “beautiful and finely laid out,” but it is “the evil one’s place,” as the Lost Princess candidly reveals to the chamberlain. In this story, as well as the other three which deal with the Lost Princess and which are analyzed in this thesis, evil is not portrayed as a burning hell full of torment and torture, the way it was painted by the artists of medieval Christianity or as it was described by Dante in “The Inferno.” On the contrary, it seems quite beautiful. Commenting on this, Steinsaltz (1993:14) writes that although evil may seem attractive, “it is ultimately illusionary.” Rabbi Nachman is aware that evil may appear at times to be quite innocuous and even tempting, but it is in reality empty of content. He says explicitly that “the evil inclination () can

be compared to someone who runs among the people with his fist closed, and nobody knows what he is holding. He stretches out his arm and asks everyone, ‘What am I holding?’ Everybody imagines that he is holding the thing that he desires; everybody runs after him, believing that he is carrying what he longs for. Finally, this man opens his fist, and there is nothing there. Thus, the desires of this world are like rays of the sun that shine as they enter a house. People try to grasp them, but they cannot grasp anything [tangible]” (*Sichot HaRan* 1961:6).

The beauty of the castle, however, points to something even deeper, namely to the extremely tragic and dark side of “the exile of the *Shechinah*.” This is the fact that “not only is she separated from the divine, but she actually supports and sustains evil. The *Shechinah* is, of course, not a willing partner, for she is a captive” (Steinsaltz 1979:12). The King’s daughter is now called the queen; that is to say, she is now the mate of the evil one, and it is she who provides sustenance and dominion to the realm of the Other Side (), the realm of evil. When the evil king ordered the queen (= the captive Lost Princess) to be brought in, “there was a great commotion and much joy, and the musicians played and sang when she was brought.” This music seems to have an important function, and we will encounter the central role of music in other stories, too. The source of music in general is from birds (*Likkutei Moharan* 3); the music of evil comes from “the birds of the Other Side” (*Zohar* I:217b). These birds of evil receive their nourishment from the ‘breasts’ of the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* (*Likkutei Moharan* 3, based on *Eytz Haim, Shaar HaKlippot* 2). Thus, it is a very ironic and paradoxical tragedy that it is the Lost Princess who (unwillingly) props up and supports the entire dominion of evil, through the means of music.

In my opinion, it is noteworthy that although the chamberlain recognizes the Lost Princess before she recognized him, it is she who takes the initiative when he lies in a corner of the room; she rises from her throne, goes down to him, touches him, and first asks him, “Do you recognize me?” (The Hebrew original is: , so a more accurate translation would be: ‘Do you know me?’). In my opinion, this question asked by the Lost Princess is an echo of the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden, when God asked Adam, “Where are you?” after Adam (whose name in Hebrew means literally ‘Man’) went into hiding (Genesis 3:9). In a parallel fashion, Rabbi Nachman seems to be hinting that although

a person may be in search of the divine, God (and the forces of holiness personified by the Lost Princess) is also in search of man. Rabbi Nachman appears to be suggesting that divine revelation is not only something that happened to prophets long ago in Biblical times. Even today God is in search of every human being; people can encounter the voice and presence of God, represented here by the figure of the Lost Princess, even in the midst of impurity. It is interesting to note that one of the levels of divine revelation that the Sages of the Talmud experienced was called a *Daughter of a Voice*, which is often translated as a ‘divine echo,’ but which literally means ‘the daughter of a voice’ (or perhaps even more accurately, a Voice with a capital ‘V’ representing the voice of God). At this point of the story, the Lost Princess may be representing not only the *Shechinah*, but also ‘the daughter of a Voice,’ the *Daughter of a Voice*, that calls out to a person, “Do you know me?”

In answer to the chamberlain’s question on how he can free her, the Lost Princess prescribes a regimen of yearning for her for a whole year; in addition, on the last day he must fast and not sleep for twenty-four hours.

Rabbi Nachman in general placed great importance on the concept of yearning. He said (*Sichot HaRan* 52): “I don’t know of anyone who can say that he serves God according to the true greatness of God, according to the way that God truly deserves to be served. For anyone who knows even a fraction of God’s greatness knows how poor and frail is the way he serves God. Even angels cannot say of themselves that they perform the service of God in truth.

The main thing, therefore, is the desire to serve God, the strong and unceasing yearning to come closer to God and to cleave to Him. Although everyone says that he desires to serve God, these yearnings wax and wane, growing stronger and weaker... Therefore, the main thing is this powerful yearning for God; and in merit of this yearning, we pray and we do His commandments (). The truth is that in comparison to God’s grandeur and greatness, all of our deeds in His service are really nothing, it is all ‘as if’... What really matters is our yearning for God.”

On a different occasion, Rabbi Nachman summarized the same idea: “The main thing is to have a constant strong desire and a constant yearning to do God’s will” (*Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 1988:91).

What God wants from us is not perfection, but an inner will to yearn for Him, to yearn for His presence and His closeness. This is the concept embedded in the Lost Princess's instructions to the chamberlain to yearn for her. Rabbi Nathan, in his second introduction printed in 1850, clarifies this point. "The *Shechinah* may reveal herself to a person from out of the deep exile where she has been hidden and concealed, coming to him quietly and telling him where she is dwelling and how he is able to find her. This is expressed in the story when the King's daughter comes to the chamberlain and reveals to him what he needs to do in order to set her free. The methods that are shown here are explained very clearly.... A person needs to choose a certain location for himself and set up for himself a schedule of penitence () and fasting and most of all, a constant and unending yearning for God, in order for him to merit receiving a perception of Him, [as it is written in the prayers of Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur:] 'Every creature must know that You have made him, each thing that You have formed should know that You have formed him'... This raising of the *Shechinah* from exile consists, above all, of recognizing God's dominion in pure faith and in truth. Then everyone both great and small will acknowledge God and the kingdom shall be His. A person begins this by selecting a place for meditation and the service of God, yearning greatly for Him." (*Sippurei Ma'asiot* 1996:13).

However, in addition to yearning, the chamberlain is instructed that he must also fast on the last day of the year, and not sleep for twenty-four hours. This seems to refer to the ten Days of Awe () that begin with Rosh HaShanah and end with Yom Kippur; the reference to fasting is a direct allusion to Yom Kippur and the prohibition of eating on the holiest day in the Jewish calendar. In the Talmud (Rosh Hashanah 18a), one of the Sages, Rabbah bar Avu, says that the verse, "Seek the Lord when He can be found, call upon Him when He is near" (Isaiah 55:6), refers to these ten Days of Awe. Rabbi Nachman often stressed the importance of Rosh HaShanah since it is the beginning of the period of repentance; the Days of Awe are also the ten days of penitence (), and without penitence there can be no redemption. Indeed, in Braslav tradition, Rosh HaShanah evolved into their most important holiday, when thousands of Braslav Hasidim make an annual pilgrimage to Rabbi Nachman's grave in Uman in the Ukraine to pray. One traditional Braslav commentary (*Rimzei Ma'asiot, Hashmatot* 25) says specifically that Rosh HaShanah is the time when the *Shechinah* can be found.

In the story, the chamberlain makes three attempts to rescue the Lost Princess and restore her to her father, three attempts to bring redemption to the world. He fails twice, but the last lines of the story promise that he will eventually succeed in the third attempt.

The first attempt (and failure) parallels Adam's sin and failure in the Garden of Eden. After the Lost Princess instructed the chamberlain what to do, he left the fortress-castle of the 'evil one' and did exactly what he was told to do. However, on the last day he sees a tree with beautiful apples, eats, and immediately falls asleep; this of course mirrors Adam's sin of eating from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil in the Garden of Eden. I would like to say in passing that it is very interesting that Rabbi Nachman chose to follow the Christian tradition by writing that this fruit was an apple. In the Talmudic tradition (*Berachot* 40a), the Rabbinic Sages debate whether this forbidden fruit was a grape, a fig, an etrog, or wheat, but never mention an apple.

After his failure, the chamberlain sleeps a very long time. Sleep is a metaphor for a lower state awareness and consciousness, a state where one is oblivious to God. According to Kaplan (1983:41), this sleep "is reflected in the Torah, where, during the ten generations from Adam to Noah, essentially nothing of [spiritual] significance happened. It was as if the human race was in a state of sleep during this time. But at this time, humanity was still one, and it could have been easily rectified."

An interesting idea is expressed in the fact that the servant does not fall asleep. The servant can never attain the high spiritual levels that the chamberlain aspires to, but on the other hand, he never descends into the depths of sin, failure and sleep, as does the chamberlain. Thus, the simple people of Israel, represented here by the servant, do not yearn for the sanctity that is the aspiration of the *tzaddikim*, the spiritual leaders of the Jewish people, but they do not fall so low. As I mentioned earlier, it is possible to understand the servant as symbolizing the *nefesh*, and the chamberlain, the *neshamah*. Indeed, in Rabbi Nachman's story, "The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged" (Story Number Eleven), at a certain point in the plot the King's true son (who represents the *neshamah*) lives a life of dissolution and sin that includes drunkenness and visiting brothels, whereas the son of the maidservant never stoops so low.

In our story, the servant tries to awaken the chamberlain but does not succeed. When the chamberlain finally does wake up, he asks his servant, "Where am I?" This

question, too, mirrors the question Adam was asked by God when he tried to hide from Him in the Garden of Eden after his sin, “Where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). And this is the question every sinner asks after he awakens from his spiritual stupor and seeks to renew his spiritual relationship with God.

It is important to note that the Lost Princess is still in the same fortress-castle, and so it is easy for the chamberlain to locate her. “This is because humanity was still one.... Humanity did not have to change its status [in order] to rectify the *Shechinah*.... Prophecy still existed. One could have the divine presence rest on him through prophecy” (Kaplan 1983:42).

In the chamberlain’s second attempt to save the Lost Princess, the chamberlain’s task is made easier; he is now allowed to eat, but he is still forbidden to sleep or to drink wine. The Lost Princess warns him that the main prohibition is sleep.

However, despite her warning, the chamberlain fails a second time; in this second failure he resembles the Biblical figure of Noah. Rabbi Nathan, in his second introduction, compares the chamberlain’s first two attempts (and failures) to save the Lost Princess with Adam’s and Noah’s sins. Rabbi Nathan writes that “as soon as Adam was created, he was supposed to rectify ‘the breaking of the vessels,’ and raise and restore all the worlds to their proper position and status. If he had done this at that time, after the creation of the world, then God’s kingdom would have been revealed, just as it will happen in the time of the Messiah. However, Adam did not refrain from eating from the Tree of Knowledge, which is represented in the story by the chamberlain’s failure when he ate from the apple. By this [failure], Adam brought about a great spiritual descent, causing the *Shechinah* to fall even lower in the captivity of the Other Side.

Afterwards, Noah wanted to rectify this, but he was unsuccessful because he drank wine and became drunk. This is the deep meaning of the verse: ‘He drank wine and became drunk, and uncovered (revealed) himself inside the tent’ (Genesis 9:21) Noah’s drinking of the wine caused him to fail the test” (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:11-12).

The verse that Rabbi Nathan quotes has an unusual grammatical structure in the Hebrew original, where it is written as “_____.” Mirkin (1968:II:69) points out that the verb _____ appears in the _____ form only twice in the entire

Bible, and the verse really “should” have been written with the word *shafar* and not *shafar*. This is exactly the question that is posed in the following midrash: “Rabbi Yehudah bar Rabbi Simon quoted Rabbi Hanin in the name of Rabbi Samuel bar Rabbi Isaac: *shafar* is not written here, but rather *shafar*. [This comes to teach us that] Noah brought exile (*shafar*) upon himself and upon future generations” (*Bereshit Rabbah* 36:4). That is to say, this midrash employs a play on words, and understands the unusual word *shafar* as coming not from the root “reveal, uncover” but rather from the word “exile” (*shafar*).

Apparently based on this midrash, Rashi and other classical Bible commentators like *Radak* (Rabbi David Kimchi) say this word does indeed allude to exile, and they all link this specific concept of exile to the drinking of wine. A very important scholar and Kabbalist who lived two generations before Rabbi Nachman, the *Chofetz Chaim* (Rabbi Moshe Haim Luzzato, 1707-1746) wrote in his comprehensive book on Kabbalistic thought (Luzzato 1882:11b) that Noah would have liberated the *Shechinah* and accomplished the great restoration (*shafar*) of ‘the breaking of the vessels,’ had he not drunk wine. Drinking the wine caused him to miss this chance, and the exile of the *Shechinah* continued and deepened. This idea is expressed in the *Zohar* (I:73) itself: “Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai said, ‘Noah wanted to investigate the sin that Adam had committed, not in order to commit it again, but rather to understand it and to repair (*shafar*) the world. However, he failed.’”

In my opinion, Noah’s insobriety from drinking wine alludes to something very basic. Wine is very powerful and pleasant, but can also be very destructive. Therefore, over the centuries mankind has developed three distinct attitudes towards drinking wine. The first attitude, which I would term Dionysiac, is hedonistic: why not drink wine as much as possible and as frequently as one desires? Drinking wine is a very pleasurable experience; every human being has inner tensions and turmoil, and becoming drunk releases a person (at least temporarily) from his or her worries and sorrows. In contrast, the second attitude is the exact opposite: because a drunkard loses his self-control, and indeed can erase the image of God within himself or herself, it is forbidden to drink wine. This is the attitude of Islam, of certain Protestant sects like the Mormons, and of certain religious groups in the Far East. Judaism has taken a third approach, namely, it is permissible to drink wine, but within clear boundaries and limitations; in other words, the power of wine is channeled into the framework of holiness. The Jewish person is supposed to sanctify (*shafar*)

the wine. “It is ... clear that our sages were aware that the drinking of wine can be harmful. And yet they bid us to begin each Sabbath with *Kiddush* over wine. This teaches us that the world is not divided into good and bad or holy and profane, but rather into good and not-yet-good, into holy and not-yet-holy. Wine when drunk with moderation can be an instrument for holiness. When abused, it becomes a source of harm and even tragedy... The Jew is not to shun the physical; his task is to make it sacred, to sanctify every aspect of creation, to suffuse the physical with the spiritual potential in all things and, thus, make them holy” (Riskin 2000:21).

According to Jewish religious law, wine may be drunk, but a blessing must be recited both before and after; moreover, not only may wine be drunk, but it becomes an integral part of something holy. For example, the Jewish Sabbath both begins and terminates with the partaking of wine, and in the most sacred and significant ceremonies like marriage or circumcision, the drinking of wine is mandatory. This third attitude towards wine, which was adopted by Judaism, is called *kiddush*, or sanctification, and it parallels in many ways the Kabbalistic concept of *tikkun* (תיקון), rectification.

Noah’s sin therefore was the fact that he did not use the power of wine for sanctifying God, but rather abused it by becoming drunk and forgetting God. This was a tragic failure, theologically and historically, which humanity has not yet overcome. In addition, wine is symbolic of other powerful forces (like sexual desires) that often overwhelm people but which do not need to be forbidden. Rather, if these forces are sanctified, they can aid a person to achieve redemption.

Rabbi Nachman takes this idea one step further in our story. I believe that he interprets the drinking of the wine from the spring by the chamberlain as being a sin of the intellect; instead of using his intelligence to strengthen his faith, the chamberlain allows his pseudo-reasoning and over-rationalizing to take control of him.

In the second trial, the chamberlain’s temptation is subtler than in the first. The first trial (with the eating of the apple) was based on physical desire, but the second trial is intellectual in nature, involving using formalistic reasoning in order to persuade oneself that what common sense clearly forbids is nonetheless permitted.

Kaplan (1983:44) writes that “these two episodes therefore relate to the two main tests that a person has in life. The apple represents simple desire. A person can fall from his

level (sleep) because he succumbs to his desires, but he does not sleep ‘seventy years,’ and the divine presence [the Lost Princess] is still there waiting for him when he wakes up.

But a person can also fall because of intellectual curiosity, and thus become involved in atheism and disbelief. When a person drinks this ‘wine,’ he falls away from all seventy faces of the Torah. Moreover, when he wakes up, the divine presence is no longer waiting for him.”

In Story Number Eight in Rabbi Nachman’s “Book of Stories from Ancient Times” (“The Clever Man and the Simple Man”), there is an incident that sheds light on the sin committed by the chamberlain when he decides to taste the wine. In Story Number Eight, Rabbi Nachman compares two men: one who is guided by a simple and child-like (but absolute) faith in God, and a second person who is intellectually brilliant but overly intellectual. At a certain critical juncture in the story, both men receive a letter from the King (who represents God in this story as well), requesting them to come to meet him at the royal palace. “The simple man was immediately filled with joy” (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:85) and set out instantaneously to go to the King, and eventually becomes the King’s minister and advisor. The reaction of the clever man, however, is much more complicated. When he receives the letter, the clever man spends the whole night analyzing and re-analyzing the situation. “How is it possible,’ he ponders, ‘that such a great and awesome King would send for a lowly creature like me?’ (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:87). Instead of reacting spontaneously and instinctively like the simple man, the clever man abandons common sense and becomes involved in over-rationalizing and sophistry. He finally reaches the conclusion that there is no King at all and all the world are fools to believe in the existence of the King. His atheism and his constant mocking of others for their beliefs also cause him to lose all his wealth and the respect of the community. The direct cause of the clever man’s downfall was his denial of common sense and his use of rationalizations and sophistry. This is exactly what causes the chamberlain to fail a second time and drink from the wine.

As Kaplan points out, this second failure is far more severe than the first. After eating from the apple and falling asleep for a period of time, the chamberlain was still able to locate the Lost Princess with no difficulty because she had not gone away. After the second failure, the Lost Princess is now much more difficult to attain. Not only has the chamberlain fallen into a coma-like sleep of seventy years, but the Lost Princess herself is unable to

awaken him despite her efforts, and she has been taken to a different place of captivity which is nearly impossible to reach.

In the Talmud (*Berachot* 17a), Rabbi Alexandri is quoted as composing this prayer: “Lord of the universe, it is clear and known before You that we wish to do Your will, and what prevents us from doing it? The leaven in the dough, and our bondage to the nations.” Rashi explains that “the leaven in the dough” is the evil inclination (*yetzer hara*), which is alluded to, in my opinion, by the eating of the apple by both Adam and the chamberlain. In other words, this “leaven in the dough,” which is the internalization of evil within mankind’s psyche, came about as a result of Adam’s sin, and in our story, is represented by the eating of the apple by the chamberlain.

Noah’s sin, however, caused the eventual servitude of Israel to the nations of the world. Let me explain. Genesis 9:21 relates how Noah drank from the wine. The preceding verses (Genesis 9:18-19) refer to Noah’s three sons and conclude that “from these [three sons] was the whole world dispersed.” This dispersion of all of humanity from Noah’s progeny is described in great detail in genealogical lists in Genesis 10 and Genesis 11 (which includes the story of the Tower of Babel). It is very important to pay close attention to the fact that if we count the nations enumerated and listed in Genesis 10 as the descendants of Noah, we find 70 nations.

In my opinion, the seventy years that the chamberlain sleeps are an allusion to these 70 nations of the world. The reason why the chamberlain’s second failure is so much more severe than the first failure lies in the fact that mankind is no longer one and united. After Noah awakens from his drunken stupor in Genesis 9, he curses one of his sons (Ham) and grandson (Canaan), and praises two other sons. We thus find in Genesis 9, 10, and 11 that not only is humanity going to be divided into seventy different nationalities with different cultures and speaking different languages, but there is going to be hostility and tension among the various ethnic groups. This tragic division of humanity causes the Lost Princess to be far more difficult to locate and redeem. “After this second failure, the situation of the King’s daughter is drastically changed and becomes symbolic of the final exile, when all hopes of immediate return are lost. She is banished to an inconceivably remote place” (Steinsaltz 1993:17).

In *Likkutei Moharan* 36a, Rabbi Nachman seems to touch upon this point, when he writes: “Every Jewish person is rooted in the 70 souls of the House of Israel [Genesis 46:27], and these 70 souls of the House of Israel are rooted in the 70 aspects of Torah. This, however, is in contrast to the 70 languages of the world, for each of these 70 languages has a certain detriment or defect that is unique to that language alone. These 70 defects camouflage the 70 aspects [literally, faces] of Torah. Therefore, before a Jewish person can gain insight or a revelation in the Torah or in the service of God, he must overcome the defects of the seventy languages of the exile. Whoever wishes to acquire revelation into the inner meaning of the Torah must overcome the external husk () of the seventy languages.”

The Biblical account of man’s search for God begins with two failures: Adam and Noah, reflected in the first two weekly portions of the Torah (and). It is highly significant, though, that the quest for God and the redemption of the world undergoes a drastic change in strategy following Noah’s failure. As I have said, humanity is now divided into different nations; but precisely this division will enable one nation to pursue a different vision and follow a different path. The third weekly portion of the Torah () therefore marks a real turning-point. One man, Abraham, will emerge as the third father of mankind, but not as the physical father of all humanity (like Adam and Noah), rather as the spiritual father of all the families of the earth and the physical father of one small nation that continues his mission. Nechama Leibowitz (1995:84) writes that “Adam and his descendants failed, and a second beginning with Noah and his sons also ended in failure. After the generation of the Tower of Babylon, humanity is divided into different nationalities and there seems to be no possible remedy ... until a third beginning dawns, when one people will be for a blessing ‘and all the families of the earth will be blessed’ in him [Genesis 12:3].”

From this point on, therefore, one can say that the chamberlain represents Abraham and the subsequent spiritual leaders of the Jewish people. It is noteworthy to pay attention to the fact that at this point in the story, after the chamberlain awakens after sleeping for seventy years and realizes that he needs to renew his quest for the Lost Princess (in a world dominated by the seventy nations of the world), he leaves his servant behind. “When Abraham was about to climb the mountain to sacrifice his son Isaac and was facing the most

terrible test of faith imaginable, he told the servants who had accompanied him to stay behind. So, too, the chamberlain, about to go beyond the limits of human experience in search of the golden mountain, must go alone. The servant (the common people) endures the physical hardship of exile together with his master, but the latter must bear its spiritual torment and despair alone. This was the way that many Hasidic leaders, and notably Rabbi Nachman, envisaged their task: they had, on the one hand, to direct and comfort their followers, and on the other, to face in isolation the spiritual challenges and existential loneliness of the final stages of the exile” (Steinsaltz 1993:18).

When the chamberlain was asleep for 70 years, the Lost Princess was exiled to an extremely remote location, carried away in a carriage. The term used in the original Hebrew for carriage is *mercazot*, which literally translates as “a chariot and covered wagons.” The word *mercazot* (chariot) is very pregnant with meaning in the Kabbalah; it is rich with important connotations, such as the mystic vision of the divine chariot in Chapter One in the Book of Ezekiel, as a code-word and synonym for the world of Creation (*olam ha-briah*), and as the whole body of the esoteric secrets of mystic knowledge. It is written in the Mishnah (Hagigah 4:1) that “it is forbidden (*lo yidabru*) to expound the subject of the Chariot before one person all alone unless he is a sage and can understand out of his own knowledge.” The phrase *mercazot* (covered wagons) appears in Chapter Seven in the Book of Numbers; these covered wagons were the vehicles used by the Children of Israel during the forty years of wandering in the desert to carry and transport the Tabernacle. This phrase appears again in I Samuel 6:7-14 and II Samuel 6:3-5 as the vehicle that carried the Ark of the Covenant, which was the most sacred of all the utensils in the Tabernacle. The Lost Princess, therefore, seems in this context seems to symbolize what the Tabernacle and the Ark represent, namely how the presence of God dwells among the Jewish people. The Lost Princess is the image of the highest levels of sanctity.

As the Lost Princess passes by the sleeping chamberlain, she descends from her carriage and tries to rouse him, but does not succeed. Once again we see that not only is humanity in search of holiness, but sanctity too reaches out to humanity. Why is she unable to awaken the chamberlain? According to Kaplan (1983:45), “the *Shechinah* itself tried to wake mankind (Israel) up but it could not. When a person loses faith because of intellectual curiosity, then even manifestations of the divine cannot arouse him.” The Lost Princess

weeps bitterly and in the end, removes the kerchief from her head and writes him a message with her tears.

The inscribed kerchief is very important because it alone contains the information that can tell the chamberlain where the Lost Princess may be found. In my opinion, this tear-stained head-kerchief is a metaphor for the Torah. In every story that Rabbi Nachman wrote in “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” that contains a quest for the Lost Princess, he always creates a different metaphor to represent the Torah. I believe he does this because the Torah is viewed by him, in accordance with Kabbalistic tradition, as being the “instruction manual” that the Jewish people were given and which will make it possible for them to pursue and attain holiness. In our story, Rabbi Nachman seems to be making the daring assertion that the Torah is an epistle sent by God written with His tears. There are indeed precedents in Rabbinical literature which speak of how God cries and mourns for His children in exile (for example, the midrash to the Book of Lamentations [*Yalkut Shimoni* 1960:1044] and in the Talmud, *Berachot* 3a).

As I pointed out earlier in Chapter Two, Concept Number Five: Revelation, the Jewish mystics of the Kabbalah believed that the Torah has different levels and in its deepest levels, the Torah is written in a kind of code that is not decipherable for the uninitiated. In our story, the servant (who represents the simple people of Israel, as I have said) saw that the Lost Princess wrote something on her kerchief, but he did not even try to read it. The chamberlain, on the other hand, picks it up and immediately holds it up to the sun. Only when the kerchief is raised to the light of the sun do the letters, written in tear-drops, become visible. In *Likkutei Moharan* 49:7, Rabbi Nachman says that the *tzaddik* is like the sun.

The chamberlain therefore is graced with the ability to see the letters, as well as to understand and believe the message written by the Lost Princess. The *Zohar* gives the appellation “the wise of the heart ()” to these individuals who are able to uncover and decipher the true meaning of the Torah. “Rabbi Shimon said: ‘The words of the Torah are in reality higher worlds and higher mysteries. When the Torah descends into the world, how could the world continue to exist if the Torah did not adorn itself with worldly garments? The narratives of the Torah are only external garments. How could a person imagine that the Torah is only the external garment and nothing else? ... This is the reason

why King David said, ‘Open my eyes so that I may see the wonders of Your Torah’ (Psalms 119:18), that is to say, let me behold what is veiled by these garments. Come and look: there are garments that everyone sees, and when a fool sees a person dressed in a garment that appears to be beautiful to him, he does not look any deeper. However, what is more important than the garment is the body, and what is more important than the body is the soul. In a similar fashion, the Torah has a body which consists of the laws and commandments of the Torah, which are called [which literally translates as ‘the bodies of the Torah,’ but is usually used by the Sages of the Talmud as an expression meaning ‘the main concepts of the Torah’]. This body is covered with garments, which are the narratives and stories of the Torah. Foolish people look only at the garment, namely the Torah’s narratives, and they do not know to look at what is covered by the garment. Then there are people who [are wiser and] look beneath the garment and also behold the body that is beneath the garment. However, the wise of the heart are the servants of the majestic King, they who stood at the foot of Mount Sinai, for they behold the soul. The soul [of the Torah] is the real foundation of the whole Torah, and one day they will be granted the merit to look at the inner soul of the Torah” (*Zohar* III.152a).

This points to yet another possible reason why this third attempt by the chamberlain to rescue the Lost Princess is so much more difficult than the first two attempts, when the chamberlain appeared in the role of Adam and Noah. In the first two attempts, the only commandments which mankind had received from God were the seven Noahide commandments () that are incumbent upon all humanity: the one positive commandment to establish a system of courts and law, and the six prohibitions against murder, idolatry, stealing, blasphemy, cruelty to animals (), and sexual abuses (incest and adultery). Now, however, in this third attempt the chamberlain has assumed the role of Abraham and the people of Israel. For good or for bad, the Jewish people are obligated to observe all 613 commandments of the Torah, which is a far more demanding test of spiritual endeavor, faith and obedience to God.

On the kerchief the Lost Princess informs the chamberlain that she has been transported to castle of pearl on a mountain of gold, and there he can find her.

Before analyzing this image of the golden mountain on which stands a castle of pearl, I wish to point out that Elstein (1984:65-66) shows that there are some remarkable parallels

between the image of the castle of pearl on top of a mountain of gold (and the latter part of the story as a whole) on the one hand, and Chapter 28 in the Book of Job on the other. In Chapter 28, Job twice asks the refrain (verses 12 and 20): “Where can Wisdom be found, and where is the place of understanding?” because Wisdom is portrayed as being extremely inaccessible, and hidden in the innermost recesses of the earth. Wisdom is compared to gold, silver (), and precious gems, but it is far more valuable and rarer than they are (verses 15-19). One of the precious gems that is specifically mentioned is , which is translated in most Biblical translations as “rubies,” but is understood in medieval and modern Hebrew as “pearls,” and is the word used by Rabbi Nachman when he describes the castle of pearl. Job goes on to say in Chapter 28 that although it is very difficult to locate, extract and mine these ores and rare minerals and precious stones, it is even harder to locate Wisdom. As in Rabbi Nachman’s story, birds and beasts cannot see it (verses 7 and 8). Man searches everywhere for Wisdom, but is incapable of finding it on his own in the physical world (verses 13, 14 and 21). Only at the very end of the chapter does Man discover, in the light of divine revelation, how Wisdom can be attained (verse 28: “And unto Man He said: ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is Wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding’”).

Thus, according to Elstein’s insight, another connotation that the image of the Lost Princess alludes to is the highest wisdom a person can aspire to, namely the fear of God. Interestingly enough, Rabbi Haim Vital wrote that the purification of souls is similar to the process of refining and purifying gold (*Pri Eytz Haim, Sha’ar HaMatzot* 1).

In my opinion, this image of the mountain of gold on which stands a castle of pearl is the most important symbol in the latter part of the story. Surprisingly, many important scholars and commentators (including Rabbi Nathan) do not address this issue.

Among those who do, most of them interpret this mountain of gold as representing something positive. For example, Levin (1951:xiii) remarks in passing, “The meaning is hidden and yet shining clear ... at last he comes to her, the *Shechinah*, in the Palace of Pearl upon the Golden Mountain (the Holy Land).” According to this quotation, Levin understands that the Lost Princess (the *Shechinah*) can be found only in the Land of Israel. I believe that it is possible to develop this idea and to interpret the mountain of gold as being the Temple Mount () in Jerusalem, and the castle of pearl as symbolizing the Temple

itself. Indeed, one traditional Braslav scholar, Rabbi Abraham ben Nachman of Tulchin hints in one short passage that the mountain of gold might be the Temple Mount (*Rimzei Ma'asiot, Hashmatot* 1949:6).

In this context, it is important to note that in the Temple itself, the Holy of Holies contained only the Ark of the Covenant (). The Ark was plated with gold, both within and without, and on the cover of the Ark were two golden cherubim; this could provide the reason for calling the Temple Mount a mountain of gold. In addition, I have already pointed out that the Ark of the Covenant was carried in a carriage (), as was the Lost Princess in our story. The Lost Princess could therefore symbolize the Ark that was brought up to Jerusalem (II Samuel 6).

In light of this interpretation, the first two failures of the chamberlain would therefore parallel the destruction of the First and Second Temples. The chamberlain is now searching in the very long and seemingly endless exile following the destruction of the Second Temple in the year 70 CE for a way to return to Jerusalem and experience not only the rebuilding of the Temple, but also the return of the *Shechinah* to the Temple Mount, signaling the renewal of prophecy and divine revelation as in Biblical times. Perhaps it is no coincidence that Rabbi Nachman related this story on Saturday night of *Shabbat Nachamu* (), the Sabbath immediately after Tish'ah B'Av, which commemorates the destruction of both the First and Second Temple.

Yehudit Kook also believes that the image of the golden mountain is something positive, but she interprets it as having an entirely different meaning. She writes (1994:76) that “the mountain of gold and the castle of pearl are the laws and commandments of the Torah. It is written in Psalms 19:11 that the laws of the Torah are more pleasant than gold and wealth.”

Kaplan writes (1983:47,53) “the *Shechinah* is hidden in a place of untold wealth ... [which]... appears to be the World to Come.... Thus, it is the good deeds a person does in this lifetime which are valuable in the World to Come, which is the castle of pearl.”

Another scholar, Weiner (1969:204), believes that “the pearl palace on the gold mountain is the hope and dream that there is a place where ‘everything is precious — everything,’ not only what the world recognizes as important, but the tear that nobody saw, the life apparently wasted.”

However, in contrast to all the above commentators and scholars, I would like to suggest an alternate reading, because I believe a careful analysis will show that the mountain of gold and the castle of pearl are actually negative. There are several reasons to support this claim.

First of all, according to the plot of the story, the Lost Princess was transported to the mountain of gold by the evil one, who had earlier abducted and imprisoned her. Therefore, this castle of pearl should logically be an abode of evil, another fortress where she is being held captive, and certainly not a place of true sanctity like the Temple Mount, the World to Come, the Torah, or the Holy Land. Indeed, in this story itself, we have seen that the beautiful palace filled with music and fine food where the chamberlain first found the Lost Princess was in fact the fortress of the evil one, despite its beauty and music. Thus, logically the reason why it is now so difficult for the chamberlain to locate and rescue the Lost Princess is due to the fact that she is now being held captive in a prison of even greater impurity and defilement.

Secondly, I wrote in my introduction (Chapter One of this thesis) that the stories are inter-connected and inter-related; each story clarifies and provides commentary on the others. Thus, I strongly feel that this symbol of the mountain of gold on which stands a castle of pearl, which appears for the first time in the story of “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” is greatly expanded and elaborated upon in “The Master of Prayer,” which I analyze in Chapter Five of this thesis. In “The Master of Prayer,” Rabbi Nachman demonstrates in great detail that the most debased vice and the most difficult lust to overcome is the lust for money, gold and riches. The yearning to accumulate gold and money is portrayed as being the hardest sin to vanquish; it is the bastion of impurity and it is the antithesis of sanctity. Thus, it seems to me that a castle of pearl would be an appropriate description for the worst possible prison in which to incarcerate the Lost Princess. Outwardly, such a prison would glitter, but paradoxically it is the very embodiment of a fortress of corruption, depravity and sin. It would therefore require an inconceivable amount of faith, purity, and perseverance on the part of the chamberlain in order to find the Lost Princess and save her.

Thirdly, Rabbi Nachman's stories are full of irony and paradox. He is a master artist when it comes to showing how the external surface is only a shallow veneer that camouflages and hides the true, inner reality and content. For example, in Rabbi Nachman's final story, "The Seven Beggars" (which I analyze in Chapter Six of this thesis), Rabbi Nachman writes about seven beggars, each one having a different handicap; the first is blind, the second deaf, the third stutters terribly, etc. However, Rabbi Nachman later clarifies that the handicap is only an external illusion and in fact the so-called "blind" beggar is actually capable of seeing far more penetratingly than other people and it is he who has the deepest vision possible; the apparently "deaf" beggar has the most acute and sensitive sense of hearing imaginable; and the beggar who "stutters" in fact has a poetic and powerful faculty of speech and it is he who utters what is perhaps the most beautiful and poetic passage that Rabbi Nachman ever wrote. The poverty of the beggars masks the true and opposite nature of their identity, for they are rich in spirit and it is they who provide support and sustenance to others.

In a similar fashion, if Rabbi Nachman writes that the Lost Princess is in a castle of pearl atop a golden mountain, it is extremely likely that externals are deceiving, and the true inner reality that is hidden underneath the façade is anything but beautiful. When people are bedazzled and bewitched by the glitter of gold, they forget about the need to dedicate themselves to the pursuit of holiness, to find the Lost Princess and redeem her; spirituality is pushed aside by materialism. Rabbi Nachman said "the lust for money, for material wealth is the most powerful lust of all, stronger than the lust for sex" (*Hayei Moharan* 2:25-26). In another passage, he said, "A person needs great wisdom and understanding in order to prevent money from destroying all the days of his life. Most people in the world are entrapped by the lust for money, and it is money that destroys them" (*Likkutei Moharan* 23:5). On yet another occasion, Rabbi Nachman told his Hasidim, "Know that ever since the Temple was destroyed, the concept of money has descended further and further below, and wealth has fallen into the domain of the husks [— this term, *kelipot*, is a code-word in the Kabbalah for the realm of evil]" (*Sichot HaRan* 4). Finally, I wish to point out that according to the Kabbalah (*Zohar* I:106a), the gold, silver and precious gems discussed in Chapter 28 of the Book of Job belonged to the people of Sodom. Sodom is of course the ultimate symbol in both the Biblical and Talmudic traditions for human corruption and

moral depravity (see for example Ezekiel 16:49 and *Sanhedrin* 109a). The deep interrelationship between Sodom, gold and the lust for money, which is implicit in the story of “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” will be clarified and greatly expanded upon in Rabbi Nachman’s story of “The Master of Prayer” which I analyze in Chapter Five of this thesis.

The chamberlain realizes that one cannot find a golden mountain in places where people dwell, and so he again turns to the desert and seeks her there. I have already quoted Kaplan’s insight that the desert is often a metaphor for *hitbodedut*, and therefore he has embarked upon a very spiritual quest. In the desert he encounters three giants who are brothers; it is imperative to clarify to whom or to what these three giants allude or symbolize.

Steinsaltz (1981:34) writes that “leaving the settled and civilized areas has a special meaning; the chamberlain in his quest leaves the limits of this world (the world of action) in order to ascend to higher, more spiritual worlds, where he might find the solution to the problem of locating the Lost Princess.... The chamberlain’s wanderings in the desert and his encounter with the three giants are events that occur in the spiritual realm. The three giants seem to be special kinds of angels; that is to say, they are celestial beings that govern each of the three lower worlds (the world of action [], formation [], and creation []).” I believe that Steinsaltz is basing this idea on a Kabbalistic tradition that appears in *Tikkunei Zohar* 19:42a, which states explicitly that each of these three dimensions of reality is governed by “a man [= ruler] of [the world of] creation, a man of [the world of] formation, and a man of [the world of] action.” According to this analysis, the first giant governs the lowest world, which is represented by beasts and animals. When he realizes that he is incapable of assisting the chamberlain in locating the mountain of gold, this giant sends the chamberlain to his brother, the second giant, who governs a higher spiritual world, the world of formation, which is here represented by birds. Because birds can ascend and fly, they can therefore see and envision more than the beasts. Finally, the chamberlain is referred to the last giant, the “governor” of the world of creation, represented by the winds, which ascend even higher. It is of course significant that the Hebrew word for wind is *ruach*, which is the same word as spirit and soul.

Other stories composed by Rabbi Nachman repeat this same pattern of three figures that represent or belong to the three worlds of action, formation, and creation. For

example, in Story Number Eleven (“The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged”), there are three main characters: the king’s true son, the man of the forest, and the false prince (who is really the son of the maidservant). Each of these three characters is rooted in each of these three worlds (namely creation, formation, and action, respectively), and each character represents three levels of the human soul which are anchored in the different spiritual worlds (namely *neshamah*, *ruach*, and *nefesh*, respectively). The similar structure and parallel from that story allows us to reach the conclusion that in order to save the Lost Princess, the chamberlain in our story must go through all three worlds and he must attain and truly internalize all three levels of soul. Thus, the encounter with the giants symbolizes how he attains and integrates within himself the levels of *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*.

The exile of the *Shechinah* is so deep that at first even the highest, most spiritual giant is unable to help the chamberlain. Only after the chamberlain refuses to despair and refuses to give up the quest, does one small wind come and reveal that it was busy carrying a King’s daughter to a castle of pearl atop a golden mountain.

The false Messiah of the seventeenth century Shabbatai Zvi said that if one wishes to enter a palace and the gates are locked, it is possible to enter through the sewer. This was a justification for his antinomian tendencies and his doctrine that only through disobeying the laws of the Torah and through sin and impurity will redemption be achieved. Rabbi Nachman took the opposite view, of course: if one aspires to enter the palace, it is possible to ascend (higher than the beasts, birds or even the winds) and fly over the palace walls and above the palace gates. In other words, only the highest levels of holiness and purity will enable the chamberlain to overcome all barriers and rescue the Lost Princess, reuniting her with her father. This is one possible explanation of the deep meaning of the chamberlain’s encounter with the three giants.

Before proceeding further, I wish to point out that there are additional ways of understanding the symbol of the three giants. Steinsaltz makes an extremely perceptive comment when he writes (1979:14) that “[Rabbi] Nachman frequently used the technique of ambiguous symbolism to present different messages within a single story to audiences of differing degrees of sophistication.” I would just add that these “different messages” usually

complement each other and these “different messages” really point to the parallel quests that Rabbi Nachman was portraying. Green too (1981:348,350) agrees with traditional Braslav commentators (and more modern scholars like Steinsaltz, Zeitlin, and Kaplan) who “rightly insist upon the legitimacy of multileveled readings of these texts.... Let the interpreter, in his zeal to find the ‘right’ meaning, take care that he not rob the tale of its richness of ambiguity.... The commentator should reject any unilinear interpretation of the tales in favor of an openness to multiple suggestions.”

Thus, Steinsaltz suggests in the same passage (1979:14) that these giants may also represent “the various peoples among whom the Jewish people dwelled, who mocked their hopes and tested their faith.” Such a reading is strengthened by different Biblical passages, like Ezekiel 20:35 which speaks of “the desert of the nations ()” that the Jewish people will pass through. If so, it is quite interesting that in the end, the nations (or at least some of them, like the last giant in the story) help the Jewish people to achieve their goal.

Kook (1994:77) believes that the three giants symbolize the natural sciences like biology, chemistry, physics and geology. She bases this idea on the following passage from the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avot* 3:22: “He whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, to what may he be compared? To a tree whose branches are many but whose roots are few; when the wind comes, it uproots and overturns the tree, as it is written: “He is like a tamarisk in the desert and shall no see good when it comes; but he shall dwell in the parched places in the desert, in an uninhabited and salty land [Jeremiah 17:6].” Kook writes (1994:77) that “mastery of the powerful natural sciences that rule the beasts, birds and winds will not help Man to achieve his spiritual mission in cleaving to the Creator; only the Torah and the observance of the commandments can do that. Science has developed and become a ‘giant,’ but science lacks roots. Scientific research and secular knowledge are [spiritually] sterile and can cause humanity to waiver in its religious beliefs.” However, she adds (1994:78) that “when a person makes the Torah and the tradition his main path, these giants [of science] can transform from being negative and a hindrance into being a positive means of helping that person achieve his [spiritual] goal.” In other words, the sciences and secular knowledge do not necessarily have to be the enemy of the man of faith; if a person anchors himself solidly in tradition and religious belief, he can learn secular wisdom without it affecting him adversely. This is exactly what happens in Rabbi Nachman’s Story Number Nine, “The

Wise Man and the Simple Man;” at a certain point in the story, the simple man of faith becomes governor and in order to be able to converse intelligently with the King, he learns foreign languages and cultures, intellectual ideas that are non-religious in nature, and secular wisdom. This greatly pleases the King, while at the same time does not damage the simple man’s faith, modesty and integrity. On the other hand, the wise man (who was gifted with a brilliant mind but was not a person of strong religious beliefs) degenerates intellectually into a sterile sophistry that brings him to atheism and egoism.

I think that Kook based her idea on the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avot* 3:22 because it uses the metaphor of a tree, which fits nicely with the image of the giant carrying a tree in our story. However, I believe that an even more appropriate citation would be *Pirkei Avot* 3:11: “Rabbi Hanina be Dosa said, ‘He whose fear of sin comes before his wisdom, his wisdom endures; but he whose wisdom comes before fear of sin, his wisdom does not endure.’”

Concerning the enormous trees that the giants carry, Kaplan (1983:49) comments that perhaps “the tree may represent the Torah, which is called a ‘tree of life’ (Proverbs 3:18).” According to the traditional Braslav commentary *Rimzei Ma’asiot* 12, the tree that each giant holds is the array of the ten *Sefirot* as they manifest themselves in each of the three lower worlds.

I would like to suggest another possible allusion to be found in the chamberlain’s encounter with the three giants. I have already brought Steinsaltz’s analysis that these three giants are celestial beings, the ‘princes’ () who govern the worlds of action, formation and creation. If so, we can see that there is a progression and ascent in their order, from the world of action (the beasts), to the world of formation (the birds), and from there to the world of creation (the winds). This parallels the Biblical description of the structure of the encampment of the Children of Israel in their forty years of wandering in the desert. The camp was organized as a system of concentric circles (see Numbers, Chapters 2 and 3): the outer circle (with the least sanctity) was the camp of Israel (), where the twelve tribes dwelled — three (Judah, Issachar and Zevulun) to the east; three tribes (Reuben, Simon and Gad) to the south; three (Ephraim, Menashe and Benjamin) to the west; and three (Dan, Naftali and Asher) to the north. The next, more inner circle (with a greater degree of sanctity and purity) was the Levite camp (): to the east were

Moses, Aaron and their families; to the south were the families of the sons of Kehat; to the west were the families of the Gershonites; and on the north were the families of the sons of Merari. The innermost circle, with the greatest degree of holiness, was the Tabernacle () in the center. Similarly, the Tabernacle itself also had three different levels of sanctity: there was the courtyard (); of yet greater sanctity was the outer sanctum () of the Tent of Meeting which stood inside the courtyard; and of the greatest degree of purity was the inner sanctum, the Holy of Holies () which only the High Priest could enter on Yom Kippur. It is therefore possible to interpret the chamberlain's encounter with the three giants in the desert as if he were entering higher and higher domains of sanctity, one after another, like a pilgrim entering the concentric rings of sanctity within the camp of the Children of Israel.

Despite the admonishments of the giants, the chamberlain is adamant in his beliefs and refuses to give up his quest for the Lost Princess. Concerning this point, Rabbi Nathan (1996:17-18) sums up what he considers to be one of the most important lessons of the entire story when he wrote in the second introduction: "The giant tried to dissuade the chamberlain from continuing his pursuit of the golden mountain. The chamberlain, however, refused to be discouraged. He insisted, 'I am certain that the mountain and the castle exist!' The giant told the chamberlain, 'You can see with your own eyes that they do not exist. Why are you making so much effort in vain? Take my advice and go home!' The chamberlain though refused to pay attention to these words and insisted, 'I am certain that they do exist.' The chamberlain refused to heed the discouragement of the giants, insisting that he had absolute faith in the existence of the mountain and the castle.... From this we can understand how stubborn a person must be when it comes to serving God. A person must comprehend that when it comes to the service of God, a person's perseverance must be limitless. This total commitment to serving God is mandatory and true for every human being, no matter if his level is high or low, and no matter what happens to him.... The chamberlain never gave up hope. He continued with his efforts, and paid no attention to the obstacles and discouragement placed on his path on the way to his goal. He ignored discouragement, and he strengthened himself [spiritually] until the giants changed their minds and started to assist him.... Thus, all of a sudden, everything was reversed and all the

different hindrances and obstacles became means of assisting him. All the negative influences became positive influences and means of achieving his quest.”

Rabbi Nachman himself often spoke of “how the main thing is faith. A person must disregard all extraneous forms of wisdom and concentrate on serving God in simplicity, for a person’s deeds should exceed his wisdom; intellectual learning is not the main thing, but rather the deed.... Even a person of great intellectual abilities must put aside his wisdom and dedicate himself to the simple service of God in integrity” (*Likkutei Moharan* II:5). On another occasion, Rabbi Nachman said, “It is absolutely forbidden to despair. Even if a person is on the lowest possible level, even if he has fallen to the depths of hell, it is forbidden to despair; he should follow the advice of the verse, “I cried to the Lord in my distress, and He answered me; from out of the depths of hell have I called out, and You have heard my voice” (Jonah 2:3). He must strengthen himself to the best of his ability, and believe.... For there is no despair in the world whatsoever.” (*Likkutei Moharan* II:78). Another example can be found in the following conversation between Rabbi Nachman and Rabbi Nathan: “Rabbi Nachman told me, ‘Even if someone has fallen to a very low level, he should strengthen himself and he must not despair under any circumstance. God’s greatness and compassion are higher than everything else, higher even than the Torah. Everything can be restored and rectified because penitence () is on a higher level than the Torah.’ I asked Rabbi Nachman, ‘How can one attain this?’ He replied, ‘You can attain this as long as you do not despair of crying out and praying to God. You must be obstinate and cry out to unceasingly until you finally succeed” (*Hayei Moharan* 2:67:114). Again Rabbi Nathan testified (*Sichot HaRan* 222): “I once overheard Rabbi Nachman speaking to someone who had difficulties in believing in God. Rabbi Nachman told him, ‘God foresaw that there would be people who would have difficulty in believing in Him, and in their minds doubts would be awakened. However, they must wrestle with these doubts and problems, and try to strengthen their faith. For this alone did God decide to create the universe.”

When the chamberlain spoke to the last of the three giants, this giant tried (as did his two brothers) to persuade the chamberlain that a castle of pearl and a mountain of gold do not exist, and that the chamberlain should give up his quest for the Lost Princess. The chamberlain, however, refuses to give up and begins to cry. It is precisely at this point that

there is a dramatic turning-point in the story. The last wind arrives and reveals it had been delayed because it had been busy carrying the Lost Princess to a mountain of gold on which stands a pearl castle. Kaplan (1983:50) comments that “the gate of tears is never closed. Rabbi Nachman in general taught that through weeping one can break all barriers. This may [also] be the significance of the tears in which the Princess’s message was written.”

Indeed, in the Kabbalistic tradition, there is a link between crying and hastening the redemption; salvation will occur in merit of tears. I would like to quote from the *Tikkunei Zohar* 11, which states that “when Israel is in exile, it is said that all the gates are locked, for the *Shechinah* which is *Malchut* is outside of the palace ... and there is no way for prayers to ascend. However, the gates of tears are not locked; but no one can open these gates [of tears] except for the master of tears, as it is written: ‘And she opened it [the ark] and saw within it the child, behold a little boy was crying’ (Exodus 2:6) — [which means that] the palace will be opened in merit of this crying.... This is the significance of the verse: ‘They will come with crying’ (Jeremiah 31:8) — in merit of their weeping Israel will be gathered from the exile.”

Kaplan makes a very astute observation concerning the last wind to arrive, and how it changes from a force of evil (it carried the Lost Princess to the golden mountain) to a force of good (it will now carry the chamberlain to the mountain). Kaplan (1983:52) points out that if the chamberlain “had found the golden mountain earlier, the princess would not have been there. He may have been discouraged by the delays, but they really helped him and the princess.” As we shall see in additional stories, what seems at the time to be something negative may turn out to be for the best.

The giant who had earlier discouraged him now wants to help the chamberlain and gives him a “vessel” that “when you put your hand into it, you will take out money.” This vessel is considered by Kaplan to be a purse; he writes (1983:53) that “it seems that the purse here is the Torah in its entirety. One can constantly take merit out of the Torah, and it is never empty.... From this purse one can get merit and good deeds.”

I think Kaplan’s insight is very apt. The Hebrew word for this vessel (or purse) is ; we find this same word in Story Number Eleven (“The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged”), where towards the end of the story, the true prince is given a vessel or instrument () that several commentators once again interpret as

a symbol for the Torah. In the Mishnah in *Pirkei Avot* 3:18, it is written that “Israel is beloved, for they were given the precious instrument () by means of which the world was created [namely, the Torah].” According to the Bible, the Torah is truly invaluable and its worth is inestimable: the Torah and its commandments are “more precious than gold and fine gold” (Psalms 19:11).

After the wind carries the chamberlain to the mountain of gold, the chamberlain is able to enter the beautiful city because he possess (and uses) the purse or vessel that the giant had given him. Rabbi Nachman in this story does not tell the reader how the chamberlain succeeds to get the Lost Princess out of there, only that “he would need to use wisdom and knowledge to get the King’s daughter out.”

In order to find out how, we must now turn to the next story that deals with the quest for the Lost Princess: “The Merchant and the Pauper,” which I will analyze in Chapter Four of this thesis. An English translation of this story can be found in Appendix Two on pages 296-309.

CHAPTER FOUR:

“The Merchant And The Pauper”

Rabbi Nachman of Braslav related Story Number Ten, “The Merchant and the Pauper,” in the spring of 1809 after Purim (*Hayei Moharan* 15c:59). This story is not only longer than “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” but its plot is more intricate and complicated, and its cast of characters richer and more complex. Whereas in “The Losing of the King’s Daughter” there were really only two main characters (the chamberlain and the Lost Princess), this story has five main characters: the merchant, the merchant’s son, the

pauper-emperor, the pauper-emperor's wife, and his daughter. As Steinsaltz (1979:37) comments, "its literary form and structure ... [are] more polished.... A single narrative line runs from beginning to end and sub-themes flow smoothly into the development of the main plot.... As in 'The Losing of the King's Daughter,' the basic theme is the Redemption, but here greater emphasis is placed on the personality of the Messiah." Kaplan (1983:197) however warns the reader that "this is a very complex story and it is very difficult to interpret." I also wish to add that there are some similarities between this story and Story Number Two in Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times:" "The King and the Emperor." However, this story is far better constructed and organized; in my opinion, the story of "The King and the Emperor" resembles a rough draft, while "The Merchant and the Pauper" is the final version, and should be treated as such.

The most important and dominant figure in the first section of "The Merchant and the Pauper" is the merchant, and it is imperative to decipher what and whom he represents first of all. The vocation of a merchant is to bring and transfer merchandise from one country to another, and thereby supply the consumer with products that otherwise would be inaccessible. In our story, I believe that on a symbolic level, the merchant's mission is similar: his task is to bring or transfer the spiritual wealth and wisdom of the upper worlds to the lower world of action. He possesses great compassion and nobility of character; in most of Rabbi Nachman's stories, external wealth is usually a metaphor for spiritual wealth, knowledge and greatness; his wealth is the wealth and richness of Jewish tradition. He is "the whole man whose wealth is both worldly and spiritual... possessing an abundance of spiritual values... while the pauper is the man who remains poor in spirit, even after he has attained material success" (Steinsaltz 1993:51-52).

In my opinion, a key to a deeper understanding of the merchant's significance lies in paying attention to the fact that while the merchant dominates the first section of the story and is the most active character in the beginning of the story, he is almost totally absent from the plot in the latter half of the story. This seems to suggest that although he played an important role in earlier history, he will step down from the stage of history later on, and be replaced by his son, who takes over his role.

It is thus possible to divide the story into two: the first section (dominated by the merchant, and to a lesser degree, by the pauper's wife), and the second and larger, more complicated section of the story which is dominated by the younger generation, namely the merchant's son and especially, the daughter of the pauper and pauper's wife (now the emperor and empress). As I will later demonstrate, the empress' daughter is none other than the Lost Princess of Rabbi Nachman's first story, who has now evolved into a much more active personality.

Seen in this light, the rescue of the pauper's wife by the merchant in the beginning of the story is a reflection and mirror image of the complex relationship between the merchant's son and the Lost Princess (= the emperor's daughter) in the latter part of the story that terminates in their final reunion and marriage. In other words, the first redemption is the prototype for the final and complete redemption.

In the first redemption from Egypt, the redeemer of the Jewish people was Moses, and therefore, according to Steinsaltz (1979:38), the merchant "represents the historical Moses," while the pauper's wife "represents the simple people of Israel, and the adventures that befell her echo ... the first captivity, the exile in Egypt." The merchant's son (the Messiah), the final redeemer, is a perfected and more refined () version of his father, the merchant (= Moses), the first redeemer, just as the daughter of the pauper's wife is a refined and more perfected version of her mother.

Similarly, Band (1978:165) believes that a "parallel is drawn between the exodus from the Egyptian bondage, which was incomplete, and the future exodus from spiritual and political exile which is supposed to be perfect and final. Veiled comparisons between the two are strewn throughout the story. The merchant, for instance, is supposed to represent Moses, and his son, whose development we observe, is the messiah."

Steinsaltz (1979:38-39) writes that the pauper-emperor's daughter represents "*Knesset Israel*, the *Shechinah*, the presence of God in the world. Whereas the mother is Israel as seen in her simplicity and poverty, the daughter is the glory of Israel, the symbol of all that the *Shechinah* can bestow on humanity. The merchant's son is clearly the Messiah. This connection between Moses and the Messiah, the first and final redeemers, is ancient and well established."

This idea that the final redemption parallels and reflects the first redemption is an example of a larger concept that was called by the Rabbinical Sages: -
 ('the deeds of the fathers are a sign and a precedent for later generations'). In many midrashim we indeed find this idea that something that was performed or done in an earlier generation by one of the great leaders of the Jewish people prepares the way and foresees what is to befall later generations. This traditional belief is presented and explained by the important medieval Biblical commentator and Kabbalist, the *Ramban* (Rabbi Moses ben Nachman of Spain, 1194—1270), who personally used and developed this concept in his Biblical commentaries as a crucial and central method of interpreting and understanding the Torah (as did many other Kabbalists). Commenting on Genesis 12:6, the *Ramban* writes: "I will tell you an important principle that will enable you to better understand the significance of all the events that befell our forefathers. It is a major principle that our Sages expressed very concisely, when they said: 'Everything that befell our forefathers is a sign and precedent for later generations' [*Midrash Tanchuma, Parshat Lech-Lechaw* 9]. The Scriptures will therefore describe in great detail the journeys [of our forefathers], how they dug wells and other such matters that the superficial reader may think is unnecessary or superfluous — but they all come to tell us what will befall later generations in the future" (Chavel 1984:77).

I will bring an example of how the Sages of the Talmud used this principle. In *Bereshit Rabbah* 40:6, there is a midrash which discusses the descent of Abraham and Sarah to Egypt during a time of famine in the land of Canaan (Genesis 12:10-20): "Rabbi Pinchas said in the name of Rabbi Hoshayah Rabbah: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham, 'Go down and prepare the way for your descendants.' For we find that everything that is written about Abraham is written about his descendants [during the Exile in Egypt and the Redemption from Egypt by means of the Exodus]. About Abraham it is written: 'There was a famine in the land [Genesis 12:10]', and concerning Israel it is written: 'For there has been a famine in the land for two years [Genesis 45:6].' About Abraham it is written: 'And Abraham went down to Egypt [Genesis 12:10],' and concerning Israel it is written: 'And our forefathers went down to Egypt [Numbers 20:15].' About Abraham it is written: '... to sojourn there' [Genesis 12:10], and concerning Israel it is written: 'We have come to sojourn in the land' [Genesis 47:4]. About Abraham it is written: 'They [the Egyptians] will kill me, but you [Sarah] they will keep alive' [Genesis 12:12], and concerning

Israel it is written: 'Every boy that is born must be thrown into the Nile, but every girl may be kept alive' [Exodus 1:22].... About Abraham it is written: 'And the Lord plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues' [Genesis 12:17], and concerning Israel it is written: 'For I will send this time all My plagues upon your person [Pharaoh] and upon your servants and upon your people' [Exodus 9:14].... About Abraham it is written: 'And Pharaoh ordered his people to expel him [Abraham]' [Genesis 12:20], and concerning Israel it is written: 'And the Egyptians hastened the people on, expelling them quickly from the land [Exodus 12:33].... About Abraham it is written: 'And Abraham went up out of Egypt...and Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold' [Genesis 13:1-2], and concerning Israel it is written: 'And He brought them out with silver and with gold' [Psalms 105:37]. About Abraham it is written: 'And Abraham went on his journeys' [Genesis 13:3], and concerning Israel it is written: 'These are the journeys of the children of Israel' [Numbers 33:1]."

Let me summarize. We can say that Rabbi Nachman takes this very accepted and traditional principle of - ('the deeds of the fathers are a sign and a precedent for later generations') and adapts it in the story of "The Merchant and the Pauper" in a very novel and innovative way, in my opinion. Thus, as I mentioned earlier on page 98, this story should therefore be divided into two parts for the purpose of our analysis. The first part of the story focuses on the first exile and redemption of the Jewish people, namely the historical Egyptian exile as it is recorded in the Torah. The merchant (= Moses) rescues the pauper's wife (= the Children of Israel) from the evil general's captivity (= Pharaoh's enslavement). This is the prototype and precedent for the longer and more complex second part of the story which focuses on the future and final messianic redemption, and which carefully traces the relationship between the merchant's son (= the Messiah) and the pauper's wife's daughter (= *Knesset Israel* = *Shechinah* = the Lost Princess). I will now proceed to analyze the story in greater detail, as well as offering several possible alternative readings that different commentators and scholars have suggested.

After beginning with a description of two childless neighbors, the merchant and the pauper, the story then dwells on the merchant's dream, in which all his possessions are transferred to the pauper; this dream reoccurs as the dream of the pauper's wife. Rabbi Nachman believed that dreams in general are meaningful, and the dreams of the righteous in particular may contain deep meaning. In several of his stories (such as "The Bull and the Ram" [Story Number Four], "The Spider and the Fly" [Story Number Seven], and "The Rabbi's Son" [Story Number Eight]), the chief protagonist has a dream which is the main key to the understanding of the story or which propels the whole plot forward. Rabbi Nachman himself wrote down many of his dreams. In several passages in *Likkutei Moharan* and *Sichot HaRan*, he stressed the importance of dreams to his Hasidim. He said, for example, "know that it is possible to foresee the future through dreams. However, dreams may also contain extraneous or negative material, as the Sages [of the Talmud] told us (*Berachot* 55a): 'Just as it is impossible for wheat to exist without chaff, so it is impossible for a dream to exist without it containing extraneous material.' Yet there are dreams that are clear and prophetic, as it is written: 'In a dream I will speak with him' [Numbers 12:6]. For the righteous person, the chaff and extraneous material are removed from his dream ... and he can decipher the dream and foresee the future. Joseph the righteous had this grace, and ... so his dreams were prophetic and he could interpret the dreams of others" (*Sichot HaRan* 262).

It is quite significant that Rabbi Nachman mentions Joseph in his aspect of Joseph the dreamer (, Genesis 37:19). The whole saga of the exile in Egypt that includes the sale of Joseph by his brothers, his descent into Egypt, the seven year famine and the arrival of all of Jacob's family in Egypt, their consequent enslavement and eventual redemption from Egypt by Moses — all this started with Joseph's prophetic dreams of his brothers bowing down to him in Genesis 37. In Rabbi Nachman's story, too, the whole sequence of events that include the merchant's impulsive decision to rescue the pauper's captive wife, his entering the fortress of the evil general in order to take her out, their actual flight and hiding in seven bodies of water until she is finally restored home — all this begins with the merchant's dream. Indeed, it is no coincidence, in my opinion, that in the Biblical narrative, Joseph is brought to Egypt by merchants (Genesis 37:28).

After the opening scene with the dreams of the merchant and the pauper's wife, the story continues with the episode in which a general abducts the pauper's wife and brings her to his fortress. This parallels the beginning of "The Losing of the King's Daughter" when the princess is kidnapped by the evil one to his fortress-palace. Here too the merchant (like the chamberlain in the first story) is motivated by compassion and altruism in order to bring home the pauper's wife. Another important parallel between the two stories lies in the fact that the merchant can enter the general's fortified residence unimpeded and with no resistance on the part of the guards, just as the chamberlain entered the evil one's palace without anyone hindering him at the beginning of "The Losing of the King's Daughter." Rabbi Nachman seems to be basing this episode on a parable that he discusses at length in *Likkutei Moharan* 46: "I heard the following parable in the name of my great-grandfather, the *Baal-Shem-Tov*: 'A king placed a great treasure in a certain location and created an optical illusion of many fortified walls around this treasure. When people saw these walls, they believed that there were real fortifications guarding the treasure and that it would be impossible to break through; therefore, many gave up without even trying to enter. Other people were able to pass through the first wall, but when they encountered the next, inner wall, they too gave up. A few people managed to penetrate even the second wall, but gave up when they came to the third, etc. Finally, the king's son came and said, 'I know that all these walls are only illusions and that there is in fact no wall nor obstacle whatsoever.' He alone was able to break through all the walls and reach the treasure. We can learn from this parable that all our fears are caused by the evil one and all the obstacles that seem to prevent us from reaching our goal — all these appear to be mighty walls and fortifications, but are really nothing. The main thing is for a person to be courageous and brave-hearted and to know that there is no need to fear; there are no obstacles that can prevent us from reaching our goal."

Continuing this line of thought, many logical obstacles stood in the way of rescuing the Children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt; their deliverance would have been seen as logically impossible because of the seemingly insurmountable difficulties involved. Yet once Moses accepted his mission, he evinced no fear of Pharaoh and it is indeed amazing that he was able to enter Pharaoh's palace unimpeded and whenever he wanted without any hint of worrying about being executed or imprisoned, or even being hindered or stopped.

Furthermore, after Moses took the Children of Israel out of Egypt on Passover, he had no detailed plans how to provide food and water for the hundreds of thousands of liberated slaves, nor had he devised a plan how to defend the people from attacks by the Egyptian army or by marauders in the desert like the Amalekites (Exodus 17:8-16). Concerning this point, Porat (2001:1) writes “the fact that the Jewish people were to be led to the desert could be viewed as a daring and rather irresponsible adventure.... How were they to be provided with food? There was not as yet even a promise of manna or wells. Yet by going unhesitatingly into the barren desert, the people of Israel [literally, *Knesset Israel*] revealed their readiness to follow their redeemer no matter what happened. This devotion is referred to in a verse in the Book of Jeremiah (2:2): ‘I remember the affection of your youth, the love of your espousals, how you followed Me into the desert, into a land that was not sown.’ Steinsaltz (1979:38) sums this up when he notes: “The historical mission — to enable a whole people to slip out of Egypt — appeared to be impractical and beyond human capabilities; indeed, it was conceived and executed almost recklessly, with no real weighing of alternatives or planning for contingencies in the desert.”

Moses, of course, had God to guard and direct him. In contrast, in our story (as in all of Rabbi Nachman’s stories), God’s presence is hidden and divine providence does not make itself manifest in overt miracles. The merchant, like the chamberlain in “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” must fend for himself. Once the merchant and the pauper’s wife succeed in leaving the general’s fortress, they have to hide from the general’s soldiers who are searching for them; they first hide “in a cistern full of rainwater,” and afterwards, they hide in six additional bodies of water: a bathing place (in Hebrew, a *mikvah* —), a lake, a spring, a creek, a river and a sea. In each of these seven bodies of water, the pauper’s wife swears an oath of loyalty that whatever future good fortune and prosperity and success she may attain will belong to the merchant.

In the Torah, the Children of Israel encounter seven bodies of water on their forty-year journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, the Land of Israel: (1) the Red Sea [Exodus 14:22], (2) Mara () [Exodus 15:23], (3) Elim () [Exodus 15:27], (4) Rephidim () [Exodus 17:1-6], (5) the waters of Meribah () [Numbers 20:13], (6) the well [Numbers 21:16-18], and (7) the Jordan River [Joshua 3:18]. Each time the Children of

Israel reached one of these seven bodies of water, there was a renewal of the covenant between God and the people of Israel, with Moses himself playing an important role. These seven bodies of water, which appear throughout the Torah (from the Book of Exodus till the Book of Deuteronomy), are alluded to in Rabbi Nachman's story as the seven different bodies of water in which the merchant and the pauper's wife hid, and which were the witnesses to the pledge of gratitude by the pauper's wife to the merchant for her present deliverance and her oath of loyalty for the future. Later on in the story, the mother relates to her daughter the saga of her deliverance from the general, and the daughter sends the merchant's son a map detailing all the bodies of water in which her mother hid with his father, namely the seven witnesses to her mother's oath of loyalty. This map is a very important symbol for the Torah (as I will discuss later on in this chapter), and parallels the head-kerchief written on with tears given by the Lost Princess to the chamberlain in the first story.

The second body in which they hid is specifically designated in Hebrew as a *mikvah* (translated into English as "a bathing place"), but actually all seven bodies of water have the *halachic* status of a *mikvah* and are permitted to be used for ritual immersion. This seems to me to indicate that both the merchant and the pauper's wife are undergoing a seven-stage process of purification and spiritual sanctification. This is necessary because the pauper's wife had been held captive in a prison of impurity (the general's fortress), which the merchant too had to enter in order to redeem her. This is also reminiscent of the seven week period between Passover (the actual liberation from the slavery in Egypt) and the holiday of Shavuot (when the Torah was given on Mt. Sinai). Similarly, before the merchant (Moses, the first redeemer) will be worthy of fathering his child (the Messiah) who embodies his true inner essence in an even more refined version, he must undergo a seven stage process of purification; the pauper's wife (the simple people of Israel) too must undergo these identical seven stages before being worthy of mothering her true inner essence, her daughter who is *Knesset Israel* (), which is in its deepest significance synonymous with the *Shechinah*, as I have earlier discussed.

There is another important point regarding the word *mikveh*. Bazak (2001:2) writes: "The word (*mikveh*) has two meanings in the Bible. The first meaning is a

place where water is collected or gathered, as in the verses: ‘... and the gathering of waters He called seas’ (Genesis 1:10), and ‘... a fountain or cistern wherein is a gathering of water shall be clean’ (Leviticus 11:36). The second meaning is hope, as a synonym to the word hope, as in the verses: ‘... yet now there is hope for Israel concerning this thing’ (Ezra 10:2), and ‘... our days on the earth are as a shadow, and there is no hope’ (I Chronicles 29:15).” Basing myself on this point, I believe that in our story, Rabbi Nachman uses both meanings. Undoubtedly, the main meaning of the word *mikveh* is a gathering-place of water that is used for ritual immersion in order to become purified. However, the rescuing of the pauper’s wife is not only an act of mercy on the part of the merchant, but it is also an expression of hope that redemption is indeed possible. It is possible that Rabbi Nachman may be alluding to the last *Mishnah* in the Tractate of *Yoma* (8:9): “Rabbi Akiba said, ‘Happy are you, Israel, before Whom do you purify yourselves, and Who purifies you? Your Father in heaven, as it is written: _____ – ‘The hope of Israel, the Lord’ (Jeremiah 17:13); just as the ritual bath (the *mikvah*) purifies the impure, so does the Holy One, blessed be He, purify Israel.”

The seven bodies of water may have additional connotations. According to the traditional Braslav commentary *Rimzei Ma’asiot* (1949:78), which was written by one of Rabbi Nathan Sternherz’s leading disciples, Rabbi Nachman of Tcherin, the seven bodies of water allude to the seven lower *Sefirot*. Thus, the process of purification that is being carried out also occurs on a metaphysical plane. Kaplan (1983:203) refers to yet another aspect when he writes “water also alludes to love and kindness. The waters of kindness that impelled the merchant to do this daring deed were what protected him from the pursuing evil.... [In addition,] the seven bodies of water represent seven tests. This seems to be hinted at in the Princess’ later words to her suitors, ‘The waters have not passed over you.’”

After the two children are born and have begun to grow, the merchant tells the pauper’s wife of his desire to arrange a match between them and thereby fulfill their dreams of wealth being transferred from one house to the other. It is important to remember that the merchant’s wealth is a metaphor for the wealth of Jewish tradition and wisdom. The merchant and his wife “are rich — not only in the material sense — and the heritage they pass on consists of the large houses of age-old wisdom and tradition” (Steinsaltz 1979:135).

The pauper's wife willingly and eagerly agrees to the match. This of course symbolizes how faithful the simple folk, the common people, are to the Torah of Moses. However, as the pauper accumulates more and more wealth due to the many gifts that are showered upon him and his family in merit of his beautiful daughter, he grows haughty and ungrateful. Moreover, the pauper is appointed to the army and evolves into an extremely successful soldier who rapidly advances in the ranks until he becomes a general. Finally, his military prowess and unending victories cause the pauper to become the emperor of the world.

Who is the pauper-emperor, and what does he represent? In order to decode this symbol more clearly, it is necessary to look at the pauper's family again. As I said, his daughter represents *Knesset Israel*, the essential, purest and most sacred manifestation of the ideal Israel, who is termed - ("the daughter of Zion") in the Books of the Prophets, and ("the beloved") in the Song of Songs. The pauper's wife is the historical manifestation of the people of Israel in their simplicity, modesty and faithfulness. However, Rabbi Nachman was only too aware that not all Jews were pious and ethical human beings, but among the Jews one could and would find greedy and immoral people who were not interested in God or in the redemption (or betterment) of the world, but rather were involved in amassing power and money. We can thus conclude that the pauper represents those individuals and forces who are biologically and historically part and parcel of the Jewish people, but are negative and arrogant and who are indeed "poor in spirit."

Steinsaltz (1979:39) writes that "this ignoble character achieves worldly power and glory by means of the divine splendor of his daughter. Having attained external wealth, the pauper loses interest in true salvation and tries to discourage contact between *Knesset Israel* and the Messiah; sovereignty over the physical world is enough for him." Band, (1978:311-312) too, minces no words about the pauper when he writes that "the reprehensible behavior of the pauper/emperor is a bit surprising. His base character had never really improved and his rise to prominence was due not to his virtues but to the remarkable beauty and personality of his daughter."

The pauper therefore represents those Jews who are not faithful to the teachings of Moses (the merchant) and choose instead the goal of pursuing money and power. However, in my opinion, I feel that this should be developed further. I believe that Rabbi

Nachman portrays the pauper as representing the *Maskilim* (– “the Enlightened”), those Jews who accepted the Enlightenment and believed that the path for a better future for the Jews lay in the absorption of general European culture, values, languages and way of life voluntarily by the Jews themselves, accompanied by the granting of full civil equality and liberty (the Emancipation) by the Gentile governments and society in the countries where they lived. As I wrote in the Introduction in Chapter One, Rabbi Nachman was totally opposed to the Enlightenment and was therefore hostile to Napoleon and the French Revolution (which itself was inspired by the French Enlightenment). The Enlightenment had spread throughout Western Europe and was in fact in the process of conquering all of West European Jewry, and was now making serious inroads into the world of East European Jewry as well. Rabbi Nachman believed that the struggle between traditional Judaism (spear-headed by Hasidism) and the Enlightenment for the souls and allegiance of the Jews was a life-and-death struggle. Nor was he alone in this attitude. “The culture of East-European Jewry in the nineteenth century was shaped by the twin forces of Haskalah, or enlightenment, on the one hand, and Hasidism on the other. In the central areas of the Pale in particular, the two camps were in violent opposition to each other” (Eban 1968:270).

It is important to remember that Napoleon demanded a high price for the emancipation of the Jews, namely for them to turn their back to traditional Jewish values and way of life and to assimilate into French and European culture. “In the Enlightenment, ... Jewish society met an attitude that was favorably inclined toward the individual Jew while inimical toward his traditions and social cohesion. The demand for disavowal of nationality on rationalist grounds meant in practice for the Jew acceptance of French or German or some other national culture instead of his own. This groping between extreme individualism in theory and national assimilation in practice had already become, by the end of the 18th century, the source of some of the greatest individual successes as well as of the most distressing tragedies in Jewish existence in modern times” (Ben-Sasson 1974:64).

In July 1806, Napoleon convened a Jewish Assembly of Notables in order to publicly rally the Jews to redefine Jewish existence in France. Among other twelve ‘imperial’ questions, Napoleon asked the Assembly “whether the Jews considered France their country and were willing to defend it. The answer to the last question was a

spontaneous ‘until death;’ the delegates gave the expected answers to the other questions as well” (Eban 1968:258). As I have noted in the Introduction, Rabbi Nachman began his initiative of composing and narrating his “Stories from Ancient Times” precisely at this time, July 1806. It seems that Rabbi Nachman was horrified and shocked to his core by the news that the Jews in France (and in all of Western Europe) were willing to give up their identity and traditions. Rabbi Nathan gave heart-rendering testimony when he wrote (*Sichot HaRan* 220): “Rabbi Nachman once said, ‘I will tell you a secret: a great wave of heresy () has come to the world. It has been decreed that this wave of heresy will engulf the world in order to test our faith. I know that my people, those who accept my teachings, will retain their faith even without my revealing this secret to you; still, I am telling you this now so that when you witness how heresy is vanquishing all, your faith will be even stronger, knowing that I have told you this beforehand.’ Rabbi Nachman spoke to me this way many times; he would sigh deeply concerning this and say: ‘Alas, how will it be possible for only a handful to stand up against all the world.’ And truth be told, shortly after Rabbi Nachman’s death [1810], we saw how heresy had spread and expanded throughout the world, as never before in history, since the earliest times. Even though this leprosy of heresy had begun to blossom and grow during Rabbi Nachman’s lifetime, still it was mainly in distant countries where these heretics wrote their books and preached their doctrines and published their newspaper, the [the main newspaper published by the *Maskilim* in Berlin]; this plague of heresy had not at that time affected the Jews of our country [Russia] very much; but now!...”

In his struggle against the Enlightenment, Rabbi Nachman looked for additional means by which he could fortify the Jewish religion and its vision of redemption in face of what he considered to be the onslaught on faith by the Enlightenment. As I showed in the Introduction in Chapter One, Rabbi Nachman hoped that his “Stories from Ancient Times” would provide a means of spiritual inoculation or spiritual remedy against the values of the Enlightenment, and strengthen the resolve of religious Jews to remain faithful to the traditional Jewish beliefs and way of life, just as the pauper’s wife had remained faithful to her pledge to the merchant (Moses).

After the convening of the Assembly of Jewish Notables in Paris in July 1806, Eban (1968:258-261) writes that “Napoleon now sought to legitimize the delegates’ representations by a body of religious authority. Nothing less than the restoration of the ancient Sanhedrin would do. Every congregation [in France, Germany and Italy, which were the countries under his control] was to send its representatives, both religious and secular... Napoleon wrote: ‘I desire ... to find for them [the Jews] a Jerusalem in France.’

The Sanhedrin finally gathered in Paris in February 1807, with great pomp and ceremony. In conformity with Napoleon’s wish that it resemble as closely as possible the ancient Council, there were 71 deputies in this latter-day Sanhedrin, a *nasi* (president), an *av bet din* (vice-president), and a *hacham* (second vice-president)... In its first session, the Sanhedrin ratified the decisions of the Assembly and gave them religious sanction... The Sanhedrin yielded on every point... With the decisions of the Sanhedrin the Jews of France renounced rabbinical jurisdiction, corporate status, and the hope for a return to the Land of Israel.”

Thus, the direct result of the Enlightenment was the rapid growth of “assimilatory tendencies involving the renunciation of religious and national traditions” (Epstein 1964:29). Rabbi Nachman reacted in horror as the end of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth witnessed the greatest wave of voluntary conversions from Judaism to Christianity in Jewish history. “Fully one tenth of the Jewish population of the German states, between 1800 and 1810, took the escape route of baptism, among these four of the children of Moses Mendelssohn” (Eban 1968:265). Among those Jews in Western Europe who did not convert, the majority stopped observing many of the commandments of the Torah; they also renounced all the nationalist elements in Judaism that call for a specific redemption of the Jewish people, and they gave up the belief in the Messiah who would lead them back to the Land of Israel and rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. For them, Berlin would be their new Jerusalem.

In summary, I strongly feel that in Rabbi Nachman’s story of “The Merchant and the Pauper,” the pauper represents those Jews who renounce the age-old pledge of loyalty to Moses (=the merchant) and the Torah of Moses. They are interested in financial success and temporal power, and no longer believe in the figure of a personal Messiah (= the

merchant's son) whose destiny is intertwined with the destiny of *Knesset Israel*. Indeed, they want their daughters to intermarry with the different princes of the world, who represent the Gentile nations and the traditions of contemporary European civilization.

It is no accident that before the pauper becomes an emperor, he first becomes a general. We have already met a general in this story, namely the evil general who had kidnapped the pauper's wife, and who was a symbol of the forces of impurity, the 49 gates of impurity () that represent the exile in Egypt. Tragically and ironically, the pauper's wife's own husband becomes himself a general and after his rise to power, "imprisons" his own wife and daughter in an imperial palace of gold (reminiscent of the mountain of gold and palace of pearl in "The Losing of the King's Daughter"), hoping to deny his daughter's destiny and prevent the Princess from making contact with, and eventually marrying, her intended bridegroom, the merchant's son. As Doron (1997:149) points out, "A beautiful palace is the most dangerous kind of captivity." The pauper is what Rabbi Nachman often calls — "poor in wisdom;" instead of sustaining themselves in the wealth of Jewish tradition, there are Jews who deny the value of Torah and traditional Judaism, and who prefer what Rabbi Nachman considered to be the counterfeit and ultimately worthless false gold of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. Steinsaltz (1979:134) writes that Rabbi Nachman "was probably the only figure in his generation who dared to condemn all Jewish rationalist philosophy, and not just its more problematic aspects." Story Number Nine, "The Clever Man and the Simple Man," focuses on this very theme, and it is possible to see the merchant as paralleling the simple man in that story, and the pauper as corresponding to the clever man (who in that story eventually descends into atheism, egoism, and ridicule).

I believe that there is significance in the fact that before becoming an emperor, the pauper had joined the army and rose rapidly in the ranks until he became a successful general. It seems to me that Rabbi Nachman is mocking, by means of this parody, the most famous general-turned-emperor in Rabbi Nachman's lifetime, namely Napoleon himself (who, by the way, was only three years older than Rabbi Nachman). The portrait of the pauper-emperor that Rabbi Nachman has created, a man who has been given great power yet is not worthy of it since he is poor in spirit and poor in wisdom, is not only a mimicry of

the French emperor (as perceived by Rabbi Nachman) but also a satiric sketch of the emancipated Jews of France who tried to be more French than the Frenchmen, and the enlightened Jews of Germany who embraced German culture and endeavored to be more German than the Germans.

In our story, the emperor realizes that he will not be able to make what he considers a more suitable match for his daughter (*Knesset Israel*) among the kings and princes of the world as long as the merchant's son (the Messianic hope) is alive. He therefore decides to get rid of the merchant's son; the first step is to devise ways to totally impoverish the merchant, and then afterwards, to dispose of the merchant's son as well. The impoverishment of the merchant symbolizes the historical fact that the spiritual richness and wealth of the Jewish tradition and of the Torah of Moses lost their value in the perspective of contemporary enlightened Jewry. There are parallels to this in several other allegories from Rabbi Nachman's "Stories from Ancient Times." For instance, in Story Number Eleven, "The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged," after the servant's son (who was mistakenly considered to be the prince) ascends the throne, he causes the exile of his "rival," the true son of the king, by first impoverishing the man who is assumed to be the true prince's father, but who is in fact the biological father of the false king himself. Another example can be found in the very beginning of Story Number Nine, "The Clever Man and the Simple Man," when the two well-to-do fathers of the two boys begin to lose their money and sink deeper and deeper into poverty, until they lose nearly everything. In all three stories it is possible to interpret these fathers as representing Jewish tradition, and their impoverishment as the fact that this tradition is no longer considered to be of value. "The tragedy of the weakening of traditional Judaism, symbolically represented by the impoverishment ... of the fathers, is a feature in several of Rabbi Nachman's tales" (Steinsaltz 1979:136).

In our story, the next step occurs when the merchant's son is falsely accused of a capital offense and is sentenced to be tied in a sack and thrown into the sea. The emperor's plan is foiled, however, by the empress, who is willing to endanger herself and her position in order to save the merchant's son, just as earlier the merchant had risked his life to save her. The merchant's son is thus saved from death but has to undergo exile. In my opinion, this

threat of being sentenced to death by drowning in water, and being saved from a watery grave by a woman from the royal family, is a symbolic echo of Chapter Two in the Book of Exodus. There Moses was saved from being drowned in the Nile by the compassion of Pharaoh's daughter (Exodus 2:3-9); here, in Rabbi Nachman's story, the merchant's son (who represents the Messiah, the symbolic 'son' of Moses) is saved from drowning in the sea by the pauper-emperor's wife. Moses, however, still has to undergo the tribulations of exile to Midian, a desert land (Exodus 2:15-22).

According to Kaplan (1983:207), "this represents the exile of the Israelites from their land, and their subjugation and persecution." However, I think it is even deeper than this. The merchant's son has to suffer the experience of exile due to the emperor's needless hatred, which is called in Hebrew *sinat chinuk*. This needless or unnecessary hatred was also the direct cause of the first exile experienced by the Jewish people, before it was even a nation. I am referring to the hatred and jealousy of Joseph's brothers (Genesis 37), which had been fanned and enflamed by Joseph's dreams, as I mentioned earlier on pages 101-102. Their hatred was so great that they planned to murder their brother (just as the pauper-emperor schemed to murder the merchant's son), although in the end they sold him as a slave to Egypt, which eventually led to the Egyptian exile. Returning to the concept of *sinat chinuk* ('the deeds of the fathers are a sign and a precedent for later generations'), needless hatred (*sinat chinuk*) was often perceived as causing not only the exile of Jacob's family to Egypt, but subsequent exiles too. We find in the Talmud (*Yoma* 9b), the Rabbinical Sages ask, "Why was the Second Temple destroyed? Because of needless hatred (*sinat chinuk*)." In our story, too, needless hatred causes the merchant's son (the Messiah) to go into exile.

At this point in the story, Rabbi Nachman proceeds to present to the reader a very important episode as a flash-back, in which Rabbi Nachman tells the reader the empress had earlier revealed to her daughter the story of her flight from the evil general and how she had been saved by the merchant, her oath of gratitude and allegiance to the merchant and most importantly, the fact that the daughter's true betrothed is the merchant's son, and he alone. The daughter, *Knesset Israel*, promises to honor her mother's pledge and sends a letter to the merchant's son which she writes in her own handwriting, affirming her

faithfulness to him alone, together with a map she draws sketching all the seven bodies of water where her mother had hidden with his father. This letter and map are a metaphor for the Torah; this pledge of total commitment and loyalty, which embodies the Torah, is one of the most crucial images in the story, paralleling the Lost Princess' head-kerchief in "The Losing of the King's Daughter." The Torah is so essential because it is not only the eternal witness of the unbreakable bond uniting the destinies of *Knesset Israel* and the Messiah, but it is also the means by which *Knesset Israel* will be capable of identifying who the true Messiah is. Even if other contenders try to convince the people of Israel of their claims, and even if they do possess some of the signs of the redeemer, only he who is a master of the Torah of Moses is the predestined savior. In contrast to the false messiahs of Jewish history like *Jacob Frank* and *Shabbatai Zvi* (and of course Jesus of Nazareth) who wanted to cancel the commandments of the Torah, the true Messiah, according to Rabbi Nachman, will observe all the laws and ordinances of the Torah. In addition, I believe that Rabbi Nachman is also hinting at the followers of the *Haskalah* (the Jewish Enlightenment). In other words, Rabbi Nachman is demonstrating his conviction that the Jewish people will gain its redemption only by being unswervingly faithful to the Torah, and not by giving up the commandments of the Torah (as preached by leaders of the Reform Movement in Germany), nor by giving up its national identity (as authorized by Napoleon's Sanhedrin in France). Steinsaltz (1979:39) may be referring to this when he writes: "The pledge the daughter grants him, the sign by which she will recognize him, is the memory of the first salvation; the final salvation reflects and completes the first". Kaplan (1983:208) makes a perceptive point when he says that "although the merchant's son and the Princess had gone to school together as children, she had never seen him as an adult. Therefore, the letter would be her only sure way of recognizing him. Later, we find that when he lost the letter, she would not believe who he was."

Fleeing the emperor, the merchant's son takes the Princess' letter with him as he goes into exile. Upon reaching the sea, he sets sail, but a storm wind arises and drives his ship onto the shore of a desert island. We saw in the story "The Losing of the King's Daughter" that the wind that had carried the Lost Princess to the mountain of gold and the palace of pearl was a force of evil. However, in the end the wind began to "blow in reverse," as it were, and transformed into a force of good when it carried the chamberlain to

the golden mountain. In our present story, too, the tempest wind (which will manifest itself three more times in this tale) is initially negative, yet it functions as a very important catalyst which will eventually cause the plot to move on and progress. The wind, initially negative, is in fact positive in the end.

When viewed in this light, the image of the wind in all four of Rabbi Nachman's stories that deal with the Lost Princess bears an uncanny similarity to the image of the wind in several of Shakespeare's plays, notably "King Lear" and "The Tempest." In the central scene of Act Three in "King Lear," the old king is thrust out in the raging winds of a terrible tempest (which is itself a metaphor for the raging storm within King Lear's soul). The tempest wind causes King Lear to lose his sanity and his dignity; however, he later regains them and emerges as a far better human being than he was in the past. In our story, too, the tempest wind causes the ship that the merchant's son is sailing on to crash ashore on a deserted island. This storm, too, mirrors the inner turmoil and torment within the merchant's son; the shipwreck itself mirrors the apparent wreckage of his life after being denied his birth-right of marrying the Princess. Yet this wind, and the winds that will occur later in the story, are actually necessary components and catalysts in the unfolding plot to re-unite the lost and exiled merchant's son with the Princess.

The parallel with Shakespeare's play, "The Tempest," is even more striking. The play begins with a storm wind that causes a large royal boat to shipwreck on a seemingly deserted island; the boat is carrying Ferdinand, the Prince of Naples, and other important dignitaries. The island is actually inhabited by the exiled Duke of Milan, Prospero (who had been denied his crown by his treacherous brother), and Prospero's beautiful daughter Miranda. The shipwreck caused by the storm wind is perceived as a terrible tragedy in Scene One, yet by the end of the play, the prince has met and become betrothed to Miranda, his predestined bride, and Prospero has regained his dukedom after a reconciliation with his brother. Gonzalo, "an honest old councilor" who functions as the playwright's voice in the play, sums up their experience in an important speech declaring his wonder at the way Providence works when he proclaims in the last scene of the play (The Tempest V,iv: 205-213):

"Was Milan thrust from Milan that his issue

Should become kings in Naples? O, rejoice
 Beyond a common joy, and set it down
 With gold on lasting pillars: in one voyage
 Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
 And Ferdinand her brother found a wife
 Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom
 In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves
 When no man was his own.”

Shakespeare has shown that the wind that initially seemed to be a force of evil and caused a shipwreck was actually a positive force for reconciliation; a very similar (although far more complicated) sequence of events occurs in Rabbi Nachman’s story of “The Merchant and the Pauper.”

After the shipwreck, the merchant’s son enters the wilderness of the desert island, walking further and further from the shore until he is lost and unable to return. Wandering yet further, he emerges from the desert and finds a lush, jungle-like area that is suitable for human habitation, with food, water, and shelter. This episode closely parallels the one in Rabbi Nachman’s Story Number Eleven, “The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged,” where the true prince enters a terrifying forest, but eventually discovers there such great peace and inner harmony that he yearns to stay there and not leave. In both stories, the natural splendor of the desert island and the forest reflects “the Kabbalistic idea that the soul of the Messiah resides in the Garden of Eden until the time comes for him to appear” (Steinsaltz 1979:40). According to Rabbi Nachman’s description, this beautiful island does indeed sound like a tropical paradise; Rabbi Nachman writes explicitly that “water was there in abundance, and its trees bore fruit,” which is very reminiscent of the Biblical Garden of Eden. According to Kaplan (1983:210), the fruit and water on the island symbolize the “good deeds and Torah” which sustain the Messiah when he resides in this paradise “where one can enjoy the radiance of the divine.”

Whatever its symbolic meaning, the island is full of natural beauty. Rabbi Nachman was extremely sensitive to the beauty of nature, and spoke on many occasions of how the

magnificence of the natural world can bring a person closer to God. Zeitlin (1965a:304-306) expresses this point with great perceptiveness when he writes that “Rabbi Nachman of Braslav was unique among all the great Jewish religious leaders throughout the generations by the emphasis he placed concerning the value and importance of nature. He attributed inestimable centrality to the splendor of nature, and on how natural beauty nurtures and affects religious feeling.... The *rebbe* of Braslav speaks about the song of the herbs, the grace of the fields which God has blessed, and the spirit of holiness and purity that nature can introduce within the soul of the beholder.... Rabbi Nachman understands nature with the comprehension of a visionary, of a person who is swept into everything he sees and feels with a sense of total and complete awe. He perceives the grace and splendor of each detail and merges them all with the yearnings of his own soul, with the sanctity within his deepest being. Above all, Rabbi Nachman’s deepest aspiration was holiness, and therefore, all the beauty of nature and the magical visions of the natural world awoke within him the love of God.... Rabbi Nachman’s heart would be filled with divine poetry and sacred music when he saw before him valleys full of grain and vegetation, forests, rivers and springs.”

There are countless examples of this throughout the traditional Braslav texts. For instance, Rabbi Nathan relates (*Sichot HaRan* 163) that “once a Braslav *hasid* told me of an incident that occurred in Zlotopolye, when Rabbi Nachman was in his twenties. Rabbi Nachman told this *hasid* one summer morning, ‘Let us go for a walk.’ Rabbi Nachman and this *hasid* left the city and were walking in the fields. Rabbi Nachman said, ‘If only people could hear the songs and praises of the herbs and grasses in this field, how each blade of grass sings the praise of God without any self-awareness, without any desire for reward. How beautiful, how pleasant it is to listen to their song and their music; how good it is to serve God in their presence.’” On a different occasion, Rabbi Nachman said, “When a person merits the experience of meditating and truly talking to God in the field or among the trees of the forest, he feels how each step he takes is as if he were walking in the Garden of Eden. Afterwards, when he leaves the world of nature and returns to town, all the world seems new to him; it is as if the world has been created anew” (*Likkutei Moharan* II:2).

The merchant's son "had a bow and arrow with which he defended himself against the wild beasts of the wilderness." In Rabbi Nachman's stories, wild beasts usually symbolize the bestiality within ourselves. In order to overcome one's bestial urges, one needs a "bow." According to Rashi's commentary on Genesis 48:22 (which is based on the translation of *Onkelus* there and *Baba Batra* 123a), this bow is prayer. In other words, the way to overcome one's own bestiality is through the power of prayer. In *Likkutei Moharan* 2, Rabbi Nachman writes explicitly that "the main weapon of the Messiah, and all the wars and all the conquests that he will conquer — everything is through the merit of prayer." The importance and centrality of prayer, which is only hinted at here, is greatly developed and expanded upon in Rabbi Nachman's Story Number Twelve, "The Master of Prayer," which is analyzed in Chapter Five of this thesis.

In this context, it may seem quite surprising that the merchant's son would sometimes shoot a hare with his bow and arrows for meat, since a hare (in the Hebrew:) is a non-kosher animal. This perhaps alludes to the idea that the Messiah will be able to perform a rectification - of the unclean and the impure. He is able to do this with his bow and arrow, in other words, through prayer.

Leaving the merchant's son for the present, Rabbi Nachman changes the venue of the story and now returns to the emperor's daughter, who has been given a suitable royal palace and royal court where she spends her time in music and poetry. The Princess also insists that each and every suitor come to her in person, in order to see if he is perhaps her destined one, the merchant's son. Rabbi Nachman describes how she would listen carefully to the words of each suitor and then send him a reply through her ladies-in-waiting; to those suitors who pleased her more, she would herself recite an answer in verse, and to those who pleased her the most, she would allow them to catch a glimpse of her. However, in the end, all were rejected with the same reply: "But the waters have not passed over you." Steinsaltz (1979:40) points out that "the great men of all generations have sought to approach the *Shechinah*, but with limited success. Some suitors are denied permission even to enter into her presence; others, in language reminiscent of a famous Talmudic text [*Hagigah* 14b] dealing with mystic knowledge, enter, gaze upon her, but are stricken with

madness; even those who are worthy of looking upon the divine presence soon proceed no further, for they have not reached the stature of the Messiah.”

In the English translation, it is written that the royal suitors “declaimed their poems of love and desire” to the emperor’s daughter. The Hebrew original uses the unusual phrase (literally: ‘song of desire’). This is very important because Rabbi Nachman himself uses this uncommon term when he speaks of the poem *Akdamot* (), which is recited in the synagogue on the holiday of *Shavuot*, as being the (‘song of desire’) *par excellence*. In *Sichot HaRan* 256, Rabbi Nathan writes that “Rabbi Nachman praised the poem *Akdamot* lavishly. Rabbi Nachman said, ‘Because the Jewish people are used to this poem, they do not appreciate the great value of its sanctity.... If only people could know the inestimable worth of this song when it is sung during the morning prayers on *Shavuot*.... It is a ‘song of desire’ () like in the story, ‘The Merchant and the Pauper’.”

The poem *Akdamot* () was written in the eleventh century by Rabbi Meir ben Isaac of France. “The poem, written in Aramaic, consists of ninety verses alphabetically arranged. Its acrostic comprises, in addition to a twofold alphabet, the names of the author and his father and a short petition.... There are ten syllables to each verse, and one rhyme () runs through the entire hymn” (Birnbbaum 1949:647-648). The most important thing about this poem, however, is that it is basically a hymn of praise to the glory of the Torah. This is most appropriate since it is recited just before the reading of the Torah on the festival of *Shavuot*, which commemorates the revelation of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Rabbi Nachman himself has thus given us a vital insight into the symbolic meaning of the image of the emperor’s daughter. She is not only the *Shechinah* and *Knesset-Israel* and the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, but she also symbolizes the Torah, above all, the deepest levels of the Torah, the mystical Torah ().

Indeed, we find an extremely crucial (and beautiful) passage in the *Zohar* (II.99a) itself which describes the Torah in terms that strongly parallel the description of the emperor’s daughter in Rabbi Nachman’s story, “The Merchant and the Pauper”: “The Torah resembles a beautiful and noble maiden who is hidden in a secluded room in her castle and who has a secret betrothed, a beloved lover whom she alone knows. Due to his

love of her, he continually walks past the gates of her castle, secretly glancing back and forth in quest of her. She knows that her beloved is searching for her; so what does she do? She opens the portal to her hidden room slightly and reveals her face for a moment, and then hides it again. If there were anyone there but her beloved, he would not see nor perceive anything. Only he sees her, and he yearns for her with his heart and soul and entire being; he knows that she has revealed herself for that one second for his sake, aflame with love for him. This is the way of the Torah, who reveals herself only to they who love her. The Torah knows that the wise of the heart continually walk back and forth in front of her gate. What does she do? She reveals her face from within the hidden recesses of her castle, calling to him and then returning to her inner chamber.... The Torah reveals herself and then conceals herself, calling out in love to her beloved and awakening his love for her. Come and see: this is the way of the Torah; when she desires at first to reveal herself to her beloved, she sends him a sign.”

Scholem (1973:67) notes that this “identification of the *Shechinah* (who is also the Queen or Matrona) with the Torah” became an important principle for many Kabbalists. Thus, we can sum up by saying that we have reached a critical stage in our search to understand the meaning of the Lost Princess; for in addition to being all that we have said to this point (the *Shechinah*, *Knesset-Israel*, and the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*), she is now a personification of the Torah as well. The quest for the Lost Princess is therefore an attempt to comprehend the mysteries of the Torah itself.

This helps explain the sentence in the story where “the suitors to whom she revealed her face were overwhelmed by her beauty: some would swoon, whereas others went mad with love.” This seems to be yet another allusion to the key Talmudic passage in *Hagigah* 14b (which I have already mentioned and discussed) concerning the four sages who entered *Pardes*, the orchard of mystical Torah knowledge. The beauty of the Lost Princess in her role of the secret Torah () can cause insanity or illness to those who are not her true bridegroom.

Meanwhile, the merchant’s son has remained in his secluded island, and like the emperor’s daughter, devotes himself to music. It is interesting that he fashions strings for his musical instruments from animal guts. In other words, he is capable of transforming the

animal into something much more refined and spiritual like music. In my opinion, the reason for this closely resembles the merchant's son's use of his bow (prayer) to overcome the wild animals (bestiality), and to catch the non-kosher hare for meat. Kaplan (1983:212) comments that the merchant's son "can take the forces of destruction, and use them for harmony. Of course, this is the concept of the Messiah." A similar situation occurs in Rabbi Nachman's Story Number Eleven, "The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged." There, when the king's true son first entered the forest, the roars and howls of the wild beasts terrified him; however, as he learned and grew spiritually in the forest, he came to such a high spiritual level that he was able to perceive the screeches and growls of the wild beasts as being part of the most beautiful harmony imaginable.

In our story, both the merchant's son and the Lost Princess devote much of their time to music. Music, like the beauty of nature, is a means by which one can draw closer to sanctity, according to Rabbi Nachman. "It is good for a person to accustom himself to music and to revive his spirit over and over again through melody, for music gladdens the soul, causing it to cleave () to God" (*Likkutei Eytzot* 197).

However, the merchant's son must be shaken out of his passivity if he is ever to marry the emperor's daughter. Thus, a great tempest comes and flattens all the trees in the forest, making it impossible for him to find the right tree in which he had hidden the Princess's letter. As I have earlier discussed at length, the tempest here too is a force that seems at first to be negative, but is actually a catalyst for change and in the long run it is a force for good that helps redemption to occur. The merchant's son feels devastated by his inability to find the Princess' letter among the many thousands of fallen trees, and resolves to leave the island and somehow to do something else.

However, at this point in the story, circumstances force the merchant's son to reveal part of his secret to three different individuals who are in fact not worthy of the trust the merchant's son has shown them and who do not merit possessing his secret. Each one of the three usurps his trust in them in order to try to gain the Princess for himself. The traditional Braslav commentary *Rimzei Ma'asiot, Hashmatot* 18 interprets these three kings as being three different false messiahs that persuaded some of the Jewish people during the course of history that the true messiah had arrived. Steinsaltz (1979:40-41) agrees; he

writes that “this episode is an allegorical account of the various messianic figures who have crossed the stage of Jewish history, frequently with disastrous results. Possessing part of the secret signs and perhaps some aspect of messiahship, each was able for a time to persuade the people, including the leaders, that he was indeed the redeemer.... Each of the personalities in the story was requested to help in bringing about the redemption, but instead each attempted to usurp the redeemer’s role for himself.” The most unexpected scene, however, is the one in which the merchant’s son actually comes before the emperor’s daughter, who refuses to recognize him and in fact rejects him. In other words, Rabbi Nachman seems to be suggesting in this story that the true Messiah had indeed once come, but was not acknowledged by *Knesset Israel*. No one can say for sure to whom Rabbi Nachman is referring, and it is very tempting to try and speculate about whom he may have been alluding to. In any case, Rabbi Nachman is making a very powerful statement against messianic pretenders. No matter how charismatic a spiritual leader may appear to be, the only true candidate that can even be considered as the Messiah must be a spiritual leader who is in possession of the Lost Princess’ handwritten letter and map, which means a person who is totally faithful and committed to the Torah of Moses as understood by Jewish tradition. In contrast to the claims of Christianity or Islam, of *Shabbatai Zvi* or *Jacob Frank*, the Torah (including its commandments) is not to be altered or changed in any way; any would-be messianic pretender who does not follow the letter and the spirit of the Law (in other words, someone who does not know the correct order of the seven bodies of water) is by that very fact not in possession of the map and letter and is not the Lost Princess’ true bridegroom.

It would seem that at this stage of the story, a stalemate has been reached. However, Rabbi Nachman introduces a new character into the story: a pirate and kidnapper who is defined as a “murderous scoundrel.” Kaplan (1983:216) believes that the pirate “represents the forces of evil. The side of evil tries to capture the holy. However, as we shall see, it is through this alone that the Princess is uplifted and reunited with her destined one. This is reminiscent of the Princess of Story Number One [“The Losing of the King’s

Daughter”] who was trapped in the domain of evil. It is significant that the pirate can capture the Princess only after she rejects her true bridegroom.”

I would like to add that in my opinion, it is also significant that this pirate is a eunuch who wants her in order to sell her later on for a large sum of money. This is important for two reasons. First, the fact that he is a eunuch is indicative of Rabbi Nachman’s strong conviction (which he has in common with the whole world of Kabbalistic thought) that when all is said and done, evil is ultimately sterile and parasitic; evil has no future. Despite the fact that evil seems so powerful and victorious in the world, it cannot reproduce and thus must ultimately vanish off the face of the earth. Second, the pirate wants the Princess not out of love or desire or even sexual lust, but simply as a means of accumulating greater wealth. I have already had occasion to discuss Rabbi Nachman’s belief that the passion for money is the lowest and basest vice of all; this idea will be expanded upon in Rabbi Nachman’s Story Number Twelve (“The Master of Prayer”), which I analyze in Chapter Five of this thesis. Yet in our present story, too, the ultimate degradation that the Princess must undergo is connected to the lust for money.

Steinsaltz (1979:41-42) understands the pirate to be the “personification of evil; not only is he a murderer, but he also makes a living from death and thus can be identified with Satan in his role as the Angel of Death ... The technique by which the scoundrel lures the daughter into his cabin is typical of the way evil tempts man: beginning with trifles, transactions of little significance, it draws man on through better bargains to the promised ultimate marvel, which is in fact an illusion and a fraud. But by the time this is discovered, it is too late to turn back.”

In *Sichot HaRan* 6, Rabbi Nachman explains in detail the way evil entices a person: “The evil inclination () resembles a person that approaches people with his fist closed, and nobody knows what he is holding inside his fist. He extends his hand and asks everybody, ‘What am I holding?’ Everybody imagines that he is holding just the thing that he most desires, and therefore everybody runs after him since every one believes that he is holding the one thing that he wants most of all. Finally, the man opens his fist and there is nothing there at all. Thus, the desires of this world resemble sunrays that shine into a house through a window. People try to grasp the sunrays, but they don’t grasp anything.”

It is important to note that the pirate succeeds in enticing the Princess through the artificial puppets of golden birds that he ingeniously devised, and which chirp and sing beautifully. Here again we have an example of how music can sometimes belong to the realm of evil, as we saw in the beginning of Story Number One (“The Losing of the King’s Daughter”), when in the palace-fortress of the evil one there was an orchestra which played beautiful music when the queen (the Lost Princess) was led in. However, it is important to point out that in all of Rabbi Nachman’s stories, birds usually belong to the forces of sanctity. Nonetheless, here the pirate’s birds do belong to the dimension of evil precisely because they are not natural, but are artificial. These metallic, golden birds are not flesh and blood, but are only imitations that superficially look and sound like real birds, but are, in fact, merely marionettes built of metal. According to Rabbi Nachman, when something looks like something real and alive, but is in fact counterfeit and a sham, such a thing belongs to the realm of the impure, the false, the evil — what Rabbi Nachman (and other Kabbalists) call the realm of the *kelipot* (), the “husks” of impurity and external appearance which cover up and envelope the inner world of purity.

All this leads us to a crucial point. The pirate succeeds in enticing and abducting the Princess by masquerading as a merchant. The true merchant whom we met at the beginning of the story represented Moses and was a true redeemer. But now, the forces of evil (the pirate) are able to succeed in overwhelming and conquering the forces of holiness (the Princess) by means of masquerading as the forces of good (the merchant), in other words, by the power of imitation.

Basing himself on the *Zohar* (II.148b), Rabbi Nachman himself writes, in *Likkutei Moharan* 64, that “the *kelipot*, the realm of impurity and evil, imitate and mimic the realm of holiness the way a monkey mimics a man.” Commenting on this passage, Fruman (2001:20) demonstrates in detail how “in the world of Rabbi Nachman, evil imitates good; evil possesses the ability to resemble good, at least externally, to an amazing degree.” Fruman stresses that Rabbi Nachman consistently uses the letter as the abbreviation for the word , the *kelipot*, the realm of the “husks” of impurity and externality; however, he sometimes uses the very same letter to represent the word (holiness). Furthermore, Fruman notes that the only difference between the letter (which always

represents the name of God) and the letter *ayin* (which represents here the husks of evil which envelop and conceal the inner seeds of holiness) is the longer “tail” that the letter *ayin* possesses; this parallels the fact that the one of the main external differences between a man and a monkey is the monkey’s tail. Moreover, the letter *ayin* in Hebrew is pronounced as (*kof*), which is the Hebrew word for monkey.

Fruman (2001:19) concludes that “the main difference between good and evil, truth and lies, is not the external appearance, which can be deceptive. The difference rather is found in the inner value, the inner kernel of spirituality. A person should not concentrate on what he sees on the outside, because things that seem to closely resemble each other on the outside, like a human being and an ape, may in fact be worlds apart in terms of their inner spirituality. This is part of the problem with rationalistic thinking, to which Rabbi Nachman of Braslav was so opposed.” Rationalist thinking tends to examine only the superficial facts that can be measured quantitatively and does not probe beneath the surface to uncover deeper levels of existence and reality.

This is exactly what happens in our story. The murderer-pirate pretends to be a merchant, thereby resembling (superficially) the true merchant and redeemer who is the father of the Princess’ betrothed lover. Kaplan (1983:217) notes that the pirate-murderer “is a parody of the merchant. We shall see that in many ways, the pirate parodies the merchant. The forces of evil always try to imitate the good.” The pirate’s merchandise, however, is something artificial and phony: puppets of birds. It is the resemblance of the puppets to real birds that arouse the curiosity of the Princess and enables the pirate to lure her unto his ship and kidnap her.

This theme of imitation and masquerading and mimicry, of the true reality being concealed and hidden, of things not really being what they seem to be on the surface — this theme becomes the dominant characteristic of the last part of the story which began with the appearance of the pirate-murderer making believe he is a merchant. Wiskind-Elper writes (1998:174) that “we might say, then, that disguises in this and many of Rabbi Nachman’s stories serve to heighten awareness that appearances may conceal precious truths.” Over and over again, one of the main characters is disguised, or someone else masquerades as a different person. For example, after the pirate succeeds in capturing the Princess, he strips

her of her royal clothes and dresses one of his sailors as the emperor's daughter. This is a classic example of how the realm of the "husks," the *kelipot*, masquerades as holiness and sanctity, the same way "a monkey mimics a man" (*Likkutei Moharan* 64). "The Evil One presents one of his minions as the divine. People are not even aware of the holiness that they have lost, even though they are given a ridiculous substitute" (Kaplan 1983:219). Steinsaltz (1979:42), too, stresses the deeper significance and tragic consequences of the sailor being dressed up as, and substituting for, the Lost Princess when he writes that "at the beginning of her exile, the daughter is stripped of her magnificent garments, her outer manifestations, and is wrapped in a sack, mark of the lowest level of being. Furthermore, the scoundrel fashions a substitute: instead of the *Shechinah* in her glory, he takes a sailor, a role lacking ultimate significance, and clothes him in her garments. It is the nature of evil to extract the inner content and to replace it with a void, thereby creating a false mystery. This spurious manifestation of holiness can be successful only temporarily, but still long enough for the servants to be decoyed and the scoundrel to make his escape."

Even more important than the sailor's masquerade are the transformations that are thrust upon the Princess. After entering the pirate's cabin with the golden birds, she is first put into a sack, which parallels the fate of her destined bridegroom, the merchant's son, who was also put into a sack earlier in the story when he was condemned to death and sentenced to be thrown into the sea. Afterwards, the pirate dresses her as one of his sailors, and she remains disguised as a male sailor until the end of the story. This has three very important ramifications. First, this is again an example of how the *kelipot*, the "husks" of evil conceal and disguise holiness. Second, when she dresses as a man, even her own father is unable to recognize her. This is a symbol of how deep and encompassing "the exile of the *Shechinah*" may become; even when one stands next to extreme sanctity, one is unaware that he or she is in the presence of the sacred. Third, wearing a man's clothes symbolizes that she is no longer passive (the traditional feminine role), but has become very active, in fact far more active than the merchant's son. In this story, Rabbi Nachman seems to be asserting that in the quest for redemption, the *Shechinah* (the Lost Princess) sometimes must play the dominant and more active role, in contrast to her destined bridegroom, the Messiah (the merchant's son), who is extremely reticent and must be prodded into action by her. Band (1978:165) summarizes this when he writes, "In 'The Merchant and the Pauper,'

the *Shechinah*, represented by the daughter of the pauper who has become the rich, cruel emperor is portrayed as a wondrous child who suffers exile in a series of adventurous episodes... She is the most forceful figure in the story... It is interesting to note that he is hesitant while she is aggressive ... and must persist in her encouragement of the one destined to redeem her.”

I wish to clarify another very important point. It is at this very late stage in the story that the pauper-emperor’s daughter can truly be termed the Lost Princess. In my opinion, it is possible, and indeed preferable, to view everything that has happened in the story until this point (the Princess’ abduction by the pirate-murderer) as being in a sense a prelude, and only now does the main plot in fact begin. In Rabbi Nachman’s first story, “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” which I analyzed in Chapter Three, the very short opening paragraph describes in just a few words how the King’s daughter became lost: “the King once said, ‘May the evil one take you!’ and that night she disappeared.”

In contrast, in the story of “The Merchant and the Pauper,” Rabbi Nachman seems to be intent on explaining how and why the Princess came to be lost. He writes many, many pages in order to fill out in great detail the significance, the background, and all the developments that preceded (and therefore prepared the groundwork for) the Princess’ kidnapping by the evil pirate, which is another way of saying how the evil one took her. The present story is therefore both a necessary extension and an important exposition of the earlier tale.

As I said, only now have we reached the stage in this story when we can confirm that the daughter is indeed the Lost Princess. She is lost because her parents, as well as all the royal ministers, do not know where she is nor how she can be located. Furthermore, she is lost in the sense that that she herself does not know how to escape from the pirate’s clutches; she is literally “at a loss.” We see that her first reaction to her abduction is that “the emperor’s daughter was mortally afraid,” and this fear paralyzes her. At present, she is incapable of action.

In order to evade the emperor’s troops who are searching for him and the Lost Princess, the pirate forces the Lost Princess to hide with him in a cistern, then in a *mikveh* (a bathing place), and in all of the seven bodies of water in which the Lost Princess’ mother,

the pauper's wife, had hidden with the merchant when they were running away from the evil general in the beginning of the story. (We thus see that the evil general was in fact an earlier manifestation of the pirate-murderer.) Of course, there is a tremendous difference between the two parallel escapes: the merchant and the pauper's wife were hiding in these seven bodies of water in order to ascend in holiness, whereas now the Lost Princess is being dragged down by the pirate back to the realm of impurity and evil. This inversion is an outstanding example of the way evil mimics holiness, "the way a monkey mimics a man," as I discussed earlier.

Again there is a storm, and the tempest wind once more has a dual function, one positive and one negative. First, it causes the Lost Princess (and the pirate as well) to become even more lost, since the fishing vessel in which the pirate and Lost Princess were sailing crashes on the shore of a desert island. Second, since this is the desert island where her destined bridegroom (unknowingly) awaits her, the storm wind paradoxically is an important catalyst that will hasten the final redemption. Thus, this wind is both similar and dissimilar to the wind at the end of "The Losing of the King's Daughter." It is dissimilar in the sense that in the earlier story, the wind brought the masculine character, the chamberlain, to the more passive Lost Princess, whereas here the feminine figure, the Lost Princess is brought to the male character, the merchant's son, who is more passive. It is similar, however, in the sense that in both stories the wind, which seemed at first to be a force for tragedy (transferring the Lost Princess to the mountain of gold and the palace of pearl in the first story, and in the second story, causing a shipwreck), actually is a force for good, in the long run.

It is at this point that the Lost Princess, dressed as a man, begins to demonstrate initiative and overcomes her fear of the pirate. "The world is but a narrow bridge, and the main thing is not to fear" (*Likkutei Eytzot* 92, section 12), Rabbi Nachman frequently told his Hasidim. Here too, as soon as a person overcomes his or her fear of evil, half the battle is already won. The Lost Princess realizes that the pirate cannot and will not kill or harm her, and therefore she is no longer afraid of hiding from him and eluding him. The murderer-pirate wanders off on his own and in the end, dies after being "devoured by wild beasts." I have already pointed out that the merchant's son was able to save himself from the wild

beasts (which symbolize one's own inner bestial desires and drives) by merit of his bow and arrow, which represent prayer. The murderer-pirate lacks this bow because he never prays to God, obviously, and therefore his own bestiality overwhelms him and destroys him, as it is written, "The evil stumble in their wickedness" (Proverbs 24:16) and "He that pursues evil will come to his own death" (Proverbs 11:19).

Steinsaltz (1979:42) suggests a different reason for the pirate's demise: the fact that the Lost Prince escaped from the pirate deprives him of his life-force. "The scoundrel is essentially a parasite, and once separated from her, he loses the source of his life. Evil draws its substance by attaching itself to holiness, and if severed from it, perishes." I am not certain that I agree with the explanation that Steinsaltz offers, but I do think it is connected to the reason why the emperor begins to lose battles for the first time, and eventually loses his throne. All his status and success, his importance and good fortune derive from his daughter, as his wife continually tells him; once their daughter is lost, all his success and good fortune also terminate and he too must undergo exile.

After the emperor goes into exile and sets sail, once again there is a tempest wind which shipwrecks his boat, casting him onto the shore of the desert island where the banished pauper-emperor joins his own daughter and the merchant's son (although no character of course is aware of the true identity of the other two). Wiskind-Elper (1998:173-174) notes that "dramatic tension is created by the disparity between the reader's awareness and the characters' ignorance of whom the pivotal figure [the Lost Princess] really is.... Her disguise as a man guards her true identity from him [the merchant's son]. Even her father, coincidentally shipwrecked on the same island, does not recognize her."

Kaplan (1983:222) makes the observation that at first, "the young man still hated the emperor, and as long as there is hatred in the world, the Messiah cannot be united with the *Shechinah*." Therefore, in order for the process of redemption to occur, a reconciliation must come into effect, and that is precisely what happens as the merchant's son nobly forgives the emperor. This act of forgiveness and the consequent reconciliation is an example of *ahava* - *levud*, "needless love," a concept that was formulated by Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak Kook (1865-1935), the most important Jewish mystic of the twentieth century.

Yaron (1985:368) defines *ahava be'lo shiklita* (“needless love”) as “love that is independent of all justification and reason.” That is to say, whereas it is natural for a husband to love his wife, or a mother to love her child, “needless love” is the ability to love someone whom you are not “obligated” to love, indeed, it may be someone who has wronged you or has been hostile to you. In the case of “needless love” (*ahava be'lo shiklita*), you love the other person even though he doesn’t deserve it, and it is a manifestation of compassion and nobility of character. Earlier on in this chapter (on page 112-113), I discussed the Talmudic concept of *hateret be'lo shiklita*, “needless hatred” (which was the emperor’s attitude towards the merchant’s son); needless hatred was the cause of the destruction of the Second Temple (*Yoma* 9b). Commenting on this Talmudic passage, Rabbi Kook wrote: “If we were destroyed, and the whole world with us, because of needless hatred, then we will merit redemption, and the whole world with us, because of needless love” (Yaron 1985:368). This is exactly what we have encountered at the end of Rabbi Nachman’s story, “The Merchant and the Pauper.” The merchant’s son is able to rise to great heights of altruism and compassion in order to forgive the pauper-emperor, despite all the suffering the merchant’s son had undergone because of him; the “needless love” displayed by the merchant’s son enables him, and all the other characters in the story, to be worthy of redemption.

I wish to elaborate on this very important point further. In my opinion, the reconciliation between the merchant’s son and the pauper-emperor is very reminiscent of the reconciliation in the Book of Genesis between Joseph and his brothers. Despite the terrible injustice done to him, Joseph forgives his brothers, promises to take care of them, and then kisses and embraces them (Genesis 45:4-15, and Genesis 50:19-21), which is exactly paralleled in Rabbi Nachman’s story when the merchant’s son forgives the pauper-emperor, promises to look after him, and then embraces and kisses him. Joseph was considered by both the Sages of the Talmud and the medieval Kabbalists as being the *tzaddik* par excellence. The nobility of character displayed by the merchant’s son in this episode enables him to be considered a true *tzaddik*, and to take upon himself the aspect of Joseph.

In the Kabbalah, Joseph is represented by the ninth *Sefirah*, the *Sefirah* of *Yesod* (“Foundation”), whose mission is to unite with the tenth and last *Sefirah*, the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* (which is synonymous with the *Shechinah* and with *Knesset Israel*, as I have

pointed out). An example of the relationship between the two *Sefirot* of *Yesod* and *Malchut* can be found in the important hymn (“I will praise”) written in Aramaic by the leading Kabbalist of the sixteenth century, the *Ari* (Rabbi Yitzhak Luria of Zefat), who was considered by Rabbi Nachman to be one of his most important mentors. This poem is sung by Braslav Hasidim, as well as by other Jewish groups, every Friday evening before the *Kiddush* (the sanctification over the wine). This mystical poem centers on the “wedding” between the last two *Sefirot*, which takes place on the Sabbath, and indeed is synonymous with the Sabbath:

I will sing in praises
 To enter the gates
 Of the fields of apples
 That are sacred [a Kabbalistic appellation for the *Shechinah*].

Let us invite her [the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*]
 As we set a newly laid table for her;
 A beautiful menorah
 Casts its lights upon us.

Between the right and the left
 The Bride [the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*] comes
 Decorated in jewels,
 Adorned in festive clothes.

Her husband [the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*] embraces her,
 And through his Foundation
 He grants her comfort and fulfillment... (Tal 1981:212)

By means of the compassion he displayed towards the deposed emperor, and having attained both the status of Joseph the *tzaddik* and the personification of the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*, the merchant’s son has reached the level where his exile can end and he can marry the Lost Princess. However, the Lost Princess’ letter and map, which were lost in the forest, must first be retrieved. As in all of Rabbi Nachman’s stories, the road to redemption

entails following the path of the Torah and the commandments of Judaism. The merchant's son reveals to his two companions the reason he goes into the forest every day: to search for the lost letter that the Princess had given him. It is of course ironic that it is the Lost Princess who discovers and retrieves her own letter. Referring to this point, Kaplan (1983:226) writes, "This is very much like Story Number One, where the Lost Princess tells the chamberlain where she can be found.... The divine presence [=the Lost Princess] always does everything possible to hasten the redemption." Steinsaltz (1979:43) notes that "Rabbi Nachman thus demonstrates that a number of factors are involved in the process of redemption. It is not enough to wait passively for the Messiah, for he is in fact inactive at certain critical stages." Yet I strongly feel that it is the attitude of "needless love" and reconciliation achieved by the merchant's son that enable the Lost Princess' letter (the secret Torah) to be revealed. This also emphasizes the idea that the path to redemption, which is implemented through the observance and study of Torah, first begins with taking steps on the road of altruism, compassion, forgiveness and love — what is called in Hebrew (which is sometimes translated as 'loving-kindness'), and which is the root of the word (Hasidism). In this context, it is worthwhile to note that before her marriage at the end of the story, the Lost Princess (following in the footsteps of her destined bridegroom) also brings about a reconciliation between her parents, because her repentant father too belongs to the House of Israel.

I have already mentioned that one of the main differences between "The Losing of the King's Daughter" and "The Merchant and the Pauper" is that the Lost Princess is much more passive in the first story than in the second. Another important difference that can be found is that in the first story, there is no hint in the text itself of a romantic link between the Lost Princess and the chamberlain, whose sole mission is to return the Lost Princess to her father. In contrast, the much longer and more complicated fable, "The Merchant and the Pauper," is in essence a love story. Moreover, much of the second story deals with the long and complicated process of how the two betrothed lovers are re-united, whereas in the first story, Rabbi Nachman does not narrate how the chamberlain actually succeeded in rescuing the Lost Princess from the palace of pearl on the mountain of gold.

Yet another major difference centers on the relationship between the father and the daughter. In Chapter Three of this thesis, I showed that the daughter-father relationship in “The Losing of the King’s Daughter” may allude to the Biblical story of Dinah (Genesis 34). In “The Merchant and the Pauper,” I believe that in many respects, the father-daughter relationship is patterned after the relationship between Rachel and her father Laban, and the relationship between Michal and her father Saul. In both cases, the father shows great hostility towards his prospective son-in-law (Jacob and David, respectively), and places obstacles in the way of the young couple, just as in Rabbi Nachman’s story. In both cases, the daughter must defy her father’s wishes, and she chooses her beloved.

The story of “The Merchant and the Pauper” ends with the marriage between the merchant’s son and the Lost Princess, who rule the kingdom and the empire (=the world). However, Rabbi Nachman does not add, as in traditional fairy-tales, that “they lived happily ever after.” We do not know what happens to the Lost Princess after her marriage, and we are left with the unspoken question: what happened next?

To answer that question, we must turn to another of Rabbi Nachman’s stories, “The Master of Prayer” (where we will find a very complex answer), which I will analyze in Chapter Five of this thesis. A translation of this story into English can be found in Appendix Three on pages 310-332.

CHAPTER FIVE:

“The Master of Prayer”

“The Master of Prayer” (Story Number Twelve) is Rabbi Nachman’s longest story, and is in many ways his most impressive literary accomplishment. It develops and expands themes that were touched upon in his earlier fables, and is populated by a very large and diverse gallery of characters. Steinsaltz (1979:103) writes that this story is “the most original and polished of all Rabbi Nachman’s tales. Structurally it is made up of two major narrative frameworks, each with its central theme, and incorporates numerous short stories... [Nonetheless,] a single motif informs the whole tale — the redemption of the world in messianic times.” It is worthwhile to note that the central character, the master of prayer, appears in both narrative frameworks and indeed provides the link between them.

In this story, the Lost Princess is only one of the ten figures who constitute the king’s family and royal court (the second narrative framework); in the first narrative framework, which focuses on the country of wealth and the other nine sects that searched for the true purpose of life, there are even a larger number of characters. However, I will demonstrate that the Lost Princess should be considered the most pivotal member of the royal court and that it is through her that the others are inter-connected. Although she is not one of the two most dominant and active figures (they are her husband, the warrior, and of course, the master of prayer himself), she plays a crucial role in the saga of redemption.

Furthermore, as I noted at the end of Chapter Four, this story develops the character of the Lost Princess at a later stage in her “life.” In the first story, “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” although the rather passive Lost Princess there was the “object” of the chamberlain’s yearning, there was no hint of romantic love. In the second story I analyzed, “The Merchant and the Pauper,” the plot focused on the two young lovers who were unable to marry due to the opposition and obstacles placed on their path by the bride’s father (a well-known motif in many stories in many cultures); there the Lost Princess was more active than her male protagonist, the merchant’s son, and the story ended with their wedding. In “The Master of Prayer,” the Lost Princess is portrayed as being older, as it were, and happily married to a husband (the king’s warrior) whom both her parents had approved of; the match itself had been proposed by the master of prayer. Furthermore, the Lost Princess is now a mother with a young, wondrous child who has inherited from his mother all the beauty and uniqueness that characterized the Lost Princess in “The Merchant and the Pauper.”

Unfortunately, and quite unexpectedly, in the story “The Master of Prayer,” the happily married warrior’s wife become once more a Lost Princess. The most pivotal and important event in the story, which is the catalyst that is the true starting point of the plot, involves a tempest wind (which we have previously encountered in earlier stories) that snatches away the wondrous child. The king’s daughter ran frantically after her abducted infant, and after her ran “the queen, the king, and all were scattered.”

This total disruption and dispersal of the king’s family and court is a very vivid and graphic reenactment of the mystical doctrine of which I have discussed several times; it is “in fact a literary rendering of the Kabbalistic understanding of the Creation. The primal harmony that once existed was shattered in the cataclysmic event known as the ‘breaking of the vessels;’ and as a result sparks of holiness were dispersed throughout the world. The task of man is to find and raise these sparks and to restore order to the cosmos. However, the task is extremely difficult — the king is not to be found, the *Shechinah* is in exile, and the primal Torah now exists only as a memory. In such a state most men fall into despair” (Steinsaltz 1979:108).

This dispersion of the king’s family caused not only the subsequent dispersion and exile of all the other members of the royal court, but also “cast the whole world into confusion.” This is a reflection of a fundamental tenet of the Kabbalah (which was totally accepted and absorbed by Hasidism), as explained by Elijah (1993:103): “The basic assumption for the understanding of reality in Kabbalistic thought is that the upper and lower worlds are mingled and mutually related — everything is included within everything.” Thus, the cosmic catastrophe of ‘the breaking of the vessels’ is reflected and paralleled on the human level by the founding of the ten different sects which we encounter in the story, including the most debased sect: the country of wealth. This country of wealth cannot be redeemed until the Lost Princess is found, and all the members of her family and the royal court are reunited. We therefore see that the quest for the Lost Princess in the story of “The Master of Prayer” has great theological significance on the cosmic level (in the world of emanation), as well as tremendous ramifications on the human level (in the world of action).

Because this story is the longest and most intricate of all of Rabbi Nachman’s stories, I have decided to divide it into five different sections (in this chapter of my doctoral thesis) in order to analyze it more effectively and efficiently. I also believe that this story

should be viewed as a drama. Like any good contemporary play or movie, this “drama” includes scenes that are flashbacks of earlier events. And like any good classical or Shakespearean drama, “The Master of Prayer” is a theatrical piece that can be divided into five “acts” or sections, according to the following division:

Act I: The presentation of the master of prayer

Act II: The presentation of the country of wealth

Act III: Flashbacks regarding (a) the king’s ‘hand;’ (b) the ten members of the Holy Gathering (), namely the four members of the Lost Princess’ family and the six royal counselors; and (c) the ten sects of humanity

Act IV: The reunion of the Holy Gathering

Act V: The redemption of the country of wealth: the sword, the mountain of fire, and the kitchen

Act I: The presentation of the master of prayer

The text of the story starts with a description and presentation of the master of prayer, who is in fact an example of , the great spiritual leader of his generation. According to Steinsaltz (1979:104), this description is patterned after “the *Baal-Shem-Tov*, Rabbi Nachman’s own great-grandfather. Rabbi Nachman regarded the *Baal-Shem-Tov* as an example of the perfect *tzaddik*, and he sought to emulate him in his own life. Like the *Baal-Shem-Tov*, the master of prayer lives far from human habitation. Symbolically he has removed himself from ‘settled’ people, whose modes of thought and of life prevent them from relating to truly significant concerns.... [However,] various other models can be detected in the personality of the master of prayer. One is the prophet Elijah, especially as he is described in texts that cast him as the precursor of the Messiah.”

Kaplan (1983:179) sees the master of prayer as being modeled after King David, “who was the paradigm of a Master of Prayer.” According to the Bible and Jewish tradition, King David wrote many of the psalms, which Rabbi Nachman (as well as many other Jewish religious leaders) considered to be the most profound and most beautiful prayers ever written. Because Rabbi Nachman understood the Book of Psalms to be the intimate prayers and supplications of King David, he saw King David and the psalms he

wrote as the prime example and role -model *par excellence* of the way every human being should pray. Rabbi Nachman believed “a person must talk to God every day; he must ponder about what he has accomplished in this world, and what he has not yet accomplished in this world. A person should examine himself and have pity on himself by speaking to God, by supplicating and begging God to draw him closer to His service.... For this was the way of King David, may he rest in peace, and this was the way he wrote the Book of Psalms. For King David used to practice *hitbodedut* (); King David would lie in his bed each night and cover himself with his blanket, and then have a long and intimate heart-felt conversation with God, as it is written in Psalms 6:7: ‘...Every night I make my bed to swim, I water my couch with my tears’ (*Sichot HaRan* 68).

The story stresses that the master of prayer “lived in a secluded spot, far from the habitations of man.” Kaplan (1979:279) believes that this shows us that “if a person truly wishes to serve God on the highest level, he must separate himself from other people. If he cannot do this physically, he should do so mentally. This is the concept of *hitbodedut* — secluded meditation — that Rabbi Nachman taught.” Nonetheless, the master of prayer leaves this secluded spot from time to time in order to visit towns and to try to influence people to come closer to God. This is paralleled in the important episode in Rabbi Nachman’s Story Number Eleven, “The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged,” when the true prince must leave the forest and return to the settlements inhabited by other people. The idea imbedded in that episode is that it is not proper to spend all of one’s time by oneself only praying to God in a kind of spiritual monastery; one must return to the world of humanity and attempt to bring that world nearer to God. Ettinger (1991:233-234) explains that “in order to lead the crowd, the righteous man must step down from his rank, his high degree, to the material world. This is the celebrated principle of the ‘descent of the righteous’ in Hasidism.” We find a very similar idea in *Likkutei Moharan* 34, where Rabbi Nachman says explicitly: “Every person must talk to his friends and companions about the fear of God. Sometimes this can even be accomplished when discussing mundane matters (), because a person will sometimes hear, in an everyday conversation, hints and insights that will awaken a person to God.” In another passage (*Likkutei Moharan* 53), Rabbi Nachman explains that this attempt to influence others to draw closer to God also benefits that person himself: “In merit

of drawing other people nearer to God, a person can attain even greater [spiritual] knowledge, indeed, all the knowledge a human being is capable of attaining.”

Some (but by no means all) of the people to whom the master of prayer speaks are deeply affected by him, and decide to join him in his “retreat,” in which a river flowed and fruit trees grew. This description is very reminiscent of the merchant’s son desert island in the previous story, which symbolized the Garden of Eden. In my opinion, this description also echoes the description of the cave in the Galilee in which Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai (the great mystic of the second century and the most important teacher and master in the Book of Zohar) and his son hid from Roman persecution for many years (*Shabbat* 33b). The Talmudic description emphasizes that Rabbi Simon bar Yohai was sustained there by a carob tree and a stream of water. Rabbi Nachman certainly considered Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai as one of his spiritual masters and as an outstanding example of a *tzaddik ha-dor*; it would therefore be very appropriate for the master of prayer to be modeled after him.

It is important to note that the master of prayer was also a master of disguise; he would sometimes appear as a beggar, sometimes as a merchant, etc. This symbolizes the fact that in order to be effective, the master of prayer could not give the same spiritual rectification (*tikkun* —) to all the people whom he hoped to help. Because people are different, their spiritual needs are different, and so are their *tikkunim*. Rabbi Nathan (*Sichot HaRan* 185) writes that “Rabbi Nachman told us that he knew the roots of the souls of Israel ... and therefore he knew which spiritual rectifications (*tikkunim*) would be appropriate for each Hasid, according to the root of his soul. Consequently, Rabbi Nachman would instruct one of his followers to fast, and then instruct a different Hasid that he would have to eat; Rabbi Nachman would then instruct a third Hasid to stay awake all night and study.”

Similarly, in our story the master of prayer would sometimes disguise himself as a man of wealth in order to influence a certain person, while for a different person he would appear as a pauper in order to prescribe the appropriate and suitable spiritual remedy. Furthermore, this need for disguise (just as the Lost Princess was disguised as a male sailor when she wore a sailor’s clothes in “The Merchant and the Pauper”) is not only tactical but also strategic, according to following paradox presented by Rabbi Nathan: “The truly wise must be extremely careful of how and what they say, for their words must often be enrobed

and disguised in order to be true” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Kosher Animals 4:32). Piekarz (1972:12) comments that “two contradictory trends exist in the world of Braslav literature: the desire to reveal and the need to conceal. This is one of the most basic characteristics of Braslav Hasidism, from Rabbi Nachman’s time till the present day.... These two opposing tendencies truly typify Braslav literature,” as can indeed be seen in “The Master of Prayer.”

Act II: The presentation of the country of wealth

The story abruptly changes venue and begins to present and expound the primary narrative framework: the chronicle of “the country of wealth.” First of all, I wish to point out that there are quite a number of words in Hebrew (as in English) for wealth and money, for example: and . It is important to pay attention to the fact that when Rabbi Nachman first introduces us to the country of wealth, he chooses to call it: , which is very close to the word: (the number ten). This is significant because the second major narrative framework centers on the ten members of the royal court. It seems to me that Rabbi Nachman is already at the very beginning of the story subtly juxtaposing the ten () figures of holiness with the country of wealth (), which embodies the epitome of impurity and distance from God, as I will demonstrate.

Rabbi Nachman devotes many paragraphs in order to describe in graphic detail this country of wealth and its folly (especially its descent into idolatry and human sacrifice). However, only much later in the story does Rabbi Nachman reveal to us the true origin of the country of wealth and how it was established. One of the soldiers whom the master of prayer meets in the camp of the warrior (who is steadily progressing towards the direction of the country of wealth) relates that “it is recorded in our chronicles that there was once a tempest that overturned the world.” (I will discuss the importance of this tempest later on in this chapter). The warrior’s soldier then goes on to explain that in the aftermath of this cataclysmic tempest, humanity broke up into ten different sects, with each sect choosing a different value which represented, in its opinion, the true purpose of life. One of these ten sects (which significantly was not specifically mentioned by the soldier in the warrior’s camp) was the nucleus which founded the country of wealth. These people believed that “the

importance and rank of every individual was determined by wealth,” and the true purpose of life was to amass money and material possessions, especially gold, silver, and precious metals. Undoubtedly, there are indeed many people in the real world who do in fact believe this to be the case and whose main goal and main motivation in life are to be rich. Many people’s lives are truly dominated by this overwhelming desire “to acquire more possessions and to obtain more money and assets” (Deutsh 2001:1). The only difference between such people and the people who inhabit the country of wealth depicted by Rabbi Nachman lies in the fact that most people in our world try to mask this belief, whereas the people in Rabbi Nachman’s country of wealth are not hypocrites and do not pretend that they have higher values than money.

Steinsaltz (1979:105) comments that in Rabbi Nachman’s exposition of the country of wealth, Rabbi Nachman “starts by describing a situation that, while strange in certain features, is nevertheless plausible and reasonable.” However, beginning with this premise, Rabbi Nachman paints a portrait of how such a society will evolve; this society will become progressively more warped and absurd, yet it is all logically consistent.

In my opinion, one of the most crucial questions a person must deal with is what are the means and what are the ends (the purpose) in life. If there is no spiritual ends or goal, it then becomes quite easy for the ‘means’ to transform into the ‘ends.’ Concerning this point, Kaplan (1983:283) notes that “every person needs money, but some people develop a lust for wealth and money, and begin to think of it as a goal in life. This, as we shall see in the story, can lead to idolatry.... The concept of wealth and its rectification form one of the primary themes of this story.” Furthermore, it is vital to see how this long and elaborate exposition on the country of wealth fits into the larger framework of Rabbi Nachman’s entire “Book of Stories from Ancient Times.” In Story Number One (“The Losing of the King’s Daughter”), we saw that after the chamberlain’s second failure, the Lost Princess was exiled to a castle of pearl atop a mountain of gold. As I explained in Chapter Three, this glittering castle was in fact a prison of the evil one and ironically an abode of impurity. In the second story I analyzed (“The Merchant and the Pauper”), I showed that there too wealth and gold are associated with evil. For example, the negative pauper-emperor “imprisons” his wife and his daughter, the Lost Princess, in a beautiful palace of gold. Another example, which is even more important, can be found by paying attention to the fact that the means by which

the evil pirate captures the Lost Princess and entices her to enter his domain (his ship, which is the realm of evil) is through the birds of gold he fashioned. The Lost Princess is enticed and ensnared by gold.

However, in these two earlier stories, the connection between wealth and sin, between gold and evil, is not explicit and is only hinted at. Here in the story of “The Master of Prayer,” Rabbi Nachman has concentrated on and greatly developed this theme, and the connection between money and gold on the one hand, and sin and evil on the other hand, is crystal clear. Elstein (1984:211) notes this in passing when, commenting of the story of “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” he writes: “The episode of the golden mountain is clarified in the fable, “The Master of Prayer.”

Band (1978:213) claims that the tale of “The Master of Prayer” is basically a “satire on bourgeois society.” However, I believe that it is much deeper and more profound than that. As I have noted, Rabbi Nachman was extremely distraught over the Enlightenment (the *Haskalah*) and the Emancipation which the French Revolution and the Napoleonic armies had brought to the Jews of Western Europe, and which seemed in the first decade of the nineteenth century to be poised to overwhelm the Jews of Eastern Europe as well. I believe that Rabbi Nachman’s depiction of the country of wealth is his prophecy and his warning to his contemporaries on what happens to a society when it stops believing in religion or in metaphysical values. In such a case, when God is seen to be irrelevant, many (if not most) people will end up as having for their main preoccupation in life making money, amassing capital, and accumulating more and more material possessions; their wealth will be the means of defining their status in society.

Among his Hasidic contemporaries, Rabbi Nachman was neither alone nor unique regarding his concern over the changes that would overtake society should Napoleon succeed, although no one painted a warning as clearly as Rabbi Nachman did. Rabinowicz (1996:340) points out that “the phenomenal exploits of Napoleon brought about a radical change in the status of European Jewry. As the Napoleonic armies marched through Italy, ‘the walls of the ghetto began to dance.’ The yellow badge gave way to the tricolor cockade, and the gates of the ghetto were torn from their hinges.... Although Napoleon was the hero of Polish Jewry, who regarded him as their liberator, Polish Hasidic rabbis were divided on the issue. Among the staunch supporters of Napoleon was Rabbi Menachem

Mendel of Rymanov.... On the other hand, Rabbi Jacob Yitzchak of Lublin and Rabbi Israel of Kozienice prayed for the victory of the czar. Rabbi Naftali of Ropczyce also opposed French domination, regarding Napoleon as a symbol of heresy and agnosticism.... Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady [the first *Rebbe* of *Habad*] aligned himself with the anti-French faction. To Rabbi Moses Meisels [who had supported the French] he wrote: ‘It was revealed to me during *Musaf* [on *Rosh HaShanah*] that if Bonaparte is victorious, there would be great material prosperity in Israel, but the Jews would become estranged from God. But should *Adoneinu* [Czar] Alexander be victorious, even though they would suffer great poverty, the children of Israel would draw closer to their Father in heaven.’”

It is an axiom in the history of the modern world that the French Revolution was “the great turning-point of modern civilization.... It cleared the way for the triumph of capitalism, and inspired the socialism that was to subvert it” (Lefebvre 1947:v-vi). In other words, the French Revolution was the great catalyst that gave a tremendous impetus to the development of capitalism throughout Western and Central Europe; it also laid the conceptual foundations that would later give birth to the movements of socialism and revolutionary communism. What all three movements have in common is the importance they all attach to economics; they posit that the dominant factor in the development and history of human society is economic and financial. As a result, God is no longer seen to be the focus of our existence and our attention; spiritual aspirations are basically irrelevant. Capitalism believes that the goal of humanity is the accumulation of capital and of greater and greater wealth; socialism emphasizes a more equitable distribution of wealth and the means of production; communism demands a dictatorship of the proletariat. Although they would disagree about many things, capitalists, socialists, and communists would be united conceptually in viewing the human being not as a unique individual created in the image of God and involved in a life-long inner struggle between good and evil within his own soul; rather, they all conceived the human being as being primarily just part of the labor force, a commodity, a means of production, a consumer, or a customer. Furthermore, the age of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars coincided with the same period of time when the Industrial Revolution was gaining momentum. It began in England but quickly crossed the English Channel into northern France, the Low Countries, and parts of western

Germany; afterwards, it gradually spread throughout the rest of Europe. The early Industrial Revolution greatly exacerbated the economic and social division between rich and poor.

With astounding foresight, the country of wealth depicted by Rabbi Nachman in “The Master of Prayer” contains within it many characteristics of both a modern capitalistic society (like the conspicuous consumerism of the United States) and a rigid communist regime (like the Soviet Union of Stalin). In the country of wealth, a person’s status was determined solely by how much money and possessions one had, since “the measure of everything was money.” In such a society, where there is not even the pretense of spiritual values, it is very easy to treat paupers and homeless people as subhuman, whereas the very rich are considered idols, both figuratively and literally. In this story, Rabbi Nachman shows us how a materialistic society degenerates into a society where the poor are mere animals that may easily be disposed of, slaughter or sacrificed; the wealthy are gods. In *Hayei Moharan* II:25, Rabbi Nachman is quoted by Rabbi Nathan as saying: “The lust for money and affluence has become in our times the strongest lust of all, even stronger than the lust for sex.” In another passage, Rabbi Nachman himself wrote explicitly, “The lust for money is a form of idolatry” (*Likkutei Moharan* 23). Rabbi Nathan, too, warned that “if someone does not recognize that wealth comes from God, he may end up worshipping money” (*Likkutei Halachot*, Laws of Prayer 4:11).

Rabbi Nachman shows us in this story that a money-oriented society will invariably go from bad to worse and relapse into idolatry and human sacrifice. Idolatry is intimately linked to human sacrifice, because many people do indeed sacrifice everything — their time, their family, their beliefs, their health — in order to attain more and more money; they literally sacrifice their lives for money.

As I said earlier, Rabbi Nachman’s description of the county of wealth verges on the border of the prophetic. In my opinion, it is amazing that a Hasidic rabbi living in a pre-industrial society in a small town in Eastern Europe could so accurately foresee the social and economic future of Europe that would occur decades after his death. This story precedes by many years the terrifying depiction of this dehumanization of the poor in a capitalistic, materialistic society which we find well-documented in the novels written by Charles Dickens in the middle of the nineteenth century, for example.

We find a parallel dehumanization of society occurring in the communist regimes of the twentieth century, which were based on the concepts of economic determinism and the belief that religion is the opium of the masses. In such a society, a human being is considered to be only a cog in the huge machine of the collective and can easily be dispensed with when no longer productive.

A good example of this can be found in “Animal Farm,” a novel by George Orwell, which is an allegory on the failure of communism in the Soviet Union. In this modern classic, the ruthless pigs (who have become the ruling communist elite in the animals’ farm and their “gods,” as it were) have no compunction about selling the very hard-working horse to the capitalists’ glue factory to be killed when the horse is too old to work and can no longer be exploited economically (Orwell 1969:Chapter 9). Indeed, I cannot help but feel that Rabbi Nachman would have nodded his head in approval when Orwell names the most brutal pig who is the merciless dictator of Animal Farm with the appellation: Napoleon.

Moved by pity and compassion, the master of prayer goes himself to the country of wealth, hoping to influence the people to change their ways. The first people whom he tries to influence are poor, namely the watchmen stationed on the mountain passes that are the entrance to the country of wealth. However, the master of prayer has no effect on them, nor on the people inside the city. Steinsaltz (1979:106) makes an astute observation when he notes: “No persuasion, no logic, can dislodge the country of wealth from its folly. Rabbi Nachman has described such situations in a number of tales, and the solution is always the same: an external force is required. The agent of change in this story is the threat posed by the warrior.”

Act III: Flashbacks regarding (a) the king’s ‘hand;’ (b) the ten members of the Holy Gathering (_____), namely the four members of the Lost Princess’ family and the six royal counselors; and (c) the ten sects of humanity

The introduction of the warrior opens up the third “act” in the drama of The Master of Prayer.” This act is in many ways the heart of the story, and includes many flashbacks of earlier events because it reveals the true origins of all the characters in this drama. The first thing that needs to be revealed (by the master of prayer himself to the leaders of the country of wealth) is the king’s ‘hand,’ which is a central symbol in this story; secondly, the master

of prayer also reveals to the leaders of the country of wealth his own origin and the origin of the other nine members of the royal court; and thirdly, the origins of the ten sects into which humanity is divided is also revealed (by one of the warrior's sentries to the master of prayer).

This third "act" begins with the statement that a warrior is approaching the country of wealth and intends to conquer it. The threat of the approaching warrior and the panic it causes in the country of wealth have several implications. The first is that Rabbi Nachman seems to be hinting that to bring about the redemption, it is not enough to pray; action is also absolutely necessary. Another implication, which is linked to the first, is that although the master of prayer may be the most important agent for change and for redemption in the story, he cannot do it single-handed. Redemption demands the union (or more accurately, the re-union) of all the forces represented by what Rabbi Nachman later in the story calls "the Holy Gathering" (), namely all four members of the Lost Princess' family and the six royal counselors. The first member of the royal entourage to be located and to join forces with the master of prayer is the warrior (who is the husband of the Lost Princess, as we discover later on in the story).

The warrior is indeed a key figure in this story, and he parallels in many ways the role of the chamberlain in "The Losing of the King's Daughter" and the role of the merchant's son in "The Merchant and the Pauper." In order to better elucidate his role in the story (as well as the role of all ten members of the royal court, the Holy Gathering), I have constructed a chart on the next page which presents in a schematic form many of the main points of the story. This chart also demonstrates that in this story of Rabbi Nachman's (as in the others), the characters "are not simple individuals. Like the figures of the Bible and the Kabbalah, they are multifaceted, not just private personages, but also archetypes Even historical figures are part of a universal symbolic world [that] ... are symbolically associated with the specific emanations or attributes of God called the *Sefirot* These commentaries do not contradict each other but are complementary" (Steinsaltz 1993:x1-xli). Green (1981:350), too, emphasizes the need for "a simultaneously multileveled reading of these texts... [and] a rejection of any unilinear interpretation of the tales in favor of an openness to multiple

CHART: The Ten Members of the "Holy Gathering"

(A) the character in the story (1-10)	1. The Master of Prayer	2. The Warrior	3. The Treasurer	4. The Sage	5. The Bard	6. The Faithful Friend	7. The Lost Princess	8. The Infant	9. The Queen	10. The King
(B) the character represents: (according to Steinsaltz)	Elijah the prophet or <i>tzaddik ha-dor</i>	Messiah the son of Joseph	Aaron the High Priest	Moses	King David; the Levites in the Temple	Abraham	the <i>Shechinah</i>	Messiah the son of David	---	an aspect of God's sovereignty
(C) the character represents: (according to Kaplan)	King David	Messiah the son of Joseph	Aaron the High Pries	Moses	Jacob	the Sabbath	---	Abraham	---	---
(D) the <i>Sefirah</i> : (according to Steinsaltz)										
(E) the <i>Sefirah</i> : (according to Kaplan)										
(F) the character's symbol	---	the bow; the sword	the golden table	the map (hand)	a sea of wine	a sea of wine	a sea of milk	golden hair	a sea of blood	crown
(G) the sect that is linked to the character	prayer	body-builders, sports, exercise, soldiers	the country of wealth	the wise men	speech, orators	joy	procreation	delicate food (health foods)	death	honor
(H) the value in its perverted form	(prayer - never debased)	physical strength	money	being clever	words without content, atheistic rhetoric; insane babbling	being drunk	sexual lusts, addiction to sex; physical beauty	bodily health, food	murder	inane honor
(I) the value in its purity and its true form	prayer	spiritual greatness and zeal for God	the fear of God; charity; spiritual richness	wisdom	the praise of God	love and joy without end	inner spiritual beauty; divine abundance	perfection and the knowledge of God	analytic power; logic	the glory of God
(J) the <i>Sefirah</i> (my suggestion)										
(K) additional allusions	Abraham	Joshua; Isaac		King Solomon			the Sabbath (<i>Shabbat</i>)			

suggestions.”

The warrior (#2 on the chart) represents the figure of “Messiah the son of Joseph — - ,” according to both Steinsaltz (B) and Kaplan (C). In the Jewish mystic tradition, there are opinions that there are in fact two Messiahs: the first one, Messiah the son of Joseph is “the precursor of the final Messiah, the son of David; his task is to subdue the world and to bring it [closer] to God” (Steinsaltz 1979:107). Hovav (1986:355) writes that Messiah the son of Joseph “will be the one who will take the first steps on the road to redemption.... Only afterwards will appear Messiah the son of David who will bring about the complete redemption.”

In terms of the world of emanation, both Steinsaltz (D) and Kaplan (E) interpret the warrior as personifying the *Sefirah* of . Kaplan bases this on the fact that later in the story, the symbol of the warrior is shown to be the bow, which is always connected to the *Sefirah* of *Yesod* (Foundation). In addition, the warrior derives his power from the king’s sword, which is also symbolic of *Yesod*. In terms of the traditional Kabbalah, *Yesod* is usually paired with the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, which is the manifestation in the world of emanation of the *Shechinah* and *Knesset Israel*, as we have previously seen. The *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, in my opinion, is clearly linked to figure of the Lost Princess (#7 on the chart), who is the seventh member of the Holy Gathering to appear in the story; it is thus quite fitting that the Lost Princess (the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*) and the warrior (the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*) are married. This is indeed the approach adopted by Steinsaltz.

Surprisingly, Kaplan disagrees. He writes (1983:279) that “in a deeper sense, all the characters in the story relate to the *Sefirot*, which are aspects through which we can understand God.... Among the *Sefirot*, the master of prayer most probably relates to *Malchut*” [Row (E) in the chart]. According to this approach, the *Malchut-Yesod* combination, which is the main impetus in the process of redemption, is rooted in the close co-operation and collaboration between the master of prayer (representing the spiritual service of God on the inner level, within the hearts and souls of men and women) and the warrior, who is able to both translate the spiritual service of God into the language of the

down-to-earth world of action, and to act on a larger, communal scale, thereby subduing the world to faith in God and God's sovereignty.

However, I strongly disagree with Kaplan's identification of the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* with the master of prayer. As I have demonstrated in this thesis, throughout the entire "Book of Stories from Ancient Times" Rabbi Nachman has consistently drawn a very strong parallel and identification between the Lost Princess, the *Shechinah*, *Knesset Israel*, and the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*. Later on in this chapter, I will prove that the figure of the Lost Princess corresponds to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* in this story as well. In my opinion, the reason why Kaplan interprets this differently lies in the fact that Kaplan (in contrast to Steinsaltz) has adopted an overly rigid framework of interpretation, by which he has decided as an absolute axiom that the different members of the Holy Gathering make their appearance in the story according to the usual order of the ten *Sefirot* as they are listed in most books of the Kabbalah, starting from the lowest (*Malchut*) to the highest (*Keter*), as can be seen in Row E in the chart, "since the story appears to go in an upward direction" (Kaplan 1983:293). I think that this is incorrect, and Kaplan himself has no choice but to admit this is not feasible when he comes to the question of which *Sefirah* corresponds to the Lost Princess herself: "She is the seventh to be reunited. Significantly, she is found before her Child. However, it appears she is *Binah* rather than *Hesed*" (Kaplan 1983:340).

In contrast, the approach recommended by Steinsaltz emphasizes that the correspondence between the various characters in Rabbi Nachman's stories and Kabbalistic symbols (like the *Sefirot*) is not mechanical and absolute, but creative and imaginative, and to be perfectly honest, often allusive. Steinsaltz (1993:258) writes: "Rabbi Nachman was not writing a [conventional] commentary on the sources but was telling an allegorical tale that draws heavily on them, and one should not seek consistent or rigid equivalents here. The figures are composite and sometimes conflated."

Before proceeding further, I would like to make another comment concerning the master of prayer. In Row (B) on the chart, the master of prayer is portrayed as alluding to Elijah the prophet. The Hebrew Bible () is divided into three main sections: Torah (), Prophets (), and Writings (). The final two verses in the section of the Prophets speak about Elijah and his mission in the process of the redemption: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord.

And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; lest I come and smite the land with utter destruction” (Malachi 3:23-24). Accordingly, Rabbi Nachman presents the master of prayer (paralleling Elijah) as being the precursor to both Messiah the son of Joseph (the warrior) and Messiah the son of David (the infant). Furthermore, Elijah is perceived in these two Biblical verses as being the catalyst that causes the hearts of the children and of the fathers to come together. In our story, the master of prayer does this literally: he helps facilitate the reunion between every possible combination of parent and child: father (the warrior) and son (the infant); father (the king) and daughter (the Lost Princess); mother (the Lost Princess) and son (the infant); mother (the queen) and daughter (the Lost Princess). It is significant to note that the Lost Princess is involved directly in three of these relationships, and indirectly in the fourth: the warrior (her husband) and the infant (her son).

I would like to add that the father-son relationship here echoes the father-son relationship in the previous story, “The Merchant and the Pauper.” In that story, the merchant (representing Moses) fathered a son who was a yet more perfect version of himself. In the present story of “The Master of Prayer,” once again there is a father (the warrior, who symbolizes Messiah, the son of Joseph), whose son (the infant, who is Messiah, the son of David) is also a more perfect version of himself.

I also wish to point out that it is precisely the fact that the warrior is steadily coming closer to the country of wealth which allows the master of prayer to make a small dent (albeit a very small one) in the overriding belief among the people in the country of wealth that money is all-powerful. We see this when the master of prayer visits the country of wealth for the second time. The master of prayer mocks their belief that a distant, rich country will be able to save them from the invincible warrior; instead, the master of prayer calls for a turning to the one true God. The watchmen are not convinced, but they are shaken up enough to admit, “But what can I do? I am one, and they are many...” The master of prayer’s exhortations, as well as the imminent approach of the warrior, have begun to make an impact on the country of wealth.

Returning to the figure of the warrior, there is another important aspect I wish to stress. I believe that Rabbi Nachman patterned the figure of the warrior according to Napoleon, or to be more precise, as the antithesis of Napoleon. During the first decade of

the nineteenth century, Napoleon had conquered one country after another on the European continent and seemed invincible. Whenever he approached a certain principality or kingdom, he offered the ruler a choice: either to fight, or to submit voluntarily to French dominance and accept certain constitutional reforms in accordance to the spirit of the French Revolution. There were rulers like the King of Denmark and the Duke of Saxony who chose the second option and acquiesced to the French demands. The first option was very risky; if the local prince or king decided to oppose the French by means of arms and lost (which was what always happened), he was deposed and replaced by French administration or by a member of Napoleon's own family. As I have shown, the ideals of the French Revolution were perceived by Rabbi Nachman to be very hostile to religion in general, and to traditional Judaism in particular. He interpreted Napoleon's path of conquest as a plot to spread the dangerous and inimical ideas of the Enlightenment and the Revolution, which began with rationalism and inevitably led to atheism (which is one of the main themes in Rabbi Nachman's Story Number Nine, "The Clever Man and the Wise Man").

In the figure of the warrior, Rabbi Nachman has created a character that is the antithesis of Napoleon, the way a photographic negative shows black as white and white as black. The warrior, like Napoleon, seems invincible and has conquered one country after another. However, in contrast to Napoleon, the warrior has a secret agenda and goal, namely, to find the Lost Princess, to locate their infant son, and to restore the king to his throne. This, of course, is the meaning of redemption, which the master of prayer, and Rabbi Nachman himself, seek to attain.

In a letter addressed to his son in the year 1822, Rabbi Nathan expressed a very important idea: "It seems to me that the Lost Princess represents holy faith, that is to say, the belief in God" (*Alim LeTrufah* 2). This insight () is extremely significant. The Lost Princess is therefore not only a symbol of the *Shechinah* and the *Sefirah* of *Malchut* (as we clearly saw in the story of "The Losing of the King's Daughter"); she is not only a symbol of *Knesset Israel* and the hidden Torah (as I emphasized in the story of "The Merchant and the Pauper"); we now see that the Lost Princess is also a symbol of "holy faith, the belief in God." This casts a whole new perspective on the warrior's search for his wife, the Lost Princess. I mentioned that Rabbi Nachman interpreted Napoleon's conquests as an attempt to spread the doctrines of rationalism and atheism among both Jew and Gentile; the

warrior's battles are therefore a *tikkun* – rectification) of Napoleon's wars of conquest. The warrior has set out to conquer nation after nation in order to restore the belief in the one true God throughout the world. Unfortunately, a major obstacle to this is found in the country of wealth, which refuses to give up its belief in the idolatry of gold.

Fruman (2001:20) reaches an important conclusion when he writes: "If in Rabbi Nachman's world, evil imitates good, then it is also possible for good to imitate evil, as can be seen in the Biblical narrative of Jacob and Esau [Genesis 27:15-24]. Jacob must masquerade as Esau in order to receive his father's blessings." Fruman bases his conclusion on a passage in *Likkutei Moharan* 12, and does not relate to "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times" at all, yet I think that this idea is indeed expressed in the story of "The Master of Prayer." The conquest of nation after nation by the warrior is an imitation of Napoleon's conquests, and is therefore an excellent example of good imitating evil in order to combat evil itself, and to restore the world to belief in God.

In addition, there is a *midrash* which provides an important parallel to the way the warrior conquers one country after another. Commenting on the verse, "When you draw close to a city, to attack it, you shall offer it terms of peace" (Deuteronomy 20:10), the *midrash* reads: "Who fulfilled this verse? Joshua Ben-Nun. Rabbi Samuel bar Nachman said, 'What did Joshua do [when he began to conquer the Land of Canaan]? He would first send a letter to every place that he was about to conquer, and in the letter he announced: Whoever wants to flee, can flee; whoever wants to make peace with us, can do so; and whoever wants to fight, can fight' (*Devarim Rabbah* 5:12). The warrior's course of action seems therefore to be very reminiscent of the course of action pursued by Joshua, according to the *midrash*, and is in accordance with the *halachah* (Maimonides: *Mishneh-Torah, Hilchot-Melachim* 6:5-6). This is very appropriate, because the goal of Joshua's wars of conquest was to transfer the land promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob from Canaanite control to Israelite control, which Rabbi Nachman would interpret as redeeming the land from the dominion of impurity and the *kelipot* to the dominion of holiness. Furthermore, the Torah says explicitly that all idols of gold and silver that would be found during the wars of the conquest of Canaan were to be destroyed (Deuteronomy 7:5, 12:3), which is the one thing that the inhabitants of the country of wealth feared most of all, and which is exactly

what happens at the end of the story. In my opinion, therefore, the figure of the warrior is an allusion to Joshua as well (see Row K on the chart on page 145).

The people of the country of wealth, terrified by the approach of the invincible warrior, believe that a distant, rich land “whose inhabitants were gods who rode in carriages drawn by angels” would be able to save them. The master of prayer, who is caught and brought before the elders, laughs at their folly and tries to convince them that this distant land will not be of avail, and its inhabitants are not gods, but only human beings. Moreover, the master of prayer warns the elders that if they place their trust in this distant land, it will bring about their downfall.

This distant land of great riches seems to be an allusion to Egypt. In a postscript to this story that appeared in the 1850 edition of “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” (although it is not certain if the actual author of this postscript was Rabbi Nathan himself or one of his pupils), it is written that “the *Rebbe*, of blessed memory, said explicitly that the entire story, from beginning to end, is alluded to in Chapter 31 of Isaiah.” This is very significant and provides us with an important tool that will aid us in understanding the story. There are indeed many passages and images throughout the story that are clarified when we turn to this key chapter. At this point, I wish to point out that there are in fact several verses from this chapter that do seem exceptionally appropriate to this episode in the story, namely Isaiah 31:1 (“Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses...”) and Isaiah 31:3 (“The Egyptians are human and not gods, and their horses are flesh and not spirit...”). It should be noted, too, that Egypt was traditionally considered a land that was very fertile and rich (for example, Genesis 13:10); consequently, Rabbi Nachman understood the Biblical Exodus from Egypt as being an extremely powerful example of liberation from the subjugation to the pursuit of wealth, as he says explicitly: “For on Passover, during the Exodus from Egypt, the Children of Israel were able to be released from the bondage to the lust for wealth” (*Likkutei Moharan* II.1).

The elders of the country of wealth ask the master of prayer to tell them how he knows that this distant land (Egypt) is destined to be overthrown. The master of prayer replies he knows this because he saw it written in the king’s map. He then proceeds to

describe in great detail the map of the world that had been in the possession of the king he had once served, a map that was in the image of a hand with five fingers.

This map, which is called the king's 'hand' throughout the story, is one of the most important symbols in this fable. "This hand symbolizes the Torah, and its five fingers allude to the Five Books of Moses... The Torah and its commandments are the foundation by which each individual is able to serve God" (Kook 1994:153). I think that there is no doubt that this 'hand' is indeed a symbol for the Torah. As I pointed out in Chapter Two, Concept Number Five, of this thesis, the idea that the Torah is the blueprint of the world is a very entrenched and ancient one. Yet I do not know of anywhere in all of Jewish literature where this concept (that the Torah is the map of the world) is portrayed so vividly and so clearly as in Rabbi Nachman's detailed and poetic description of the 'hand' of the king here in the story of "The Master of Prayer." I also wish to emphasize that in every story that deals with the quest for the Lost Princess, Rabbi Nachman has created a different image for the Torah. In the first story, "The Losing of the King's Daughter," the Torah was symbolized by the Lost Princess' head-kerchief on which she wrote (with her tears) that she had been removed to a palace of pearl atop a mountain of gold. In the story of "The Merchant and the Pauper," the Torah was symbolized by the letter the Lost Princess sent to the merchant's son, her destined bridegroom, recalling the seven bodies of water in which her mother and his father had hid, and pledging her loyalty only to the merchant's son. In the present story, the Torah is symbolized by the map that the king had possessed and which was in the form of a hand. This map, which embraces past, present, and future, and encompasses every place on earth and the destiny of every human being, seems to be almost a hologram, that is to say, a three-dimensional representation, of the entire universe.

I believe that this very detailed description of the 'hand' shows Rabbi Nachman's deep conviction that the Torah is not only a book of laws that direct a Jew about how he should behave. Indeed, the main emphasis in Rabbi Nachman's conception of the Torah is that it contains all possible knowledge of what was, is, and will be; the knowledge found embedded within the Torah is all-encompassing in terms of both space and time. Encoded in the Torah, the map of the world and of all the worlds, are the paths by which a person can ascend from this world to a higher one. It is the means through which one can uncover both the secrets of creation () and the secrets of redemption (). In

Rabbi Nachman's description of the 'hand' of the king, the stress certainly appears to be placed on relating to and learning the Torah on the higher levels of *sod* and *remez*.

However, it is important to remember that at this point of the story, the king's 'hand' is in fact lost, and all that remains is a "copy" or residue that is imprinted in the memory of the master of prayer. "This map is a copy of a higher map which will some day be revealed, but meanwhile the copy is all he has" (Weiner 1969:340).

And how do the people of the country of wealth react to this highly poetic and spiritual passage that describes and reveals the secrets of the Torah, the king's map and 'hand'? Pathetically, they ask, "Where is the king? Perhaps he will show us a way to find money."

The humor here is biting, and the satire very sharp. The lust for money has blinded these people completely to the possibility that there is a higher reality and a deeper significance to life than money. The reader, like the master of prayer and Rabbi Nachman himself, can only be astounded and appalled at how low the inhabitants of the country of wealth have fallen, and how serious their obtuseness is. "The only way to cope with something deadly serious is to try to treat it a little lightly" (L'Engle 1984:60), and Rabbi Nachman employs a great deal of satire, irony and dry humor in his treatment of the country of wealth. In his analysis of Rabbi Nachman, Wiesel (1972:198) notes that "humor and laughter occupy an astonishingly important place in his work."

The portrayal of the Torah as the map of the world and the king's 'hand' is, however, only a prelude to an even more important revelation; for the master of prayer now goes a step further and proceeds to reveal to the elders of the country of wealth (and to the reader) the origins and the chronicle of what is later called *the Holy Company*, which Steinsaltz translates as "the Holy Company," but I believe a more precise translation is "the Holy Gathering;" this term refers to the Lost Princess, her father, mother and son, and the six counselors of the king's court. Rabbi Nachman, through this speech of the master of prayer, demonstrates his deep conviction (and the conviction of great masters of the Kabbalah) that the Torah, which is the map of all the worlds and the 'hand' of the king, deals not only with matters of *halachah* in the world of action, but also opens up before us the existence of higher and more spiritual dimensions of being, specifically the world of emanation. As I wrote in Chapter Two, Concept Number Three, the world of emanation is

characterized by ten different manifestations of the divine light which are called the ten *Sefirot*. The ten members of the royal family and the royal court are symbols of these ten *Sefirot*, and both Kaplan and Steinsaltz believe that each character corresponds to a specific *Sefirah*, as can be seen on the chart on page 145. I will discuss each character individually when he makes his first appearance in the story, just as I discussed the master of prayer and the warrior earlier. However, I would already like to make several comments about the Lost Princess, who is now introduced into the story for the first time by the master of prayer as he speaks to the elders of the country of wealth. She is mentioned immediately after the king and queen, and it is stressed that she is their only child. When the Lost Princess came of age to be married, it was the master of prayer himself who suggested that she marry the warrior. Everyone agreed and was pleased with the match (in strong contrast to the previous story of “The Merchant and the Pauper,” where the pauper-emperor was strongly opposed to the suggested marriage between his daughter, the Lost Princess, and the merchant’s son). I believe one reason why the proposed match is accepted by everyone in this story is due to the fact that the initiator was the master of prayer, who is a character that was absent in previous stories.

In *Tikkunei-Zohar* 13:29b, it is written that: “He who kills the Snake is given in marriage to the king’s daughter.” Thus, in the very first passage in which she is mentioned, the Lost Princess and her husband are linked to the idea of overcoming the snake of the garden of Eden; in other words, she and the warrior are key figures in the quest for redemption.

Furthermore, the master of prayer tells the elders of the country of wealth that she is the mother of a miraculous child. However, this little boy is snatched away by a great storm wind. The master of prayer relates how one day, when each of the king’s counselors had gone to the special place the king had shown him (to enable each one to renew his own unique power), “a great tempest arose and cast the whole world into confusion. The sea became dry land, and the dry land sea,” etc. What is especially significant is the fact that when this wind reached the king’s court, it was not powerful enough to cause damage, but it was able to abduct the Lost Princess’ infant son. She ran out after her child to try to rescue him; the queen ran after the Lost Princess, and the king after her, “and all were scattered.” It is important to pay careful attention to the fact that the dispersion of all the king’s family

and counselors stems from the fact that the Lost Princess ran after her child. Like a stack of falling cards, it was this desperate attempt on the part of the Lost Princess to retrieve her son kidnapped by this hurricane wind that causes the entire royal household and court to disperse.

We have of course already met the image of the wind as a destructive force in all of Rabbi Nachman's stories that deal with the Lost Princess. In the first story, "The Losing of the King's Daughter," it was a wind that transported the Lost Princess to the palace of pearl atop a mountain of gold. In the story of "The Merchant and the Pauper," we encountered the storm wind several times, most notably when the tempest wind uprooted all the trees in the forest on the island where the merchant's son had gone into exile, including the tree in which he had placed the Lost Princess' letter and pledge of loyalty. And in our story, it is the wind that kidnaps the wondrous son of the Lost Princess, causing the dispersion of the ten members of the royal family and court (representatives of the world of emanation). A little later in the story, one of the warrior's soldiers will relate to the master of prayer that this same storm-wind simultaneously wrecked havoc and upheaval in the society of mankind, causing humanity (in the world of action) to break up into ten different sects. The storm wind was therefore a negative force of disruption and dispersion in all the worlds.

Rabbi Nathan writes: "This storm wind represents 'the breaking of the vessels,' when the original *Sefirot* were shattered and their light left its proper place" (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Prayer 4:1). Scholem (1973:112-113) explains that is "the decisive crisis of all divine and created being.... Nothing remains in its proper place. Everything is somewhere else. But a being that is not in its proper place is in exile. Thus, since that primordial act, all being has been a being in exile, in need of being led back and redeemed. The 'breaking of the vessels' continues into all the further stages of emanation and creation; everything is in some way broken, everything has a flaw, everything is unfinished."

In the traditional Braskov commentary *Hochmah U'Tevunah* 8, an interesting point is raised. The Hebrew word for a stormy wind is , which is there linked to the words (hair) and (Seir), one of the names of Esau and Edom. The commentary goes on to say that "the power of Esau is expressed in the storm wind (); it is this storm wind which prevents a person from being able to utilize the 'hand' of the king, the Torah." I think

that this allusion to Esau is important for another reason: Esau's first-born son is named Eliphaz (Genesis 36:4), which means literally 'my god is gold;' — and this is a very apt name for the country of wealth itself. Whereas the Lost Princess' golden-haired child represents Messiah the son of David (the epitome of human holiness), Esau's child is a false god of gold. In addition, Eliphaz himself is the father of Amalek (Genesis 36:12), the arch-enemy of Israel. Finally, it is quite significant that it is this very Biblical chapter (Genesis 36) which is the foundation upon which the *Zohar* constructs its exegesis for the concept of the 'breaking of the vessels.'

The master of prayer decides to go out to the warrior's camp in order to find out if the approaching warrior is in fact the warrior whom he had previously known, namely the husband of the Lost Princess. When he comes to the warrior's camp, he engages one of the sentries in conversation. This soldier tells the master of prayer that "it is recorded in our chronicles that there was a great tempest that overturned the entire world. After the tempest had abated, the people of the world decided they wanted a king ... but because they had different opinions, they soon broke up into several sects."

As I mentioned earlier, the same cosmic calamity of the 'breaking of the vessels,' which had disrupted and overthrown the original unity and harmony among the *Sefirot* in the world of emanation (causing the ten members of the royal family and court to scatter), brought about a corresponding dispersion of humanity in the world of action, resulting in a complete mix-up in people's systems of values. As I said, the storm wind was a force of chaos and dissolution in all the worlds.

The image of the storm has additional connotations besides symbolizing the cosmic catastrophe of the 'breaking of the vessels.' Steinsaltz (1981:140) believes that the metaphor of the storm "has several historical allusions to different events that occurred during different periods of time.... For example, the storm represents the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, an event whose inner significance is the exile of the *Shechinah*, which corresponds and complements the cosmic 'breaking of the vessels.' The meaning of both events is identical, namely, God's presence is absent or hidden in the world." I wish to point out the identification that Steinsaltz discusses (the storm = the destruction of the Temple = the exile of the Jewish people = the exile of the *Shechinah*) is developed further in

Rabbi Nachman's final story, "The Seven Beggars" (which I analyze in Chapter Six of this thesis), and is indeed one of the most important keys in deciphering and understanding that story.

In addition, I believe that Rabbi Nachman uses the image of the storm-wind not only in its Kabbalistic connotation of the 'breaking of the vessels' or as a image for the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem (resulting in the exile of the *Shechinah*), but also as a metaphor for the revolutionary changes that were sweeping over Europe during the first decade of the nineteenth century. In other words, the French Revolution is a historical parallel for the great tempest wind that overturned the entire world, so that "the sea became dry land, and the dry land sea; deserts became cities and cities deserts," as it were. The Old Regime had been swept aside in France, and the map of Europe had been completely transformed. For example, the one-thousand year old Holy Roman Empire was simply abolished by Napoleon. From Rabbi Nachman's perspective, however, the main upheavals were not political but religious and cultural. In the 1790's, the radical wing of the French Revolutionaries had established a secular 'religion of reason' and openly mocked traditional religion and the belief in divine Providence and Biblical revelation. The storm-wind of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic forces were viewed with great dismay by Rabbi Nachman.

Steinsaltz (1979:108) comments that after the storm-wind struck and humanity was dispersed, "mankind had no contact with God. However, the basic urge to seek for divinity still existed; and in the story it is translated into the search for perfection. The emergence of the various cults reflects the fact that a human being cannot relate to the totality of existence and must channel and direct his energy in accordance with the dictates of his religious personality." As a result, humanity is divided into ten different sects or groups, each with its own set of values. The sentry in the warrior's camp describes in great detail to the master of prayer how the different sects evolved and the absurd kings each sect found for itself; his narrative is a very vivid and graphic depiction of the follies of mankind. Because there is no direct communion with God and because the 'hand' cannot be found and consulted, the search for perfection deteriorates into debased and deviant variants. Perhaps warning his contemporaries, Rabbi Nachman shows how ludicrous and pathetic the future of humanity will be if society is cut off from its connection with a higher spiritual reality. If we look at

Row H on the chart on page 145, we can see how people chose perverted values like being drunk, sexual lust, murder and wanton killing, or an inane desire for honor.

What all these sects have in common (except for the sect of prayer) is that they do not believe in God; or to express it more accurately, God seems to be absent in the world, or at best, irrelevant. As a result of the ‘breaking of the vessels’ and its corollary, God’s self-contraction (*tzimtzum* —), the world has been emptied of its religious content and in such a secularized world, humanity has to fend for itself. Since the original unity and integrity of the Kingdom of God is no longer manifest, each group or sect focuses on one value exclusively, resulting in a lack of balance that is ultimately degrading and deviant, and in fact idolatrous. The essence of idolatry stems from believing one fragment of reality to be of divine origin; instead of searching for the true king, most people focus on only one such segment or value. Such a distorted vision of the world must necessarily lead to some kind of aberration.

It seems to me that Rabbi Nachman is warning his contemporaries of the dangers facing them if they accept the ideals of the French Revolution and of the Enlightenment, and consequently abandon God. According to this interpretation, any and all atheistic societies will inevitably deteriorate into one of these sects (in particular, the sect of money).

I would like to pay closer attention to the fourth and fifth sects the warrior’s sentry mentions: the fourth sect that chose the values of procreation, beauty, sex and passion; and the fifth sect that chose the value of speech. This fourth sect believes that the true purpose of humanity is reproduction, and therefore, sexual relations are important, as is physical beauty (since beauty arouses the sexual urge, which in turn leads to procreation). Consequently, this sect chose a beautiful woman to be their ruler (a kind of “beauty queen”). Only later in the story will this beauty queen be deposed and replaced by the Lost Princess. In my opinion, this choice of a beauty queen to be their ruler parallels the episode in “The Merchant and the Pauper” in which after the pirate abducts the Lost Princess, he strips her of her regal garments and places them upon a sailor. In that story, people were at first unaware that the Lost Princess was missing and they mistook the disguised sailor to be the Lost Princess. In both allegories, Rabbi Nachman seems to be hinting that there can be very negative repercussions if and when people seek or relate only to the external aspects of the *Shechinah*. The Lost Princess is a symbol of deep spirituality and sanctity, but if people

lack the framework of the fear of God and the guidance of the Torah, they may attempt to reach the Lost Princess and attain a spiritual “high” through orgiastic rituals and sexual ecstasy, as indeed was the case in ancient Canaanite and Near Eastern religions, as well as in certain Hindu cults even today. There is a danger that people may try to reach a state of nirvana not only through the use of drugs, but also through illicit sexual pleasure and immoral sexual practices.

Another aberration connected to this sect is the pursuit of beauty for beauty’s sake, which was advocated by important European writers like Oscar Wilde and Jean Genet. Beauty is perhaps important, but Rabbi Nachman would certainly condemn those who seek only beauty and disregard the values of compassion and truth, for example. The perversion of true values associated with this fourth sect, therefore, stems from looking at the externals (what Rabbi Nachman would call the *kelipot*), rather than at the true inner beauty and significance of the Lost Princess.

I also want to devote attention to the fifth sect to be discussed in the story, namely the sect of speech. This sect originally chose as their king “a mad Frenchman who went around talking to himself.” It is extremely unusual in any of Rabbi Nachman’s stories to find any clear geographical or historical reference. Wiesel (1972:181) points out “the notion of time never enters Rabbi Nachman’s work. Neither does the notion of place.” Yet here Rabbi Nachman specifically refers to a Frenchman, and this demands from us to look for the reason why.

I believe that once again Rabbi Nachman is making a subtle allusion to the values spread by the French Revolution, and to be even more exact, he is commenting on the thinkers who created the ideas of the Enlightenment and by doing so, paved the way for the French Revolution; I am referring to the French *philosophes* (philosophers) like Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot and Rousseau. Famighetti (1995:520) writes specifically that it was these “French philosophers who assumed leadership of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.” The common denominator of all these French writers and intellectuals is the centrality and importance they placed on rationalism. The basic tenet of the Enlightenment was that human reason, and human reason alone, could and would bring about the (secular) redemption of mankind. Rabbi Nachman opposed this completely, and felt that one of his main objectives in life was to combat what he considered the false god of rationalism.

Fruman (2001:19) writes: “It is possible to define Rabbi Nachman’s teachings as an attempt to wage a holy war against the idol of the intellect, that is to say, the arrogance and hubris of the human intellect that is unjustifiably over-confident in its power to solve all problems and understand all mysteries. The intellect, in its haughtiness, claims to be the absolute truth, higher than religious truth, the way an idol claims to be a true god. Rabbi Nachman aspires to shatter the idol of the intellect.”

There is not the slightest shred of evidence that Rabbi Nachman knew or read French, or that he read the works of these philosophers in the original. However, we know that Rabbi Nachman was very familiar with the most important newspaper published by the *Maskilim* during this period, the *Ma’asef* (“The Gatherer”). It was published in Hebrew in Berlin, which was the most important center of the Jewish Enlightenment during Rabbi Nachman’s lifetime; the declared aim of this newspaper was to spread the ideas of the Enlightenment among the Jews (especially those Jews who read only Hebrew and were not literate in European languages), and it regularly printed out and explained the ideas of all the leaders of the Enlightenment, both Jewish and Gentile. It first appeared in 1786 and its last edition was in 1811, one year after Rabbi Nachman’s death. “Its publishers, ‘The Society of Friends of the Hebrew Language,’ were primarily assimilationists, and only revived Hebrew to introduce Jews to secular culture. Its first contributors were from Mendelsohn’s German school, but it was later dominated by East European *Maskilim*” (Kramer 1980:130). In addition, we know that Rabbi Nachman had frequent conversations with many important *Maskilim* in Lemberg and in Uman. Indeed, it is possible that these contacts between Rabbi Nachman and the *Maskilim* constituted one of the reasons (perhaps the main reason?) for the hostility and antagonism that the Grandfather of Shpola and other Hasidic leaders had towards Rabbi Nachman. There is no doubt that Rabbi Nachman knew of the writings and ideas of the fathers of the Enlightenment like Voltaire and Rousseau, and that he viewed each of these French rationalist philosophers and pioneers of the Enlightenment as being simply a “mad Frenchman” who “talked an enormous amount” but really babbled meaningless rhetoric, and was in fact an imbecile.

Furthermore, Rabbi Nachman might be referring to leaders of the radical wing of the French Revolutionaries (like Robespierre or Danton) who attacked all forms of traditional religion based on divine revelation (both Christianity and Judaism) and who

established in the 1790's a religion of reason as the officially approved religion of the state. Some French Jews enthusiastically embraced this 'religion.' Margolis and Marx (1967:610) note that in France in the 1790's, "Jewish teachers led their pupils to the 'Temples of Reason.' Jewish deputations effusively compared the new laws of the Mountain, as the advanced Jacobins were called, with the ancient law given on Mount Sinai; Jewish 'priests' vied with the ecclesiastics who abjured Christianity, acknowledging the God of freedom and the religion of equality. The Republican Calendar, with its system of every tenth day as a feast, made the observance of the Sabbath a misdemeanor; difficulty was experienced in procuring unleavened bread for Passover; extremists agitated to have the Abrahamic rite [circumcision] prohibited by law."

The ideals of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution were therefore considered by Rabbi Nachman to be the lunatic chatter of a 'mad Frenchman.' I believe that I can prove this point by referring to a passage in *Likkutei Moharan* 29. This difficult passage discusses both the importance of speech and the lust for money. "When speech is devoted to the praise of God and the praise of the righteous (), it is able to raise the level of knowledge () higher. However, when speech is abused and attacks the righteous and attacks the sanctity of God, then the evil maidservant, which is the dominion of the evil one, rules, as it is written in Proverbs 30:23: 'A maidservant inherits her mistress'.... In addition, there is also the issue of faith. For if a person lacks faith in God, he will be overwhelmed by the lust for money.... The wicked, through their sins, cause the *Shechinah* to become separated from the Holy One, blessed be He, and they cause knowledge to diminish and to be hidden. Therefore, the evil maidservant must be vanquished. And how is this accomplished? The only way to rectify false or insane speech is by means of uplifting speech through the praise of God and the praise of the righteous. And there is a verse which contains this whole idea: (Proverbs 10:20): – 'The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver'."

The end of this passage demands further elucidation; how does this verse from the Book of Proverbs "contain this whole idea"? Rabbi Nathan helps clarify this when he writes (*Hayei Moharan*, in the section entitled 'Clarifications of Rabbi Nachman's Teachings' 20): 'Rabbi Nachman later told us that this verse [– 'The

tongue of the righteous is as choice silver” (Proverbs 10:20)] refers specifically to France. For this passage in *Likkutei Moharan* 29 discusses the importance of speech, and that the way to rectify [] improper speech is through the praise of God and the praise of the righteous. This passage also discusses the lust for money and for silver, which can be rectified through faith. And if we look at the four last letters of the four words of this verse: _ _ _ _ , it spells out the word _ _ _ _ – *Frank*, or ‘France’ in Yiddish.” Later on, a Braslav Hasid named Baruch Efraim (B’Abei HaNachal 1984:68b) expanded on this: “In what way is France alluded to in this verse in Proverbs 10:20? In the story of “The Master of Prayer,” Rabbi Nachman writes that the fifth sect [mentioned in the story] believes that the true purpose of life is speech, and their king was a crazy Frenchman. This demonstrates that France is considered to be the source and embodiment of debased and perverted speech (that is to say, the speech of the evil one). France is ‘the evil maidservant’ that needs to be rectified because of France’s three vices: sexual immorality, warped knowledge and debased speech. And the way to rectify the evil that France has brought to the world is through ‘the tongue of the *tzaddik*.’”

This expression, “the tongue of the *tzaddik*,” refers to the teachings that the *tzaddik* says in order to educate and instruct his disciples and his contemporaries. In this context, we can deduct that Rabbi Nachman is telling us that his teachings, namely his discourses and stories (like the story of “The Master of Prayer” itself) are the antidote to what he considers to be the poisonous ideas of rationalism and secularism that originated in and were spread by France. In Chapter One, Section D, I quoted the passage from *Likkutei Moharan* I:164 where Rabbi Nachman used a parable in which he compared the *tzaddik* to a doctor, and the *tzaddik*’s teachings are a medicine for the ailing souls of his generation. Because the teachings of the true *tzaddik* () are based on the Kabbalah, the *tzaddik* “must disguise and wrap the inner essence of the Torah [=the teachings of the Kabbalah]” in the form of tales in order to enable people to digest the beneficial ideas of the *tzaddik*’s teachings without any negative side-effects.

This key verse from Proverbs 10:20 reads: “The tongue of the *tzaddik* is choice silver” and these last two words () are highly significant in the context of “The Master of Prayer,” since the main theme of this story centers upon the chronicle of the country of wealth, namely its descent into the folly of the lust for wealth (leading to the

idolization of money) and its eventual rectification () by the ten members of the Holy Gathering. The Hebrew language (like French too!) uses the same word for both money and silver: (in French: argent). Rabbi Nachman uses this key verse from the Book of Proverbs to demonstrate that true wealth – “choice silver” – is not the amount of money you have deposited in your bank account or stashed away in a safe deposit (as the people of the country of wealth, in all its different variations, would have us believe), but rather true wealth is the spiritual richness of the *tzaddik's* teachings. The *tzaddik* may externally appear to be quite poor, but inwardly he is the source of true wealth. This idea will be greatly expanded upon in Rabbi Nachman's last story, “The Seven Beggars,” which is analyzed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

Let us return to our story, to the episode in which the sentry in the warrior's camp finishes narrating to the master of prayer the chronicle of how the different sects originated; I believe this episode to be the final scene in Act III. Interestingly, the warrior's sentry actually speaks about only nine of the ten sects, and does not mention the sect of the country of wealth. Kaplan (1983:322) believes that “the soldier may not have mentioned it since they were outside the city of this group.” However, earlier in the story, when the master of prayer spoke to the elders of the country of wealth about the king's ‘hand’ (map) and the ten members of the king's court and family for the first time, the truth is that he actually mentioned only nine of them and in fact did not tell them about the tenth member of the Holy Gathering, namely the king's treasurer. It is precisely the king's treasurer who is destined to become the king of the country of wealth, and therefore I believe that it is no coincidence that in both cases when the origins of the ten sects and the ten members of the Holy Gathering are first presented, the sect of money and the one figure who embodies their rectified value (the king's treasurer) are not revealed. It seems to me that the reason for this lies in Rabbi Nachman's conviction that the lust for money is the most difficult of all vices to correct. Since, as I have said, the main theme of this story is the rise and fall of the country of wealth, Rabbi Nachman felt no need to present them in an abbreviated fashion, as he did with the other sects, but rather narrates their fate in great detail. In addition, the next

member of the Holy Gathering whom we will soon meet is going to be the king's treasurer, whom Rabbi Nachman will very shortly portray in detail.

Act IV: The reunion of the Holy Gathering

The master of prayer is given permission to meet the mysterious and invincible warrior, and they recognize each other immediately. They experience great joy at their reunion, but also deep sorrow since they have not yet found their other eight companions. During their conversation, the master of prayer relates that during the course of his wanderings and searching for the missing members of the Holy Gathering (), he came across "the king's crown. I knew that the king must be nearby, but I was unable to find him. Later I came upon a sea of blood and I knew that it was from the tears that the queen had shed," etc. The master of prayer thus reveals that although he was incapable of locating any of the nine other members of the king's court in the past, he did succeed in finding different signs or symbols that they had left behind them and which hinted to the fact that they had not completely vanished. In other words, although the different members of the Holy Gathering could not be seen, they nonetheless had left an impression upon the world. These different signs and symbols are listed in Row F on the chart on page 145. These various artifacts left by the king's advisors and family are in fact but faint shadows of the ten *Sefirot* which were dispersed and scattered in the catastrophe of the 'breaking of the vessels.' This is another way of saying that in our present, unredeemed world, it is almost impossible to experience the presence of manifestations of divinity in a direct and unmitigated fashion. In this context, it is important to note that there is a Kabbalistic concept called (derived from the root word: , "impression"), which is conceived as being a "residue" of God's presence in the world. Although God needed to "withdraw" into Himself, as it were, in order to create an "empty space" () in which the universe could be created (this being the Kabbalistic theory of *tzimtzum* which I discussed in Chapter Two), God's presence is nonetheless not altogether absent even in the world of action, and there is a "residue" () or pale impression of divinity that can be detected (although with great difficulty) in the world. In this story, Rabbi Nachman is presenting a basic problem that

the Kabbalah grapples with: in the world of action, it is not only almost impossible under normal circumstances to perceive the world of emanation (the ten *Sefirot*, embodied by the ten scattered and lost members of the Holy Gathering), but also only rare individuals can succeed even in discerning the echoes of their shadows, which are the various signs that the master of prayer and the warrior came across. Yet these signs do exist. In my opinion, this can be compared to a bottle of perfume. Even after all the perfume has been poured out of the bottle and the bottle seems completely emptied, still a scent of the perfume is somehow retained; when the empty bottle is opened, it is nonetheless possible to smell perfume and to remember the wonderful liquid which is now missing.

It appears that these concepts of the *tzimtzum*, the *shvut*, and “the empty space” (which is in fact not really so empty of God) preoccupied Rabbi Nachman to a great degree. For example, in *Likkutei Moharan* 64, Rabbi Nachman writes that “the notion of the ‘empty space’ (*shvut*), which was the result of the *tzimtzum*, cannot be truly understood or comprehended. The reason for this is that we are saying two contradictory statements, namely, existence and non-existence. The only time that we may be able to comprehend this is the ultimate future. For the ‘empty space’ was formed as a result of the *tzimtzum*, when God constricted His own essence, as it were. Consequently, God’s essence is absent from the ‘empty space.’ For if His essence were to be there, then this ‘space’ would no longer be empty of God and there would be nothing there except for God’s infinite essence. If this were true, then there would not exist any place in which the universe could have been created. Yet the actual truth is that nonetheless, God’s essence must necessarily be present in the so-called ‘empty space.’ For we know without doubt that nothing can exist if God’s life-force is not present there and giving it life. Therefore, if God’s essence were absent from the ‘empty space,’ nothing whatsoever could exist there. Consequently, it is impossible to comprehend the paradox of the ‘empty space’ and *shvut* until the ultimate future.”

Kaplan (1990:123, 216) points out that this paradox is “actually very basic. Since God created all things in this vacated space [*shvut*] we must say that His creative power exists there. Since God is an absolute Unity, He cannot be separated from His creative power, and therefore, we must also say that He also exists within the vacated space. This,

however, contradicts the basic principle that this space is vacated and that by definition, God constricts His essence from it.... The paradox of the *tzimtzum* thus develops because of our double vision. When we look at God through the lens of ‘attributes of action,’ we see Him as Creator, and therefore, we must say that He removed Himself from the vacated space in order to create the world. On the other hand, when we look at God through the lens of ‘negative attributes,’ we cannot say that He is absent from any place. It is only in the ultimate future that we will no longer have to look at God through lenses, and therefore, all dichotomies and paradoxes will be resolved.”

Before the master of prayer leaves the warrior, they discuss the country of wealth. The warrior then tells the master of prayer that “the king had once told him that men could be extricated from any base desire except the love for money.... Such men can only be freed by going along the road that leads to the sword.” This sentence will be repeated several more times in the story, and demonstrates that among all the base and perverted desires of the different sects, the most degrading one is the lust for money. Rabbi Nathan comments that “it is possible to escape from any lust, except for the lust for money” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Prayer 4:11). In another passage, Rabbi Nathan writes that “even though a person may be ensnared by sexual desires and lust, it is still possible to speak to that person about faith in God and religion. However, if a person is immersed in the lust for money, he will not listen to any talk about sanctity or faith in God” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Marriage 3:4).

Steinsaltz (1979:111) explains that the power of money to enslave people “is enormous. It encompasses all aspects of their existence, to the exclusion of every decent emotion. Earning money is an activity that can involve almost all of one’s waking hours, enslaving all one’s thoughts and acts. It is the only vice that cannot be sublimated or raised, and it must be broken from without.”

The master of prayer leaves the warrior’s camp, and comes across a group of people who constitute the sect of prayer. It is extremely significant that during all the years since the tempest wind wrecked havoc, the master of prayer had never encountered them, but only now, when he parts from the warrior, he meets them. I believe the reason for this “coincidence” occurring now stems from the fact the reunion between master of prayer and

the warrior is not only the true beginning of the process of redemption, but it is also an important milestone in the spiritual development of the master of prayer himself. For the master of prayer has finally succeeded in making contact with another member of the Holy Gathering; the inner significance of this is that he is able to break out of the terrible spiritual isolation and loneliness which had enveloped him ever since the time of the terrible tempest. Rabbi Nachman writes explicitly that the master of prayer “was overjoyed” to find the sect of prayer. As a result of meeting them, the master of prayer is now capable of sharing his vision with these other people who believe like him that the true purpose of humanity is prayer and the service of God. Furthermore, his band of followers will be able to assist him in his spiritual quest and mission. Hasidism has always stressed that not only does the *tzaddik* help elevate his followers, but the disciples themselves help raise the *tzaddik*. In other words, the relationship between the *tzaddik* and his Hasidim is mutually beneficial. In terms of the story, although the master of prayer did have followers before this, he now becomes the “king” of a group of people who can truly identify with him and appreciate him. As Rabbi Nachman tells us, the master of prayer “was in awe of them, and they too were in awe of him.” Even more importantly, after the master of prayer explains to them his mission, they will pray for his success in finding the other missing members of the king’s family and court; and indeed, the process of redemption will now proceed at an accelerated rate. Perhaps one of the reasons for this is that the sect of prayer is indeed praying to God on behalf of the master of prayer.

This episode in the story describing the meeting between the master of prayer and the sect of prayer, and which culminates in the coronation of the master of prayer as their ‘king,’ has always occupied a very special place in the hearts of Braslav Hasidim. Many of the major Braslav leaders and traditional scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth century believed that Rabbi Nachman was the historical manifestation among European Jewry of the master of prayer as he is described in this story. This, in turn, led to the belief that the sect of prayer has been made manifest in historical reality in the guise of the followers and disciples of Rabbi Nachman, namely the Braslav Hasidim themselves. As Piekartz (1972:20) explains, “the wondrous master of prayer was interpreted by Rabbi Nachman’s disciples as referring to Rabbi Nachman. This identification inevitably resulted in a further self-identification of the sect of prayer with Braslav Hasidism itself.” I wish to add that their

belief that they were in fact members of the sect of prayer meant that the Braslav Hasidim saw themselves as fulfilling a vital role in the redemption of the world, paralleling the support given by the sect of prayer to the master of prayer in our story. This belief greatly strengthened the resolve and cohesion of the Braslav Hasidim in the nineteenth century in face of their isolation from the mainstream of East European Jewry in general, and the ridicule, hostility and even severe persecution they often encountered at the hands of the rest of the Hasidic community in particular.

The next stage in the saga of the country of wealth occurs when their messengers come across a man “walking along with a staff ... inlaid with many precious jewels,” who is the king’s treasurer, the third member of the Holy Gathering to appear in the story. The king’s treasurer brings the emissaries to a mountain where he shows them the king’s riches: golden tables and utensils and treasures. In merit of these immense riches, he is considered to be “a god of gods” by the people of the country of wealth and is crowned as their ruler.

The king’s treasurer is thought by both Steinsaltz and Kaplan to be an allusion to the *Sefirah* of *Hod* (see Rows D and E on the chart on page 145), and as representing the figure of Aaron, the High Priest (Rows B and C on the chart). This would signify that the mountain that he brought them to was Mt. Moriah, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem; the Temple contained sacred utensils like the Holy Ark, the table for show-bread, the menorah, the altar, the laver, etc.

In *Berachot* 33b, we find this passage: “Rabbi Hanina said: ‘Everything is in the hands of heaven, except for the fear of heaven (-).... The only treasure that is stored in the treasure-house of Holy One, blessed be He, is the fear of heaven, as it is written, ‘The fear of the Lord is His treasure’ (Isaiah 33:6).”

We can thus say true wealth is the inner, spiritual richness that begins with the fear of God. This spiritual richness, symbolized by the sanctity of the Temple and exemplified in the person of the High Priest who was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies only once a year on Yom Kippur, will lead to the *tikkun* for the lust for money which dominated the people of the country of wealth. This idea (of the centrality and sanctity of the Temple), which at this point in the narrative is only hinted at, will be clarified and expanded upon at the end of the

story in Act V. In any case, the first step in acquiring spiritual richness starts with the fear of God.

In *Likkutei Eytzot* 144, Rabbi Nachman writes: “The lust for money is real idolatry, and as long as there is idolatry of money in the world, God’s anger is kindled. When the lust for money will be destroyed, then the fear of heaven as well as God’s grace () will flow over the world and the Messiah can be revealed; the knowledge of the Lord, too, will flow over the world and the Temple will be rebuilt.”

This same idea is found in Chapter 28 of the Book of Job, which I referred to in Chapter Three of this thesis, and which concentrates on the contrast and dichotomy between the superficial value of gold versus the true value of religious wisdom and the fear of God. “For there is a mine for silver, and a place for gold which they refine.... But wisdom, where shall it be found? And where is the place of understanding? Man does not know its price... It cannot be gotten for gold, nor shall silver be weighed for its worth. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire.... And unto man He said: ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding’” (Job 28:1,12,13,16,28). In other words, true wealth is wisdom, which is the fear of God.

The Temple located on Mt. Moriah was of course the focal-point for the service of the Lord and the fear of God. The first time Mt. Moriah is mentioned in the Bible is in the story of the Binding of Isaac (Genesis 22:2), when Abraham goes to sacrifice Isaac, but sacrifices a ram instead. Abraham’s readiness to sacrifice his son is the most outstanding example of the service of the Lord in Jewish thought, as well as proof of his fear of God, as the Bible explicitly proclaims: “... for now I know that you fear God, seeing that you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me” (Genesis 22:12). Furthermore, the Temple was considered the source of spiritual richness, bounty and blessing not only because it housed the sacred utensils like the Holy Ark (which indeed was covered with gold), but because it was the venue and point of meeting where mankind could come into contact with the *Shechinah*; the Temple was the source of prophecy.

It is stressed in the story that the king’s treasurer brings the messengers from the country of wealth to a mountain. This is significant because while Rabbi Nachman’s stories are filled with deserts, forests, islands, seas and oceans, we do not often encounter

mountains. Rabbi Nachman did speak about mountains earlier in this story, when he wrote that “the people of the country of wealth also decided that it was not fitting that they should live in the air of this world. Nor should they mix with other inhabitants of the world, who were unclean, lest they become defiled by them. So they decided to seek out high mountains, the very highest in the world.... A different group settled on each peak. They built great fortifications and earthworks around each mountain so that no one could approach them. There was a single secret path leading up to each mountain-top, and no stranger could ever find it.” These mountains, which became the homeland of the country of wealth, were meant to be barriers that would prevent poor strangers from entering their country and “defiling” it with poverty. Thus, these mountains were a symbol of evil.

In fact, these mountains sound very reminiscent of the mountain of gold where the Lost Princess had been exiled to in Rabbi Nachman’s first story, “The Losing of the King’s Daughter.” There the Lost Princess had been abducted to an inaccessible and remote mountain that was also connected to great wealth (a mountain of gold on which stood a palace of pearl). In both stories, mountains are images of evil.

In contrast to these mountains that are fortresses of evil and the unbridled lust for money, the treasurer shows us the Temple Mount, “the holy mountain” () in Jerusalem, which is in fact the opposite (and therefore the *tikkun*) of the mountains of impurity encountered earlier. Furthermore, it is precisely the Temple Mount in Jerusalem which will play an extremely critical role in the final redemption of the country of wealth, as I will demonstrate later on at the end of this chapter when I reach Act V of this story. We will see later in this chapter that the mountain of fire mentioned there is yet another metaphor for the Temple Mount and it is the sanctity of the Temple that finally liberates the people of the country of wealth from the lust for money. In a sense, the mountain which the king’s treasurer shows the people of the country of wealth now is but a preview of the mountain of fire which plays such a crucial role in Act V.

In addition to the concept of the fear of God, Kaplan (1983:333) suggests that “the treasurer may represent charity.” In other words, the *tikkun* for the lust of money and the obsession to accumulate more and more possessions and capital can be found in the ability to give away your money to other people who are less fortunate than you are. If we think about it deeply, we may come to the conclusion that the antithesis of the desire to hoard

money is the willingness to give it up as charity. Charity stems from the recognition that the money that a person has earned or received does not really belong to him or her, but is only a loan from God and should be used or distributed according to His will. This concept will be further developed in Rabbi Nachman's final story, "The Seven Beggars," when the sixth beggar speaks about how it is possible to save the Lost Princess by giving charity. I will elucidate this in Chapter Six of this thesis.

The king's treasurer now becomes the ruler of the country of wealth. The lust for money, however, is such a powerful vice that he is not able to break it, but only to mitigate some of the worst depravities, like human sacrifice. "No persuasion, no logic, can dislodge the country of wealth from its folly" (Steinsaltz 1979:106). On the other hand, the treasurer does succeed in initiating a plan that will eventually reverse the lust for money and will redeem the country of wealth. The treasurer tells the people that because he knows who the warrior truly is, he can lead them to the place of the sword, which is the source of the warrior's power, and by going there, they will be able to discover how to overcome him. His true intention is of course the opposite; the treasurer had been informed by the warrior that "the king had once told him that whosoever sank into the lust for money could not be freed of it except by going along the road that leads to the sword." The treasurer's scheme works and the leaders of the country of wealth agree to journey with him to the place of the sword; significantly, they are accompanied by the warrior and the master of prayer (both of whom are disguised) as well. The fact that they are disguised is important, for in order to accomplish their mission, the master of prayer and the warrior must not disclose their true identity to the country of wealth. In a homily printed in *Likkutei Moharan* 33:5, Rabbi Nachman writes explicitly that "there are great *tzaddikim* who must be hidden and concealed, whom the world is not worthy of meriting the knowledge of who they really are.... The true identity of these *tzaddikim* and the true Torah that they teach will not be revealed until the future redemption, when great peace will fill the world and all opposites will be reconciled one to another, as it is written: 'The wolf shall dwell with the lamb' (Isaiah 11:6)." It is necessary to note that this theme of disguise and masquerade (which we also encountered in the previous story, when the Lost Princess was dressed as a sailor) will

become even more prominent in Rabbi Nachman's last story, "The Seven Beggars," which I analyze in Chapter Six.

Thus, the first three members of the Holy Gathering (the master of prayer, the warrior and the treasurer) journey together with the leaders of the country of wealth until they come upon the sect of wisdom, which had recently appointed the king's sage as their ruler. The king's sage, who is the fourth member of the Holy Gathering to appear in the story, represents the Biblical figure of Moses as well as the *Sefirah* of *Netzach*, according to both Steinsaltz and Kaplan (see Column 4 on the chart on page 145). The identification of the king's sage with Moses seems self-evident, since it was Moses who received the Torah at Mount Sinai, and it is therefore most appropriate that he should be the custodian of the king's 'hand,' the Torah which is considered by the Kabbalah to be the blueprint of the world (as I demonstrated in Chapter Two, Concept Number Five). Indeed, the very last verses of the Torah speak how never again arose in Israel a prophet in Israel like Moses who performed awesome signs and wonders, and (in the final verse of the Torah) "the mighty hand and the great awe which Moses displayed before all Israel" (Deuteronomy 34:12). Commenting on the words: "and the mighty hand," Rashi writes, "He [Moses] received the Torah on the tablets in his hands" (*Mikra'ot G'dolot* 1961:V:187).

The sage is in possession of the 'hand,' but since the catastrophe of the great tempest, "he had not wanted to look at it ... but he had engraved a copy of it on a stone." This certainly sounds like an allusion to the stone tablets of the covenant () that Moses had received. It might also be a reference to the large stones which Moses commanded the Children of Israel to erect and plaster over after crossing the Jordan and entering the Land of Israel; after setting up these stones near Shechem, Moses commanded them to inscribe the Torah on them (Deuteronomy 27:1-3). According to the Sages of the Talmud, the Torah was written in seventy languages on these stones (*Sotah* 32a).

In my opinion, the statement that the sage did not want to look at the original hand of the king but only at a stone copy seems to me to have an additional meaning, namely that in this world, the world of action, we have only the external version of the Torah; the truer, more refined and more accurate manifestation of the Torah, the king's 'hand' (which will reflect how the Torah is actualized in the world of emanation), belongs only to the future redemption and a future revelation.

Let us return to the metaphor of the ‘hand’ and probe its connotations, for when we closely examine both a human hand and the ‘hand’ of the king, we can discover additional layers of meaning. When we first take a look at a human hand, we see only the surface reality of the hand: its size and shape, the outline of the fingers, the wrinkles and lines, etc. However, if we look underneath the skin, we will uncover muscles, tissues, bones, sinews, tendons and lineaments; arteries and veins pulsating with the constant movement of blood; sweat glands, nerves, hair cells, lymph nodes, etc.. If we wish to proceed beyond the biological and anatomic aspects of the hand and go yet deeper, we may turn to the chemical level: the hand is composed of billions upon billions of incredibly complex organic molecules, with each molecule being constructed from thousands of atoms of carbon, nitrogen, oxygen and other elements arranged in complicated chemical structures like the double helix of DNA. If we progress further and reach down into the depths of nuclear physics, we encounter the electrons, neutrons and protons (and dozens of other subatomic particles) that compose each atom and which are the true building blocks of all matter. Based on this analogy, the king’s ‘hand’ which we call the Torah has great depths and layers of meaning beyond the superficial level which we generally perceive. Scholem (1977:169-170) writes that for the Kabbalah, the “limited, human meaning of the Torah is only its most external aspect. The true essence of the Torah, on the other hand, is defined in the Kabbalah according to three basic principles: the Torah is the complete mystical name of God; the Torah is a living organism; and the divine speech is infinitely significant, and no finite human speech can ever exhaust it.”

It should also be noted that the sect of wisdom had earlier searched for wisdom, but had not yet attained the true wisdom of religious faith. The reason for this, in my opinion, is that in a world where God’s presence is hidden and the forces of the divine attributes are scattered and in exile (that is to say, the ten members of the Holy Gathering are not yet united nor even revealed), wisdom is based only on human reason and thus can easily become only “secular and heretical.” Again we come across Rabbi Nachman’s preoccupation with the conflict between secular wisdom founded on human logic and rationalism, on the one hand, and the wisdom of religious faith founded on divine revelation, on the other. This theme will be very dominant in Rabbi Nachman’s last story, “The Seven Beggars,” which is analyzed in Chapter Six of this thesis.

I wish to add that in my opinion, the sage may also be a reference to King Solomon, who was considered to be the wisest of all men (see Row K on the chart on page 145). Rabbi Nachman seems to have had a special affinity with King Solomon. For instance, in Rabbi Nachman's major work, *Likkutei Moharan*, Rabbi Nachman quotes in his homilies more verses from the three Biblical books attributed to King Solomon ("Canticles," "Proverbs," and "Ecclesiastes") than from all the other books of the Bible combined. Another example of the importance of King Solomon's wisdom can be found in an important episode in the latter half of Rabbi Nachman's fable of "The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged," which is the eleventh story in "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times." The true prince in that story has to undergo a test, which consists of being able to enter a wondrous garden in peace and to exit it in peace. This garden of marvels is a metaphor for the *Pardes*, the "orchard" of mystic wisdom and the secrets of the Torah, and the true prince is able to pass the test only when he perceives that the key to entering the garden lies in standing next to the statue of "the king in whose days there was peace, but before him and after him there were wars," a clear allusion to King Solomon. Furthermore, in that story, the true prince has the statue of King Solomon placed on a hill in the center of the garden, which enables everyone to enter the garden. This symbolizes Rabbi Nachman's belief that only the wisdom of King Solomon enables us to enter the orchard of mystic knowledge and insight.

After the first three counselors of the Holy Gathering meet the sage, an extremely important idea is expressed: "If we were cast out and scattered for no other reason than to restore that country [of wealth] to the path of truth, it would still have been worthwhile," they told each other." In my opinion, this is one of the most important sentences in the entire story, for it is connected to several of the most difficult questions that a deeply religious thinker steeped in the Kabbalah like Rabbi Nachman must grapple with: Why didn't God create a perfect world in the first place? Why did evil and suffering, sin and death have to be created? To use Kabbalistic terminology, why did the 'breaking of the vessels' have to occur at all?

The Hebrew term for the 'breaking of the vessels' is *Shevirat HaKelim*. Ailon (2000:10-11) explains that "when a vessel is too small or too narrow to contain a large amount of dense material, the vessel breaks. At first glance, such an act of breaking and shattering

seems sad, painful and tragic, but the truth is that this breaking is a profound process whose purpose is a new rebuilding and a gradual ascent towards a more perfect existence — an ascent which enables us to ascend slowly towards the great light, using our own powers exclusively.... If we look at it deeply, this concept of ‘breaking of the vessels’ is actually an act of mercy () that God grants us [because] He wants us to be worthy of His great light by our own merit and not through His pity.... It is fascinating that in the Hebrew language, the root for ‘to break’ — — has two opposite meanings. On the one hand, ‘to break ()’ means to destroy. Yet on the other hand, the word means to find hope in the midst of the rubble, as we find in the words of Jacob to his sons: ‘And he said, ‘Behold, I have heard that there are food rations () in the land of Egypt; go down to there and obtain rations () for us from there, so that we may live and not die’ (Genesis 42:2). The word in Hebrew may usually mean ‘crisis,’ but it does not mean that you have reached the end of the road; rather, it may allude to a new and better beginning, since the word also means the birth-stool on which sits the mother at the time of giving birth, and upon which the whole birth process occurs. Out of the blood and the pain emerges a higher state of being, which we have attained due to our own merit.” I wish to add to Ailon’s explanation that the birth of a child often begins by the breaking of the amniotic sac which sustains and holds the infant in his mother’s womb, and which must be broken in order to permit the infant to be born. Indeed, the process of birth itself can be viewed as a ‘breaking of the vessels,’ since the womb has become too narrow and too constricting to contain the growing child who needs to finally emerge into the world.

Ailon’s insights concerning the dual meanings of , , and need not surprise us. Rabbi Nathan writes specifically that “the wind () represents the ‘breaking of the vessels” (*Likkutei Halachot*, The Laws of Prayer 4:1), as I have earlier noted. However, I wish to restate and emphasize the idea I mentioned in Chapter Four, namely that Rabbi Nachman uses the image of the wind in both of the two stories I had earlier analyzed (“The Losing of the King’s Daughter” and “The Merchant and the Pauper”) as being not only a negative and destructive force, but also as a constructive and positive catalyst. In “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” the wind was first perceived as negative because it transported the Lost Princess to the palace of pearl and the mountain of gold, yet the wind was positive as well since the very same wind was commanded to bring the

chamberlain to the mountain and the palace where the Lost Princess had been imprisoned. In the story of “The Merchant and the Pauper,” the terrible tempest wind which had flattened all the thousands of trees on the desert island where the merchant’s son was exiled caused the letter that the Lost Princess had given the merchant’s son to be lost and unattainable. However, it was precisely the fact the letter was lost which caused the merchant’s son to shed his passivity and to leave the desert island, which after a long chain of events eventually brought about the reunion between the merchant’s son and the Lost Princess, and their marriage.

We should remember that the word that Rabbi Nachman consistently uses in his stories for wind, namely *ruach*, also means “spirit.” Indeed, the very first time the word appears in the Bible is in Genesis 1:2: “And the earth was unformed and void, and darkness was upon the surface of the deep; and the spirit of God (*ruach*) hovered over the surface of the waters.” The *midrash* (in *Bereshit Rabbah* 2:4) comments that “this ‘spirit of God’ is none other than ‘the spirit of Messiah,’ as it is written in Isaiah 11:2: ‘And the spirit of God shall rest upon him.’” This *midrash* then continues: “In merit of what does this spirit come? In merit of *teshuvah* (repentance), which is compared to water.” In other words, the word *ruach* is not only a negative hurricane, but it also symbolizes the spirit of God which is linked to the Messianic redemption and to the concept of repentance. Just as the idea of *shattering of the vessels* (the ‘breaking of the vessels’) is not altogether negative but contains within it the seeds of rehabilitation (according to Ailon), so too does the image of the *ruach* as used by Rabbi Nachman in his stories contain both positive and negative elements. In the story of “The Master of Prayer,” the terrible tempest which kidnapped the Lost Princess’s infant and caused the dispersion of the Holy Gathering (in the world of emanation) and which scattered humanity into ten different sects (in the world of action) ultimately paved the way for the total redemption of the country of wealth. This seems to me to be the deeper meaning of the sentence I quoted earlier from the story, after the sage joins up with the master of prayer, the warrior, and the king’s treasurer: “If we were cast out and scattered for no other reason than to restore that country [of wealth] to the path of truth, it would still have been worthwhile.”

After the king's sage joins the other three members of the Holy Gathering and the leaders of the country of wealth on their journey, they arrive at the country of speech, which had been ruled by a mad Frenchman (whom I discussed earlier). However, he had recently been replaced by a new 'king,' who is in fact the king's bard and who represents the *tikkun* of the sect of speech. Steinsaltz and Kaplan differ in regard to which *Sefirah* and which Biblical figure the bard represents (see the chart on page 145). Whereas Steinsaltz feels that the bard is linked to the *Sefirah* of *Gevurah* and to King David (the composer of the psalms) and to the Levites in the Temple (who sang the psalms as part of the Temple service), Kaplan believes that the bard is associated with the *Sefirah* of *Tiferet* and with the Biblical figure of Jacob. The connection between the bard and King David and the Levites is obvious and clear; the connection between the bard and Jacob may be based on the verse: "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau" (Genesis 27:22). This identification of the bard with Jacob is further strengthened by Rabbi Nachman's teaching (in *Likkutei Moharan* 29) that the rectification of improper and heretical speech is the praise of the *tzaddik*; Jacob is often portrayed in Jewish thought as a *tzaddik* (for example, see *Rashi's* commentary to Genesis 28:10), whereas his brother Esau is considered a wicked person ().

It is quite interesting to note that after Rabbi Nathan published *Likkutei Tefillot*, one of the Braslav Hasidim made a remark that Rabbi Nathan must be the master of prayer that Rabbi Nachman wrote about in this story. When Rabbi Nathan heard this remark, he was taken aback and said, "No, Rabbi Nachman is the master of prayer. If I am worthy enough to be considered among the king's men, I am the king's bard" (*Hochmah U'Tevunah* 1).

The next land the Holy Gathering finds is the land of the sect of joy, which is governed by the king's faithful friend. Steinsaltz believes that the king's friend is related to Abraham and the *Sefirah* of ; Kaplan in term links the king's friend to the Sabbath and the *Sefirah* of *Gevurah*. In my opinion, the identification of the king's beloved friend with Abraham seems very appropriate, since in the Bible, Abraham is indeed called God's beloved friend: "But you, Israel My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My beloved friend ()" (Isaiah 41:8).

A short traditional Braslav treatise called *Kedushat Shabbat*, written by a pupil of Rabbi Nathan's named Rabbi Nachman Goldstein and originally published in Lemberg in

1876, notes that the sect of joy “chose the king’s beloved friend as their king because true friendship is an aspect of joy, as it is written (Psalms 5:12): “Those who love Your name shall rejoice in You” (Goldstein 1992:18). This commentator also feels that it is significant that the king’s true friend was found sitting next to the sea of wine which “had flowed from the elegies of the bard;” in his opinion, this is because “the sea of wine represents wine of *Kiddush*, and therefore the king’s friend symbolizes the Sabbath” (Goldstein 1876:19). Kaplan (1983:339) agrees and writes that “wine is related to love, as it is written (Canticles 1:4): ‘... We will find your love more fragrant than wine...’”

At this point in the story, all of the king’s six counselors have been reunited, and so now it is possible to finally locate the members of the king’s own family; the first member of the king’s family who is found is the king’s daughter, the Lost Princess.

Thus, the next sect to be encountered is the sect of reproduction, who had believed “that the purpose of life was to populate the world and that beauty helped to fulfill this.” The six counselors ask permission to meet this sect’s queen, and “when they came into her presence, they saw that she really was the king’s daughter. The joy of the reunion cannot be imagined.” I believe that this last sentence is highly significant. If we examine carefully the exact wording Rabbi Nachman employs to describe each previous encounter among the king’s counselors, we see that he had never before used such strong language as used here to describe the great joy they all felt at the reunion of the first six members of the Holy Gathering (the king’s counselors) with the Lost Princess. The reason for this, in my opinion, lies in the fact that the act of actually finding the Lost Princess is a major turning point and a quantum leap forward in the process of redemption delineated in this story. It seems to me that Rabbi Nachman’s juxtaposition of the six male counselors with one female member of the royal family (the king’s daughter, who is the Lost Princess) is an allusion to the very beginning of Rabbi Nachman’s first story, “The Losing of the King’s Daughter.” That story began with a description of a king who had six sons and one daughter; the daughter was subsequently lost and sought after by the king’s chamberlain. In my opinion, one disconcerting question that hovers unspoken (perhaps out of tact) in the background of the story “The Losing of the King’s Daughter” is: Where are the Lost Princess’ six brothers? Why aren’t they out there searching for her, the way the king’s chamberlain searches and

years for her? I believe that the answer to that question can only now be found. For at this stage in the present story of “The Master of Prayer,” I believe that the king’s six counselors now represent a fusion of the first story’s chamberlain and the king’s six sons (who were totally passive and did not go out on a quest in search of the Lost Princess, in contrast to the chamberlain). The king’s six counselors in the present story should therefore be viewed as a kind of “reincarnation” and *tikkun* of the king’s six sons in the first story, because the six royal counselors are now deeply committed to seeking and finding the Lost Princess, just as the chamberlain did in “The Losing of the King’s Daughter.”

I would like to make another point. All ten members of the Holy Gathering are a representation of the ten *Sefirot* (see Rows D and E on the chart on page 145). Traditionally, the ten *Sefirot* are divided into two groupings: the upper three and the lower seven. Jacobs (1991:338-339) explains that “of the ten *Sefirot*, there are ‘three’ higher and seven ‘lower.’ The three ‘higher’ are: *Keter* (‘Crown’), *Hochmah* (‘Wisdom’), and *Binah* (‘Understanding’). The seven ‘lower’ are: *Hesed* (‘Loving-Kindness’), *Gevurah* (‘Power’), *Tiferet* (‘Beauty’), *Netzach* (‘Victory’), *Hod* (‘Splendor’), *Yesod* (‘Foundation’), and *Malchut* (‘Sovereignty’). The three ‘higher’ *Sefirot* have to do with the divine thought; the seven ‘lower’ with the divine emotions, as it were, as they manifest that thought. *Malchut*, or the *Shechinah*, is the link between the *Sefirotic* realm and the worlds beneath. Into *Malchut* there flows the divine grace so that, including itself, it is said in the Kabbalah to be called ‘Batsheva’

(= *bat sheva*, ‘daughter of seven’), and from *Malchut* the flow of blessing is transmitted to all creatures.” According to this approach, we can view the first seven members of the Holy Gathering who manifest themselves in the story (the six royal counselors and the Lost Princess) to represent what Jacobs calls the ‘lower’ seven *Sefirot*, that is to say, those *Sefirot* which represent the ‘emotional’ attributes of God, as it were. In this sense, the Lost Princess constitutes the focal point and vital link that allows us to shift away from the lower seven *Sefirot* and ascend to an even higher level, the level of God’s thoughts, as it were, which are manifested in the three upper *Sefirot* of , , and (symbolized in our story by the Lost Princess’ father, mother and child).

In my opinion, this division of the ten *Sefirot* into seven ‘lower’ and three ‘higher’ ones may help us achieve an additional level of understanding, and thereby I would like to

suggest another alternative analysis concerning the personification of the ten *Sefirot* in this story (Row J on the chart on page 145). It is quite important to pay attention to the fact that when each member of the Holy Gathering encounters the master of prayer for the first time, that character tells the master of prayer that he had come across different signs or symbols that showed him that other members of the Holy Gathering were nearby, but still unattainable. For example they came across a crown (symbol of the king), a sea of blood (symbol of the queen), golden hair (symbol of the infant), etc., (which are summed up in Row F on the chart on page 145). What is especially crucial to note, however, is that in all cases not one of them came across the symbol of the master of prayer. Furthermore, each member of the Holy Gathering came across progressively fewer and fewer symbols. The sage, for example, who was the fourth member of the Holy Gathering to make an appearance in the story, found the seas of blood, wine, and milk, but he had not discovered the bow (the symbol of the warrior) nor the golden table (the sign of the treasurer), because the warrior and the treasurer had preceded him in the story and were the second and third members of the Holy Gathering to become manifest in the story. All this implies that there was a definite order and a steady progression from the master of prayer in the very beginning till we reach the seventh member of the Holy Gathering, namely the Lost Princess. I interpret this to mean that Rabbi Nachman may be hinting to us that the master of prayer should be interpreted as representing the *Sefirah* of *Chesed* (the first of the lower seven “emotional” *Sefirot*); the warrior (who is always and consistently called the *Chayil* in the original Hebrew text) should be perceived as representing the second of the lower seven *Sefirot*, namely the *Sefirah* of *Gevurah*; the treasurer — the *Sefirah* of *Tiferet*; the sage — *Chochma*; the bard — *Binah*; the faithful friend — *Chessed*; and the Lost Princess — *Malkuth*, of course.

One implication of this interpretation is that it is a clear application of the very basic Hasidic principle that “God wants the heart.” Traditional Rabbinic Judaism, as it was expressed in East European Jewry in the generations before Hasidism, stressed the centrality of intellectual achievement to an extraordinary degree. The *Mitnagdim*, the opponents of Hasidism, felt the main way to approach God was through learning Torah, and therefore the most important pathway in the service of God was intellectual, which was expressed in the study of the Talmud and classic Rabbinic literature. In contrast, Hasidism insisted that the heart must precede the head, and that the emotional approach to religion and to God comes

before the intellectual. Knowing this may then strengthen my suggestion that the master of prayer personifies the divine attribute of mercy. According to this interpretation, the first attribute of God that precedes all others on the road to redemption and *tikkun* is the *Sefirah* of mercy and the attribute of loving-kindness; only after one starts walking on the path of love and altruism is it possible and proper to progress to the intellectual. Concerning this point, I wish to quote a conclusion reached by an Israel psychiatrist named Ancori who conducted a lengthy study of the relationship between depth psychology and the teachings of Braslav Hasidism. Ancori (1991:108) observes that “Rabbi Nachman searched for a faith in God that was based on the soul and its richness and its overflowing. This was in direct contrast to the emphasis placed on the dry intellect that typified traditional Rabbinic Judaism. He felt that the intellectual version of Judaism was a body without a soul, and this is what he wanted to rectify.” Ancori was not referring directly to the story of “The Master of Prayer” per se, but making a general observation concerning the overall teachings of Rabbi Nachman. Yet it seems to me that if we accept my suggested interpretation as it appears in Row J on the chart on page 145 (namely that in this fable the seven “emotional” *Sefirot* precede the three “intellectual” ones), we come to the same conclusion that Ancori reached.

Moreover, my suggested interpretation of the correlation between each character in the story and the *Sefirah* he or she represents (Row J on the chart on page 145) opens the door to a rich array of further associations and allusions, in my opinion (Row K on the chart). For example, if the master of prayer represents the *Sefirah* of *Hesed*, then he would also symbolize the Biblical figure of Abraham, who is always linked to the *Sefirah* of *Hesed* in the Kabbalah. Indeed, both Kabbalistic and Hasidic texts often quote the verse: “The world will be built through mercy” — “רחמים” (Psalms 89:3) in order to emphasize the importance of both the personality of Abraham and the attribute of mercy that he exemplified. If we think about it, the master of prayer is indeed a figure of great *Hesed*, mercy and loving-kindness, in this story. More than any other figure, he is the catalyst that begins and then accelerates the process of the redemption of the world in general, and the redemption of the country of wealth in particular. We find an important parallel in the Biblical narrative in the episode (Genesis 18:20-33) in which Abraham argues with God in an attempt to save the city of Sodom, the city of great wealth and great sin (which of course corresponds to the country of wealth in our story). It is fascinating to note that when

Abraham argues with God in order to save the city, the final number that is reached is the number ten: if there are ten righteous people in the city, it will be spared (Genesis 18:32). In Genesis 19, ten righteous men are not found and Sodom is overturned. In contrast, in Rabbi Nachman's story of "The Master of Prayer," the ten righteous members of the Holy Gathering are reassembled and the country of wealth is saved (or more accurately, rectified by the *tikkun* of the sword, which I will explain a little later in this chapter). In a deeper sense, though, the country of wealth is overturned, but not negatively and destructively like Sodom was, but spiritually, for at the end of the story, their values have been completely overturned and transformed. In regard to this point, I believe that Rabbi Nachman had already made a subtle hint earlier on in the story linking Sodom with the country of wealth and Abraham with the master of prayer. When the master of prayer first revealed the existence of the king's 'hand' (= the map of the world) to the elders of the country of wealth, the master of prayer told them that "everything was engraved on the hand as it was when the world was created, as it is now, and as it will be. Thus the city of Sodom appeared as it was before it was destroyed, while it was being destroyed, and after its destruction" (my emphasis). In the entire "Book of Stories from Ancient Times," Rabbi Nachman hardly ever mentions the name of a specific city, nation or historical personality; any time that he does mention a real name, it demands our immediate attention. Since the city of Sodom is the only geographical detail that the master of prayer mentions in this passage, we should ask ourselves why did Rabbi Nachman choose this particular city out of the thousands of possible names or historical episodes he could have chosen; the answer lies, in my opinion, in my hypothesis that the country of wealth is an allusion to Sodom, and the ten members of the Holy Gathering (led by the master of prayer, who corresponds to Abraham and the *Sefirah* of) are the ten *tzaddikim* who save it.

Indeed, in my opinion the more closely we look, the clearer and more apparent it becomes that the country of wealth in our story is actually a "reincarnation" of the Biblical city of Sodom. Earlier in the story, Rabbi Nachman had already given us a very strong hint that the country of wealth is a metamorphosis of Sodom in a short but very important passage in Act II when he first presented the country of wealth. Rabbi Nachman had emphasized that there was an absolute prohibition in the country of wealth to give charity: "Charity was, of course, a great sin, for who would be so wicked as to give away the

money that God had bestowed upon him?” Furthermore, they had placed guards and watchmen around the entrances to their country to prevent paupers or strangers from entering their country.

This is very reminiscent of the most serious transgressions of Sodom, according to both the Bible and the Talmud, since in the Jewish tradition, the main sin of Sodom was its cruelty to the poor and the stranger. For example, we read in the Bible: “Behold, this was the iniquity of your sister Sodom: haughtiness, fullness of bread and complacency were in her and her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy” (Ezekiel 16:49). The Sages of the Talmud as well believed that the evil of Sodom stemmed from their hatred of charity, and the stinginess and cruelty they displayed towards the poor, the stranger and the wayfarer. In *Sanhedrin* 109, the Sages discuss the reasons why the people of Sodom have no portion in the World -to-Come (), and almost all of the many anecdotes they bring focus on the Sodomites’ total rejection of charity, their lust for money and their hostility to paupers and strangers. I will bring several examples: “They [the people of Sodom] said: ‘Since the bread that comes out of our earth is covered with gold, why should we let wayfarers, who come only to deplete us of our wealth, enter our country? Let us forbid strangers from travelling into our country’” (*Sanhedrin* 109a) ... A certain maiden [had pity on a pauper] and gave bread to a poor man, hiding it in a pitcher. When the matter became known [to the authorities in Sodom], they daubed her with honey and placed her on the parapet of the city wall, so that bees came and [stinging her to death,] consumed her” (*Sanhedrin* 109b). There is a similar *midrash* in *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:6: “Once two maidens went down [to a well or spring] to drink and to draw water. One said to her friend, ‘Why does your face look so sickly?’ Her friend answered her, ‘I have run out of food and I am starving to death.’ What did she [the first maiden] do? She filled her pitcher with flour and they exchanged pitchers, so that the starving maiden took the pitcher with flour and the first maiden took the other’s [empty] pitcher. When the matter became known, they burned her to death.”

All this alludes to one of the most basic ideas that Rabbi Nachman has presented in the story of “The Master of Prayer.” Any society that is based on the lust for wealth and the obsession to acquire gold and amass capital and possessions, while at the same time

lacks any compassion for the poor and has no fear of God — such a society is an imitation of Sodom and has no right to exist, according to Rabbi Nachman’s values.

I wish to return to the Lost Princess, and point out her deep significance in yet another way. Rabbi Nachman has made it clear that the lust for money is the most vicious and debasing of all vices, and that this story should be understood as a chronicle on how the lust for money, exemplified by the country of wealth, must be overcome. Yet the urge for illicit sex (which is the perversion of the values represented by the Lost Princess) is also an extremely powerful and dangerous vice, and Rabbi Nachman was only too aware that sexual desires too need to be rectified — not by attempting to repress them (which would not succeed), but by uplifting, re-channeling and sublimating them. The country that is now ruled by the Lost Princess had as their original purpose the need for procreation. This legitimate goal rapidly degenerated, however, into the pursuit of external beauty (what we would call today ‘sex appeal’), addiction to sex, and “terrible debauchery,” as Rabbi Nachman candidly writes. As a result, the Lost Princess turned to the master of prayer and “asked the master of prayer to stay in her country for a while, in order to cleanse its people of their pollution. Since they regarded beauty as the ultimate goal, they had sunk into terrible debauchery. Furthermore, they had made their lechery into a religion.” Rabbi Nachman was acutely conscious of the difficulty one faces when one tries to wrestle with sexual passions and desires, and he often stressed the need to pray and turn to God in order to request God’s help in dealing with sexual urges in general, and illicit sexual urges in particular. We discover this theme throughout the literature of Braslav Hasidism; for example, in *Likkutei Tefillot* 19, we find this prayer: “Awaken Your pity on me, Master of the universe, and help me be worthy of overcoming my sexual desires and of quenching the fire of illicit passions (). For You know, O Lord our God, that sexual desire is our main temptation and stumbling block It is Your will to try us by means of our sexual urges, to see if we will have the strength and will-power to overcome our desires, and subdue and master our sexual lusts; instead of submitting to these desires, may we cleave () to Your great name in truth all our lives”

It is noteworthy that the Lost Princess’ country is the only country whose ruler had no choice but to turn to the master of prayer directly and request him to stay in that land in

order to rectify that sect from its pollution and vice. Thus, just as the master of prayer had earlier been a very important personage in the life of the Lost Princess (since it was he who had been the matchmaker who had arranged the match and proposed the most suitable husband for the Lost Princess), now too the master of prayer is the one figure she turns to in order to re-channel the obsession with sex and lechery into a much more refined and purified value. The Lost Princess knows the secret of *tikkun* is, as Steinsaltz (1979:110-111) explains, “not to suppress people’s debased attributes but to redirect those attributes to their proper goals. Here Rabbi Nachman is expressing a basic concept of Hasidic thought, that of ‘raising the sparks of holiness’ that exist even in human vices. This is a form of sublimation: the correct way to overcome one’s evil inclinations is not to suppress them but to redirect them from the base to the divine.”

After the Lost Princess has been found and reunited with her husband, the warrior, and with the king’s other counselors (and after her kingdom has been rectified of the their debauchery), the task of finding the three remaining members of her family is able to make a great leap forward and to progress very swiftly. There is a very deep reason why this is the case, in my opinion. I believe that in a sense, the relationship between the six male royal counselors and the king’s only daughter, the Lost Princess, parallels the relationship between the first six days of the week and the Sabbath (the *Shabbat*) in the Jewish tradition. Just as the *Shabbat* heralds an entirely different level of sanctity and an entirely different way of experiencing time and reality, so does the Lost Princess represent an entirely new level of sanctity. The Lost Princess is the bridge between the seven “emotional” *Sefirot* and the three “intellectual” ones. Because the Lost Princess is the central hinge and the key figure in the array of the ten *Sefirot* and the members of the Holy Gathering, once the Lost Princess has been located and her kingdom purified, the three remaining members of the royal family (her son, mother and father) are readily accessible and quickly found.

I would now like to discuss the names that are given to the three higher, “intellectual” *Sefirot* which are represented by the Lost Princess’ three blood-relatives (her son, mother, and father). It is important to emphasize that the classical Kabbalah had in fact two alternative and equally acceptable systems of labeling these three *Sefirot*. In the more widespread system, the highest and purist of all the *Sefirot* is *Keter* (Crown); the second highest is *Hochmah* (Wisdom), and the third one is *Binah* (Understanding). In the second,

equally valid system, the highest *Sefirah* is called *Hochmah*, next comes *Binah*, and the third *Sefirah* is called *Da'at* (Knowledge), which is conceived as a synthesis of the first two *Sefirot*. Scholem (1974:107) explains that according to this second system, “a complementary *Sefirah* called *Da'at* (“Knowledge”) appears after *Hochmah* and *Binah*, a kind of harmonizing of the two that was considered ... an external aspect of *Keter*.” This second system was the one adopted by many Hasidic thinkers and leaders (most notably by the first Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi). If we examine Rabbi Nachman’s writings carefully (especially his most important and extensive work, *Likkutei Moharan*), we find that it was this second system that Rabbi Nachman almost always employs. I would therefore like to suggest that we adopt this second system of *Hochmah*, *Binah*, and *Da'at* in our attempt to understand the story of “The Master of Prayer,” and accordingly, the Lost Princess’ infant son represents *Da'at*; the Lost Princess’ mother the queen represents *Binah*; and her father the king represents *Hochmah* (see Row J on the chart on page 145). I believe a careful analysis of the events in the latter part of the story will reinforce such a reading.

After the members of the Holy Gathering leave the country ruled by the Lost Princess, they arrive at the country of the fastidious eaters, the sect whose main concern is health food. This country’s king is the Lost Princess’ infant son, who was nourished by the sea of milk that had flowed from his mother’s breasts. Steinsaltz (1979:107) writes that “the infant is clearly the Messiah, son of David, and the description given here, [is] of a person who embodies all virtues and perfections even from his birth.” I agree wholeheartedly with Steinsaltz. The Messiah is referred to only in a few passages in the Bible (mainly in the Book of Isaiah), but when we examine these passages carefully, we discover that the portrait of the infant drawn by Rabbi Nachman in “The Master of Prayer” indeed matches those Biblical verses that were considered by Jewish tradition as referring to the Messiah. The Book of Isaiah consistently describes the Messiah as an infant or small child: “For a child is born unto us, a son is given us” (Isaiah 9:5); and the sea of milk that sustained the Lost Princess’ child seems to allude to the verse: “Butter and honey will he eat” (Isaiah 7:15). The most important chapter in the Bible that focuses on the Messiah is Isaiah 11 (verses 1-3, 6, 8 and 9 in particular). An examination of these critical verses clarifies several vital points. In Isaiah 11:2, the word “spirit” appears four times. It is important to

remember, however, that in Hebrew, the same word means “spirit,” “wind,” and “direction;” I believe the reason why the word is used four times is to allude to all four winds or directions: the north wind, the south wind, the east wind and the south wind. Furthermore, I believe that the four-fold use of may be a reference to the four worlds of emanation, creation, formation and action. In addition, as I have earlier pointed out, the very first time the word appears in the Bible, the *midrash* says that it refers to the spirit of the Messiah. I have also previously spoken how the image of the “wind” is used both positively and negatively in Rabbi Nachman’s stories. In “The Master of Prayer,” there was a terrible tempest wind that had snatched the infant away from the Lost Princess; this in turn had caused the dispersion of the Holy Gathering (in the world of emanation) and the dispersion of humanity into ten different sects (in the world of action). Yet the image of the wind has positive allusions as well, since all four winds of the world will rest upon the infant, the young Messiah, and fill him with a sacred spirit. In Isaiah 11:2, these four winds are described as: (1) the spirit of the Lord; (2) the spirit of wisdom () and understanding (); (3) the spirit of counsel and might; and (4) the spirit of knowledge () and the fear of the Lord. It is possible to interpret the second wind as hinting at the highest two *Sefirot* of *Hochmah* and *Binah*, whereas the fourth wind or spirit that descends upon the child refers to the *Sefirah* of *Da’at*. Such a reading is strengthened by the final verse in the passage (Isaiah 11:9) which speaks of the future time when “the earth shall be as full of the knowledge () of the Lord, as the waters that cover the sea.” It appears that according to Rabbi Nachman, this sea is a sea of milk, which is a very fascinating and unusual idea, in my opinion.

I would like to point out that we find a strong connection between the figure of the Messiah, knowledge (), and the key image of (“wind” or “spirit”) in many traditional Braslav sources. For example, in *Likkutei Tefillot* 112, Rabbi Nathan writes: “Master of the universe, the Giver of the Torah, have pity on us and make us worthy of learning Your sacred Torah, that we may study it in depth every day ... so that we may be worthy of having the spirit () of the Messiah descend upon us, which is the spirit of God that hovers upon the waters, which is the Torah.” In *Likkutei Tefillot* 142 (which is based on Rabbi Nachman’s homily in *Likkutei Moharan* 247), it is written: “May it be Your will, O Lord our God and the God of our fathers, that You may have mercy on us and send us quickly

the righteous Messiah who will rectify () this world together with all the other worlds which are completely dependent on this world of action. Have mercy upon him [the Messiah] and upon us; bring him quickly to the world, so that he may rectify everything with a great and awesome *tikkun*, for he will help us attain true knowledge ()” [my emphasis].

After the Lost Princess has been reunited with her lost child, the only remaining figures who are still missing are her parents. Therefore, the next member of the Holy Gathering who is located and found is the queen, who had been crowned as the ruler of the sect of murderers and the country of death, and who represents the *Sefirah* of *Binah* (Understanding), in my opinion (see Row J on the chart on page 145). And immediately after the queen, the king, who rules the sect of honor and who represents the highest *Sefirah* of all, is also found and reunited with the Lost Princess and all the other members of his court. Kaplan (1990:52) explains that the *Sefirah* of *Hochmah* (Wisdom), which is the *Sefirah* that the king symbolizes in my opinion, “represents what could be called pure, undifferentiated mind. It is pure thought which has not yet been broken up into differentiated concepts of ideas. At the level of *Hochmah*, we find the most basic axioms of existence in a kind of pristine unity. *Binah* (Understanding) is the level immediately below *Hochmah*. It represents the power of diffusion, the ability to scrutinize and make logical distinctions. In this sense, *Binah* is the system of logic by which the basic axioms of *Hochmah* are delineated and defined. *Da’at* (Knowledge) would then follow *Hochmah* and *Binah*. *Da’at* could be called ‘applied logic.’ It is the ability to bring together the basic information that is given through *Hochmah* and make it interplay logically through *Binah*. Together, *Hochmah*, *Binah* and *Da’at* constitute the basic mental processes that underlie all creative expression ... [and] the most abstract level of mind.”

Thus, the three final members of the Holy Gathering, who are the blood-relatives of the Lost Princess and who are unable to be located until the Lost Princess is first found, symbolize the mind of God and His intellect, as it were. However to be perfectly honest, the three highest *Sefirot* of _____ are very difficult to comprehend or even define; because they symbolize the thought processes of God, they belong to the realm of ultimate

sanctity which the human mind can only most dimly perceive. This is yet another reason why in Rabbi Nachman's stories, the highest we can aspire to is the Lost Princess, and no higher.

Before returning to the narrative of the story of "The Master of Prayer," there are two points I wish to stress. First, although the role played by the ten members of the Holy Gathering (who are the symbolic representatives of the ten *Sefirot* in the world of emanation) is central to this story, it should always be remembered that God Himself is beyond the array of the ten *Sefirot*. God Himself is as above the world of emanation as He is above the worlds of creation, formation and action; the ten *Sefirot* are only the means, the vessels, through which flows from above "the light of the Infinite One, blessed be He," to use Kabbalistic terminology, as I explained in Chapter Two (Concept Number Three).

Secondly, I feel that it is mandatory to comment on the fact that the Lost Princess' mother, the queen, who is the symbol of the very high *Sefirah* of *Binah*, is paradoxically the ruler of the sect of murderers and the land of death. We must try to understand why Rabbi Nachman chose to make such a daring link between *Binah* and death. The answer, in my opinion, stems from Rabbi Nachman's great apprehension in regard to the hubris and arrogance of rationality and those philosophers and thinkers who presume that human reason knows all and can explain all. *Binah* represents logic and the thought processes of rational analysis (in contrast to *Hochmah*, which is often compared in the Kabbalah to lightning because *Hochmah* represents the sudden flash of insight and of instantaneous comprehension). Ever wary of human logic and the claims of the *Maskilim* and of the rationalists (both Jewish and Gentile) that reason is capable of probing and solving all the mysteries of the universe and of human existence, Rabbi Nachman felt that the only way that Judaism could and should survive and flourish would be stressing the centrality of the non-rational aspects of Judaism, like faith, emotion and compassion, and not the dry intellect so typical of both the *Mitmagdim* and the *Maskilim*. If Judaism were to rely only on logic and reason (which is represented by the *Sefirah* of *Binah*), then the human soul would dry up and wither, and the Jewish religion too would fade and die a slow death. As Rabbi Nachman expresses it so poetically in the story of "The Master of Prayer," if *Binah* exists all by herself and is cut off from all the others, she sits amidst a sea of blood. In other words, the absolute need for *Binah* to be re-united and connected with all the other *Sefirot* is but another example of Rabbi Nachman's conviction that logic is only part of a much

larger and much more complex picture, and should never be separated from all the other attributes like loving-kindness () and beauty ().

Act V: The redemption of the country of wealth: the sword, the mountain of fire, and the kitchen

Now that all ten members of the Holy Gathering have been finally reassembled, we have now reached the fifth and last “act” in the drama of “The Master of Prayer,” which culminates in the redemption of the country of wealth. According to Rabbi Nachman, after “the master of prayer was sent out to all the countries to correct them, to purify them, and to bring them out of their folly,” all the sects were rectified — except for the country of wealth, whose vice is the most debased and stubborn of all. The only way to redeem them is by taking the road to the sword, which “leads to a mountain of fire.”

This is quite significant, because the mountain of fire, in my opinion, seems to be the antithesis to the mountain of gold in which the Lost Princess had once been imprisoned in Rabbi Nachman’s first story, “The Losing of the King’s Daughter.” That mountain of gold was the abode of the forces of evil and the epitome of impurity. In contrast, this mountain of fire must be a source of great holiness if it is strong enough and potent enough to bring about the *tikkun* of the country of wealth. In addition, the mountain of fire appears also to be the opposite of the high mountains on which the sect of money set up their country of wealth.

In a short but very important postscript to “The Master of Prayer” (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:181), Rabbi Nachman says that this mountain of fire is an allusion to the verse: “Says the Lord, whose fire is in Zion and whose oven is in Jerusalem” (Isaiah 31:9). This verse proves that this mountain of fire is none other than the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The kitchen, in which are cooked the foods that are powerful enough to redeem the people of the country of wealth, seems to represent the Temple itself; the foods that are cooked in this “kitchen” are the sacrifices that were offered up on the Temple altar (some sacrifices were burned while other sacrifices were eaten). This identification of the mountain of fire in our story with the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, as well as the kitchen with the Temple, is strengthened by the reference to the lion which crouches on the mountain, which at first reading seems very puzzling. What is a lion doing here? Yet in *Yoma* 21b, we find a passage linking the symbol of a lion with the fire on the altar in a *Baraita* that reads: “Five

things were said to describe the fire on the altar of the Temple: [First,] it crouched like a lion ...” An even more explicit reference can be found in Chapter 29 of Isaiah, where Jerusalem is called by the name of ‘Ariel’ [] (Isaiah 29:1,2 and 7), which can be interpreted as ‘the hearth of God,’ but literally means ‘the lion of God.’

I believe that Rabbi Nachman is making a very profound statement concerning the essence of holiness through this double image of the mountain of fire and the kitchen. Fire can often be destructive (like a lion that pounces on its prey), but here, according to Rabbi Nachman’s narrative, the heat of the fire is channeled into the kitchen. Similarly, holiness can sometimes be destructive, as destructive as a great fire; in the Bible, we find several examples of great sanctity as being so powerful and so overwhelming that it literally kills. In II Samuel 6:6-8, the Bible relates how King David brings the Ark of the Covenant up to Jerusalem; Uzzah the son of Amminadav (who is driving the carriage carrying the Ark) inadvertently tries to catch the Ark in order to prevent it from falling. However, after he touches it, he is instantaneously killed because the great holiness of the Ark has thereby been violated and God’s anger is kindled against Uzzah. An even more exact parallel can be found in Leviticus 10:1-2; on the very day on which the Tabernacle was dedicated, Aaron’s two older sons took their censers and offered strange fire (which God had not commanded), “and fire went out from before the Lord and devoured” Aaron’s two older sons. Holiness is shown to be a force that is extremely powerful and potentially destructive and even fatal. Yet the same power of holiness can of course be extremely beneficial when it is channeled into the positive force of redemption and of *tikkun*. It is the great warmth from the mountain of fire that provides the heat for the kitchen to cook the special foods that will enable the people of the country of wealth to finally overcome their terrible vice. Indeed, it is possible to view the process of cooking as being an example of *tikkun*. In an oven in an ordinary kitchen, the energy of fire is taken advantage of in a very positive manner and is used to transform the inedible into the edible, of taking different raw ingredients and improving them, changing them into delicious and nutritional nourishment and refreshments. Similarly, the great sanctity of the Temple (the “kitchen”) has the power to provide atonement and forgiveness for one’s sins through the sacrifices (). According to Rabbi Nachman’s story of “The Master of Prayer,” it is precisely and exclusively the great sanctity of the

Temple which will allow the people of the country of wealth to be liberated from their lust for money.

“The Master of Prayer” is not the only story that Rabbi Nachman wrote in which he expresses his belief that the Temple in Jerusalem is the focal point of redemption; in other fables as well, he demonstrates his deep conviction that the process of the final and complete *tikkun* must necessarily concentrate on the specific venue of the Temple on Mt. Moriah. A very graphic illustration of this can be found in a key passage in “The Modest King” (Story Number Six in Rabbi Nachman’s “Book of Stories from Ancient Times”): “For among all the countries in the world, there is one country that includes all other countries. In this country that includes all other countries, there is a city that includes all the cities of that country. In that city that includes all the cities, there is a building that includes all the other buildings of that city” (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:64). Only by entering this building (the Temple, in Jerusalem, in the Land of Israel) can the *tikkun* of the world be finalized.

Another example can be found in the concluding episode in “The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged” (Story Number Eleven in Rabbi Nachman’s “Book of Stories from Ancient Times”). There the final test that the true prince must undergo (in order to prove that he is the king’s true son and can restore the rightful name of the kingdom) involves a throne, a bed, a table and a lamp. At the story’s end, Rabbi Nachman added a very short postscript in which he explained that “this is the idea of the bed (בַּד), table (בַּד), throne (בַּד), and lamp (בַּד): they are the rectification of the divine presence (בַּד).” Rabbi Nathan points out (*Likkutei Halachot, Shabbat* 4) that the first letters of these four words (in the order that Rabbi Nachman recited them) spell out the word *Beit* (Tabernacle), while the last letters of these four words spell out *Beit*, Aaron the High Priest. This reinforces the link between the Holy of Holies in the Temple (or Tabernacle) on the one hand, and on the other hand, the test that the true prince must undergo before the redemption of the world can be actualized. In that story, the true prince’s actions regarding the throne should be understood and interpreted as paralleling the deeds performed by the High Priest in the Temple in Jerusalem.

I wish to make another point. The Temple was not only the center for performing sacrifices but was also perceived as being a house of prayer (Isaiah 56:7). Indeed, it is

amazing that in the very long speech that King Solomon delivered at the dedication of the First Temple (I Kings 8:12-61), he describes the Temple only as a house of prayer and does not even mention the sacrifices at all.

This aspect of the Temple, which stresses the primacy of prayer and the fact that the Temple was the focal point and center of prayer, is alluded to in the story of “The Master of Prayer” by the image of the sword. In *Likkutei Moharan* 2, Rabbi Nachman writes explicitly that “the main weapon of the Messiah is prayer.... We learn this from Onkelous’ translation to the verse in Genesis 48:22, when Jacob blesses his son Joseph and tells him: ‘And I have given you one portion above your brothers, which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow,’ which is translated as ‘my prayer and my supplication.’” Commentating on this particular point in Rabbi Nachman’s homily, Zeitlin (1965a:328-330) writes that “according to Rabbi Nachman of Braslav, the Messiah is a warrior and a conqueror, but the main weapon he uses is prayer which is called his sword ... The main path to redemption will come through the sword (which is prayer) of the Messiah.”

The first time the warrior’s sword was mentioned in the story was at the beginning of Act III, when the master of prayer first spoke to the elders of the country of wealth about the king’s ‘hand’ and the different counselors and members of the king’s court. When the master of prayer discussed the king’s warrior, he said that the warrior obtained his strength from a sword that “possesses three kinds of power.” We must try to understand the significance of these “three kinds of power.”

The answer can be found, in my opinion, by consulting Rows J and K on the chart on page 145. According to my suggested interpretation, the warrior (in Hebrew: יְהוָה) represents the *Sefirah* of *Gevurah* (Power, Might, Courage); in the Kabbalah, the Biblical figure who usually alludes to the *Sefirah* of יְהוָה is the patriarch Isaac. This identification between Isaac, the warrior and the *Sefirah* of יְהוָה may shed light upon the deeper meaning of the three kinds of power possessed by the sword (which is the symbol of prayer, as I have shown above).

In the Book of Genesis, Isaac is seen meditating or blessing several times, but there is only one verse which says specifically that Isaac prayed to God: “And Isaac entreated (יְהוָה) the Lord on behalf of his wife, for she was barren; and the Lord let Himself be

entreated of him, and his wife Rebecca conceived” (Genesis 25:21). What is quite unusual about this verse is that instead of using the regular verb for “he prayed” (), the highly unusual and rarely used verb “he entreated” () is employed in this verse. This of course did not escape the notice of the Sages of the Talmud, and they explained this through the means of a play on words between the verb (he entreated) and the noun (a three-pronged pitchfork). Commenting on this verse from Genesis 25:21, we find this passage in *Yevamot* 64a: “Rabbi Isaac said: ‘What can the prayers of the righteous () be compared to? To a three-pronged pitchfork (). This is to tell you, just as a three-pronged pitchfork turns over the grain from place to place, so too does the prayer of the righteous turn over the attribute of anger () to the attribute of mercy.’”

I believe that this Talmudic passage is very relevant to our story, for it shows that the warrior’s sword is similar to Isaac’s prayer which in turn is similar to a three-pronged pitchfork. Just as Isaac’s prayer was able “to turn over the attribute of anger to the attribute of mercy,” so does the warrior’s sword contain the ability to point the way to the annulment of the negative attribute of the lust for money that obsessed the inhabitants of the country of wealth. Furthermore, it seems to me that the “three kinds of power” that were inherent in the warrior’s sword allude to the three prongs of the pitchfork () of Isaac’s prayer, as well as to the three daily prayer services (). I base this on the opinion in the Talmud (*Berachot* 26b) that “the patriarchs established the [three daily] prayers.... Abraham established the morning prayer service ().... Isaac established the afternoon prayer service ().... Jacob established the evening prayer service ().” Prayer, which Jewish law requires to be performed three times a day, has the power of transforming the negative into the positive. Returning to *Berachot* 26b, there is a second opinion that prayer was established in lieu of the sacrifices. This opinion too may be alluded to in the story of “The Master of Prayer,” since the food that is cooked in the kitchen (the Temple) symbolizes the sacrifices as well as prayer. Finally, I wish to add that it is perhaps no coincidence that in the passage from *Yevamot* 64a, the pitchfork is described as overturning grain, since the grain may be related to the food that is being cooked in the kitchen on the mountain of fire (the Temple Mount), and indeed several of the Temple sacrifices were grain-offerings of wheat and barley.

Returning to the narrative of “The Master of Prayer,” the king tells the warrior to lead the leaders of the country of wealth to the kitchen (= the Temple), because when they eat from the food of the kitchen, their lust for money will finally be broken. It is quite noteworthy, I believe, that the people of the country of wealth are finally redeemed through the act of eating. We have seen that among the different sects into which humanity was divided at the time of the great tempest wind, there was a sect of eaters, whose ruler turned out to be in the end the Lost Princess’ infant son (who represents Messiah the son of David). One of the names for Jerusalem is the City of David, and it is therefore quite fitting that the act of eating food from the City of David (namely, the sacrifices and prayers from the Temple in Jerusalem) is an essential part of the messianic redemption. Furthermore, it is also essential to remember that the member of the Holy Gathering who ultimately became the ruler of the country of wealth was the king’s treasurer, who symbolized Aaron the High Priest. Aaron the High Priest was of course the most important and central person in the sacrifices and rites of the Sanctuary (), the precursor to the Temple. We thus see that the linkage between the country of wealth and the king’s treasurer found earlier in the story should be seen as hinting to the *tikkun* at the end of the story, when the people of the country of wealth eat from the food of the kitchen on the mountain of fire (representing the Temple on Mt. Moriah).

In our story, the king tells the warrior that the kitchen “cannot be seen from the road, but it can be detected by the birds that hover it.” This seems to be a reference to a verse in the key chapter of Isaiah 31 (which Rabbi Nachman specifically mentioned in the post-script I earlier brought): “As birds hovering, so will the Lord of hosts protect Jerusalem, protecting and saving, rescuing and delivering” (Isaiah 31:5). The hovering birds mentioned in the story might also be an allusion to the two cherubim (), which were part of the golden Ark-cover () that covered the Holy Ark in the Holy of Holies (see Exodus 25:17-22), the most sacred part of the Temple. Each one of these cherubim had two outstretched wings and so they resembled hovering birds.

The leaders of the country of wealth were led “along the road to the sword and up the side path to the kitchen.” They then ate from the food from the kitchen, and as I have said, this food seems to be an allusion to the sacrifices as well as to prayer. In my opinion, this may also be an echo of the verse: “And they saw the God of Israel, and ate and drank”

(Exodus 24:11), which refers to the episode on Mt Sinai when after having offered up sacrifices, the elders of Israel merited experiencing the presence of God, and consequently they ate and drank. The *Zohar* (I:135b), commenting on this verse from the Book of Exodus, notes that it is possible to be nourished by the radiance of the divine. It should also be remembered that the Hebrew words for sacrifice are *zebach* (from the root word *z-b-ch*, to draw closer [to God]) and *olah* (from the root word of *al*, to make an ascension and to ascend in sanctity). Kaplan (1983:347) notes that “a sacrifice was like a fine, since it involved a major monetary expenditure in ancient times.” This being the case, the concept of sacrifices could be viewed as a *tikkun* (a rectification) for the lust for money because one is willing to spend one’s money and dedicate it to drawing closer to God and ascending in sanctity by means of offering the sacrifices. Indeed, Rabbi Nathan writes that “by spending money for sacrifices, one also breaks the lust for money.... The concept of the sacrifices is to break the idolatry of money worship, and that is why we recite the *Sh'ma* as part of the *Korbanot* section in the beginning part of the morning prayers” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Prayer 4:15 and 4:18).

In the story, Rabbi Nachman emphasizes the importance of the wonderful smell of the foods that are cooked in the ‘kitchen,’ and he refers to the potency of their marvelous fragrance several times. I think this is an allusion to the incense (*ketoret*) which was a very important part of the Temple service (see Exodus 30:34-37 and 30:7-10). As a matter of fact, Rabbi Nachman writes specifically that “the lust for money can be broken by the fragrance of the incense” (*Likkutei Moharan* 13).

In contrast to the wonderful fragrance of the food from the kitchen, Rabbi Nachman now describes the smell of money as being horrid. After the leaders of the country of wealth ate the food from the kitchen (the Temple), “they began to throw their money away, for they realized that it was the source of the stench. It stank like excrement. They were deeply ashamed, and each dug a pit and buried himself in it.” This depiction of money as having the stench of excrement is extremely satirical and biting. In *Likkutei Eytzot* (1996:130), Rabbi Nachman explains “when a person does not sanctify himself nor his life, but instead pursues the lust for money and wastes his life in accumulating more and more money so that he may leave a larger inheritance to his children when he dies — all the money that such a person has accumulated literally stinks. Such a person is like someone who smears himself with

excrement over and over again.” However, Rabbi Nachman was realistic enough to be aware that earning money is a necessity. In *Likkutei Moharan* 68, Rabbi Nachman acknowledges the fact that “all people need money, and all people have a desire to acquire money;” nonetheless, he goes on to say, although money is a necessary part of life and we all must work in order to provide a livelihood for ourselves and our families, still we must do everything possible to make sure that it doesn’t become an obsession and we must never develop a lust for money. Rabbi Nachman does not say that money is necessarily evil, but rather he stresses his conviction that a person must try to avoid falling into the trap of having the pursuit of money become the main driving force in his or her life. If that happens, then money is a false god, and the lust for money is a vicious and enslaving form of idolatry — which literally stinks. “Any person who is submerged in the lust for money is an idol-worshipper” (*Likkutei Moharan* 23), Rabbi Nachman warns. In yet another passage (*Likkutei Eytzot* 1996:144), Rabbi Nachman tells his disciples: “The lust for money is real idol-worship. But when this lust is annulled, grace and loving-kindness () descend into the world, and the Messiah can be revealed, and knowledge () can be disclosed, which is the deeper meaning of the building of the Temple.”

After the people of the country of wealth throw away their gold, silver and money (as a result of having eaten the food from the kitchen), they dig holes and bury themselves in the ground due to their great shame and self-mortification. This is alluded to in the key chapter of Isaiah 31: “For on that day each person shall be disgusted by his idols of money [or silver –] and his idols of gold, which your own hands have made for you as a sin” (Isaiah 31:7). Other Biblical verses which may have inspired this passage and which express a similar idea are Isaiah 30:22 (“And you shall make impure your idols overlaid with silver [or money] and your molten images plated with gold; you shall throw them away as something unclean; ‘go away’ you shall tell it”); Isaiah 2:18-21 (“For the idols shall utterly pass away. And people will crawl into the crevices of the rocks and the holes in the ground due to the fear of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty when He arises to rule the earth. On that day each person will cast away his idols of money [or silver] and his idols of gold, which they have made for themselves to worship ... to go into the clefts of the rocks and into the crevices of the crags, due to the fear of the Lord and the splendor of His majesty when He arises to rule the earth”); and Ezekiel 7:18-19 (“They will gird themselves with

sack-cloth and horror will cover them; shame will be upon their faces and baldness upon their heads. They shall cast their silver in the streets and their gold will be like an unclean thing”).

It is important to note how vividly Rabbi Nachman stresses the great shame that overwhelmed the people of the country of wealth. In *Likkutei Moharan* 10, Rabbi Nachman writes that “the greatest suffering in purgatory () is shame.... Shame is what a sinner feels when he becomes aware of God’s presence.” According to a younger contemporary of Rabbi Nachman’s, Rabbi Hayim of Volozhin (*Nishmat Hayim* 1:13), “the fire of purgatory is actually the burning shame one feels because of one’s sins.” Rabbi Nachman (and his leading disciple Rabbi Nathan as well) seems to have been acutely aware of the overwhelming pain of shame that is experienced by a person who realizes that he has wasted his life in pursuit of false goals (like the lust for money in our story). In *Likkutei Tefillot* 22, we find this prayer: “Master of the universe, the King of glory, have mercy and pity upon me. For my shame is so great that it is impossible for me to express it; You alone know how I feel. Where can I hide my shame? How will I be able to cover my face and my embarrassment in the world of truth? How will I be able to stand before You? Where can I find a place to hide from my shame? For You have bestowed such goodness and kindness upon me every day and every hour and every minute of my life, both physically and spiritually, and You have called upon me to come closer to You. But instead, I have rebelled against You, I have acted haughtily against Your will by sinning and transgressing many days and many years.... O Master of the universe, You alone know how great is the pain of my shame.”

The warrior raises the leaders of the country of wealth out of their pits and holes in which they had hid due to their sense of shame. He also gives them a large amount of food from the kitchen to bring back to the country of wealth so that all the inhabitants there may be cured and redeemed. Earlier in this chapter I wrote that the warrior had set out to conquer nation after nation in order to restore the belief in the one true God throughout the world, and that a major obstacle to this was found in the country of wealth, which refused to give up its belief in the idolatry of gold. It is only now, at the very end of Act V, that the warrior succeeds (with the active assistance of the master of prayer, the king, and the reunited Holy Gathering in general). The warrior is in fact one of the most active members

of the Holy Gathering. In many ways, the Lost Princess' husband, the warrior, is a literary "reincarnation" of the merchant's son from the story of "The Merchant and the Pauper," and his activism seems to be a *tikkun* for the passivity displayed by the merchant's son in that story.

In the last scene in the story, the master of prayer is sent to the rest of the people of the country of wealth in order to purify them and to teach them how "to correct their ways." Once that happens, the king is able to rule the whole world and all men return to God.

Before ending this chapter, I think it would be worthwhile to compare "The Master of Prayer," which is one of Rabbi Nachman's masterpieces, with the play "King Lear," which is one of Shakespeare's masterpieces. In both works, a pivotal role is played by the king's daughter (the Lost Princess and Cordelia, respectively), even though she is not the central figure in either work and does not occupy center stage most of the time. Despite this fact, she is central to both the plot and the main themes of each work. In my opinion, what one of the twentieth century's greatest Shakespeare scholars wrote about Cordelia is equally valid and pertinent in regard to the Lost Princess in "The Master of Prayer:" "We must say a word about Cordelia. The extraordinary vividness of her portrayal, considering the brevity of her role, has often been commented upon. The beauty of her nature ... goes far toward explaining the clarity of impression. But it is the fact that never for an instance do we forget her that compensates for the infrequency of her physical presence.... The best verbal embodiment I can think of for what Shakespeare's magic gradually turns Cordelia into in our imagination is that starry phrase of Emily Dickinson's: Bright Absentee."

Another point of comparison can be found in the fact that in both works, the king's daughter is both passive and active. In "King Lear," Cordelia is passive in the beginning (when she is banished and exiled by her father), active later on (when she returns to England from France in order to try and restore her father to his throne), and then passive again at the very end (when she is captured, imprisoned and finally murdered). In the "Master of Prayer," the Lost Princess too is both passive and active. She is active in the critical episode when after the storm-wind abducts her child, she runs out of the palace and voluntarily accepts exile upon herself in a desperate attempt to retrieve her little boy. However, she is also passive because in the end, she is found by the six royal counselors,

and she is not the “finder.” In this respect, by the way, we can say that she is a fusion of the portrayals of the Lost Princess that appeared in Rabbi Nachman’s two earlier stories. In “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” the Lost Princess was extremely passive; in contrast, in the latter part of “The Merchant and the Pauper,” she was extremely active in the search for her betrothed bridegroom, and it was she who discovered the lost map and letter.

In both “King Lear” and “The Master of Prayer,” a central symbol is the storm-wind (see Act III, Scene II in “King Lear”), which is also an important catalyst in the plot of both dramas. Furthermore, there is a structural similarity; both works contain a main plot and a parallel subplot which begin as separate narratives, but by the middle of each drama (Act III) they have become intertwined. In “King Lear,” the main plot revolves around King Lear and his three daughters; the subplot focuses on the Duke of Gloucester and his two sons. In “The Master of Prayer,” one plot deals with the country of wealth, whereas the other narrative focuses on the saga of the ten members of the Holy Gathering (the Lost Princess’s family and the six royal counselors). Most important of all, the basic theme of both dramas is the quest for redemption. In “King Lear,” a foolish and vain king loses his throne but redeems his soul as he gains wisdom, insight, compassion and humility; in “The Master of Prayer,” the ten dispersed members of the Holy Gathering are reunited and the country of wealth, as well as all the other nine sects of humanity, return to God.

However, it should be stressed that the differences between these two works are even greater, for “King Lear” ends in tragedy. King Lear’s angelic daughter, his “lost princess” Cordelia, is assassinated and King Lear too dies from despair. In contrast, “The Master of Prayer” culminates in a very “happy ending” as I wrote in the previous paragraph: the reunion of the Holy Gathering (Act IV), and the redemption of mankind (Act V). The reason for this, in my opinion, lies in the great importance that Rabbi Nachman attributes to the king’s ‘hand.’ As we have seen, it is the Torah, which is the blueprint of the world and the revealed ‘hand’ of God, as it were, which makes possible the redemption of the world and the salvation of humanity. In contrast, in Shakespeare’s plays there is no concept of Torah, and his characters in “King Lear” can therefore rely only on human reason, human emotions, and human aspirations to guide them — and all these are apparently not enough to avoid tragedy.

Because this story focuses on the redemption of the country of wealth, I think it fitting to end this chapter by quoting a passage from the Braslav prayer-book, *Likkutei Tefillot* 23: “God, through Your great mercy and compassion, help us overcome the lust for money, help us to have no passion nor desire for wealth. Help us so that all the riches in the world will not tempt us to depart from truth and faith... Have pity upon me and my children and all Your people, the house of Israel, and save us from this evil lust for money which has so overwhelmed the world in these last generations. Fill us with wisdom, understanding and knowledge (), so that we should not waste our lives in the pursuit of money. Do this for the sake of the *Shechinah* who wanders in this exile among the nations, and who cries out in agony over those who have fallen into the idolatry of worshipping money, which is the worst of all idolatries.”

The last story that Rabbi Nachman told, and the final one to be analyzed in this thesis, is “The Seven Beggars.” An English translation appears in Appendix Four on pages 333-340. I wish to point out that I have deleted extracts from the third section of “The Seven Beggars,” in the narratives of those beggars that do not deal with quest for the Lost Princess, in order to concentrate on those that do.

CHAPTER SIX:
“The Seven Beggars”

Rabbi Nachman’s final story, “The Seven Beggars,” was related in installments over a two-week period in March and April 1810, half a year before his death. Only slightly shorter than “The Master of Prayer,” “The Seven Beggars” is one of Rabbi Nachman’s most evocative stories and is “a masterpiece from the point of view of both content and literary style.... The story is extremely rich in imagery and combines in an artistic unity Biblical, Talmudic and Kabbalistic sources” (Steinsaltz 1979:171-172). Band (1978:321) believes that “The Seven Beggars’ is both the most quoted and least understood of his [Rabbi Nachman’s] narratives. The story is so complex, so richly allusive, so enigmatic that no commentator, either traditional or modern, had dared to claim mastery of it.” Indeed, Rabbi Nachman himself was aware of the power of this story. Rabbi Nathan quotes him as saying, “If I came into the world only to narrate this one tale, I would still be considered extraordinary” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Prayer 5:1).

While this story does indeed have many layers of meaning, I believe that the theme of the quest for the Lost Princess — the theme that we have encountered as playing a critical role in the three fables analyzed in Chapters Three, Four and Five of this thesis — is central to a deeper understanding of Rabbi Nachman’s last story as well.

This story can be divided into three distinct sections. The first section is an external narrative framework involving a king who abdicates his throne and whose son inherits his father's kingdom but misrules it by turning to secular wisdom and thereby abandoning religious faith. This section is actually an introduction that introduces the main dilemma that the rest of the story will grapple with, in my opinion. The second section of the story (which is longer than the first) is an inner narrative framework which relates a tale about two children (a very young boy and a girl) who become lost in a forest and are met there by seven crippled or deformed beggars, who provide food for the children for seven days (a different beggar each day). The children eventually leave the forest and become beggars themselves. When the children grow up and come of age, they marry (the wedding itself takes place in a pit).

The third section (and by far the longest) occurs during the week long nuptial celebrations following the children's wedding. Each day one of the seven beggars mentioned above turns up to bless the young bride and groom by revealing the deeper meaning of his deformity or maim, and by wishing the couple that they should be granted the same "deformity." At this point, I wish to stress two points regarding this third section. First of all, it is incomplete: the Seventh Beggar never shows up, or to put it more accurately, Rabbi Nachman never told anyone the Seventh Beggar's tale. (Indeed, after the Sixth Beggar's tale, the story simply ends and we never return to the king and his son from Section One).

Secondly, and perhaps even more significantly, the Sixth Beggar's tale focuses on the quest to save a Lost Princess. We must remember that the Sixth Beggar's tale is the very last story that Rabbi Nachman ever told, and it is astonishing that at the end of his literary career, Rabbi Nachman once more returns to the central motif of his first story, "The Losing of the King's Daughter," as well as a basic theme in two other of his most important stories, "The Merchant and the Pauper," and "The Master of Prayer." This demands of us to try and unravel the deeper layers of meaning in this story in order to comprehend the overall significance of the quest for the Lost Princess in Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times" as a whole.

Section One: The External Narrative Framework

Rabbi Nachman was of course not the first writer in world literature to use the literary device of a narrative framework as the means by which he could bring unity to a string of seemingly different and independent stories. We can find such devices in many diverse and divergent literary traditions, such as “One Thousand And One Arabian Nights” or Boccaccio’s “Decameron,” to bring examples from medieval Islamic and medieval European (Italian) literatures, respectively. “Collections of stories linked by such a device [a narrative framework] were common in the later Middle Ages” (Abrams et al 1968:105). However, in nearly all cases, it is not at all important which character relates which story, nor is there any significance between the plot of a particular story and the personality of the character who is relating it. If we take, for example, the hundred stories of the “Decameron,” Boccaccio (the first great Italian writer) created ten different characters, and each character narrates ten different stories. However, there is no intrinsic relationship between the first character and the first ten stories; Boccaccio could have easily had him relate the ten stories of the second (or the last) character. Nor is there any importance to the order of the stories; the last three could just as well be the first three.

In contrast, “The Seven Beggars” is constructed with great precision. In my opinion, the first section (the external narrative framework) is crucial to an understanding of the rest of the story and serves as a prologue to the main themes of the story as a whole; it is therefore incumbent upon the commentator to try to understand and explain how each beggar’s individual story (in Section Three) relates to and elucidates Section One, and vice versa. Secondly, each of the beggar’s stories is based on the same literary format (which only stresses the unique approach of each beggar concerning the fundamental dilemma presented in Section One). As Steinsaltz (1979:172) points out, “the beggars’ tales are all cast in the same literary form, with each beggar relating how he won a competition.” Furthermore, there is a deep and significant relationship between each beggar and the content of his story, as well as the specific order of the beggars. As I will show, the Sixth Beggar is the culmination of all the beggars before him, and it is his story of the Lost Princess which grapples most profoundly with the dilemmas presented in the opening unit of the king who abdicates his throne and his son (Section One).

In this respect, the only narrative framework which approaches a similar level of literary sophistication and intricacy as that achieved in “The Seven Beggars” is “The Canterbury Tales” by Geoffrey Chaucer, one of the earliest and greatest masterpieces of English literature. Chaucer constructed his book using the framework of a diverse gallery of characters who have assembled together in order to set off on a pilgrimage to the shrine of a famous English saint, Thomas a Becket, an archbishop of Canterbury who was murdered in his cathedral in 1170. This narrative framework of a pilgrimage to Canterbury “in which men and women [who] are drawn from all classes of life lighten their journey by telling tales in keeping with their various characters and callings, is much more than a mechanic peg on which to hang a miscellany of stories: it is a dramatic concept, a dynamic device by which the different tales are made to set off one another and throw light on the characters of the tellers” (Wright 1974:9). Rabbi Nachman, however, goes one step further than Chaucer, in my opinion; whereas Chaucer’s aim was to create a panorama of characters that would constitute a mirror reflecting the life of fourteenth century England, Rabbi Nachman’s goal was far more ambitious, namely to present and clarify the truths of the Kabbalah (as he understood them) through the means of his creative imagination, i.e., his stories. And the quest for the Lost Princess, as presented and summarized in the Sixth Beggar’s tale, is at the very heart of this.

The first section of “The Seven Beggars” begins with a plot that Rabbi Nachman has already presented earlier in “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times,” namely, a wise king wishes to abdicate his throne in order to hand over his kingdom to his only son. This closely resembles the situation described in the latter part of Story Number Eleven, “The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged.” In that story, after the true prince leaves the forest, he is told that he must go to “the foolish country with the wise king.” Upon reaching this kingdom, the true prince discovers that this “foolish country” had indeed formerly been ruled by a very wise king, but after he died, he had been replaced by his son who is not wise and is not worthy of ruling; the name of the country was subsequently changed to “the wise country with the foolish king.”

Although the situation depicted in Story Number Eleven resembles the first section of our present story, it is not identical, because in our story the king is of course very much

alive, and intends to keep his son and the way his son rules the kingdom under surveillance. All commentators, both traditional and academic, agree that “as in most of the other tales, the old king clearly represents God” (Steinsaltz 1979:172). In “The Seven Beggars,” the old king’s abdication seems to symbolize the fact that although God created the world, He has handed over the dominion of the world to humanity, His “son,” as it were. On the other hand, there is not even a hint that the old king intends to leave the kingdom, and this seems to point to the basic paradox that although God exists, His presence and His providence are hidden. Rabbi Nachman seems to be alluding to the fact that God cannot be seen nor perceived by any of the other senses, and that the only way He can be “felt” is through faith. The quest for faith has been intricately and intimately intertwined with the quest for redemption and the quest for the Lost Princess, as we have seen in the stories analyzed in this dissertation: “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” “The Merchant and the Pauper,” and “The Master of Prayer.” It will also appear prominently in the Sixth Beggar’s tale in Section Three of this story.

In the Biblical description of the creation of mankind, God commands humanity to rule the world: “And God said: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.’ And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them: ‘Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that creeps upon the face of the earth’” (Genesis 1:26-28). At the beginning of Section One of “The Seven Beggars,” the great feast and the great rejoicing at the coronation of the king’s son denotes how the entire world rejoiced at the fact that God created Man on the sixth day of creation, and had handed dominion of the world over to humanity; the whole Creation together with God felt that this was very good (“And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” [Genesis 1:31]). I believe that it is important to emphasize the fact that the opening scene of the story represents the sixth day of Creation because we will see significant parallels when we come to Section Three of

this story, when we analyze the tale of the Sixth Beggar, which is narrated on the sixth day of the week long wedding celebration.

However, there is an alternative interpretation pertaining to what the king's son coronation represents. Rather than symbolizing humanity as a whole, it is possible to interpret the king's son as symbolizing the people of Israel, as it is written: "My son, my first-born, is Israel" (Exodus 4:22). According to this approach, the great festivity that is portrayed at the very beginning of the story of "The Seven Beggars" would therefore represent the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Furthermore, we should remember that the Hebrew date for the giving of the Torah is the sixth day of the Hebrew month Sivan, and so once again there is a possible allusion or possible parallel to the Sixth Beggar and the tale he will relate on the sixth day of the wedding celebration in Section Three.

Indeed, there are a number of Talmudic passages and *midrashim* in which God is called a king and the people of Israel are called the king's son. For example, in *Baba Metziyah* 113b, we find that "Rabbi Shimon Ben-Gamliel and Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiva were all of the opinion that all of Israel are called the sons of kings." In *Baba Batra* 10a, Rabbi Akiva relates the following parable: "What may this [God's relationship to Israel] be compared to? To a king who was angry with his son and had him imprisoned; the king ordered that his son should not be fed nor given anything to drink. Someone went and brought food and drink to the king's son in prison. When the king heard this, would he not wish to give a present to this man? And we [the Jewish people] are called 'sons,' as it is written [Deuteronomy 14:1]: 'You are sons to the Lord your God.'"

To summarize, there are two opposing but valid interpretations regarding the meaning of the festive coronation of the king's son in the opening scene of Section One of our story: 1) the king's son represents humanity as a whole, versus 2) the king's son represents the Jewish people. I agree with the majority of commentators who choose the first option. In my opinion, this first option finds support when we contrast the lavishness and splendor of the king's son's coronation with the poverty of the two children's wedding ceremony in a pit covered with straw, dirt, leaves and refuse that is described in Section Two. I will later demonstrate that the two children lost in the forest represent the Jewish

people as a whole. Accordingly, the story of “The Seven Beggars” seems to be told in chronological order: Section One commemorates the creation of humanity as a whole; Section Two alludes to the birth of Israel and the inauguration of their historical mission, as well as their wanderings in exile; Section Three in turn narrates in literary and poetic language the culmination of the long historical saga of the Jewish and their spiritual leaders. Section Three reaches its zenith in the story of the last two beggars: (a) the Sixth Beggar, whose mission is to prepare the way for the final redemption, and (b) the Seventh Beggar, who represents the Messiah and the final redemption itself (which is the precise reason why his tale cannot yet be revealed).

Returning to Section One of our story, Rabbi Nachman writes that “at the height of the festivities, the king said to his son, ‘I am an astrologist, and I can foresee that a time will come when you will step down from the throne.’” This sentence seems to be a creative paraphrase of the profound proverb in the tractate of the Mishnah, *Ethics of the Fathers* 3:19: “Everything is foreseen yet freedom of choice is given,” which deals with the paradox of divine omniscience that would logically appear to contradict man’s free-will. As Goldin (1962:50) explains, “God foresees everything that is to happen in the future, yet such knowledge does not deprive man of his free will to choose either the right or the wrong path in life.” Once again, this passage seems to support the interpretation that the king’s son represents mankind as a whole, and not just the Jewish people.

In his description of the lavish festivities attending the coronation of the king’s son, Rabbi Nachman emphasizes the great rejoicing that occurred at this unique occasion. This is highly significant because one of the most central themes of this story as a whole is the importance of joy, and its major role in the quest for faith. Indeed, before Rabbi Nachman related this story, he prefaced it with the words “I will tell you how people once rejoiced.” Rabbi Nathan (*Sichot HaRan* 149) writes that one Friday night “Rabbi Nachman recalled a letter that I had sent to a friend of mine, and which he [Rabbi Nachman] had seen. In the letter I had written that he should be happy. Rabbi Nachman spoke about happiness, and then said, ‘I will tell you how people once rejoiced.’ And then he began to tell the story [of ‘The Seven Beggars’].”

The king stresses the importance of joy to his son, and exhorts him, "... take care not to be sad. Be joyful. When you are joyful, I too shall be happy." Steinsaltz (1979:173) believes that according to Braslav Hasidism, "sadness was regarded as a kind of self-indulgence that drains man of his spiritual resources. A person who is sad about having sinned, for example, loses the capacity for change and is likely to be caught in vicious circles from which there is no exit: sin creates feelings of guilt, which generate sadness and dejection, which lead to despair and to surrender to the urge to sin again. The Hasidic prescription, which the king gives his son, is to strive for a good disposition, to will oneself to be happy even in bad times." Indeed, Rabbi Nachman writes specifically in *Likkutei Moharan* 24 that "it is a great *mitzvah* to always be in joy, and one must do everything in one's powers in order to overcome sadness and depression, and must constantly rejoice." On another occasion, Rabbi Nachman said, "The most difficult and strenuous kind of divine service is to be in joy. Therefore a person has to force himself with all his strength and through all kinds of advice to be happy" (*Sichot HaRan* 20). According to Rabbi Nachman, joy is linked to faith in God, whereas sadness and depression are symptoms of a deep spiritual malaise, and can easily lead a person to distance himself from God and from belief in God. We thus see that when the king's son becomes an atheist, he is haunted by sorrow. We find a passage that elucidates this point explicitly in *Likkutei Moharan* 155: "Sadness, depression and apathy all stem from the lack of faith. This can be compared to the act of putting a grain of wheat in good, fertile soil, which enables the grain to grow well.... This is due to the fact that the soil contains the nutrients which enable plants to grow well, and the grain of wheat will not be damaged by anything. In contrast, when a grain of wheat is placed in poor, infertile soil, it rots in the earth because the soil does not contain the nutrients and minerals necessary for the plant's growth. Similarly, faith is the good, fertile soil that allows a person to grow [spiritually].... Therefore, if a person has faith [in God], he will grow and nothing can harm him. He will fear no one, but will be able to pray with fervor ... But the person who lacks faith is like the seed that rots in the poor soil, and he is therefore sad, melancholy and depressed." According to this parable, faith is compared to fertile soil; a person who is "planted" in the rich soil of faith will grow spiritually and also merit happiness; in contrast, a person who is placed in the infertile and depleted soil of

atheism will rot and become depressed and sad (as indeed happens to the new king in Section One of “The Seven Beggars”).

The king’s son’s insatiable thirst for knowledge and wisdom leads to his downfall, and seems to be a poetic rendition on the part of Rabbi Nachman of the story of Adam eating from the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden. In *Likkutei Eytzot* 1996:115, Rabbi Nachman terms the pursuit of secular wisdom and science for their own sake (and that is not accompanied by faith in God) “the temptation of the Serpent in the Garden of Eden,” and it is precisely this temptation that the king’s son succumbed to in Section One of the “Seven Beggars.” Rabbi Nachman expands upon this theme in *Likkutei Moharan* II:4, where he writes that science and secular wisdom stem from “the [brazen] forehead of the Serpent of the Garden of Eden. Everything has a source, and the source of science is the Serpent’s forehead.... The heretics and atheists want to show that everything is caused only by nature, which is the forehead of the Serpent.... Scientists and researchers come to believe that everything is controlled by nature, as if there were no will of God.”

Steinsaltz (1973:173), too, notes that “the sin that eventually seduces the king’s son is the pursuit of wisdom as an end in itself, just as the sin of Adam was to eat the [forbidden] fruit of the Tree of Knowledge.” Kaplan (1983:356) also believes that this passage describing the king’s son’s intoxication with wisdom is an allusion to the Biblical story of the fall of man in Eden, and how “Adam loved wisdom and hence ate from the Tree of Knowledge. As a result, he forgot the art of war — against evil.”

As I have discussed at length, Rabbi Nachman was opposed to the pursuit of secular wisdom, science and rationalism, which he believed inevitably leads to heresy and atheism. He saw how the Enlightenment had undermined traditional religion and belief among the Jews of Western Europe, and was convinced that the advance of science and rationalism would cause both Jew and Gentile to lose their faith in God. Shulman (1993:239-241) emphasizes that “Rabbi Nachman lived in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, when science was being used as a tool in a *Kulturkampf* against traditional values and beliefs. For a Jew to learn science was to make a major break with his upbringing, ambience and culture. It was an act of rebellion. This was especially true of Rabbi Nachman’s specific milieu in the Ukraine.... Rabbi Nachman was relating to a

science that had left the moorings of belief in God and had undertaken an actively anti-Providence position. Everything was to be attributed to natural law, and ‘God was a postulate that was not needed’.... Rabbi Nachman states that no one has ever come to serve God through books of science, and any position that would tend to make a person rely on immutable laws of nature, rather than seeing nature as a malleable tool of God, has its roots in the ‘forehead of the Serpent.’ The snake [in the Garden of Eden] is the entity that enticed mankind with the belief that by partaking of something in this world, they too could attain a godly status.”

Historians of the nineteenth century have indeed documented the fact that the progress of science at the very end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century created a major crisis in the religious life of Western civilization. “The march of science in the nineteenth century profoundly affected religious thought. Geology established the antiquity of the earth, thus discrediting the chronology of Genesis. Evolution, as set forth in Darwin’s *The Origin of Species* in 1859, saw man as the result of a slow development from simpler forms of animal life, thus challenging the Christian [and Jewish] belief in his special creation. Astronomical science seemed to point to an infinite universe, in the face of which man appeared insignificant.... Modern science seemed to leave no room for the soul, or God, or the transcendental perception of truth” (Blair et al 1966:17). This struggle between scientific rationalism and religious faith would become an important theme in the literature and thought of the nineteenth century, and Rabbi Nachman was one of the earliest writers and thinkers to focus on this struggle. In my opinion, we find that in the episode of the king’s son whose quest for knowledge leads him to atheism, Rabbi Nachman is creating a very deep allegory that relates to and weaves together two different references: on the one hand, Rabbi Nachman is alluding to the story of Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve surrender to the subtle temptation of the Serpent and eat the fruit of forbidden knowledge; on the other hand, Rabbi Nachman is also relating to the pursuit of science and rationalism in contemporary Western civilization.

It is very ironic that according to the story, “only the sages and the [new] king became heretics,” whereas “the simple people in the country were not harmed by the wisdom of the great sages and did not become heretics.” Once again Rabbi Nachman is

expressing his deeply felt conviction that simple faith and trust in God is far superior to wisdom and cleverness (which is the main theme of Story Number Nine, “The Clever Man and the Simple Man”). Rabbi Nachman had warned his disciples “that before the Messiah comes, there will be another flood — a flood of atheism. It will be a flood of destructive waters that will cover the highest mountains, and will even inundate the Land of Israel. The destructive waters will even spray into kosher hearts, and wisdom will be unable to hold it back.... Only the simple Jews who recite Psalms and serve God in simplicity will remain firm and will be able to stem the tide. Therefore, when the Messiah comes, it will be the simple people who will put the crown upon his head” (Horowitz 1936:23).

This same idea is expressed in one of Rabbi Nachman’s shorter parables: “A young king went out to hunt animals, dressed like a simple commoner so that he would be able to hunt more easily. Suddenly a terrible rainstorm broke out and he was drenched. All the king’s ministers fled and the king was left by himself and was in grave danger. The king came across a peasant’s house, where he was taken in. The peasant gave the king dry clothes to wear and heated the oven for him; after cooking groats for the king, the peasant then gave the king a cot to sleep on. The king, who was extremely exhausted, felt that he had never experienced anything as warm and pleasant as the peasant’s care for him.

The king’s ministers began searching for the king. After finding him asleep in the peasant’s hovel, they wanted to accompany him back to the palace. The king then told them, ‘You all ran away when the storm broke out and didn’t try to save me. Yet this man saved me, and the time I spent here with him was a wonderful experience. Therefore, it will be he who escorts me back to my palace as I ride in his wagon and wear his clothes, and it will be he who restores me to my throne’ (Odesser 2002:25-26). Again we see that it is the simple folk (represented in the parable by the peasant) who do not desert the king and faith in God when the rainstorm breaks out and the rainwaters of atheism and disbelief flood the world.

Section One of “The Seven Beggars” ends with the young king, immersed in his atheism and melancholy, tormenting himself with self-doubts: ‘What have I come to? What am I doing? ... How could I have strayed into such things? What is happening to me?’

What will become of me?" In my opinion, it seems that this passage revealing the self-questioning gnawing away inside the king's son's heart is Rabbi Nachman's interpretation and adaptation of the verse in Genesis 3:9, where God turns to Adam (who is hiding from God in the Garden of Eden) and asks him: "Where are you?" According to Rabbi Nachman, the question that God asks every sinner is no longer external but has become internalized; that is to say, the king's son (representing humanity that has sinned and distanced itself from joy and faith in God) does not hear a Voice from outside asking, "Where are you?" but rather hears a still small voice form within his own conscience asking, "Where am I in the world?"

We have encountered parallel situations in earlier stories. For example, in Story Number Eleven ("The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged"), at an early point in the story, the king's true son "took to drinking and frequenting brothels, desiring nothing more than to spend his time gratifying his desires" (*Sippurei Ma'asiot* 1996:120). However, somewhat further in the story, the king's true son begins to bombard himself with questions like: "Does it make any sense for me to behave as I do? Is it right to do as I have done?" In both stories, the king's son has begun a long and soul-searching process of repentance (), which starts with thoughts of introspection, self-doubts and self-questioning. Yet there is a crucial difference between the two stories. In Story Number Eleven, Rabbi Nachman devotes many pages in describing (in great detail) the spiritual struggle, spiritual growth and inner *tikkun* the king's true son undergoes. In contrast, in the story of "The Seven Beggars," Section One seemingly breaks off abruptly and the king's son disappears from the story, or at the very least we can say that Rabbi Nachman does not return to him explicitly. Indeed, the whole allegory of "The Seven Beggars" simply § cut off after the Sixth Beggar's tale in Section Three, and we never find out what happened to the king's son of Section One, and how (or even if) he returns to faith in God.

Nonetheless, I strongly feel that Sections Two and Three of "The Seven Beggars" are precisely aimed at showing how the king's son (= humanity) will be able to recover. We can see this by analyzing what I believe to be a very important clue that Rabbi Nachman has left us, and which points out the way how the king's son can (and will) overcome his spiritual

malaise of heresy, depression and atheism in order to return to what Rabbi Nachman would consider to be spiritual well-being: belief in God and joy. This important clue can be found in a short parable that Rabbi Nachman told his disciples and which may at first glance appear to be unrelated to “The Seven Beggars.”

In *Hayei Moharan* 391, Rabbi Nathan writes that Rabbi Nachman narrated the following parable: “Once there was a king whose only son was fatally ill. All the doctors felt that his case was hopeless and gave up trying to heal him. However, there was one great, wise doctor whom the king turned to, begging him to try and save his son. The wise doctor answered, ‘To tell you the truth, it may be possible to save your son, but it will be extremely difficult. There is one kind of treatment which we can try and which might work, but I don’t know if I should even tell it to you, since it is so difficult.’ Nonetheless, the king begged the wise doctor to reveal this treatment to him. The wise doctor then answered, ‘Know that your son is so seriously ill that it is impossible to put even one drop of medicine into his mouth. Now there are some medicines that are so expensive that even one tiny vial costs thousands, and we must fill barrels and barrels with these precious medicines. Afterwards, we must take pails and fill them up from the barrels of medicine and then pour these pails of precious medicines over your son. It is completely obvious that all these expensive and potent medicines will go to waste, yet it is possible that this treatment might strengthen his body. And perhaps, from all the medicine that is being poured over him, maybe one drop of medicine might somehow trickle into his mouth and cure him.’ The king immediately agreed to all this. He commanded that the doctor’s instructions be carried out, and the king’s son was cured.”

Rabbi Nathan then proceeds to explain the parable: “This parable clarifies for us why Rabbi Nachman created so many wondrous and awesome stories and teachings, even though it would seem that they were not effective.... Because our generation suffers from so many spiritual ailments, the *tzaddik*, who is likened to a great and wise doctor, has no choice but to spill and pour over us the most powerful and potent [spiritual] medicines, his stories and teachings. Even though it might seem that almost all of it is going to waste, God forbid, still a fragrance of it is retained, and as time goes by, we may be worthy of absorbing

a precious drop within our inner selves. We may therefore hope to merit a full recovery in our spiritual plight. Amen — may it only be so.”

This parable deals with a king’s beloved son who is extremely ill. I believe that this fatally ill prince in the parable is none other than the king’s son in Section One of “The Seven Beggars,” who is afflicted with the deathly ailments of atheism and depression. How can he be cured? The parable both asks and answers: by means of the precious medicine of the *tzaddik’s* teachings and the *tzaddik’s* stories — which is exactly what happens in Section Three of “The Seven Beggars,” where each beggar (= *tzaddik*) narrates a tale and presents it as a gift to the bride and groom who are introduced in Section Two. And this is exactly Rabbi Nachman’s mission, according to Braslav Hasidism: the tales that appear in “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” were composed by Rabbi Nachman in order to provide the antidote to the rationalism and the abandonment of religion that had become prevalent among the Jewish people (and the Gentile population of Europe as well) ever since the spread of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. Furthermore, this mission is intimately linked to the quest for the Lost Princess as told by the Sixth Beggar in Section Three of this story, as I will demonstrate later on in this chapter.

However, before we turn to Section Two (which constitutes the link between the plight of the king’s son in Section One, and the healing process which will be revealed in Section Three), I want to make one more point. In the story of “The Master of Prayer,” we encountered ten different sects of humanity, with each sect focusing on one central value. That story concentrated on the sect of money, namely the country of wealth which was obsessed with the pursuit of money. One sect that was mentioned but which was barely touched upon was the sect of (secular) wisdom. They had originally enthroned a wise man as their king, but he was later replaced by the king’s sage (symbolizing Moses).

In my opinion, the sect of secular wisdom hastily sketched in “The Master of Prayer” is none other but an earlier manifestation of the country ruled by the king’s son in Section One of “The Seven Beggars.” The reason why Rabbi Nachman did not devote much attention to it in “The Master of Prayer” was that in Story Number Twelve he had wanted to concentrate on the tragedy and the *tikkun* of the country of wealth, and that he was saving (perhaps subconsciously in the recesses of his creative imagination) the chronicle

of the sect of wisdom, as it were, for more extensive coverage in Story Number Thirteen (“The Seven Beggars”).

Section Two: The Internal Narrative Framework

Section Two opens with the sentence that “one day the entire population of the country took flight.” Although Rabbi Nachman does not specify what was the exact nature of the calamity that precipitated this mass exodus, traditional Braslav commentators as well as modern scholars believe that the country from which the entire population fled is of course the country ruled (actually misruled) by the king’s son, and it is the king’s son’s atheism which is the ultimate cause of the calamity. For example, Band (1978:322) writes that “the [old] king’s transfer of his power to his foolish son obviously precipitated the mass flight which left the children alone in the forest.”

I believe that Rabbi Nachman is also commenting on and criticizing the excessive emphasis on the intellect that characterized not only the *Maskilim* (the Jews who followed the Enlightenment), but also the *Mitnagdim* (the Orthodox Jews of traditional Rabbinic Judaism who were opposed to the Hasidim). In Section One of “The Seven Beggars,” Rabbi Nachman had stressed the fact that the great sages at the court of the young king (as well as all the inhabitants of his country) had devoted so much of their time and energy in the pursuit of intellectual learning and wisdom “that they eventually forgot the tactics of war.” Rabbi Nachman is already hinting early on in the story at one of the most important insights that will appear in Section Three: the process of healing and *tikkun* is not to be found in the rational aspects of existence, but rather in the non-rational and meta-rational facets of the human psyche and the universe as a whole.

It seems to me that Rabbi Nachman appears to be saying that when mankind relies on rationality alone, catastrophe inevitably results. As I have shown, the pursuit of wisdom at the expense of everything else (which leads the young king to distance himself from God and descend into atheism) is a poetic allusion by Rabbi Nachman to Adam’s and Eve’s sin of eating forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge in the first weekly portion of the Torah (); according to Rabbi Nachman, no human society can survive unless it is based on faith in God and obedience to God’s will. This is paralleled in the Bible itself, for

we find that after humanity sins intellectually in *Parashat Noach*, ten generations pass but in the end catastrophe strikes, and strikes savagely, in the second weekly portion of the Torah (*Parashat Noach*), namely the double disasters of the Flood and the Tower of Babel. Therefore, when Kaplan (1983:358) comments on what the exodus at the beginning of Section Two symbolizes, he writes that “this mass flight may refer to the Great Flood, [or] the scattering of the people after the Tower of Babel.”

To summarize, we find a chronological progression between Section One and Section Two. Whereas Section One described in symbolic language the creation of the world, God’s granting dominion over the world to man and man’s sin in eating from the Tree of Knowledge (*Parashat Bereshit*), Section Two opens with an allusion to a great disaster which is a one sentence paraphrase of the entire *Parashat Noach*. Furthermore, it is important to remember that at the very end of *Parashat Noach*, the progenitors of the nation of Israel (Abraham and Sarah) are mentioned for the first time in the Bible (Genesis 11:26-29). I strongly believe that this is of the outmost importance because the two lost children in the forest represent the Jewish people, in my opinion. As Steinsaltz (1979:173-174) most perceptively points out, “the two children who are lost in the forest are not described as possessing individual identities of personalities, and they remain a dual entity throughout the story. They can be seen as symbolizing either the Jewish people as a whole or as its best part.... What is clear is that there has been a great catastrophe, and that the few survivors are those that can provide a fresh start for humanity. They are a new creation, a new generation that can set right what their predecessors have spoiled.” In other words, Rabbi Nachman may be here alluding to his belief (which he will expand upon in Sections Two and Three) that the *tikkun* for the king’s son’s heresy lies in the birth and development and destiny of Israel.

The children are represented as being very young, which alludes to the idea that we are being told the chronicle of the spiritual history of Israel since its inception. Thus, it is also possible to interpret the mass flight at the very beginning of Section Two as being an allusion to the Exodus from Egypt as well, and the birth of the Jewish people in the Sinai desert. If so, the forest (which is the venue of the first part of Section Two) can be understood as representing Sinai, where the Jewish people as a whole first came into contact with spiritual

revelation when the Torah was given to them. This is paralleled by the contact between the lost children and the seven beggars in the forest.

I wish to stress that the forest, which is a very important and rich symbol in this story, has in fact at least two opposing connotations. On the one hand, a forest is a place where nature in all its beauty and splendor is revealed and experienced; it is therefore the location where the Jewish people (and the individual human being as well) can discover the deepest mysteries of existence in a positive and spiritual setting. A forest is a place of great natural beauty where a person can feel not only the majesty of God's creation, but may also experience a sense of awe as that person comes to recognize (intuitively and non-rationally) that beyond and within the grandeur of creation lies the greatness of the Creator.

On the other hand, a forest is also a frightening place of shadows and darkness, inhabited by wild animals and far from human settlements and human culture; in this respect it can be a symbol of terror, fear, and inhumanity. It was precisely this negative aspect which Joseph Conrad wished to evoke when he used the Congo rain-forest as his main metaphor in The Heart of Darkness.

Rabbi Nachman uses both aspects in this story, weaving a rich fabric based on Kabbalistic imagery and symbolism. For Rabbi Nachman, the forest represents first and foremost the confusion and perplexity inside the human heart and the human psyche, as can be seen not only in this story, but also in Story Number Eleven, "The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged." In a forest there are no sidewalks, traffic-lights, or even street signs. It is extremely easy to get lost in a forest; — almost as easy as getting lost in the labyrinth of the human heart. Therefore, in order to find one's way out of the labyrinth and the maze of the human heart, one must turn inward in an attempt to make contact with the deeper recesses of one's own heart, and not to accept blindly the conventions of society.

I have already discussed in Chapter Three the great importance that Rabbi Nachman attached to the practice of *hitbodedut*. At this point, I just wish to emphasize that Rabbi Nachman (and Braslav Hasidism to this day) believed that the practice of *hitbodedut* is most effective when carried out outdoors, especially in a forest: "It is best to pray and to perform *hitbodedut* in a forest or a field, among the trees, bushes, and blades of grass. For when a person prays or talks to God there, then all the trees and bushes and blades of grass

merge into his prayer and help him, by giving him the power to meditate and pray. The practice of *hitbodedut* is the most vital of all the ways to serve God and to worship Him, and indeed includes all the other ways of service to God. Through it, one merits good both in this world and in the world to come.... There is no way to overcome one's own evil desires and lusts, and to come closer to God, other than through *hitbodedut*....” (*Likkutei Eytzot* 1996:61).

I believe that one reason these two small children — hungry, lost, penniless, orphaned from their parents — enter the forest is because they are undergoing an extreme form of *hitbodedut*. The spiritual reality they encounter is the manifestation of the seven beggars themselves. However, as I pointed out earlier, the forest is a two-edged metaphor: although on the one hand, it is a place whose natural beauty draws a person closer to God as well as to his inner self (which are the aims of *hitbodedut*), it is on the other hand an image that evokes associations of bewilderment, confusion and loss of direction. In my opinion, the primal connotation of the forest for the lost children is quite negative: it is a place of great danger and loneliness, where one can die of starvation without anyone else even being aware of the fact.

The children are faced with an immediate problem: “they had nothing to eat, and they began to cry for food.” In all of Rabbi Nachman's stories, food in general and bread in particular symbolize spiritual nourishment. For example, in Story Number Eleven, “The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged,” the true prince finds a sack of bread in the forest, and it is this sack of bread (representing spiritual enrichment) which enables him to gain dominance over his servant. In our story, the Jewish people (= the lost children) are in desperate need of spiritual sustenance which will make it possible for them to survive in the dangerous, hostile world of the forest.

Thus, weeping for food, the lost children encounter seven different beggars carrying bags of bread who each day give them enough to sustain them for that particular day. Steinsaltz (1979:174) writes that “the beggars who save the children from starvation are the seven great spiritual providers of the Jewish people, who were active in their own times and also served as paradigms of parallel leaders in later generations. They are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David (though they do not appear in this story in this order), who are collectively known in mystical sources as ‘the seven shepherds.’”

The beggars, who are the most important characters in the story, do indeed represent the diverse spiritual leadership of the Jewish people during their long historical odyssey. The general name given to these leaders is that they are the *tzaddikim*, but in different historical periods, these leaders and teachers, whose mission was to guide the nation of Israel, functioned in a variety of ways according to the times and mores and cultural environment of each historical period. Thus, during the Biblical period, the spiritual leaders were prophets, the greatest of whom being Moses. In the period following the end of prophecy at the beginning of the Second Commonwealth, the spiritual leaders were called Scribes (), beginning with Ezra; they later evolved into the ‘Early Hasidim’ () and the Pharisees of the Hellenistic and early Roman period. In the period of the Mishnah, the Sages who were the spiritual leaders of the people were called the ‘Tanaim’ (), and after them came the ‘Amoraim’ () and the ‘Geonim’ () in Babylonia. The great Rabbis of post-Talmudic Jewry like Rashi and Maimonides typify yet another kind of spiritual and Rabbinic leadership among the Jewish people in the medieval period. The great mystics and leaders of the Kabbalah like Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai or the *Ari* embody yet another albeit alternative kind of spiritual leadership, as does the Hasidic movement founded by the *Baal-Shem-Tov* and his disciples. Although we can find many differences among all these various categories of spiritual leadership, what they all have in common is not only their total commitment to belief in God and adherence to the Torah and the entire corpus of Jewish tradition, but also the fact that they succeeded to provide the spiritual sustenance appropriate to the Jewish communities of their particular time period and locality. Rabbi Nachman has chosen to characterize and categorize these different types of Jewish spiritual leadership (be they prophets or sages, mystics or halachic experts) within the traditional framework of seven different archetypes of *tzaddikim* or spiritual leaders which he calls the ‘Seven Beggars.’

Why beggars? In Yiddish, the word Rabbi Nachman uses is “*betler*,” which literally means “seeker,” and alludes to the fact that the each one of the great *tzaddikim* seeks God. In Hebrew, the word for beggar is , which comes from the root word — to gather, collect. A basic idea in the Kabbalah is that it is the task of the Jewish people as a whole and the righteous in particular to try and gather () the sparks of holiness which were scattered and diffused throughout the world at the time of ‘the breaking of the

vessels' (this concept was discussed at length on pages 42-43 in Chapter Two of this thesis). Thus, the great *tzaddikim* (symbolized in our story as the beggars) go through the world with the mission of gathering, unifying and uplifting these fallen sparks of holiness. And the beggars bless the children (the Jewish people) that they should be like the beggars, which means (at least on one level) that they too should accept upon themselves the task of collecting and raising the fallen sparks of holiness in the world.

There are additional allusions and connotations to the concept of "beggars," in my opinion. Although on the one hand a beggar may be considered to be completely dependent on the charity of strangers, he may on the other hand also be thought of as being quite independent, in fact far more independent and freer than most people. Because he does not have any obligation whatsoever to an employer or a salaried place of employment, he can start his "work" of begging any time of the day that he wishes, or anywhere that he feels like being. He is free to decide for himself where and when to go or to leave.

We can find an important link between this story and Story Number Twelve ("The Master of Prayer") when we look closely at the word — beggar. In "The Master of Prayer," Rabbi Nachman called the king's six counselors, together with the Lost Princess and her parents and son, the ten members of ("the Holy Gathering"). The key words and come from the same root , and seem to point to a strong identification between the king's six counselors in "The Master of Prayer," and the six beggars who reappear in our story in Section Three when they reveal their truer, inner identity. Furthermore, because there are quite a number of links between the two fables of "The Master of Prayer" and "The Seven Beggars," it seems to me quite logical that just as there were ten members of "the Holy Gathering" whose reunion and combined forces paved the way for the redemption of the country of wealth, so too in "The Seven Beggars," if Rabbi Nachman had continued our present story to the very end, I believe that we would have witnessed a gathering together of ten characters (the seven beggars + the two lost children + the Lost Princess herself [who is the most important figure in the story of the Sixth Beggar in Section Three, as I will later demonstrate]) whose united forces would free the king's son and the entire country of secular wisdom (of Section One) from the forces of atheism, heresy and sadness, and would cause them to return to a state of joy and faith. In fact, I believe that this story would logically end in a wedding between the king's son from

Section One and the Lost Princess who lies asleep in the castle of water in Section Three. Indeed, such a wedding would complement the lost children's wedding in Section Two, as well as parallel the wedding between the merchant's son and the pauper-emperor's daughter which terminates the story of "The Merchant and the Pauper." I will discuss all this in more detail at the end of this chapter.

I also feel that the six beggars who reappear in Section Three of our story may be a *tikkun* for the Lost Princess' six passive brothers in the story of "The Losing of the King's Daughter;" whereas none of her brothers set out to save her in Rabbi Nachman's first story, we will see that in Rabbi Nachman's final story, the Sixth Beggar at least plays a vital role in the saving of the Lost Princess.

The phenomena of the seven beggars is full of paradoxes; they appear to be penniless beggars cursed with terrible physical deformities but are actually endowed with tremendous spiritual wealth, and it is in merit of their great spiritual richness and nobility that the world endures (although the world at large is unaware of this). The fact that Rabbi Nachman portrays the seven beggars as being physically handicapped is extremely important. Actually, it is crucial to remember that the beggars are only superficially maimed; after the lost children's wedding the beggars return and reveal to the children (and to the reader) that each one of the seven beggars has tremendous power in the bodily organ that was thought to be deficient or defective. We thus learn in Section Three that the apparent physical deformity points to the exact opposite: the beggar who is blind, for example, has deeper insight into the true reality of the world and thus "sees" far better than other people; the deaf beggar in fact hears the fullness of God's praises and therefore does not waste his hearing on the futility and deficiencies of this world; the third beggar (who seems to stutter) actually recites the most beautiful and poetic passage, etc.

In fact, in nearly all of Rabbi Nachman's stories we find descriptions pointing to the discrepancy between the superficial veneer of what seems at first glance to be "real" to most people, and the inner truth of spiritual reality. In Story Number One ("The Losing of the King's Daughter"), the beautiful palace in which the king's chamberlain found the Lost Princess at the beginning of the fable was actually a prison-fortress of the evil one who had abducted the Lost Princess; in Story Number Ten ("The Merchant and the Pauper"), the Lost Princess wore a man's clothes and masqueraded as a male on the desert island, just as

earlier the evil pirate had masqueraded as a wealthy merchant and had one of his sailors don the beautiful dresses and the veils of the Lost Princess herself so that people would mistakenly believe that he was the Lost Princess; in Story Number Twelve (“The Master of Prayer”), Rabbi Nachman introduced us to the master of prayer in Act One by telling us that he was also a master of disguise who “always appeared in a different guise: at one time as a beggar, at another as a merchant, and so on and so forth.” Yet I believe that in terms of paradox, the portrayal of the seven beggars in the present story is unsurpassed, and it is impossible to find in the entire corpus of Rabbi Nachman’s literary legacy a better example of the contradiction between surface “reality” and true inner reality. As Rabbi Nachman himself said, “the light of the great *tzaddikim* is so hidden in this world that they appear to be completely crippled (-)” (*Likkutei Eytzot* 1996:228).

However, we must remember that only in Section Three of the story does Rabbi Nachman reveal to the reader this contradiction between the external manifestation of the seven beggars and their inner reality, and I will therefore discuss this in more detail when we reach Section Three. At this point, I simply wish to point out that in my opinion, the picture that Rabbi Nachman paints of the seven beggars is greatly influenced by the legend of the *lamed-vovniks*, the 36 () hidden or secret *tzaddikim* whose merit sustains the world. Although the origin of this belief is found in the Talmud (for example, in *Succah* 45b and *Sanhedrin* 97b), this idea became very widespread among the Jews of Eastern Europe; it was expanded upon and embellished until it became a cornerstone of Yiddish folklore, and was incorporated into the mainstream of Hasidic thought and literature. According to this concept, the highest level of righteousness is not attained by the famous *tzaddikim* whom the (Jewish) world at large acknowledges; rather it is attained by each one of the thirty-six hidden saints or *tzaddikim* (who was also sometimes called in Yiddish the *nistar*, from the Hebrew word – hidden). The individual *lamed-vovnick* may seem to be only a poor cobbler or a simple tailor (or a beggar without hands!) whom the world at large belittles or ignores, but who in reality performs great deeds of kindness and charity in secret, unknown to the rest of the world. It is the spiritual nobility of these 36 hidden *tzaddikim* that sustains the world and justifies its existence. It seems to me that in the portrait of the seven beggars, Rabbi Nachman was influenced (perhaps subconsciously) by the legends of the *lamed-vovniks*.

There is another very important reason why Rabbi Nachman chose the metaphor of beggars, I believe. In a very powerful *midrash* in *Sanhedrin* 98a, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi is told by Elijah the Prophet that the Messiah sits among the beggars suffering from sores. This *midrash* stresses the intimate relationship between the beggars and messianic redemption.

Returning to our story, the lost children plead with the first beggar whom they meet to take them out of the forest. Surprisingly, the blind beggar refuses and responds, “I do not want you to come with me.” I feel that there is a deep reason for his refusal. Although the importance of the *tzaddik* is central to Rabbi Nachman’s world-view, Rabbi Nachman is now making it clear that the only person who can solve your spiritual dilemmas and take you out of spiritual distress and confusion (symbolized by being lost in the forest) is you yourself. The *tzaddik* can (and should) be a spiritual guide, but he cannot do the job for you; you alone are capable of finding the way out of those spiritual perplexities that haunt you.

Kaplan (1983:359) raises another point. He suggests that “perhaps they [the two lost children] had to meet the other six beggars. Moreover, they would not be worthy of following in his path until they were married.” Kaplan’s two remarks are very perceptive. First of all, the path of redemption demands of the children to be exposed to the blessings of all seven beggars, just as the path of redemption in “The Master of Prayer” demanded the reunion of all ten members of “the Holy Gathering” (). Kaplan’s second remark hints at the vital role played by the marriage, which I will shortly discuss.

Before the blind beggar leaves the children, he blesses them. In the Bible, we find that the act of a righteous man blessing someone else has great significance. For example, in Genesis 27 Jacob is willing to follow his mother’s advice and deceive his father in order to obtain Isaac’s blessing. Steinsaltz (1979:175) believes that the act of blessing someone is a means by which that person is able “to pass on to another a gift that one has received oneself. It is a method by means of which spiritual existence transcends the barriers between people, and it is a manifestation of the donor’s desire to remain in the world indefinitely by imparting his experience and essential humanity to those he considers worthy.”

The next day, the reader discovers that the food that the children had been given by the blind beggar “did not last long,” and so once again the children cry out for food. In my

opinion, each one of the seven days the lost children spend in the forest alludes to a different historical period or a different cultural environment the Jewish people went through, and the spiritual sustenance that was sufficient and adequate for one period is no longer appropriate for the new historical circumstances. As a result, the children (= the Jewish people) need to be provided with a different “diet,” a different kind of spiritual sustenance which is more suitable for their new historical or cultural environment. Thus, on the second day the children encounter a deaf beggar, then a stutterer, a beggar with a crooked neck, a hunchback, a beggar with no hands and finally a beggar with no feet.

After meeting all seven beggars, the children succeed in leaving the forest and they themselves become beggars. Thus, even at this early stage the beggars’ blessings are starting to be fulfilled, at least partially, since each beggar blessed the children, “May you be as I am.” This passage shows us that the children have identified themselves with the beggars and have taken upon themselves ‘the way of the beggars;’ in other words, the Jewish people have accepted the teaching of the beggars and will strive to be *tzaddikim* () like them, in order to eventually fulfill the promise alluded to in the verse: “All your people shall be righteous” (Isaiah 60:21).

The path chosen by the two children who become beggars may be contrasted with the foolish country of wealth in Story Number Twelve, “The Master of Prayer.” These two children have embarked upon a road which is the diametrical opposite of the country of wealth (which forbade the giving of charity, as Rabbi Nachman emphasized). Instead of dedicating their lives to the obsessive pursuit of money and of amassing wealth, the children walk in the footsteps of the seven beggars.

Although I have been stressing the positive aspects of being a beggar until now, it seems to me that Rabbi Nachman might be using the metaphor of “the children-becoming-beggars” to be in fact also subtly criticizing the form Jewish existence had taken during the centuries of exile. After all, a beggar is usually considered to be at the bottom of society; he does not produce anything nor does he really contribute to society; he is dependent on the charity of strangers for his very existence. Is this not a description of the state of the Jewish people in exile? For in the exile (), the Jewish people did not have a home of their own, and their survival depended not upon themselves, but upon the good-will, tolerance and charity of the nations of the world among whom they resided. This was far from being

an ideal situation, and therefore sooner or later the Jewish people would need to build a home of their own. The first step on this road to national redemption would demand of the children to get married and set up their own household. Thus the image of the children's wedding and marriage embodies a critical leap forward on the road to redemption.

The idea of arranging a *"shidduch"* (a match) between the two children arises among the beggars when "a great fair was held not far from a large city." The beggars decide to organize the wedding in a very ingenious fashion: for the wedding dinner they collect the leftovers from the feast celebrating the king's birthday, and for the wedding "hall" they dig a large pit and cover it with reeds, straw, dirt and refuse (in the Hebrew original:).

The wedding is an extremely important episode in the story's development and is in fact the event which makes possible the passage from Section Two to Section Three; I therefore wish to analyze it in depth. First of all, the wedding is a symbol of completion and the attainment of a very high spiritual level, as Steinsaltz (1979:175) notes: "... only when man and woman are united can they reach perfection." According to the mainstream of Jewish tradition, only a married person can reach true spiritual enlightenment and a rich inner life. In *Yevamot* 62b, "Rabbi Tanchum said in the name of Rabbi Hanilai: 'A man who has no wife finds himself living without joy, without blessing, without goodness ... In the Land of Israel they added, 'without Torah and without defense.'" A little later, in *Yevamot* 63a, "Rabbi Elazar said: 'A man who has no wife is not a whole man, as it is written: 'Male and female did He create them, and He blessed them and called their name Man, on the day they were created'" (Genesis 5:2). Another example can be found in *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:22, which comments on the verse: "... I have acquired a male child with the help of the Lord' (Genesis 4:1) — Before this, Adam was created from the earth and Eve was created from Adam. From now on, 'in our image, after our likeness' (Genesis 1:26) — no man without a woman, no woman without a man, and both of them together with the *Shechinah*."

Thus, the wedding of the two children symbolizes the fact that the children have reached a high spiritual stage and are worthy of a sacred revelation, which means that the seven beggars can manifest themselves again. We should remember that the greatest of all revelations and spiritual experiences — the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai — is likened by the Sages of the Talmud to a wedding (*Ta'anit* 26b, as well as *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* to

Canticles 3:11). And not only will the seven beggars reappear in Section Three, but they will reveal secrets about themselves, their identities and abilities, and the true nature of what had appeared to be a severe handicap. “The individual deformities that characterize each of the beggars will be explained” (Steinsaltz 1979:174).

I believe that we should pay close attention to the fact that (a) the food for the children’s wedding comes from the king’s birthday celebration, and (b) the wedding itself takes place in a pit covered with a canopy of straw, reeds and refuse. Regarding fact (a), the king symbolizes God (as usual), and the king’s birthday refers to Rosh HaShanah, the anniversary of the creation of the world and the most important holiday in the Braslav calendar (even more important than Yom Kippur). It is worthwhile remembering that whenever Rabbi Nachman speaks of food in his stories, the connotation is to spiritual sustenance; thus the food that is “eaten” in the children’s wedding alludes to spiritual nourishment that stems from a divine source. It seems to me that the banquet of the king’s birthday (where the beggars gather the leftovers for the children’s wedding feast) is an analogy and a counter-point to the opening paragraph of the story of “The Seven Beggars;” in other words, the children’s wedding is an echo of the great, joyous celebration described at the beginning of Section One. Just as the first celebration (the creation of humanity to rule the world) was a momentous occasion, so too the children’s wedding (commemorating the future redemption) is a momentous occasion.

Fact (b) [the wedding being conducted in a pit covered with a canopy of reeds and straw] creates a very strong connection between the children’s marriage and the festival of *Succot*. This canopy of reeds and straw seems to allude to the covering () of a *succah*. Moreover, the festival of *Succot* is a weeklong holiday in the Land of Israel, which parallels the children’s wedding celebration which continues for seven days. In addition, there is a very widespread custom rooted in the Kabbalah that during *Succot*, the seven (which literally means “guests” in Aramaic and refers to the seven great spiritual leaders of the Jewish people from the Bible — Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Aaron and David — whom I had mentioned on page 219) are invited to come to the *succah* and bless its inhabitants. This ritual consists of the following prayer that is recited each night in the *succah*: “May it be Your will, the Lord my God and the God of my fathers, to cause Your *Shechinah* to dwell in our midst, and spread over us Your *succah* of peace; encompass us

with Your glorious, sacred and pure splendor. As for those who are hungry and thirsty, give them sufficient bread and water. May You make us worthy of dwelling for many days in the Holy Land, in Your service and in Your awe. Blessed be the Lord forever, amen and amen. I invite to my feast exalted guests: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David. [Each night the following is added, changing the first name each time:] Abraham, my exalted guest, may it please you that they sit with you and with me all the other exalted guests: Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David.” This prayer and this custom seem to allude to the children’s wedding in “The Seven Beggars,” especially since these seven “guests” do indeed come to the children’s *succah*.” Commenting on this tradition, Birnbaum (1949:675) notes that “the custom of inviting the patriarchs to the *succah* is based on a passage in the *Zohar* (section *Emor*) which reads: ‘When one sits in the *succah*, Abraham and six righteous men come to share his company.... Everyone should try to invite poor people to share his meals in the *succah*.’”

There is another factor that links the children’s wedding to *Succot*, which stems from the belief that just as the weeklong holiday of Passover commemorates the first redemption of the Jewish people (the exodus from Egypt), so does the seven-day holiday of *Succot* “commemorate” the future and final redemption. The children’s wedding therefore may be viewed as an expression and celebration of the future, complete redemption, and just as the exile from Egypt had supreme spiritual significance (namely the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai seven weeks afterwards), — so too will the future redemption of the Jewish people (symbolized by the lost children’s wedding) be characterized as having deep spiritual ramifications (represented by the reappearance and revelations of the seven beggars).

We must remember that Rabbi Nachman prefaced the entire story of “The Seven Beggars” with the words: “I will tell you how people once rejoiced.” We saw that Section One began with the description of the great joy that filled the kingdom when the king (God) handed dominion over his kingdom (the world) to his son (humanity). Here in Section Two, when Rabbi Nachman depicts the future redemption embodied in the wedding, we encounter great joy. However, in contrast with Section One where the tremendous outpouring of happiness did not last very long and deteriorated into sadness and melancholy when the king’s son and the country’s sages turned to atheism and heresy, there is no hint in Sections Two or Three that the great joy of the children’s wedding will ever come to an end.

Regarding these points, Kaplan (1983:362) writes that “the lowly state of this wedding can be contrasted to with the great pomp in the hall at the beginning of the story. In both cases there was great joy. But the ball at the beginning denoted the joy of creation, while here the joy is because of the rectification of a very imperfect world.”

In a traditional Jewish wedding, seven blessings are recited under the wedding canopy, and I believe that the seven beggars in our story allude to these seven blessings. When we analyze these seven nuptial blessings carefully, we see that they contain two main motifs: the creation of Man (blessings three, four and six), and the redemption of Israel (blessings five and seven). Furthermore, we find that the idea of joy dominates all these benedictions: the root word *simcha* or *simchah* appears nine times, the root word *gaia* or *gaiah* appears four times, the root word *gaia* or *gaiah* twice, and we find a number of other synonyms for joy in addition: *gaia* as well as *gaia*.

According to the *halachah*, these seven nuptial blessings are recited not only under the canopy, but also during the week following the wedding ceremony they “are repeated after each meal attended by the newly married couple, if certain conditions are met” (Scherman 2001:220). The manifestation of the seven beggars after the wedding, one each day, seems to suggest that in a sense, the beggars themselves may be viewed almost as personifications or embodiments of these seven blessings. Indeed, in Section Three, each beggar begins his speech with the same formula: “Here I am. In the forest I blessed you with the wish that you should be as I am, and now I grant it to you as a wedding gift.”

I would like to discuss the reason why Rabbi Nachman decided that the children’s wedding is held in a pit covered with a canopy of straw, reeds, dirt and refuse. I believe that the image of this pit reflects the same idea that found expression in the description of the great *tzaddikim* as being physically deformed beggars, namely the extreme and paradoxical discrepancy between superficial appearance and inner reality, what we could call in Kabbalistic terminology the tension between the *shela* (the husk or shell) and the *simcha* (the fruit or seed). We live in a very imperfect world, which is called in the Kabbalah “the world of lies” (*olam ha-shela*), in contrast to the future, redeemed world which is labeled as “the world of truth” (*olam ha-simcha*). Because of this, what we see is often the opposite of the true inner reality, and thus it is possible to listen to the third beggar and think that he stutters,

although in reality he is “extraordinarily eloquent ... a master of poetry and speech [who] can recite such marvelous parables, poems and songs that there isn’t a creature on earth that doesn’t desire to listen.” This is true of all the beggars and it is equally true regarding the pit in which the wedding takes place. According to Rabbi Nachman, the lost children’s wedding represents the redemption of Israel, one of the most important “events” in Jewish history, yet it takes place under terrible conditions, in a miserable pit hidden from the eyes of humanity by a pathetic mat of straw and refuse. The external shabbiness and poverty of the wedding masks its deep, inner significance. Tragically, it is ignored and unperceived by the rest of mankind.

This idea is paralleled by one of the great English poems of the twentieth century, “*Musee des Beaux Arts*” by W. H. Auden (1907-1973). The title of the poem refers to the name of the national art museum in Brussels, Belgium, which houses a famous collection of Flemish paintings from medieval and Renaissance times. Auden’s poem describes three different pictures painted by Pieter Brueghel (1525-1569) — two pictures in the first stanza, and a third one named *The Fall of Icarus* in the second stanza (a copy of this picture appears on page 232). According to Auden’s poem (based on these three paintings), the most miraculous events occur unnoticed or ignored by an unaware or an even apathetic humanity, who continue with their daily routine oblivious to the dramatic spiritual events that are happening right next to them.

“About suffering they were never wrong,
 The Old Masters: how well they understood
 Its human position; how it takes place
 While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking
dully along;
 How, when the aged are reverently, passionately waiting
 For the miraculous birth, there must always be
 Children who did not specially want it to happen, skating
 On a pond at the edge of the wood:
 They never forgot
 That even the dreadful martyrdom must run its course

Anyhow in a corner, some untidy spot
 Where the dogs go on with their doggy life and the torturer's horse
 Scratches its innocent behind on a tree.

In Brueghel's *Icarus*, for instance: how everything turns away
 Quite leisurely from the disaster; the plowman may
 Have heard the splash, the forsaken cry,
 But for him it was not an important failure; the sun shone
 As it had to on the white legs disappearing into the green
 Water; and the expensive delicate ship that must have seen
 Something amazing, a boy falling out of the sky
 Had somewhere to get to and sailed calmly on."

(Williams 1963:472-473)

Icarus was an important figure in Greek mythology. "According to Greek mythology, Daedalus and his son Icarus made wings for themselves in order to escape an enemy. But Icarus flew too near the sun, disobeying his father's orders. The wax on his wings melted, and he fell into the sea and drowned" (Shalvi 1982:13).

Logically, if an artist paints a picture entitled *The Fall of Icarus*, we would expect that the major character in the painting itself to be Icarus. However, if we examine this painting by Brueghel that is described in the poem by Auden, we discover that it is extremely difficult to see or even find Icarus. The main images in this painting are the peasant plowing his field, a shepherd with his sheep, and a number of ships in the bay. Only if one looks very closely at the painting does one notice that in the left-hand corner there are two very small feet of a drowning boy sticking out from the ocean. The faces of all the people in the painting (the plowman, the shepherd, the sailors) are turned away from the poor boy and they all look in the opposite direction. The truly amazing event went by unobserved and ignored. This is exactly what Rabbi Nachman is expressing by having the children's wedding take place in a pit covered by a canopy of straw and refuse, unseen and ignored by the rest of humanity.

In addition, I believe that Rabbi Nachman is stressing here the idea that the final redemption of the Jewish people will be a 'hidden' one. In contrast to the first redemption (the exodus from Egypt) which was characterized by great miracles like the Ten Plagues or the splitting of the Red Sea, the final redemption will not be accompanied by a great miracle like a Temple of fire descending from the heavens. Instead, the final redemption of Israel will begin modestly and will be barely noticed; it will be accompanied by pain and suffering and poverty, symbolized by the canopy of refuse and dirt.

There is another dimension to the children's wedding that I wish to discuss, which reflects the historical and sociological background of Rabbi Nachman's environment. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the sanitary and health conditions of the people living in Poland and Russia were quite poor, and epidemics (especially of cholera) were fairly common. "Whenever an epidemic would break out in a Jewish community, it was a custom to find a poverty-stricken bride and groom and



have the community organize a wedding for them, at the expense of the community. It was believed that this act of charity would help atone for any sins committed by the community, and perhaps be able to cut short the epidemic. Sometimes, instead of a poverty-stricken

couple, the community would arrange the marriage of two orphans or two cripples. This marriage was often performed in the local Jewish cemetery, and the leaders of the local community would attend the wedding to honor the bride and groom. Different members of the community would bring gifts that would aid the young couple to establish their household. This kind of wedding was called ‘an epidemic wedding’ ()” (Goren 1984:19).

In my opinion, it is possible to view the lost children’s wedding in Section Two of our story as portraying such an ‘epidemic wedding.’ However, I wish to stress that it seems that Rabbi Nachman views this wedding as being a kind of atonement not for a physical epidemic (like cholera), but rather as a response to the epidemic of atheism (which is the exact phrase he uses in *Sichot HaRan* 35 and *Sichot HaRan* 220) that broke out among the Jews of Europe in the wake of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. Indeed, we have seen that the children’s wedding is a by-product and a result of the epidemic of atheism which broke out in the country of wisdom ruled by the king’s son in Section One of “The Seven Beggars” as well. Yet we can even go further. As I will presently demonstrate, it is the children’s wedding, and in its wake the reappearance of the beggars who come and manifest themselves in Section Three (in order to actualize the blessings they uttered to the children in the forest) that will hold the key to ending this epidemic of atheism and heresy, and cure the king’s son.

I wish to make one last remark before turning to Section Three. The fact that the children’s wedding takes place in a pit seems very surprising and even somewhat disturbing, even if we accept the suggestion that their wedding was an “epidemic wedding.” Why did Rabbi Nachman choose a pit? The answer may be found if we remember that in the Bible, a pit () is often a synonym for a grave and the phrase (“those who descend into a pit”) is a poetic expression that means “the dead” (for example, Psalms 28:1, 30:4, 88:5 and 143:7). This being the case, we again encounter another example of extreme paradox: the children descend into the place which we associate with death, namely the pit () or grave, yet they experience there a great spiritual rebirth and revelation; instead of mourning and sadness comes great joy. Seen in this light, the image of the pit may be perceived as an echo of the passage in Ezekiel 37 which speaks of the vision of the valley of dry bones,

where the Bible says explicitly that there will be a physical and spiritual resurrection of the Jewish people from the grave of exile (in particular Ezekiel 37:11-14).

Section Three: The Beggars' Tales

Section Three is by far the longest section of the story. In it each of the first six beggars reappears during the week long nuptial celebrations to bless the young couple and explain the significance of his particular blessing. In addition, the lost children (= the Jewish people) are told by each beggar (= a great spiritual leader or *tzaddik*) that what had looked like a deformity is actually the opposite, namely a great spiritual asset. In this respect, the beggars are like a photographic negative, where black is white and white is black.

In my opinion, there is a marked resemblance between the beggars and “the suffering servant of the Lord” who figures prominently in the Book of Isaiah (Isaiah 42:1-4, 42:18-19, 44:1-5, 49:1-6, 50:4-11, 52:13-53:12). Some of these verses seem to be describing Rabbi Nachman’s beggars to a remarkable degree: “He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of pains and acquainted with disease, and as one from whom men hide their face; he was despised and not esteemed” (Isaiah 53:3), or “Who is blind, but My servant? Or deaf, as My messenger whom I send? Who is blind as he who is whole-hearted and as blind as the servant of the Lord? Seeing many things, you do not observe, opening the ears, he does not hear” (Isaiah 42:19-20). Commenting on the last verse, the leading Israeli Biblical scholar Hacham (2001:452) notes that “the servant of the Lord is completely blind — the blindest of all men.” So once again we encounter paradox, but this time in the Bible itself: the divine messenger who really “sees” far better than others is tragically perceived to be blind; the divine messenger who hears the word of God is thought to be deaf by erring mankind.

The figure of the suffering servant of the Lord was interpreted as a symbol of the Jewish people and of Jewish suffering by the classical commentators of traditional Judaism like Rashi and Radak, as well as by contemporary Biblical experts. “The servant of the Lord who appears here [in the Book of Isaiah] is the nation of Israel personified as one person. Israel is described as being physically repulsive and afflicted with deformities.... In the end, the prophet says the people of Israel are to be blessed with seven blessings.... In

addition, it is possible to interpret the figure of the Lord's servant in the Book of Isaiah as being an ideal and visionary figure of the righteous man (), like Job, or of a martyr.... Another possible interpretation is that the servant of the Lord symbolizes a particularly devout or pious group within the Jewish people' (Hacham 2001:574-575). This image seems to have heavily influenced the concept of the *lamed-vovnick* which I mentioned on page 223 as well as Rabbi Nachman's portrayal of the seven beggars.

Who exactly are the beggars? As I pointed out earlier, the general consensus among scholars, both traditional and modern, is that the beggars represent *tzaddikim*, true spiritual leaders. Steinsaltz (1979:176-186) thinks that the seven beggars represent the 'seven shepherds' or ("guests") who are invited to sit in the *succah* each night of *Succot*, although not in the usual order: the first beggar parallels Isaac, the second – Abraham, the third – Moses, the fourth – Aaron, the fifth – Jacob, the sixth – Joseph, and the last – King David. In contrast, traditional Braslav commentators do interpret the seven beggars as paralleling the seven ("guests") according to the usual order. In any case, the Sixth Beggar is always thought as representing the sixth "guest," Joseph. This is important because in the Kabbalah, Joseph is always linked to the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*, and is considered to be the outstanding example of the *tzaddik*. Indeed, in Rabbinic literature the one Biblical figure who is consistently given the appellation of the "righteous" is Joseph —

Another way of interpreting the seven beggars is to view them as corresponding to the seven lower, "emotional" *Sefirot* from to . Accordingly, the first beggar would symbolize the *Sefirah* of , the second beggar would represent the *Sefirah* of , etc. Following this train of thought, the Sixth Beggar would symbolize the *Sefirah* of (*Yesod* – Foundation), which is linked to the verse: "the righteous is the foundation of the world" (Proverbs 10:25). In the Kabbalah, the *Sefirah* of absorbs all the forces and influx of the five *Sefirot* above it (from *Hesed* to *Hod*), and concentrates them towards the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*; it alone interacts with *Malchut* in order to transfer the divine plenty to the world. "All the divine influx, all the creative power with which God sustains and directs the world, comes through the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*" (Kaplan 1990:171).

We have seen that it is possible to compare the seven beggars in this story with the seven _____ and with the seven emotional *Sefirot* from _____ to _____. A third system of corresponding relationships can be found by comparing the seven beggars to the seven days of creation described in Genesis 1 and 2. Thus, the first beggar would represent the first day of creation, when God said, “Let there be light.” This is quite appropriate since the first beggar is considered to be blind, but really sees better than others and his vision is full of divine light. Indeed, the Talmudic expression for a blind person is _____ - _____, which literally means “full of light” in Aramaic. The Sixth Beggar, accordingly, would correspond to the sixth day of creation, when Man was created. We thus see that the first unit in the “The Seven Beggars,” namely the episode of the king’s son described in Section One (which alludes to the creation and fall of mankind on the sixth day of creation) will find its completion only in the final unit of the story that Rabbi Nachman told, namely the Sixth Beggar’s tale.

I wish to add that the identification of the Sixth Beggar with the sixth day of creation is further reinforced when we remember that the Sixth Beggar also corresponds to Joseph and the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*, since according to the Kabbalah, “the *Sefirah* of *Yesod*-Foundation parallels the sixth day of creation when man was created” (Kaplan 1990:65).

All this has further implications. When we examine Chapter One of Genesis closely, we discover a very intricate and interesting relationship among the first six days of creation: we can arrange the first three days as one column that parallels a second column consisting of Days Four, Five and Six. On Day One, light was created in general, whereas in Day Four that parallels it, light was concentrated and specified in particular sources or “containers” of light: the sun, moon and stars. On Day Two, the heavens were created (to divide the upper waters from the lower waters), and on Day Five were created the birds and the fish to “fill” the heavens and the waters, respectively. On Day Three, the dry land was created, and on Day Six (which parallels Day Three), the mammals — and most importantly, mankind — were created to “fill” the dry land. Day Seven of course stands by itself, although it is Man, created on the sixth day, who is most closely connected to the seventh day and who will eventually be commanded to imitate God by resting on the Sabbath.

All this is relevant to our attempt to understand the story of “The Seven Beggars” because just as there is a clear link and a strong parallel between Day Three and Day Six of creation, so too is there a clear and important link between the third beggar (who seemingly “stutters” but is in fact very eloquent and a master of words) and the Sixth Beggar, who superficially seems to have no hands but is in fact extremely talented in his hands and who is a master musician, as we will discover later on. We will see that the power of the Sixth Beggar (music) begins where the power of the third beggar (words) ends.

However, I would like to suggest an additional, alternative interpretation of my own concerning the significance of what and whom the seven beggars of our story symbolize. Rabbi Nachman strongly believes that in Jewish history there were a number of individuals who were far above the level of “ordinary” *tzaddikim*, he called such a unique individual: or (a “true *tzaddik*” or “the leading *tzaddik* of that generation,” although it would be even more accurate to call such a person: – the pioneering *tzaddik* of many generations). Zeitlin (1965a:326-327) explains: “What is the difference between an ‘ordinary’ *tzaddik* — even a great *tzaddik* — and the ? According to Rabbi Nachman, is an extraordinary person who opens completely new gates in the higher palaces, a spiritual guide who reveals a new heaven and a new earth, ... who reveals the splendor of sanctity which had been unperceived by earlier generations.... And who were these individuals? According to the Braslav tradition, the path is clear — the first was Moses; then Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai; then the *Ari*; then the *Besht*; then Rabbi Nachman himself; and finally the Messiah.... I dare to declare that the most crucial point in all of Rabbi Nachman’s teachings is not the *tzaddik* but rather the Messiah; the *tzaddik* is important because he prepares the way for the Messiah.” Following Zeitlin’s insights, we can define the as being the great innovators of Jewish tradition, and especially Jewish mystical tradition. Even Moses, who was the greatest of the prophets and the wisest of the sages, had very deep mystical experiences; in addition, he was considered by Rabbi Nachman not only to be the first great redeemer of the Jewish people, but also the prototype and role model for the Messiah, the final redeemer, himself (as we saw in the analysis of “The Merchant and the Pauper” in Chapter Four).

Basing myself on this insight, I wish to suggest that we may understand the seven beggars as representing these . The first two beggars together represent Moses; the blind beggar may personify Moses in his capacity of being the greatest prophet, and the deaf beggar may symbolize Moses as the wisest of all sages (as we saw in “The Master of Prayer,” the king’s sage was a metaphoric representation of Moses). For indeed, the blind beggar seems to represent the spiritual leadership of the prophets during the Biblical period, whereas the second beggar may represent the spiritual leadership of the sages during the period of the Second Commonwealth and the Talmudic era.

In my opinion, there is an inner logic behind the order of appearance among the beggars in the story; they do not manifest themselves in a haphazard or arbitrary fashion, but there is a chronological reason for the order of the beggars in the story. As I said, the first, blind beggar seems to represent the prophet, the spiritual leader of the Biblical period (which is often called “the First Commonwealth” in Jewish history). In the Bible, we find that the prophet () is sometimes called “the seer” (), as for example in I Samuel 9:9. Furthermore, the divine message that the prophet received was often visual in nature (for example, Jeremiah 1:11-14), and the prophetic message was often called a vision (in Hebrew: or), as in Isaiah 1:1 or Genesis 15:1. The Biblical prophet had his eyes focused on eternal truths, and therefore could have said, as the blind beggar says, “I am not blind at all, but to me the time of the whole world is not worth a moment’s fleeting glance.”

In the beginning of the Second Commonwealth (circa 500 BCE), prophecy ended and a new kind of spiritual leader emerged that was able to cope with the new and different historical and cultural environment; this leader was the rabbinical sage (). The sage was called by a variety of appellations, as I earlier pointed out, starting with the term ‘scribe’ (), like Ezra the Scribe; then the ‘Early Hasidim’ (), followed by the Pharisees (), and finally the ‘Tanaim’ () and the ‘Amoraim’ (). Yet they were all essentially based on the same prototype of someone who hears the divine word as it is revealed both through the study of the sacred text of the Bible (the written Law), as well as through the tradition of the Oral Law. Whereas the prophet received his vision directly from God, the sage received the Oral Law (-) audibly, from teacher to student, from master to disciple, mouth to ear. This second kind of spiritual leader (the sage) is therefore represented in our story paradoxically by the deaf beggar since the rabbinic sage

does not see a prophetic vision, but rather listens to the word of God as it has been handed down orally from generation to generation. The Rabbis of the Talmud stress the importance of a life dedicated to the study of Torah and not wasted in the pursuit of material luxuries. In *Pirkei Avot* 6:4, they said: “This is the way of Torah — eat bread with salt, and drink water by measure, sleep on the ground and live a life of sorrow while you toil in the Torah. If you do this, ‘Happy will you be and it will be well for you’ [Psalms 128:2]: ‘happy will you be’ in this world, ‘and it will be well with you’ in the world to come.” This is very reminiscent of the words of the deaf beggar: “You think that I am deaf. In fact, I am not, but to me the whole world is worth nothing, so why should I listen to its cries of want? All the sounds of the world are brought forth by want; everyone cries out for what he lacks.... I, however, live a good life and lack nothing, and so these wants are not for my ears.... (This good life was that he ate bread and drank water).”

Just as the second spiritual leader, the rabbinic sage (the deaf beggar) had incorporated the teachings of his predecessor, the prophet (the blind beggar), so does the third beggar incorporate the teachings of the earlier two beggars. The third beggar is the stutterer, and seems to represent a totally different kind of spiritual master, the mystic.

Within the mystic tradition, Rabbi Nachman repeatedly emphasizes that there were four important great teachers; each teacher was a pioneer who opened up new vistas in the service of God and initiated ways of striving for closeness to God that were especially appropriate for that generation and that time period, as well as revealing new layers in the depth of the Kabbalah. Each one of these four leaders was a who appeared on the scene after the Jewish people experienced a major historical tragedy, and through their teachings, helped the Jewish communities of their generation (and of succeeding generations as well) to cope with the new historical and religious challenge; they spiritually revitalized the Jewish people as a whole. The first of these four teachers, according to Rabbi Nachman, whose teachings helped to revitalize the Jewish people was Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai in the second century (who was the compiler of the *Zohar* according to Jewish tradition) following the terrible Roman persecutions known as in the wake of the fiasco of the Bar-Kokhva Revolt (133-135 CE); the third beggar seems to be linked to the figure of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and the Book of *Zohar*. The third beggar tells the lost children at their wedding:

“You think that I am heavy of speech. In fact, I am not really a stutterer at all. I am unwilling to speak, because all that man says that is not uttered in praise of God is wanting. In fact, I am extraordinarily eloquent; I am a master of poetry and speech. I can recite such marvelous parables, poems and songs that when I begin to speak, there is not a creature on earth that does not desire to listen, and in my words there is all wisdom.” This is very appropriate for the author of the *Zohar*, which is extremely poetic and full of images and similes. It is considered to contain the hidden wisdom (), which is the deepest and most comprehensive level of learning Torah. And indeed, the tale told by the third beggar is considered by most scholars and students of Braslav to be the most beautiful and the most poetic story of all. “The third beggar’s tale is one of the most famous tales in all Hasidic, as well as in world religious literature. Its remarkably few images are employed with great poetic skill and conjure up a substantial, almost palpable mystical world” (Steinsaltz 1979:179).

The fourth beggar is the beggar with the crooked neck and he seems to be connected to the next great teacher of Kabbalah, the *Ari*, who lived and taught in the sixteenth century (1534-1572) and whose teachings attempted to give new meaning and new directions to Judaism in the aftermath of the Expulsion from Spain in 1492, which was the worst Jewish catastrophe in one thousand years. “You think that I have a crooked neck,” the fourth beggar tells the children. “In fact, my neck is straight and fine ... My neck is beautifully formed and I have an excellent voice, with which I can imitate every sound in the world that is not speech. This has been confirmed to me by the people of the land of music.” The theme of this beggar’s tale is music, which is indeed one of the great innovations of the *Ari* and the mystical School of Zefat which he led. The *Ari* stressed the important role of music in the service of God. He himself wrote songs that became part of the Jewish tradition worldwide; his followers established the custom of *zemirot-Shabbat* (), songs that were composed to be sung at the Sabbath table. The *Ari* also established the Sabbath evening prayer service (), which is marked by the singing of eight psalms on late Friday afternoon just before the coming of the Sabbath, and the song that was composed by his brother-in-law Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz for this purpose.

According to Rabbi Nachman, the next great spiritual leader of the Jewish people was his own great-grandfather, the *Besht*, Rabbi Israel the Baal-Shem-Tov (1700-1760), who may be alluded to in the story by the fifth beggar. The *Besht* strove to introduce new life into the Jewish people in the wake of the false Messiahs, *Shabbatai Zvi* and *Jacob Frank*, and the terrible Cossack uprisings of the seventeenth century. One of the most important innovations that the *Besht* initiated was the transformation of the Kabbalah from being an esoteric body of secret wisdom restricted to small circles of Torah scholars into a mass movement embracing hundreds of thousands of Jews. This seems to be reflected in the words that the fifth beggar reveals to the children: “I am not a hunchback at all; in fact, my shoulders are so powerful as to be ‘the little that holds the great.’” In Yiddish, the exact phrase is “I have broad shoulders” (*breita pleitzes*), which is an idiom that means ‘I have the ability to take on great responsibility.’ This is extremely apt for the *Besht*, because one of his major teachings was that the mystic and the student of the Kabbalah was obligated to accept responsibility for the larger community and to provide spiritual leadership for their contemporaries, and help them come closer to God. The fifth beggar appears to be a hunchback, in my opinion, due to the fact that he had bent his back to accept the yoke of leadership, and had never straightened his back because that would mean throwing off his yoke of responsibility and abandoning his flock. One of the most basic characteristics of the Hasidic movement founded by the *Besht* is the strong bond forged between the *rebbe* and his followers; in a paradoxical fashion, it is the *rebbe* who supports his supporters.

The Sixth Beggar is the beggar without hands, and it is he who has the power to rescue the Lost Princess. In order to understand whom he represents, we must analyze his tale in detail. However, before discussing his story, I wish to reiterate that it is clear that each one of the beggars incorporates the qualities of his predecessors, and then adds something new. Each beggar stands on the shoulders on the previous teacher, and this enables him to see new vistas and new insight in the service of God. The Sixth Beggar therefore incorporates all the insights of his predecessors, as well as striking out on new pathways.

The Sixth Beggar's Tale

The Sixth Beggar begins by telling the children that although they think that his hands are stumps, his hands are actually “quite sound” and “extraordinarily powerful.” They only appear to be useless because he does not use his power in this world because he needs it “for another purpose,” namely to save the Lost Princess, whose story he then proceeds to relate to the children. His tale of the Lost Princess strongly resembles the story of “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” as well as corresponding to important episodes in both “The Merchant and the Pauper” and “The Master of Prayer.” Once again we encounter an evil king who has captured a princess. The evil king personifies the forces of the “*kelipot*,” the “husks” of impurity, both on a psychological level (namely, symbolizing the , the evil urge) and a theological level (namely, the Evil One or the Devil). Kaplan (1983:422) notes that “as is known, evil came into existence basically with ‘the breaking of the vessels.’” As I have pointed out, Kabbalistic tradition links ‘the breaking of the vessels’ to the passage in the Bible that speaks of the kings of Edom (Genesis 36:31-43), and therefore Rabbi Nathan comments that it is most appropriate that the forces of impurity which capture the Lost Princess are represented by an evil king (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Worms 4:3). Rabbi Nathan goes on to say that this evil king is also personified by Pharaoh who enslaved the Children of Israel (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Worms 4:4).

The Sixth Beggar relates that the evil king devised many plots in order to capture the Lost Princess, but after he succeeded, his desire for her was spoiled by his dream that she would indeed kill him. “His desire for her reflects the desire of evil to unite with holiness and to derive from it the flow of divine abundance. This is possible, and it does happen —but only temporarily, for eventually evil will be defeated by the very good it enslaves” (Steinsaltz 1979:185). Concerning the evil king’s dream, we find a strong Biblical parallel in the passage describing Sarah’s abduction by Avimelech, king of the Philistines, who dreamt that God came to him and told him that he would die because of the woman he had taken (Genesis 20:7). It is of course no coincidence that the name “Sarah” means ‘princess’ in Hebrew.

It is interesting that it is the evil king who receives the prophetic dream, and not the Lost Princess. Rabbi Nachman has written of this same phenomenon (an evil king dreaming of his own destruction as a result of his oppression of the forces of holiness) in one of his

most enigmatic fables, “The Bull and the Ram” (Story Number Four). In both stories, the dream functions as a self-fulfilling prophecy and as a catalyst that hastens the evil king’s own downfall.

Even more interesting, however, is the passage in which Rabbi Nachman writes that not only did “his [the evil king’s] love for her begin to diminish, . . . [but] . . . she too gradually ceased loving him.” This hints at a turn of events that did not appear in any of the earlier stories that Rabbi Nachman had told about the Lost Princess — namely, that at one time, the Lost Princess had loved (or at least was emotionally “seduced” by) the evil king. In all previous stories, the Lost Princess was held captive against her will by the forces of evil, whereas here, Rabbi Nachman alludes to a new idea, namely, that the Lost Princess had experienced feelings of affection and attachment towards the evil king. To understand this surprising statement, it is necessary to turn towards an analysis of the Lost Princess herself as she is portrayed in the Sixth Beggar’s story.

Throughout this thesis, we have seen that the Lost Princess represents a number of parallel symbols. First and foremost, in all the tales in Rabbi Nachman’s “Book of Stories from Ancient Times,” she is the symbol of the *Shechinah* and of *Knesset Israel*, as Rabbi Nathan says explicitly in his Second Introduction to “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” (*Sippurei Ma’asiot* 1996:8). In addition, we also saw that she also corresponds to the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, as I discussed in Chapter Three in my treatment of “The Losing of the King’s Daughter.” In Chapter Four, in my analysis of “The Merchant and the Pauper,” I added that the Lost Princess alludes to the hidden Torah () as well, and in my commentary to “The Master of Prayer” in Chapter Five, I demonstrated that the Lost Princess personified religious faith and belief in God. In our story, the Lost Princess retains all these meanings, of course, but additional connotations are unveiled, too.

In a very important passage in *Sichot HaRan* 273, Rabbi Nachman himself discusses the Sixth Beggar’s tale, saying: “The sacred soul of every single Jewish person is called a princess, as is known [for example, in the *Zohar* to Leviticus 7]. The soul, who is the princess, lies exhausted and helpless and feeble, weakened by sins, which are the ten kinds of arrows that the evil king shot at her and wounded her, as is written in the story. Therefore a great, powerful *tzaddik* is needed to penetrate all the places where she fell, and

to retrieve and extract all ten kinds of arrows. He must also know all ten kinds of melody because the main way of healing the Lost Princess is through melody and joy ...”

This passage provides a vital key that will aid in unlocking the deeper significance of the Sixth Beggar’s tale, as well as the meaning of the image of the Lost Princess in this fable and indeed, in previous allegories found in “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times.” For here we find in Rabbi Nachman’s own words that another connotation that the Lost Princess evokes is that of the soul. Consequently, the quest for the Lost Princess includes the attempt to locate and redeem one’s own soul.

Tragically, we are all too well aware that the human soul can at times be attracted to evil and may become infatuated with evil. Even though this love will not last for long, still it may exist. In a sense, the captivity of the Lost Princess in this story alludes to the situation in which the soul was enchanted by evil and felt affinity towards evil.

If we look closely, I believe that we can uncover what kind of evil is being referred to. In the story of “The Merchant and the Pauper,” we saw that the evil emperor symbolized the forces of the *Haskalah* and of rationalism. We can continue this line of thought here as well, and deduce that the evil king in the tale of the Sixth Beggar similarly represents the Enlightenment. In my opinion, Rabbi Nachman seems to be implying that not only has the Enlightenment “seduced” the Jewish soul (= the Lost Princess) of many of his contemporaries, but also the soul is drawn to the Enlightenment and feels attraction towards the Enlightenment’s values of rationalism and intellectualism. We thus find a very strong parallel between the end of Section One (the king’s son becoming attracted to over-emphasis on the intellect which leads inevitably to rationalism and atheism) and the beginning of the Sixth Beggar’s tale. In a sense, the Sixth Beggar’s tale begins where Section One ends. Furthermore, the connection between the king’s son and the Lost Princess will become clearer later on in this chapter.

The Sixth Beggar tells the reader that in the wake of the evil king’s dream, the love between the evil king and the Lost Princess sours and turns to hate. The Lost Princess flees his court, leaps into the water and succeeds in passing through all ten walls of water in order to enter the castle of water. Unfortunately, the evil king’s ten poisoned arrows hit her and seriously wound her.

I feel that the water represents knowledge and wisdom in general, and the castle of water symbolizes the Torah itself. In other words, there is a huge sea of knowledge, but within this vast ocean there is a special concentration of pure waters that is called the castle of water. According to Rabbi Nachman, it is only the castle of water (the Torah and no other source of knowledge) that can sustain the Lost Princess (the soul) in her flight from evil.

Commenting on this idea, Rabbi Nathan writes that "... the water alludes to wisdom. If one goes into it and does not know one's way, one will drown. This is what happened to many philosophers and scientists, who entered the realm of wisdom, but drowned in atheism" (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Worms 4:2). Kaplan (1983:429, 427-428) makes a similar point when he writes that "it is impossible to enter the waters of knowledge except through the Torah. The walls are the barriers in the waters of knowledge, which are like the sea; whoever enters them without proper preparation is drowned. This is because there is too much water; there is so much knowledge that one cannot accept it. It is therefore impossible to enter this knowledge to know God."

Rabbi Nachman says that the Lost Princess represents the soul. In the Bible, the soul is compared to a candle: "The candle of the Lord is the soul of man" (Proverbs 20:27). Pursuing this image of the candle, we can say that the flame of a candle can be extinguished by water, but will burn well when oil is added. Similarly, the waters of general knowledge can potentially drown the soul, whereas the Torah, which is often compared to oil, will maintain the soul.

In *Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Worms 4:2, Rabbi Nathan continues this line of thought when he notes that the only way a person can safely enter the castle of water and not drown is through faith. He calls faith a wall, basing himself on the verse from Canticles 8:10, "I am a wall," which Rashi interprets as meaning "My faith is as strong as a wall." I wish to add that in my opinion, the castle of water, which represents the Torah and is an image of ultimate sanctity, should be considered the complete antithesis to the castle of gold on the mountain of pearl in Story Number One ("The Losing of the King's Daughter") and the palace which the pauper-turned-emperor built for the Lost Princess in Story Number Ten ("The Merchant and the Pauper").

In the Bible, water often is used as a metaphor for the Torah or spiritual wisdom, and this may have influenced Rabbi Nachman when he chose the castle of water to symbolize the Torah. We find many Biblical passages like: “Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the water, and he who has no money, come, buy and eat ... Hearken diligently unto Me and eat that which is good ... Incline your ear and come to Me, hear and your soul shall live” (Isaiah 55:1-3); or “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the mountain of the Lord will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:9).

The Torah is compared to water not only in the Bible, but also in the Talmud and in many *midrashim*. For example, we find the following passage in *Berachot* 61b: “Once the evil empire [= the Roman authorities during the Hadrianic persecutions] decreed that the Jews were forbidden to learn Torah. Pappos Ben-Yehudah came and found Rabbi Akiva gathering congregations of Jews in public and teaching them Torah. He said to him, ‘Akiva, aren’t you afraid of the [Roman] authorities?’ Rabbi Akiva answered him, ‘Let me tell you a parable: What may this be compared to? To a fox that was walking along a riverbank and saw fish taking elusive measures and swimming in groups. The fox asked the fish, ‘What are you fleeing from?’ The fish answered, ‘From the nets that the fishermen are throwing [into the water] to catch us.’ The fox replied, ‘If you wish, come ashore onto dry land, and you and I will live together, the way your ancestors and my ancestors lived together [in the Garden of Eden].’ The fish said, ‘Are you he who is considered the cleverest of all animals? You are not the cleverest, but rather the most foolish! If in the place which grants us life we are frightened [to die], all the more so we are in danger [of dying] in the place of our death [= dry land].’ Rabbi Akiva continued, ‘This is true for us [Jews] as well. Now that we sit and learn Torah, about which it is written: ‘It is your life and the length of your days’ [Deuteronomy 30:20], we are in danger; but all the more so will we be in danger if we stop learning Torah.” According to this Talmudic parable, the Torah is compared to water which grants life to the fish. Similarly, in the tale of the Sixth Beggar, it is the castle of water, symbolizing the Torah, which grants life to the Lost Princess even though she has been wounded and poisoned by the arrows of the soldiers of the evil king.

The sea of knowledge described in “The Seven Beggars” is absent from the story of “The Master of Prayer,” which contains a sea of milk, a sea of wine and a sea of blood — but no sea of water. However, in “The Merchant and the Pauper,” we did encounter seven bodies of water in which the merchant and the pauper’s wife hid when they fled the evil general, which is very reminiscent of the way the Lost Princess in our story enters water in order to escape from the evil king. Furthermore, in “The Merchant and the Pauper,” the Lost Princess rejects all her false suitors with the words: “But the waters have not passed over you...” In other words, the only way to attain the hand of the Lost Princess (in Story Number Ten) or to revive the Lost Princess from her state of suspended animation and heal her from her wounds (in Story Number Thirteen) is by passing through all ten walls of water.

Water fulfills a very positive and purifying function in both “The Merchant and the Pauper” and “The Seven Beggars” because according to the *halachah*, immersion in a *mikvah* or any other body of clean water is part of the ritual purification process. A proselyte who wishes to convert to Judaism must immerse in water, as must a person who wishes to enter the Temple, and a wife (following the cessation of her period) before she can have marital relations with her husband. Therefore, it is quite appropriate when Kaplan (1983:424) comments that “when the Princess wanted to escape the [evil] king, she went to water since water cleanses all things ... [and] water can cleanse evil at its root.”

I have already pointed out that both Steinsaltz and the traditional Braslav commentators saw a strong resemblance between the Sixth Beggar and the Biblical figure of Joseph (as well as Moses of course). We find a very relevant passage linking Joseph to water in a *midrash* to a verse that recounts an event that took place during the Exodus from Egypt: “And Moses took Joseph’s bones with him; for he had exacted an oath from the Children of Israel, saying, ‘God will surely remember you, and you shall carry up my bones from here with you’ (Exodus 13:19). According to a *midrash* in *Sh’mot Rabbah* 20:21, because the Egyptians knew that the Children of Israel had sworn never to leave the land of Egypt unless they took Joseph’s coffin with them, the Egyptians had thrown Joseph’s coffin into the Nile in order to prevent the Jews from ever attempting to run away. This *midrash* asks, “What did Moses do? He stood on the banks of the Nile and called out, ‘Joseph, Joseph, the hour has arrived in which the Holy One, blessed be He, will redeem His

children... The *Shechinah* and Israel and the clouds of glory are all being delayed for your sake. If you reveal yourself — good! But if not, we are free of your oath.’ Immediately Joseph’s coffin arose from the depths and floated upon the Nile.” In this *midrash*, we should pay attention that paradoxically Joseph resembles not the Sixth Beggar (here it is Moses who resembles him), but rather Joseph resembles the Lost Princess, entombed underwater in a coma-like state, not quite dead but not quite alive. It is the voice of redemption which causes the walls of water to open and deliver the one who needs to be redeemed.

I would also like to comment on the image of the arrow, and the significance of the fact that the Lost Princess was wounded by arrows. Rabbi Nachman emphasizes that although the Lost Princess succeeded in entering the castle of water, the soldiers of the evil king nonetheless managed to inject ten kinds of poison into her bloodstream with the ten arrows which hit her. I quoted above the passage from *Sichot HaRan* 273 in which Rabbi Nachman interpreted his own story and said explicitly that these arrows symbolize sins. Rabbi Nathan clarifies this further. In *Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Rosh HaShanah 6:12, he writes that these “ten arrows represent ten [different] kinds of spiritual damage caused by sins;” and in *Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Reproduction 3:10, he specifies that the ten different kinds of poison in which the arrows were smeared represent “ten different ways that a person can defile the covenant of Abraham [a euphemism for sexual transgressions]... A sexual transgression is like an arrow shot at the *Shechinah*.” The image of an arrow embodying a sexual transgression (besides it being a rather obvious and graphic phallic symbol) may stem from a quote in the Talmud which states that male sperm “shoots like an arrow” (*Yevamot* 65a). Rabbi Nachman might also have been influenced by Rashi’s commentary to Exodus 14:19-20 (Rashi’s interpretation itself is based on the *Mechilta* to this verse): “And the angel of God, that had been going before the camp of Israel, removed itself and went behind them; and the pillar of cloud shifted from in front of them and stood behind them. And it came between the camp of Egypt and the camp of Israel ...” Rashi comments (at the beginning of verse 19) that the angel went behind them in order “to absorb the arrows and the catapult stones of the Egyptians [= which the Egyptians

had been shooting at them].” According to Steinsaltz (1979:185), “the imagery in this story is strongly reminiscent of the Biblical account of the Exodus. Pharaoh ruled over the children of Israel and grew progressively suspicious and fearful of them. The water here represents the Red Sea, through which the Jews passed safely, but in which Pharaoh and his host were drowned.”

After the Sixth Beggar finishes relating the course of events which befell the Lost Princess, he immediately goes on to prove to the children (and the reader) that his hands are indeed extremely skillful and dexterous by narrating the story of a competition (actually a competition with four different stages or categories) in which a group of men sat and boasted of the prowess in their hands. In this competition, the Sixth Beggar demonstrated that only his hands had all the qualities and all the abilities to redeem the Lost Princess, and to achieve the completion of her *tikkun*. His hands have supreme ability in four distinct categories: a) the power to retrieve and to extract all ten kinds of arrows (which are linked to ten kinds of poison and ten kinds of sin); b) the power to give by receiving all ten kinds of charity (which is linked to the ability to penetrate the ten walls of water which surround and guard the castle of water); c) the power to bestow all ten kinds of wisdom when his hands are laid on the heads of the leaders of the world (the ten kinds of wisdom are also linked to ten types of pulse); and d) the power to hold back and control all ten kinds of wind (which are linked to ten kinds of song). Therefore, only he, the Sixth Beggar, can revive the Lost Princess.

To understand what is the source of his hands’ strength, we must go back to the story of “The Master of Prayer.” In Chapter Five, I showed that the ‘hand’ was a very central symbol and undoubtedly represented the Torah, which is the map of the world that revealed everything that happened in the past, that happens in the present, and that will happen in the future everywhere in the world. It seems to me that this symbol retains the same meaning in the story of “The Seven Beggars” as well, and as a result, the seemingly handless Sixth Beggar is in fact a master of the Torah; his great prowess and skill stem from the fact that he has learned in depth and mastered the Torah (both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, and both the revealed Torah and the hidden Torah []).

In the story of “The Master of Prayer,” the ‘hand’ was entrusted to the king’s sage, who represented Moses. Therefore, in the story of “The Seven Beggars,” the fact that the Sixth Beggar is a master of hands indicates that he resembles Moses, although the stress here is less on the Torah as a manifestation of revelation and more on the Torah as a manifestation of redemption and the way of achieving *tikkun*. We saw in the story of “The Merchant and the Pauper” that the merchant’s son, representing the Messiah, the final redeemer, resembled his father and the events of his life were patterned after the events in the life of his father the merchant, who symbolized Moses, the first redeemer. Here too the Sixth Beggar seems not to be identical with Moses, but patterned after him. One of the ways the Sixth Beggar resembles Moses is that both of them have mastery over water. We should remember that in the Bible, Moses himself had many links to water throughout his life, and as I demonstrated earlier, water is a metaphor for Torah. Moses was cast into the waters of the Nile as an infant in an attempt to save his life from the cruel decrees of a truly evil king, Pharaoh (Exodus 2). Rabbi Nathan believes that Moses was cast into the water to prepare him, as it were, to be able in the future to enter the ten walls of water and heal the Lost Princess (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Passover, *Roshei Perakim* 9:3). Moses finds his wife next to a well of water, and in the first plague, gains dominance over water and is able to turn it into blood. Strongly corresponding to the tale of the Sixth Beggar, Moses splits open the Red Sea when the Children of Israel (like the Lost Princess fleeing the evil king) need to pass through walls of water in order to escape Pharaoh’s troops. And of course, throughout the sojourns of the Children of Israel in the desert, it is Moses who strikes the rock and brings forth water.

However, the most important Biblical passage, in my opinion, linking the “handless” Sixth Beggar to Moses occurs in the episode of the war between Israel and Amalek in Exodus 17:8-16. First of all, we must pay attention to the fact that the key word of this passage is the word “hand,” which appears seven times in nine short verses (Exodus 17:9, 11 (x2), 12 (x3), 16). As Samet (2002:36) has proven, whenever the Bible uses a key word seven times in one episode, this signifies that the inner, core meaning of this passage is linked to this key-word. Second, in the Biblical account, the war between Israel and Amalek is not an easy one, and is determined by Moses’ hands; when Moses raises his hand, Israel prevails, but when Moses lowers his hand, Amalek prevails. In all of Rabbi

Nachman's writings, Amalek (who is considered in Jewish tradition to be the archenemy of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion) is consistently used to represent atheism. Thus, the key in the war against atheism (according to Rabbi Nachman) depends on the hands of Moses. In the stories of "The Master of Prayer" and "The Seven Beggars," we have seen that the hand is a symbol of the Torah. However, in the Biblical account itself, a very unusual phrase is written to define the hands of Moses: (Exodus 17:12), which literally translates as: "his hands were faith." In other words, we could say that according to Rabbi Nachman, the battle against atheism (= Amalek) is determined by the state of Moses' hands, which represent faith as well as the Torah. I will demonstrate in a few more pages that Rabbi Nachman clearly alluded to the idea that he was the Sixth Beggar (*Sichot HaRan* 103), or at least strongly resembles the Sixth Beggar, and it is he who has the historical mission to combat the atheism which overcame the king's son during the period of the Enlightenment and of rationalism, and to restore the world to faith.

The fact that the Sixth Beggar is extremely talented and powerful in his hands, as he demonstrates in the competition, means that he has absorbed all the abilities of the previous five beggars and is thus capable of attaining the ultimate goal: healing the Lost Princess.

The first area in which the Sixth Beggar proves the great prowess his hands possess involves the arrows, which represent sexual transgressions. Rabbi Nathan believes that "a *tzaddik* can undo the damage done by sexual transgressions, and thereby 'retrieve' the arrow.... A sexual transgression can be compared to an arrow shot at the *Shechinah*" (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Reproduction 3:10). At this point, I wish to note that sometimes it is amazing to see how aware Rabbi Nachman, a Hasidic rabbi and mystic who lived in a small town in Eastern Europe one hundred years before Freud, was of the importance of sexuality in the human psyche and the human personality.

A previous example of Rabbi Nachman's awareness of the central role played by sex in human consciousness was found in the story of "The Master of Prayer." Among the ten different sects that comprise humanity was the sect of procreation and sexual relations. In its perverted form, the followers of this sect became addicted to compulsive sex and unbridled sexual lusts and lechery. Once they merited *tikkun*, this sect reverted back into the sect of spiritual beauty and divine abundance, symbolized by the wholeness of the sea of

milk (see Column 7 on the chart on page 145 in Chapter Five). Most importantly, the member of the “Holy Gathering” () who is the ruler of this sect is none other than the Lost Princess; it is she who is closely aligned with the sexual drives. Sometimes it is for the good, as in the story of “The Master of Prayer,” where she, working together with the master of prayer, was able to raise the sparks of inherent holiness that resided within this sect and help them achieve redemption, after the reunion of the entire “Holy Gathering.” In the fable of “The Seven Beggars,” we see the negative side of her link to the sexual drive, because it is she who is terribly injured and wounded by the ten arrows, namely by sexual transgressions.

I believe that Rabbi Nachman’s perception of the centrality of sexuality, for good and for bad, stems from his awareness that the human being is very complex and that it is incorrect to focus all our attention on the intellect and on the rational. Rabbi Nachman realized that the non-rational aspects of human experience (including sexual needs and urges) are present, and must be addressed and redeemed. We find that Rabbi Nachman told his followers that “just as eating and drinking are necessary to maintain the body, so too one must have marital relations in order to have children. A person has to do all these things, and therefore there is no lust. But there is one condition: a person must act in sanctity and in purity” (*Sichot HaRan* 51). According to Shulman (1993:156), Rabbi Nachman believed that “the greater a person is, the greater is his connection to his eros, his life force. Since sexuality is intimately connected to the life force, both personal and universal, when a person becomes a *tzaddik*, his channel of erotic energy grows as well. This is not to say that he becomes a lustful person, but rather that the channel through which sexuality passes is also a channel for eros. A *tzaddik* does not suppress his sexual being, but transforms it...” Steinsaltz (1993:282-283) confronts this issue when he notes that Rabbi Nachman was opposed to “the immersion of the mind in sexuality, which takes far more time and struggle from a person than many other areas of basic needs that are or are not fulfilled.”

The Sixth Beggar is able to retrieve all ten kinds of arrows, which is an expression of the concept of — repentance. Repentance on its highest levels involves much more than a sense of shame and regret for one’s past misdeeds, the fear of God and an inner

conviction not to sin again in the future; the higher forms of repentance demand the ability to go back in time, as it were, undo the transgression, and retrieve the evil deed and redeem () it by transforming the unclean into the pure. In *Likkutei Eytzot* 1996:336, Rabbi Nachman says that one way it is possible to make a *tikkun* for sexual transgressions is by talking to your comrade about ethics and the awe of God, and thereby bringing him closer to God. And this is exactly what the Sixth Beggar (as well as the other beggars) is doing as he narrates his tale to the children during their week-long wedding celebration.

The Sixth Beggar stresses that there are ten arrows and ten kinds of poison in which the arrows were dabbled (and therefore ten different kinds of sexual transgressions). Noting the emphasis on the number ten, Rabbi Nathan writes that the ten Days of Awe between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur (which are also called the ten days of repentance) correspond to the ten arrows of sin. “We were given ten days of repentance in order to remove the ten arrows through our repentance (). The arrows are the blemishes we make in the *Shechinah* through our sins” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Rosh HaShanah 6:13).

The second category in which there was a competition involved ten kinds of charity and began with the words: “Another boasted that his hands were so powerful that when he received, he was actually giving, and therefore he is always a great giver of charity.” We thus see that whereas the first category in the competition dealt with sexual transgressions (the arrows) that stem from carnal lust, the second category deals with the issue of money. We have seen that in all four of the stories that we have analyzed and that focused on the Lost Princess, there is the issue of financial matters and the need to rectify the lust for money; this was of course the main problem dealt with in “The Master of Prayer,” but it appeared in one form or another in all four fables. It seems that Rabbi Nachman firmly believed that it was the task of the *tzaddik* not only to aid people in their quest for faith and to cope with their sexual desires in a positive manner, but also to rectify and overcome the lust for money, especially in his period which witnessed the growth of modern capitalism and materialism.

In the tale told by the Sixth Beggar, the *tzaddik* for the obsession of money is tied to the giving of charity. The Hebrew word for charity is *chesed*, which is tied to the word *chayim* (the righteous person) and *tsedek* (justice). In the Jewish tradition, the giving of charity is not a form of voluntary philanthropy, but a rightful and just obligation that a person is commanded to perform if he is to be considered a righteous person. The Sixth Beggar told his competitor that since he, the competitor, gave only one kind of charity (the tithe), “you cannot heal the Princess for you can penetrate only the first of the walls that surround her.” The wall referred to is a wall of water. Because water is a metaphor for Torah, as I have demonstrated above, the Sixth Beggar is really saying that a person might be intellectually gifted and learned in Torah, but if he does not display compassion towards others, he cannot fathom the depths of the Torah. In other words, only a master of charity can be a master of Torah. According to the Sixth Beggar, the Torah involves not only the intellect, but also the heart; the Torah focuses not only upon the relationship between God and man, but also upon interpersonal relationships — especially the way one treats a person who is less fortunate.

Quite significantly, in the Bible, charity is sometimes associated with water. For example, in Isaiah 48:18, we read, “Your charity (*chesed*) is like the waves of the sea.” We should remember that the Sixth Beggar says explicitly, “These walls of water are the waves of the sea.” Moreover, the Torah itself is compared to charity (“It will be charity [*chesed*] for us, if we observe to do all this commandment before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us” – Deuteronomy 6:25). In *Likkutei Moharan* II:15, too, Rabbi Nachman wrote that charity is like water.

Steinsaltz (1979:185) notes that “the dispensation of charity acquired a special meaning in the Hasidic movement. The *tzaddik* was generally supported financially by his followers, to whom in return he gave spiritual nourishment and guidance. The relationship was frequently likened to that between the Sabbath, ‘the source of blessing,’ and the weekdays, which ‘give charity’ and thereby received sustenance.”

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed whom each of the seven beggars represented, and I deliberately postponed speaking at length of the identity of the Sixth Beggar. Although I did hint at it, I believe that the time has come to address this issue directly.

In *Sichot HaRan* 150, Rabbi Nachman is explicitly quoted as saying, “When I receive money from someone, I am really giving him something, for my taking is actually giving.” Rabbi Nathan added in parenthesis “(this is meaning behind the story of the sixth day in ‘The Seven Beggars,’ concerning the beggar who has tremendous powers in his hands).” In other words, we have here a rare instance in which Rabbi Nachman seems to have explicitly identified with one of his characters; Rabbi Nachman (or at least Rabbi Nathan) appears to believe that he strongly resembled the Sixth Beggar in the list of the great that began with Moses and ends with the Messiah (who is the seventh beggar without feet).

It is possible that Rabbi Nathan did not understand correctly, or that he misquoted the words that Rabbi Nachman is attributed to have said in the passage in *Sichot HaRan* 150, and we may be attributing a dose of megalomania to Rabbi Nachman that is overstated. Be that as it may, I think that at the very least, it is safe to say that Rabbi Nachman himself, as well as Rabbi Nathan and Braslav Hasidism in general, certainly felt that there was a great deal of affinity between the Sixth Beggar and Rabbi Nachman. He felt that just as the Sixth Beggar had a vital role to play in the process of healing the stricken Lost Princess lying unconscious and in a coma-like sleep, so too did he, Rabbi Nachman, have a vital role to play both in the process of awakening the dormant souls of his contemporaries (and the souls of future generations of Jews as well), and in the process of reviving religious faith in an increasingly non-religious and secular society, as I will demonstrate in the following pages.

The third category in the competition involves wisdom, which is a very “loaded” word in the legacy of Braslav Hasidism. After dealing with the issues of sexual transgressions and the lust for money, the Sixth Beggar now turns his attention to a third problematic area, the quest for wisdom. In Section One of this story, we saw that the quest for wisdom on the part of the king’s son led him down the road to heresy and atheism. In earlier stories, the same thing had happened; in the story of “The Master of Prayer,” the sect of wisdom turned to secular wisdom and heresy as well, and this was the major theme in Story Number Nine, “The Clever Man and the Simple Man.”

What is very interesting and surprising, however, is the fact that the kind of wisdom that the Sixth Beggar's tale focuses upon does not really involve intellectual knowledge at all, but rather involves the pulse and the heart. This seems to be a kind of "medicine" that combines intuition and emotional skills that are not scientific. The truth is that this does not need to surprise us at all, for Rabbi Nachman consistently has shown that in his evaluation, the greatest kind of wisdom is the wisdom of the heart, and not the wisdom of the mind or the intellect.

One very relevant example of the wisdom of the heart can be found in the tale told by the third beggar, whose tale functions as an introduction to the tale told by the Sixth Beggar. As I earlier pointed out, there is a strong affinity between these two beggars.

The third beggar began his tale by telling the children during the third day of their wedding celebration, "I can recite such marvelous parables, poems and songs that when I begin to speak, there isn't a creature on earth that does not desire to listen, and in my words there is all wisdom" (my emphasis). The third beggar proves that his words contain all wisdom by telling of a competition in which "all the wise men were sitting together and each one boasted of his wisdom." One participant boasted that he had invented the smelting of iron, another the extraction of silver, a third the process of purifying gold, a fourth the instruments of war, and a sixth gunpowder and explosives. All these wise men deal with physical and materialistic reality, that is to say, with reality that can be assessed and evaluated rationally and scientifically. In contrast, the third beggar's wisdom is metaphysical and deals with the heart — the heart of the world. He proves to them that his wisdom is far greater than theirs, for he, the third beggar, gathers all acts of true grace () and from these acts of true grace is woven time; he then gives the gift of time, day after day, to "the heart of the world." Steinsaltz (1979:180-181) explains that "the heart of the world is the *Shechinah*, the indwelling presence of God in the world ... [this] is a beautiful literary rendering of one of the basic tenets of the Kabbalah, according to which the world was created in a spontaneous act of grace, but its continued existence depends upon men raising up and returning some of the divine abundance." In the story of the third beggar, the *Shechinah* is symbolized by the image of "the heart of the world," whereas in the tale told by the Sixth Beggar, the *Shechinah* is represented by the Lost Princess whose body was

pierced and poisoned by the ten arrows. Only the Sixth Beggar possesses the wisdom that enables him to feel each of the ten kinds of pulses with his ten fingers, and thus detect the illness that is poisoning her heart. It is important to note that the kind of medicine that the Sixth Beggar “practises” is not the conventional, rational kind of medicine, for that is incapable of curing the Lost Princess, who is the heart of the world. As we shall presently see, the cure involves music.

We have finally reached the fourth and final stage or category of the Sixth Beggar’s competition. Only the Sixth Beggar can control the ten kinds of wind that play the ten kinds of melody which will heal the Lost Princess. We should remember that in each of the four stories analyzed in this thesis and which focused on the image of the Lost Princess, we encountered the symbol of the wind (). The wind was usually portrayed in these stories as a highly destructive tempest-wind: in Story Number One, the wind transported the Lost Princess to the remote fortress of the evil one located in a castle of pearl on a mountain of gold; in “The Merchant and the Pauper,” the wind appeared several times, and it caused sea-gales that shipwrecked boats as well as blowing down all the thousands of trees on the desert-island where the Lost Princess’ fiancé, the merchant’s son, was stranded; and in “The Master of Prayer,” the tempest-wind abducted the Lost Princess’ infant son. Yet the wind in all these stories was revealed to be a double-edged image since the wind inevitably was discovered to be a force for good that eventually hastened the redemption. Therefore, it is no surprise that in the story told by the Sixth Beggar, we again find the wind fulfilling a double role. On the one hand, the wind is quite negative because the “ten walls of water are the waves of the sea that ‘stood like a wall,’ and they are raised by the wind. The waves that form the walls stand there always, but it is the wind that supports them.” On the other hand, it is the wind that creates the melodies that are necessary to heal the Lost Princess in her coma-like state. These melodies apparently come from musical instruments that the wind blows through (like a flute or a recorder) or that the wind plucks the strings of (like a harp or lute). Indeed, we find in the Talmud a *midrash* that says: “An Aeolian harp [— sometimes translated as a lute or violin] used to hang above King David’s bed; each night at midnight, a north wind used to come and blow upon it and play a melody upon it; the

melody would wake up David, who would arise and study Torah until dawn” (*Berachot* 3b).

In my opinion, the third and fourth stages of the Sixth Beggar’s competition (the wisdom of the ten kinds of pulses, and the ability to control the ten kinds of the wind and thereby play the ten melodies) are intimately intertwined and interlinked. In *Likkutei Moharan* II:24, Rabbi Nachman says explicitly that the ten kinds of pulse are related to the ten kinds of song, and that both are connected to joy: “It is a great mitzvah always to be in joy, and to overcome sadness and melancholy with all of one’s strength. All illnesses that befall a person stem only from the lack of joy. For there are ten kinds of melody, and they express joy.... And these ten kinds of melody are produced by ten kinds of pulse, and they grant life. Therefore, when there is a lack of joy or there is a defect in one’s joy — joy being the expression of these ten melodies — this causes illness in the ten kinds of pulse. For all the diseases of the world are linked to the ten kinds of pulse, just as all the music of the world is linked to the ten kinds of melody.” In a similar vein, Rabbi Nathan comments that “knowing the pulse is a prerequisite for healing and for knowing which kind of song and music is needed in order to heal the sick” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Reproduction 3:1). In yet another passage, Rabbi Nathan writes that “through the ten kinds of song, it is possible to balance the ten kinds of wind. The ten winds, however, form the ten kinds of waves, which are the ten walls which surround the castle of water. Therefore, only someone who knows the ten songs can penetrate the ten walls of the castle of water” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Rosh HaShanah 6:3). Kaplan (1983:418) summarizes this point when he notes that “both song and the pulse depend on wind and breath. Therefore the energy of song gives strength to the energy of the pulse. The wind is associated with music and the pulse also upholds the walls of water. The Princess also escapes the arrows by running into these walls of water. Therefore, all four concepts in this story are interdependent, and hence all four major powers are in the hands.”

Before proceeding further in analyzing the theme of music, I wish to point out that earlier in this chapter, I stressed that the children’s seven-day wedding celebration in the covered pit seems to allude to the holiday of *Succot*. I wish to strengthen this allusion by noting that the Lost Princess’ healing process, which involves the Sixth Beggar playing the

music of joy, takes place in the castle of water. I believe that this is significant because the holiday of *Succot*, which is called in the prayer-book “the time of our rejoicing ()” and is considered in the Bible as the most joyous of all the Biblical holidays, is connected to the concept of water. In the period of time when the Temple was standing, one of the happiest festivities (which was called in Hebrew:) occurred during the seven days of *Succot* when water was drawn for the special *Succot* water-libations; these celebrations, which lasted many hours, were marked by music and orchestras and great joy.

It is also worthwhile to note that after the holiday of *Succot* ends, there begins the holiday of *Simchat-Torah*, “the rejoicing of the Torah,” which is one of the most joyous days in the Jewish calendar. This holiday celebrates the joy of completing the yearly cycle of Torah readings, and beginning it anew. Furthermore, it is possible to see a link between the “handless” Sixth Beggar and the last verses of the Torah (which are read on *Simchat-Torah*) that eulogize Moses and recall “... the mighty hand and all the awesome power which Moses displayed in the sight of all Israel.” In any case, the joy of *Succot* and *Simchat-Torah*, the joy of the children’s wedding celebrations and the joy expressed in the ten melodies of the Sixth Beggar all remind us of the words that Rabbi Nachman said before he began narrating this story: “I will tell you how people once rejoiced.”

I would like to discuss the significance of the ten melodies and the theme of music. The Lost Princess is to be healed through song and music, and this music is the music of joy. We find literally dozens of passages in *Likkutei Moharan* that deal with the importance of music, and many more passages scattered through the classical Braslav literature. At first glance it might seem that there is really little new or innovative in his attitude towards music since many earlier important and major Jewish thinkers wrote of music as an expression of *devekut* () — attachment to God. For example, Yehudah HaLevy (1080-1140), in his monumental work “*The Kuzari*” wrote: “Just as ‘supplications’ () need thought and concentration, so too does rejoicing in God and God’s commandments require thought and concentration... if you were to come to His house as a guest at His banquet, surely you would praise Him in your heart and in your speech. And should your happiness in His commandments reach the level of song and dance — then these too [song and dance] will

be part of the service of God and through them [song and dance] you shall cleave to God” (*The Kuzari*, Article Two, Section Three).

Yet when we look at this passage carefully (and similar ones in classical Jewish texts), we find that Yehudah HaLevy views song as an expression of closeness to God, whereas Rabbi Nachman consistently views song and music as the means of attaining this closeness to God. Amital (2002:4) believes that according to Rabbi Nachman, “music and dance can cause a person to open his heart in prayer, and to deepen his sense of standing in the presence of God.” Yet as I shall presently demonstrate, music has an even more pivotal role to play, for as the Sixth Beggar emphasizes, it is only music (= the ten melodies) that can heal the Lost Princess; it is music that can combat spiritual ailments and spiritual perplexity and lead to the path of faith.

In order to better understand why and how the music of the Sixth Beggar can cure the Lost Princess, I wish to examine closely an important teaching of Rabbi Nachman’s in *Likkutei Moharan* 64. Many important scholars, such as Weiss (1974:121-141), Green (1981:311-317) and Mark (2002:175-197) considered this teaching to be one of his most penetrating works; Green (1981:311) for example wrote that this long passage is “perhaps the most important single statement of Rabbi Nachman’s thoughts on the themes of faith, doubt and reason.” Unfortunately, however, both Weiss and Green dealt only with the first half of this long passage and completely ignored the latter half (which is the far more important section, in my opinion) that discusses in depth the significance of music and how the music of faith provides the antidote to heresy and disbelief. In contrast, Mark shows how vital the latter part of this teaching is.

According to *Likkutei Moharan* 64, there are two kinds of heresy (). The first kind of heresy or disbelief stems from ‘the breaking of the vessels,’ whereas the second kind comes from the *tzimtzum* and the void () that is formed by the *tzimtzum*. The spiritual dilemmas and religious questions posed by the first kind of heresy have answers, and therefore can be grappled with on the intellectual and rational level. Mark (2002:178), in his very perceptive article, writes that ‘the breaking of the vessels’ created a reality in which heretical conclusions emerge from various wisdoms, but profound study is capable of uncovering the divine spark, the ‘mind’ and the letters that are concealed in them and vitalize

them. Man must therefore examine those forms of wisdom in order to reveal the divine ‘mind’ and speech that exist within them.”

In contrast, the second kind of heresy and atheism (that stems from the) poses questions that have no answers, or to be more exact, have no rational answers that can be intellectually verbalized; therefore, a person who enters the void created by the *tzimtzum* and grapples with the wisdoms and questions that emerge from the void is in danger of falling into heresy and atheism. In my opinion, that is exactly what happened to the king’s son in Section One of “The Seven Beggars.”

Regarding this second kind of heresy, Rabbi Nachman writes (continuing in *Likkutei Moharan* 64) that “in truth it is impossible to resolve these difficulties, for the objections raised by this sort of heresy come from the void, and in that void, God’s presence is absent and there is, as it were, no God. For that reason, questions which come from the void cannot be answered, because God cannot be found there.” However, Rabbi Nachman then goes on to say that it is possible to overcome heresy, doubts and atheism by a leap of faith. “But Israel, by means of faith, transcend all ‘wisdom,’ even such heresy as is derived from the void. They believe in God without any intellectual inquiry, by the wholeness of their faith.... For this reason [the people of] Israel are called *Ivrim* () [literally: ‘they who cross over’] because through their faith they transcend all intellectuality, even the false wisdoms of this second kind of heresy that originates in the void.” Commenting on Rabbi Nachman’s approach, Mark (2002:179) notes that “the *tzimtzum* created a reality in which humanity cannot find even a divine letter or spark. In terms of human perception, God is absent from the void, which even seems to indicate that there is no God.... There is no wisdom, no intellect and no speech that is capable of providing an answer to this difficult reality that indicates that there is no God; humanity must therefore be aided by faith, that is independent of the intellect and these wisdoms, in order to transcend the void.... in certain instances, the intellect, language and speech are irrelevant for the worship and the perception of and the contact with God.... Rabbi Nachman focuses the emptiness of the void to mean emptiness from rationality, language and speech, thereby opening a window to the presence of God in another way, ... which is beyond language.”

To summarize, the created an empty space, a void () which is beyond language and speech, and therefore it is not possible to overcome heresy and disbelief through language and rationality; the path to faith demands a different route. And what is this different route? Music.

The path to faith demands music, song and melody, as Rabbi Nachman explains in *Likkutei Moharan* 64: “Know that every wisdom in the world has a special song and melody; this song is unique to this wisdom and this wisdom is derived from this melody... Belief too has a song and melody that are unique to faith... Every [different kind of religious] belief has its own song and melody, but ... just as the highest form of all the various kinds of wisdoms and faiths in the world is the belief in the light of the Infinite One who surrounds all the worlds, so too is that song above all the songs and melodies in the world. All the songs and melodies of all the wisdoms are derived from this one supreme song...”

Thus, the way to combat atheism as well as the sadness that always accompanies atheism, according to Rabbi Nachman, is through music —the music of faith. However, only a great *tzaddik* is able to master this music: “And this level of the song of faith can be attained only by the , the *tzaddik* of the generation, who is the aspect of Moses.... And know that by means of the melody of the *tzaddik*, who is of the aspect of Moses, he raises the souls from the heresy of the void into which they had descended.”

I believe that in our story, the Sixth Beggar has attained this level. Rabbi Nachman emphasizes several times that it is in merit of the fact that the Sixth Beggar knows the ten melodies that he is able to heal the Lost Princess. I believe that it is possible to interpret the ten kinds of poison that were smeared on the arrows and which penetrated her bloodstream, thereby injuring her heart, to represent the heresies of the Enlightenment and of rationalism that stem from the void created by the *tzimtzum*. Yet the “poison” of disbelief and heresy can be overcome by music, according to Rabbi Nachman; and music is but an example of the deep, non-rational elements of the human soul and the human experience. Music, the gift and the talent of the artist, can liberate the spirit of humanity, provided that the musician or the artist or the poet is a true *tzaddik* whose artistic expression is a song of holiness. I will expand upon Rabbi Nachman’s insight in the final chapter of this thesis. At

this point, I simply wish to point out that this is indeed a very innovative concept that Rabbi Nachman was the first to formulate and express in Jewish tradition.

The picture of the Sixth Beggar that Rabbi Nachman has drawn is of a master of music in many senses: he is so talented in his hands that he can apparently play ten different musical instruments all at the same time; he is a master composer who is able to weave together ten different melodies into one harmony and one symphony of faith; he is a maestro, a virtuoso conductor of a huge philharmonic orchestra, who by waving his hands is able to cause dozens of different instruments to play together.

In accordance with this approach, Rabbi Nathan wrote the following prayer: “Through Your great pity, O God, make us worthy by sending us great and true *tzaddikim* who will resemble Moses our teacher. May they have the power to approach the inquiries and questions that stem from the void (), and cancel and terminate and neutralize them completely; may these *tzaddikim* be able to extract all the poor souls who have fallen there; may they be granted the power to awaken and reveal the supreme melody and the exalted song of faith, which is the most sublime music in the world. Through the music of these *tzaddikim* may they succeed in rescuing all those souls who have fallen through their errors and confusion into the heresy of the void; for You alone know how much mercy they require” (*Likkutei Tefillot* 64).

We have seen that the story of the Lost Princess told by the Sixth Beggar parallels in many ways the Biblical account of the Exodus. It is quite striking that after the splitting of the Red Sea (paralleled in our story by the ten walls of water) and the crossing of the Red Sea by the Children of Israel, we encounter the manifestation of song: “Then sang Moses and the Children of Israel...” (Exodus 15:1). The Song of the Sea () that they sang was a song of faith, as witnesses by the previous verse (which also uses the key-word “hand”): “And Israel saw the great hand which the Lord did unto the Egyptians, and the people had awe of the Lord; and they believed in the Lord and in Moses His servant.” Rabbi Nathan comments that “the ten types of songs [of the Sixth Beggar] are included in the Song of the Sea, which, according to the Talmud [*Sanhedrin* 91b], Moses will sing in the Messianic age. Therefore, the song literally begins, ‘Then Moses will sing’ []

(Exodus 15:1). The Messiah is an aspect of Moses, and when he comes, he will sing this song which includes all of the ten songs, and the *Shechinah* will be healed.... Regarding this it is written, ‘Sing to God a new song, for He has done wonders’ (Psalms 98:1). The Song of the Sea ends, ‘God will reign forever and ever’ (Exodus 15:18). This is speaking of God’s kingdom in the Messianic age, when the attribute of *Malchut* (symbolized by the royalty of the Princess) will be rectified. Regarding this it is written, ‘Sing to God, sing to our King, for God is King of all the earth’ (Psalms 47:7 -8). The Princess is thus healed primarily through song. It is thus written, ‘Praise God with the harp, with a lyre of ten (songs); sing to Him, sing to Him a new song ... ’ (Psalms 33:2 -3)” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Worms 4:4).

As I pointed out earlier, the Sixth Beggar possesses four different kinds of prowess and power in his hands, which find expression in four different (albeit interrelated) categories. He will need all four kinds of manual dexterity in order to save the Lost Princess, as we saw when the Sixth Beggar spoke of the competition in which he participated. Let us summarize what these four abilities are:

(A) the ability to retrieve and to extract all ten kinds of arrows (which are linked to ten kinds of poison and ten kinds of sin);

(B) the ability to give by receiving all ten kinds of charity (which is linked to the ability to penetrate the ten walls of water which surround and guard the castle of water);

(C) the ability to bestow all ten kinds of wisdom when his hands are laid on the heads of the leaders of the world (these ten kinds of wisdom are also linked to ten types of pulse);

and (D) the ability to hold back and control all ten kinds of wind (which are linked to the ten kinds of song).

I believe that these four categories correspond to the four different “worlds” or dimensions of being which I discussed in Chapter Two, “Concept Number One: The World.” Category (A) [the ten arrows] corresponds to the world of action, which is the lowest of the four worlds and the one closest to sin and transgression; category (B) [the ten

walls of charity] reflects the world of formation, which is the world of emotion and is characterized by the emotion of compassion as embodied in the giving of charity; category (C) [the ten types of wisdom which are linked to the ten types of pulse] parallels the world of creation, which is the world of thought, as reflected in the ten types of wisdom; and category (D) [the ten melodies] corresponds to the world of emanation, which is beyond the limits of understanding attainable by the mind and by human reason but can be attained by the music of faith.

The number 10, which appears so many times in the Sixth Beggar's tale, is related to the ten *Sefirot*, in my opinion. The ten *Sefirot* belong to the world of emanation, of course, but they also manifest themselves in a very veiled and cloaked fashion in the lower three worlds as well. Thus, the ten arrows injure not only the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, but they injure the manifestations of all ten *Sefirot* in the world of action as well; the ten walls of charity are linked to the way the ten *Sefirot* manifest themselves in the world of formation; each one of the ten pulses corresponds to each one of the ten *Sefirot* as they are manifested in the world of creation; and of course each one of the ten melodies emerges from each one of the ten *Sefirot* in the world of emanation. We can therefore say that the Sixth Beggar must ascend to and penetrate all dimensions of being in order to heal the Lost Princess, although it is, in the end, quite literally “the music of the spheres” — that is to say, the ten melodies that comprise “the music of the light of the Infinite One” (*Likkutei Moharan* 64) that emanates from the ten *Sefirot* in the world of emanation — which is capable of awakening the Lost Princess and curing her. In fact, it is possible to view each one of the ten *Sefirot* as being a different kind of unique musical instrument that the Sixth Beggar, with his extremely dexterous and talented hands, is capable of playing simultaneously.

According to Rabbi Nathan, the Lost Princess is destined “to remain unconscious in the castle of water for hundreds of years” (*Likkutei Halachot*, the Laws of Reproduction 3:10). In the first story that Rabbi Nachman told (“The Losing of the King's Daughter), the king's chamberlain lay asleep for seventy years (despite the efforts of the Lost Princess to awaken him). In the very last story that Rabbi Nachman told, namely the Sixth Beggar's tale at the end of Section Three of “The Seven Beggars,” we have come full circle: it is the Lost Princess who lies asleep due to the poison of sin, and it is the mission of the Sixth

Beggar to awaken her. Rabbi Nathan's comment that the Lost Princess would lie dormant and unconscious for centuries is very perceptive. If the Sixth Beggar symbolizes Rabbi Nachman, this comment means that both Rabbi Nachman and Rabbi Nathan, as well as Braslav Hasidism in general, were aware that Rabbi Nachman's influence would not be immediate nor during his life-time, but generations would pass until the melody of Rabbi Nachman would succeed in awakening the Lost Princess. This throws new light on one of the last and most well-known remarks that Rabbi Nachman is recorded as having said shortly before his death: "My fire will burn until the Messiah comes." Perhaps it will burn till then, but certainly on a very low flame.

For in many ways, the ten melodies of the Sixth Beggar can be said to symbolize the stories and teachings of Rabbi Nachman himself. The Lost Princess (an image of great beauty and sanctity) lies waiting in a state of suspended animation, apparently for many years after Rabbi Nachman's death, until the ten melodies of the Sixth Beggar will begin to have their effect; and these ten melodies are the literary legacy of Rabbi Nachman preserved in his books. For it is very important to pay attention that in the story itself, Rabbi Nachman never says that the Sixth Beggar actually does in fact cure the sick Princess. He has the potential to do it, but the truth is that this potential is never realized in the story as Rabbi Nachman told it.

When we look at the historical facts, the stories of Rabbi Nachman were not appreciated by anyone outside the small circle of Braslav Hasidim during the entire period of the nineteenth century. I believe that this might have been due to the fact that (a) the main thrust of the thought and philosophy of the nineteenth century was a belief in rationalism and mankind's inevitable progress, and (b) the literature of the nineteenth century was dominated by the realism of novels that stretched on for hundreds of pages by writers like Dickens, Austen, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, James or Flaubert. Rabbi Nachman's stories were ahead of his time by generations; his stories resemble those of Kafka's or other twentieth century writers far more than any author in his lifetime. As Fruman (2001:20) perceptively wrote, "Rabbi Nachman's general world-view was that the world is a pile of broken shards that somehow survived the metaphysical catastrophe of 'the breaking of the vessels.'" Therefore, the world is basically a difficult place which is very hard to change ... This is in contrast to

the belief in man's progress characteristic of the Enlightenment, both among the Jews and the Gentiles." It was only in the latter half of the twentieth century, in the wake of two world wars and non-realistic literary trends like surrealism and stream-of-consciousness that Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times" began to be read seriously by a wider public. Like Van Gogh among the artists, so too Rabbi Nachman among the writers — he simply was a creator who was way ahead of his time. In this sense, his stories themselves can be compared to the Lost Princess, asleep in the castle of water, waiting year after year to be redeemed.

It seems to me that Rabbi Nachman was aware of this. In *Sichot HaRan* 207, he said, "Sometimes I say something to someone, and my words do not have any effect for a long, long time. This can be compared to a doctor who gives a medicine, for there are two kinds of medicine. In the first kind, the medicine acts immediately. However, there is a second kind of medicine that enters the body but which take a long time until it takes effect. Similarly, there are words that I say that seem to just lie around and do not awaken the hearer for a long time. But in the end, these words will surely be effective." On another occasion, Rabbi Nachman is quoted by Rabbi Nathan (in *Sichot HaRan* 209) as telling his disciples that "his (Rabbi Nachman's) stories and teachings were not intended only for us, but for 'for him that stands here with us today, and also for him that is not here with us today' [a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 29:14], which Rashi interpreted as meaning the generations in the distant future.... Rabbi Nachman told us, 'You must preserve for your children and your children's children my stories and teaching and lessons which I revealed to you.' He then repeated in Hebrew and in Yiddish this verse with great emotion: 'Only take heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes saw, and lest they should depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your children and your children's children' (Deuteronomy 4:9)."

The Seventh Beggar's Tale

Rabbi Nachman never revealed the tale of the Seventh Beggar, and never completed the "The Seven Beggars." The last sentences of the story are the final words of the Sixth Beggar: "With my ten fingers I can feel each of the ten kinds of pulse, and I can

heal the Princess by means of the ten kinds of melody. Thus I can heal the Princess completely, and this is the confirmation of the great power that I bear in my hands. Today I am giving you that power as my wedding gift.’ The gladness of the wedding feast was greater than ever, and all who were there were very joyful indeed.”

Nonetheless, I feel that Rabbi Nachman has left us quite a number of hints and allusions that make it possible for us to try and put the pieces of the puzzle in place, allowing us to venture an educated guess on how the story of “The Seven Beggars” might have unfolded and ended. First of all, we have seen that the apparent deformity of each beggar is not a handicap but an asset, and points to the opposite truth; thus, the first beggar is not really blind, but his eyes focus on eternity and therefore the time of the whole world is not worth a moment’s fleeting glance; the second beggar is not really deaf, but he simply does not listen to the cries of want which fill the world, etc. This being the case, it is clear that the seventh beggar, who seemingly has no feet, must actually be very talented in the use of his feet and is in fact an outstanding dancer.

Furthermore, in terms of the ‘seven shepherds’ and the seven ‘guests’ (), the seventh beggar would symbolize King David. In the Kabbalah, one of the most important qualities that characterize King David is the fact that he danced with joy before the Lord, as stressed in the Biblical narrative in II Samuel 6 (verse 6:16 especially).

Since the seventh beggar would be a consummate dancer, the main theme of his story and the gift he would bestow upon the children would involve dancing. We find a very important *midrash* dealing with the concept of dance in *VaYikrah Rabbah* 11:9: “In the future, the Holy One, blessed be He, will lead the dance of the *tzaddikim*. The *tzaddikim* will dance enthusiastically in a circle around Him, as it were, and point their finger at Him, as it were, and the dancing *tzaddikim* will recite this verse: ‘For He is God, our God forever and ever; He will lead us for eternity [=]’ (Psalms 48:15). What does [this difficult and unusual phrase] mean? Onkelous translates it as ‘atanasya’ [the Greek word for ‘eternity’] — the world which is immortal. Another meaning of is ‘two worlds:’ God will lead us both in this world and in the world to come.” (I wish to point out that there is a very similar *midrash* in the Talmud itself, in *Ta’anit* 31a, but instead of bringing a verse from the Psalms, a verse from Isaiah 25:9 is quoted as being the verse that the dancing

tzaddikim recite: “And it shall be said on that day, ‘Lo, this is our God for whom we waited, that He might save us; this is the Lord for whom we waited, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation”).

This *midrash* alludes to the future redemption, in which the music will be so beautiful and so overwhelming that the *tzaddikim* who hear this music will dance in joy in praise of God. Who are these *tzaddikim*? From Rabbi Nachman’s point of view, they certainly would include all seven beggars, and would be led by the seventh beggar. It seems that because the seventh beggar parallels the seventh day (the Sabbath), he is closely aligned to the sixth beggar who parallels Friday, which is called in Hebrew _____, “the day that ushers in the Sabbath.” Since the Sixth Beggar was a master musician, the music he plays flows into the Sabbath, and the melodies of faith that the Sixth Beggar plays on musical instruments with his talented hands cause the seventh beggar to dance in great joy and with incredible skill with his feet.

It also seems clear that the lost children who are now getting married would also join the dance of joy of the *tzaddikim*. The two children represent the Jewish people of Israel as a whole, and their wedding represents the redemption of Israel, as I discussed in my analysis of Section Two of this story. At the time of the redemption, the seven beggars’ blessings to the children in the forest (“May you be as I am”) are being completely fulfilled in their entirety and in all aspects. Thus, not only are the children great *tzaddikim* at the same level as the seven beggars (and thereby completely fulfilling the divine promise embedded in the verse: “And your people shall all be righteous — _____” [Isaiah 60:21]), but they have realized the potential invested in them by the beggars’ blessings and attained the same skills and abilities that each beggar possesses. Therefore, they are as good dancers as the seventh beggar is himself.

The 7 beggars + the 2 children = 9. Yet we have seen that throughout this story Rabbi Nachman has stressed the number 10 (the ten arrows, ten walls of water, ten melodies, etc.). It seems logical that there should be ten dancers, not nine.

Furthermore, I earlier pointed out that there seems to be a deep connection between the story of “The Seven Beggars” and “The Master of Prayer,” based on the key word:

. The beggars (in Hebrew: _____) parallel the members of “the Holy Gathering” —

_____. Therefore, just as there were ten members of “the Holy Gathering,” there should also be ten *tzaddikim* who participate in the dance of joy of the seventh beggar.

In my opinion, the tenth participant can only be the Lost Princess. And indeed, at the very end of the Sixth Beggar’s tale, the Sixth Beggar was poised to awaken her and cure her. Therefore, in the tale of the seventh beggar, the Lost Princess is finally healed and emerges from the castle of water to join all seven beggars and the two children in the dance of redemption. It should be emphasized that the Lost Princess is the one character who unequivocally appears in both of Rabbi Nachman’s last two stories (“The Master of Prayer” and “The Seven Beggars”) and who therefore demonstrates the unity pervading these two stories.

However, the tale of the seventh beggar does not end here, for we have yet to heal the king’s son and the country of heretical wisdom suffering from atheism and melancholy from Section One of “The Seven Beggars.” We saw in the story of “The Master of Prayer” that after all ten members of “the Holy Gathering” were reassembled and united, it was possible to redeem the country of wealth. Similarly, I believe that after we have all ten participants (the 7 beggars, the 2 children and the Lost Princess) joining the dance of joy of the seventh beggar and dancing to the tune of ten melodies of faith of the Sixth Beggar, it will be possible to redeem the king’s son and the country of heretical wisdom that he rules as well. We should remember that the king’s son represents humanity as a whole, so it is fitting that after the wedding of the two lost children (= the redemption of Israel), comes the redemption of all mankind.

How is the king’s son to be redeemed? I believe that Rabbi Nachman has left us a clear hint in *Likkutei Moharan* II:23, where he writes that “when people are dancing and merry, it sometimes happens that one of the dancers grabs a person who is sad, melancholy and depressed, and standing outside the circle of dancers. The dancers pull this sad person into the circle, sometimes even against his will, to be merry with them. The sad person is swept along by the dance, and he becomes happy too. We should make every effort to grasp sadness and melancholy and pull them into the dance of joy.”

I believe that all ten members of the dance of joy, dancing to the melody of faith, would pull the king’s son into the circle of dancers. Thus song and dance would help cure

the king's son. In addition, after the dance comes to a halt, I believe that each one of the seven beggars would narrate a story and a blessing ("May you be as I am") to the king's son. For as we saw in the important parable from *Hayei Moharan* 391 of a king's son who was deathly ill that I brought and which I explained on pages 213—214 of this chapter, literature (poems and stories) composed by great *tzaddikim* can also affect the soul and provide the antidote to spiritual ailments (which is the way Rabbi Nachman viewed sins and lusts like the lust for money, atheism, excessive rationalism, and depression). Literature, and song and dance as well, are all examples of one of Rabbi Nachman's most perceptive and deepest insights, namely, that the way to combat rationalism and the Enlightenment and atheism is not through logic and reason, but by choosing a completely different form of tactics: by using art to enlist beauty in order to probe and reveal and redeem the deepest recesses of the human soul. As Mark (2002:185) points out, "The ability to hear the melody and the song is the ability to come in contact with the nonverbal plane of the spirituality and sanctity inherent in the world. Song and melody are an expression of the festive and spiritual stratum of reality that does not manifest itself in prose, and cannot be formulated verbally."

However, it is my firm conviction that Rabbi Nachman would have planned one more very important event to occur before ending the saga of "The Seven Beggars." Rabbi Nachman prefaced his narrative of this story with the words, "I will tell you how people once rejoiced," and despite the joy that we have seen in the story (like the wedding of the two lost children and the return of the first six beggars, and my hypothesis regarding the dance of the *tzaddikim*), there is yet one more episode that that would reflect the greatest joy of all. The story would end with a wedding, in my opinion, but not only the wedding of the two lost children, but also the marriage of the king's son and the Lost Princess.

I believe that after both the king's son (from Section One) and the Lost Princess (from the Sixth Beggar's tale at the end of Section Three) were cured, Rabbi Nachman had planned that they should get married and that the story would end with a description of the great joy that took place at their wedding celebration. We find such a precedent at the end of the story of "The Merchant and the Pauper," when the merchant's son and the pauper's

daughter are wed after all the tribulations they had gone through. That story ended with the sentences: "... [they] were wed, and the happiness was complete. The new couple received the kingdom and the empire, and they ruled over the whole world. Amen." This (or a very similar passage) would be the last paragraph of "The Seven Beggars" as well.

Whereas the wedding of the two lost children (representing the redemption of Israel) took place in a pit covered with straw and refuse, the wedding between the king's son (who represents all of humanity, as well as sinning Adam expelled from the Garden of Eden) and the Lost Princess (who represents the *Shechinah*, *Knesset Israel*, the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, faith in God, the deepest level of the hidden Torah and the human soul) would be as festive and as dazzling as the great, lavish feast the king had made at his son's coronation (which represents the creation of man and his being given dominion over the world on the sixth day of creation), described in the first paragraph of the story of "The Seven Beggars." There would no longer be any need for concealment (which characterized the wedding of the two lost children), for the final redemption will eliminate any reason for disguise. In addition, this wedding between the king's son and the Lost Princess would constitute the great *tikkun* of 'the breaking of the vessels,' as well as causing the abrogation of God's (the hiding of God's presence in the world) and of the *tzimtzum*. The whole world would be able to hear the melody of faith, just as at the end of Story Number Eleven ("The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged") the whole world was able to hear the music of the forest.

I think it fitting to end this chapter by quoting these words, relating to the fables composed by Rabbi Nachman: "A story has great power to penetrate deep into the heart. A person may give a speech for hours and bore his audience to death with his intellectual analysis which will be immediately and totally forgotten. But if he narrates a story, the eyes of his listeners will shine like stars. And the story, if told correctly, will never be forgotten" (Taub 1996:166).

CHAPTER SEVEN:
Conclusion

This doctoral thesis has shown that the Lost Princess is a central figure in four of the most important fables in Rabbi Nachman's "Book of Stories from Ancient Times," and represents a diverse number of very important Kabbalistic and non-Kabbalistic symbols. First and foremost, in all these allegories she symbolizes the *Shechinah*, *Knesset Israel* and the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*, as I demonstrated in my analysis of "The Losing of the King's Daughter" in Chapter Three of this thesis. At the same time, she also symbolizes the Torah, and especially the deepest, most esoteric levels of the 'secret Torah' (), as we saw in Chapter Four ("The Merchant and the Pauper"). Furthermore, the Lost Princess is the

symbol of faith in God, as was shown in Chapter Five (“The Master of Prayer”). Finally, my analysis of Rabbi Nachman’s last story, “The Seven Beggars,” which appears in Chapter Six, reveals that the Lost Princess is none other than the soul as well, and the quest for the Lost Princess is an inner-directed odyssey in search of one’s own self.

I believe, however, that the image and symbol of the Lost Princess may have additional allusions as well. In this concluding chapter, I will show that the Lost Princess may allude to at least two more references: the first additional allusion refers to the Biblical image of “the daughter of Zion” (-), a poetic representation of Jerusalem, the Temple Mount and the Land of Israel; and the second additional allusion refers to the imagination. I will also discuss the use of allegory and parables by Rabbi Nachman

The Lost Princess as “Bat-Zion,” the daughter of Zion

In the Bible, different nations are sometimes symbolized poetically as being in the image of a young maiden: the daughter of Babylon (Isaiah 47:1; Jeremiah 50:42; Zechariah 2:11; Psalms 137:8); the virgin daughter of Egypt (Jeremiah 46:11); the daughter of Zidon (Isaiah 23:12); the daughter of Edom (Lamentations 4:21 and 4:22); the daughter of Tyre (Psalms 45:13); and the daughter of Assyria (Ezekiel 27:6). However, by far and away the main use of this literary device of describing a regal young woman as the symbol and the representative of a specific nation is reserved for the image of - , “the daughter of Zion.” This image is used dozens of times, as I will shortly demonstrate, to symbolize not only the Jewish people, but also the Temple, the Temple Mount, the holy city of Jerusalem, and by extension, the entire Land of Israel.

The figure of this royal young woman (representing the people of Israel and Jerusalem) is given various appellations. In the Bible, the most common name is “the daughter of Zion” (-) which appears 21 times: Isaiah 52:2 and 62:11; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:2; and 6:23; Micah 1:13; 4:8; 4:10; and 4:13; Zephaniah 3:14; Zechariah 2:14 and 9:9; Psalms 9:15; and Lamentations 1:6; 2:1; 2:4; 2:8; 2:10; 2:13; 2:18; and 4:22. She is also called “the daughter of Jerusalem” (-) seven times: 2 Kings 19:21; Isaiah 37:22; Micah 4:8; Zephaniah 3:14; Zechariah 9:9; and Lamentations 2:13 and 2:15. Fourteen times she is named “the daughter of my people” (-): Isaiah 22:4; Jeremiah 4:11; 6:26; 8:11; 8:19; 8:21; 8:22; 8:23; and 9:6; Lamentations 2:11; 3:48; 4:3; 4:6; and 4:10. Because

it is strongly linked to this appellation, I would add the very similar phrase “the virgin daughter of my people” (-) in Jeremiah 14:17. We find the expression “the virgin daughter of Zion” (-) twice: Isaiah 37:22 and 2 Kings 19:21. There is also the interesting appellation “the mount of the daughter of Zion” - in Isaiah 10:32 and 16:1. In Lamentations 1:15 we find “the virgin daughter of Judah” (-), which resembles the phrase “the daughter of Judah” (-) in Lamentations 2:2 and 2:5

A careful analysis shows that the Bible uses the term “Bat-Zion” (or one of her other names) mainly in two books: the Book of Jeremiah and the Book of Lamentations (which is traditionally ascribed to having been written by the Prophet Jeremiah after witnessing the destruction of the First Temple and the burning of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE). Indeed, the “density” of the appearance of the image of “Bat-Zion” in the Book of Lamentations is astounding; in the course of the five chapters which comprise this book, the phrase - appears eight times, and its parallel appellations, such as - or - , appear another ten times — by far the most intensive semantic field for the image of “the daughter of Zion” in the entire Bible

When we examine carefully the way the image of “the daughter of Zion” is used in the Bible, and especially in the Book of Lamentations, we see that she is basically portrayed as a royal princess who has been cast down to the ground and estranged from her Father in Heaven, prey to calamity and disaster. This closely parallels the way Rabbi Nachman portrays the Lost Princess in all four stories analyzed in “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times.” In each of these stories, the Lost Princess has lost her special status and is in a state of exile. In the allegory of “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” the Lost Princess’ exile stems from her father’s anger at her, and the plot of the story revolves around the chamberlain’s inexhaustible efforts to restore the exiled Lost Princess to her father’s court. In “The Merchant and the Pauper,” the Lost Princess loses all her splendor and is forced to undergo a series of tribulations and disguises until she is finally able to regain her regal position and magnificence at the very end of the story. In the third fable, “The Master of Prayer,” we saw that all ten members of the “Holy Gathering” () were lost, but we also saw the pivotal role and pivotal position of the Lost Princess, the seventh member of the king’s court to be rescued. In addition, I demonstrated that the mountain of fire which

is so crucial in Act V of that story is the Temple Mount (the Biblical Mt. Zion) in Jerusalem. Finally, the Sixth Beggar's Tale in the framework of "The Seven Beggars" depicts the Lost Princess as lying mortally wounded and poisoned in a state of suspended animation in the castle of water awaiting her redemption.

It seems to me, therefore, that Rabbi Nachman incorporated and developed the Biblical image of *the daughter of Zion* when he painted the portrait of the Lost Princess in the fables of "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times." Furthermore, the parallel between the Biblical "daughter of Zion" and Rabbi Nachman's Lost Princess is strengthened by the fact that both the Bible and Rabbi Nachman emphasize the fallen state of the regal young woman, and barely touch upon how she appears in the state of redemption. As I mentioned before, a careful reading of the Biblical verses which I listed on the previous page shows that "*the daughter of Zion*" is almost always described as being in mourning or in captivity, and only rarely is she described as rejoicing or being restored to her throne and her rightful position. This is exactly what happens in Rabbi Nachman's stories as well, since the Lost Princess in all the stories is portrayed mainly as being a captive or imprisoned by the forces of evil, whereas the description of her being in a state of redemption is only hinted at.

Let me be more specific. In Story Number One, only in the opening paragraph and in the final sentence of the story is the Lost Princess not in a state of exile and suffering. In "The Merchant and the Pauper," there are far more sentences and paragraphs that describe the Lost Princess in her state of disgrace (kidnapped by the pirate and afterwards living on the desert island) than in a state of grace. In "The Master of Prayer," the Lost Princess is found and restored to her husband, and then reunited with her son and parents, only towards the end of Act Four. Finally, in "The Seven Beggars," the Lost Princess is described (in the Sixth Beggar's Tale) only in her state of fall and exile: (a) when she is married to the evil king; (b) when she makes a desperate attempt to escape; and (c) when she is wounded and poisoned and lying in a coma. In this story, she is never depicted in a state of restoration or redemption.

Taking all this into account, I believe that we may conclude that the Lost Princess parallels the Biblical "*Bat-Zion*" (Jerusalem and the Temple) in her state of destruction. It is therefore feasible to say that the Lost Princess in Rabbi Nachman's stories may be

interpreted as being a symbol of - waiting for redemption, just as the destroyed city of Jerusalem in the Bible is described as waiting for the return and the ingathering of the exiled Jewish people. This is reinforced when we recall that the very last image of the Lost Princess that Rabbi Nachman left us with is the image of the Lost Princess lying in a coma and seriously wounded in the castle of water, in the Sixth Beggar's Tale. This may be his vision of the ruined city of Jerusalem and the desolate Land of Israel needing to be rebuilt and redeemed.

Moreover, we must remember that one of the most fundamental meanings of the image of the Lost Princess is that she is a representative of the *Shechinah*. This can and should be linked to the traditional Jewish belief that the *Shechinah* never left the Temple Mount, even after the destruction of the Temple. Thus, we can interpret the castle of water in which the Lost Princess (= "Bat-Zion" = the *Shechinah*) is both entombed and kept alive as symbolizing the Temple Mount itself.

In Chapter Five of this thesis, when I analyzed Act V of "The Master of Prayer," I discussed the importance of the Temple and the Temple Mount in Rabbi Nachman's understanding of redemption. It is of course quite interesting to see that whereas in "The Master of Prayer" the Temple Mount is symbolized by a mountain of fire, in the "The Seven Beggars" it is symbolized by a castle of water. Indeed, the waters in the castle of water (which encompass the Lost Princess) may be interpreted in this case as coming from the tears of suffering which are so great that they flow like a river or the sea. We see this clearly in three verses from the Book of Lamentations: "What shall I take to witness for you? What shall I liken to you, O daughter of Jerusalem? What shall I compare you to, virgin daughter of Zion? For your calamity is as great as the sea; who can heal you?" (Lamentations 2:13); "Their heart cried unto the Lord: 'O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night; give yourself no respite; let not the apple of your eye cease'" (Lamentations 2:18); and "Arise, cry out in the night, at the beginning of the watches; pour out your heart like water before the presence of the Lord; lift up your hands to Him for the lives of your young children who faint because of hunger in the corner of every street" (Lamentations 2:19).

In conclusion, I believe that it is possible to say that the sleeping Lost Princess in the castle of water corresponds to the slumbering *Shechinah*, who in turn represents the ruined and almost mortally wounded Temple, hidden deep down in a state of paralysis within the depths of the Temple Mount.

I would just like to add that this approach is quite consistent with Rabbi Nachman's general attitude regarding the importance of the Land of Israel. Unlike almost all of his Hasidic contemporaries, Rabbi Nachman did make a long pilgrimage to the Land of Israel in 1798, as I discussed in Chapter One; he believed that this was a pivotal development in his own spiritual growth. "Wherever I go, I am going to the Land of Israel," Rabbi Nachman told his Hasidim (*Sichot HaRan* 128). On another occasion, Rabbi Nachman noted, "Anyone who wants to be a true Jew, and ascend from rung to rung, can achieve this only through the sanctity of the Land of Israel" (*Likkutei Moharan* 20).

The Lost Princess as the embodiment of the imagination

In his earlier writings, Rabbi Nachman conceived of the imagination (in Hebrew: הַיְחַוּוּת) as a force within the human personality that can often create dangerous illusions and delusions. As Green (1981:341) points out, "In several of [Rabbi] Nachman's earlier teachings the term *medammeh* (an ellipse of the phrase *koach ha-medammeh*, the imaginative faculty) has a decidedly negative connotation.... In the early [writings of Rabbi] Nachman there is no identification or link between faith and imagination.... It would seem that no distinction exists in [the early Rabbi] Nachman's mind between 'imagination' and 'illusion,' *medammeh* being the term used to convey both of these meanings at once." However, by the year 1805 we find that his attitude towards the imagination changed dramatically. A close and careful examination of his writings between 1805 and his death in 1810 (this period of time includes of course the four and a half years in which he composed all 13 fables that comprise "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times") shows that the imagination is now depicted in an extremely positive light, and it plays a major role in the quest for religious faith. In a very important discourse that appears in *Likkutei Moharan* II:8, Rabbi Nachman writes explicitly that "faith can exist only where the intellect (הַיְחַוּוּת) ends. Faith has nothing to do with rationality. Faith relies mainly upon the imagination, for when the intellect understands something, we cannot use the word 'faith.' Thus, faith exists

when the intellect ceases; when the mind is unable to comprehend something, all that remains is the imagination, and it is then necessary to have faith; at that moment, man needs faith. Therefore, imagination is the cornerstone of faith.”

After explaining the centrality of the imagination for faith, Rabbi Nachman then goes one step further in this same teaching and makes a link between imagination and prophecy. He writes, “Imagination is crucial to prophecy, and prophecy leads to the restoration of faith... When the imagination is purified and rectified, prophecy expands. This is the significance of the verse (Hosea 12:11): ‘I have also spoken to the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and I am imagined by the prophets’ — [this is the way Rabbi Nachman seems to have understood this Biblical verse, but on page 286, I will show that this verse can be interpreted and translated differently]... The imagination was rectified and elevated by the prophets... Prophecy grows out of the imagination, that is to say, prophecy emerges after the imagination is purified and rectified. For the prophets had a purified and unblemished imagination... Therefore, it is mandatory to seek out a true leader of Israel even in our times, a *tzaddik* of the generation, and to adhere to him, for the great leader has a spirit of prophecy. Even now, despite the fact that true and full prophecy no longer exists, still the leader of the generation does possess an aspect of prophecy, a different spirit (), which is not present among ordinary individuals. This ‘different spirit’ is an aspect of the holy spirit (), which is an aspect of prophecy, even though it is not full prophecy and he cannot predict the future... Anyone who adheres to and learns from such a great leader will gain great insight into true faith and true belief in God, because his [the leader’s] imagination has been rectified and purified. Thus, when the rectified imagination finds expression, so too does the holy faith find expression” (*Likkutei Moharan* II:8).

We see clearly from this passage that Rabbi Nachman came to the conclusion that the imagination has a pivotal and prophetic role to play in the quest for faith. He conceived of the imagination as a weapon to be used in the battle against atheism (and consequently, in favor of belief in God) in the period of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation that were engulfing European Jewry in the wake of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Wars. Furthermore, he envisioned himself as one of the great leaders of his generation, who would

use the tool of the imagination through the stories he composed and which conveyed the ideas of Judaism and the Kabbalistic traditions. He saw himself reaching the level of the Biblical prophets who fought for God in Biblical times during those periods of time when many of the Israelites had turned their back on the God of Israel and worshipped idolatry; he even went so far as to claim that he was able to predict the future, as had been done by the great prophets of the Bible who had “rectified and purified” their imagination. Rabbi Nachman records that on October 6, 1809, Rabbi Nachman declared: “My stories and teachings are very great, and they come from the holy spirit (). It is possible to know the future if one learns my stories and teachings well, for my stories and teachings predict the future” (*Sichot HaRan* 196). This date is significant because this declaration was said exactly one week before Rabbi Nachman related Story Number Eleven, “The Son of the King and the Son of the Maidservant who were Exchanged,” which together with “The Master of Prayer” and “The Seven Beggars” are Rabbi Nachman’s longest and most intricate stories; they were all composed and narrated in the last year of his life.

Different scholars have commented on the importance Rabbi Nachman attributes to the imagination. For example, Ancori (1991:111) notes that “the preference of the ‘rational’ over the ‘emotional’ aspects of the personality is a personal form of exile.... Rabbi Nachman gave a central role to the imagination in the nurture of faith.” Many years previously, in the early part of the twentieth century, the extremely perceptive author and thinker Hillel Zeitlin discussed precisely this point. In an article first published in Warsaw in 1936, Zeitlin (1965a:308-309) wrote that “the foundation of faith lies in the imagination, according to Rabbi Nachman. However, there are different levels of imagination. There are people whose imagination is intermixed with the coarse and vulgar, but there is also the rarer kind of imagination that is pure and clear; such was the imagination of the prophets.... The imagination is a creative force, comprehensive and inclusive.... It is impossible, in Rabbi Nachman’s opinion, to attain God and divine insight only through the intellect. Indeed, it is only through the means of a purified and sanctified imagination that Man can portray the sublime realities of the divine. Therefore, it is futile and vain for rationalist thinkers to believe that the use of the intellect will be the vehicle to reach God; the human intellect is ineffective, covered and hidden a thousand-fold; only by means of the imagination can God be reached. The prophets were the greatest teachers of faith because they had a more perfect

imagination — an imagination that was pure and purified.... According to Rabbi Nachman, faith must be linked to the emotions of sanctity. The imagination of a holy man must be linked to an unending yearning for divine beauty and sublime splendor, which are the yearnings of holiness. Rabbi Nachman's conclusion was clear: a person who seeks to plant faith in the hearts of human beings must influence, and be influenced by, the imagination and emotion. There were three ways to do this, in Rabbi Nachman's opinion: (a) through the art of music and sacred melody; (b) through the beauty of nature; and (c) through the art of literature, as Rabbi Nachman demonstrated in the stories he composed.... Rabbi Nachman answers the questions of what is the power of faith, and what is the core of its essence, content and foundation in the soul, by saying that faith comes neither from the mind nor [even] the heart, but rather from the power of the imagination.”

We find that Rabbi Nachman's greatest disciple, Rabbi Nathan, expressed this in one of the prayers he wrote, based on Rabbi Nachman's teachings: “May You make us worthy through Your great compassion, O God, to adhere to the true *tzaddikim* who possess the aspect of the spirit of prophecy, the true holy spirit, so that through them we may merit the ability to rectify () and purify our imagination. Do not let the imagination confuse us through false illusions and delusions, God forbid. Let us be worthy of a sanctified and clear imagination that has become truly rectified, so that we may attain full and complete faith in You ... and bring us quickly to the Land of Israel.... Make me worthy to hear the song of redemption which will be sung in the future, final redemption — this holy and awesome song” (*Likkutei Tefilot* II:8). Rabbi Nathan brings the same idea in his *magnus opus*, *Likkutei Halachot* (The Laws of Blessings for Smells and the Thanksgiving Blessing 4:17) as well: “Our master [=Rabbi Nachman] explained that all the praises and descriptions by which we praise and describe God, may He be praised, all stem from the imagination.... All the names, appellations, titles and praises of the Lord, may He be blessed, they all stem from the sanctified imagination.... It is from the power of the imagination that Man achieves the ability to believe, that is to say, to acquire true faith.”

Mark (2002:196) summarizes the central and critical role that the imagination plays in Rabbi Nachman's thought when he writes that “the imagination is the force by which Man is capable of action, even when reason has departed. Furthermore, it is specifically when

reason has departed that the imagination ascends and replaces it. Belief emerges by the power of the imagination ... [for] the power of imagination remains with a person when reason and intellect have left.... The imaginative faculty within Man, which is expressed through religious faith, relates to the imaginative faculty in the Creation.” A little earlier in the same article, Mark (2002:195) takes note of Rabbi Nachman’s positive assessment of the imagination when he writes that “the inability to understand God, of which Rabbi Nachman speaks, relates only to the way of the intellect and rational wisdom, whereas the way of the imagination and its power to enhance faith and prophecy, as well as song, make it possible for us to attain some understanding of Him, according to Rabbi Nachman.”

I wish to develop this further, by first referring to an important insight that Weiner makes. Weiner (1969:337) feels that if we take an overall view of the different components that comprise Judaism, mysticism should be considered “the ‘salt’ which helps make the ‘meat’ of Jewish law [= the *halachah*] more palatable; that is to say, there can be no doubt that the Law is the major substance of Jewish existence. Salt without meat is altogether valueless. On the other hand, meat without salt lacks not only taste but also lacks the quality of preservation which salt gives to meat. Men need both. This is the position of classical Judaism, but Rabbi Shneur Zalman [of Liadi, the first *rebbe* of Lubavitcher Hasidism and Rabbi Nachman’s contemporary and friend] and other mystically inclined thinkers have made a point about the relationship between salt and meat which is of great importance.... It appears, they say, that the latter-day generations require far more salt than did the earlier ones. It is as if the appetites and sensitivities which were once healthy have become jaded. The deep truths and illuminations which once came naturally and easily to men in Biblical or even Rabbinic society are no longer perceived by our sickened and degenerate spiritual organs.... It is the spiritual illness of the later generations which make it necessary to receive a stronger dose of mystical teachings.”

Using Weiner’s approach as our starting point, I believe we can develop this analogy even further. If Jewish law (the *halachah*) is the meat of the Jewish diet and the Kabbalah its salt, as Weiner suggests, it seems to me that according to Braslav Hasidism, we are entitled to use the term “sugar” to describe the products of the religious imagination,

such as the works of literature exemplified by “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” composed by Rabbi Nachman. After all, Rabbi Nachman saw the “rectified and purified imagination” as being an important new component in the diet of the modern Jew — especially the modern Jew who was being challenged by the “bitterness” (as Rabbi Nachman saw it) of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. Weiner points out that in modern times, our spiritual needs and our spiritual diet have changed. However, whereas Weiner believes that the modern appetite is jaded, I think it is more accurate to say that in earlier generations the imagination was neglected because it was not necessary; in a traditional society, a Jew remained faithful to his religious heritage and national identity without the need to digest the “sugar” and the “sweets” of the imagination. In my opinion, it is remarkable that Rabbi Nachman came to the realization that the sweetness of the imagination could and should be utilized as a vital nutritional supplement for contemporary and future generations of Jews; Rabbi Nachman thus became a pioneer in the field of modern Jewish religious literature.

At several points in this thesis I cited different parables and similes that Rabbi Nachman and Rabbi Nathan composed in which the *tzaddik* is compared to a doctor, and his stories are compared to medicine. I would like to go one step further and compare the *tzaddik* to an apothecary or pharmacist. When a pharmacist prepares a prescription, he must be very careful to mix the correct and precise proportion of the right ingredients and components in order for the prescribed medicine to work effectively. Furthermore, the same ingredients sometimes need to be put into the same medicine in varying proportions and in different dosages; for example, the proportions will be different if the same medicine is to be administered to an infant or to a full-grown man, to a nursing mother or to an elderly woman. In a similar fashion, we can view Rabbi Nachman as a pharmacist who sought to measure, weigh and add the ingredient of the imagination to the medicine of Judaism in order to help heal or inoculate those Jews who were “infected” (as he saw it) with the spiritual ailments of atheism and rationalism; the imagination would be a potent ingredient in the medicine that would make them spiritually healthy and well. Piekartz (1972:115) seems to be hinting at this when he says that in his opinion, Rabbi Nachman utilized the Rabbinic dictum: “Words of Torah are poor in one passage, but rich in another” (Palestinian Talmud, *Rosh HaShanah*, Chapter 2, *Halachah* 5) to justify his approach that the *tzaddik* could

somewhat rearrange the words and stories of the Torah to a certain degree in order to make them more accessible to his contemporaries.

Rabbi Nachman was of course not the first great writer to understand and speak of the importance of the imagination. Shakespeare, for example, felt that it was the imagination that revealed the deeper truths of existence to humanity and which enabled humanity to perceive deep spiritual insights. In one example out of many, there is a famous passage in the play *The Tempest* (one of whose central themes is the vital role of the imagination), in which Shakespeare writes that “We are such stuff\ That dreams are made on” (IV.i.156-157). Goddard (1968:166-169) writes that according to Shakespeare, “imagination’s voice is ever soft, gentle and low, and the din of the world easily makes it inaudible. It is the faculty by which alone man apprehends reality... Reason is what we have to fall back on when imagination fails — as we have to fall back on touch when eyesight fails.”

The Lost Princess represents the imagination. The forces of rationalism seemed to threaten and imprison the imagination, and therefore the figure of the Lost Princess (= the imagination) is portrayed as being held in captivity, or imprisoned, or seriously wounded, or in a state of coma in Rabbi Nachman’s stories. Yet in the end, the imagination, like the Lost Princess, will finally be redeemed.

It is a historical fact that during the entirety of the nineteenth century and the early decades of the twentieth, Rabbi Nachman’s stories had little impact outside the small circle of Braslav Hasidism. It has only been in the last hundred years (and especially the last thirty or forty) that wider circles of academic scholars on the one hand, as well as the wider public and writers and poets on the other, have begun to study seriously and appreciate Rabbi Nachman’s thought and stories. Therefore, I wish to suggest that the Lost Princess in Rabbi Nachman’s stories represents not only the imagination in general, but specifically personifies Rabbi Nachman’s literary tales in particular. Just as the Lost Princess in the Sixth Beggar’s tale lay unconscious and in a state of hibernation in a castle of water, so did all of the fables found in Rabbi Nachman’s “Book of Stories from Ancient Times” lie in a state of dormancy for many decades after his death. It seems to me that Rabbi Nachman felt intuitively and prophetically that his stories would remain in a state of suspended animation for a long, long

time. Rabbi Nathan tells us that “Rabbi Nachman said that his teachings, stories and homilies are intended not only for us, but are intended for future generations, in accordance to Rashi’s commentary to the verse: ‘Neither with you alone do I make this covenant and this oath, but with him who stands here with us today before the Lord our God, as well as with him who does not yet stand with us here today’ (Deuteronomy 29:13-14). Several times he told us this matter, and once he exclaimed explicitly: ‘Hand down to your children and your children’s children my stories and my teachings’” (*Sichot HaRan* 209). We know that on his deathbed, Rabbi Nachman told his crying Hasidim, “My fire will burn till the coming of the Messiah.” Perhaps that may be true, but for many decades and generations this fire burned on a very low flame.

Like many great artists, Rabbi Nachman really preceded his time and was not appreciated by most of his contemporaries, just as Van Gogh’s paintings or the music of Mozart and Bach were not evaluated as being exceptional during their lifetimes; only later generations appreciated their genius. I believe that Rabbi Nachman suffered a similar fate, and I think we can understand why if we pay attention to the fact that the main thrust of nineteenth century thought was based on the belief in the steady and harmonious progress of humanity. In literature, the fundamental trend was realism and naturalism, as we find in the novels of Balzac and Flaubert in France, Dickens and Jane Austen in England, Mark Twain and Henry James in America, and Tolstoy and Dostoevsky in Russia. In contrast, Rabbi Nachman’s tales are surrealistic, symbolic and full of fantasy, as well as dream-like (if not sometimes nightmarish); they are far more akin to the stories of Kafka written a hundred years after Rabbi Nachman’s death. Fruman (2001:20) perceptively points out that “according to Rabbi Nachman’s general world-view, the world is a pile of shattered shards; ... it is basically a hard world which can be changed only with great difficulty.” This attitude to the world as being fragmentary and elusive stands in sharp contrast to the music, art and literature of the nineteenth century, the optimistic century that had no doubt that humanity was steadily and inevitably advancing towards a world of reason, liberalism and reform. Only in the twentieth century does the perception of the world as being “choppy” and of being fundamentally irrational and illogical find vivid expression not only in the stories of Kafka, but also in the art of Picasso, the music of Ives and Schoenberg, and the plays of Becket and Ionescu. It is no wonder therefore that the generations that lived after two

world wars in the twentieth century could more readily identify with Rabbi Nachman's stories, and search for meaning in them and through them.

The Use of Allegory and Parable in Rabbi Nachman's Literary Legacy

I would also like to comment on the use of allegory and parable which lies at the heart of the four stories analyzed in this thesis, and indeed of all thirteen fables that comprise "The Book of Stories from Ancient Times." The English words "allegory" and "fable" are both of Greek origin. There are several Hebrew words used in traditional and classic Jewish texts for parable and/or allegory: *parable* and *allegory*. The most widely-used Hebrew word for allegory in Rabbi Nachman's writings is *parable*, which comes from the Hebrew root *par* - *par* ("to be similar"), and is used in modern Hebrew to mean the imagination exclusively; it is indeed fascinating that in traditional texts, the same word "*par*" can be used to refer to both allegory and the imagination.

On page 279 of this thesis, in the very important passage from *Likkutei Moharan* II:8 which speaks of the link between prophecy and the imagination, I brought the key verse from Hosea 12:11 which Rabbi Nachman interpreted as meaning: "I have also spoken to the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and I am imagined by the prophets -

." However, we find that the classical Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages (Rashi, the Radak and Ibn-Ezra) understood this verse to mean: "I have also spoken to the prophets, and I have multiplied visions; and I have used allegories by means of the prophets." Indeed, this is exactly the way that Maimonides interprets this verse when he brings it in his Introduction to "The Guide of the Perplexed," which is the most important source in all of Jewish literature that analyzes and deals with the issues of allegory and parable. Because of the importance of this passage for understanding Rabbi Nachman's approach to allegory and parable in his "Book of Stories from Ancient Times" in general and his use of the image of the Lost Princess in particular, I would like to quote the relevant passage [in the excellent translation into English by Professor Shlomo Pines (1974:10-12)]:

"Know that the key to the understanding of all that the prophets, peace be on them, have said, and to the knowledge of the truth, is an understanding of their parables, of their importance, and of the meaning of the words in them. You know that God, may He be exalted, has said: 'And I have used allegories by means of the prophets' (Hosea 12:11)....

The Sage has said: ‘A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings [*maskiyyot* —] of silver’ (Proverbs 25:11). Hear now an elucidation of the thought that he has set forth. The term *maskiyyot* denotes filigree trceries; I mean to say, trceries in which there are apertures with very small eyelets, like the handiwork of silversmiths.... The Sage accordingly said that a saying uttered with a view to two meanings is like an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes. Now see how marvelously this dictum describes a well-constructed parable. For he says that in a dictum that has two meanings — he means an external one and an internal one — the external one ought to be as beautiful as silver, while its internal meaning ought to be more beautiful than the external one, the former being in comparison to the latter as gold is to silver. Its external meaning also ought to contain in it something that indicates to someone considering it what is to be found in its internal meaning, as happens in the case of an apple of gold overlaid with silver filigree-work having very small holes. When looked at from a distance or with imperfect attention, it is deemed to be an apple of silver; but when a keen-sighted observer looks at it with full attention, its interior becomes clear to him, and he knows that it is gold. The parables of the prophets, peace be on them, are similar.”

Maimonides’ analysis of the verse from Proverbs 25:11 is very enlightening and perceptive. Both the external and the inner meanings of a parable or allegory must be meaningful and beautiful, according to Maimonides. However, in a well-constructed parable, the reader discovers that beyond the external meaning or layer (= the silver filigree-work) there is an even more beautiful and glittering core (= the apple of gold), which is even more precious.

The Rabbinic Sages were well aware of this as well. We find in the very beginning of *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* (the midrashic anthology to the Book of Canticles) that there are several parables that speak about the importance of parables! (Indeed, Maimonides even brings some of them in “The Guide of the Perplexed”). We read, for example, the following passage: “Our Rabbis say: ‘Let not the parable be considered as being of little value in your estimation, since by means of a parable a person can understand the words of the Torah. To what may this be compared? To a king who lost gold or a precious pearl inside of his house, which can be found only by lighting a wick worth a penny [literally, an ‘assarius,’ a

very small Roman coin]. So, too, the parable should not be underestimated, since by means of a parable a person attains the words of the Torah” (*Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:8). Commenting on this parable, Hefter (2000:308) asks, “How does the *mashal* [— parable] help us arrive at the true meaning of the words of the Torah? The *mashal* itself is compared to an inexpensive wick, with which the king’s lost precious items can be found. In the *nimshal*, the Torah is the precious object lost somewhere in the dark. One who is in search of the Torah cannot find it without the light. The inner meaning of the Torah eludes him and remains hidden. The *mashal*, therefore, must be seen as valuable in and of itself, regarded as the light revealing the significance of the Torah, without which one would remain forever groping in the dark.”

Rabbi Nachman seems to have grasped this very well. On page 280, I wrote that Rabbi Nachman realized that he could use the power and richness of his imagination as a powerful weapon in the battle for faith and against atheism in the wake of the Enlightenment and the Emancipation. Rabbi Nachman channeled his imagination into the art and vehicle of literature; even more specifically, into narrative prose; even more specifically, into allegories. Indeed, it is no wonder that the term he uses for the concept of the imagination () stems from the same root in Hebrew () as the word for allegory: , as I have pointed out.

Rabbi Nachman became a master literary craftsman who perfected the traditional art of telling a ; instead of a short parable of only several sentences (of which we find hundreds, if not thousands, of examples throughout Rabbinic and medieval Jewish texts), he developed the allegory into stories and fables that went on for dozens of pages, as we have seen in this thesis. The four stories of the Lost Princess from “The Book of Stories from Ancient Times” are an outstanding exemplification of the verse from Proverbs 25:11 as clarified and elucidated by Maimonides in his Introduction to “The Guide of the Perplexed;” in other words, each story of the Lost Princess is as intricate and as beautiful as a silver filigree, but beneath each story lies a deeper inner meaning waiting to be analyzed and deciphered. When this inner meaning is uncovered, an “apple of gold” is also revealed. Accordingly, I have tried to show in this thesis both the silver and the gold that adorn the Lost Princess.

I wrote earlier that Rabbi Nachman in fact preceded his time, and that the nineteenth century was not ready to accept Rabbi Nachman's approach that there are non-rational layers of reality and meaning that more accurately express man's position in the world. These layers penetrate deeper than conventional logic to reveal the core of humanity's existence.

One modern poet who appreciated Rabbi Nachman's insight was Zbigniew Herbert, a Polish poet and religious Roman Catholic who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1996. One of the most important figures in contemporary European literature, Herbert has written many poems that focus on an alter-ego whom he calls Mr. Cogito. "Cogito" is Latin, of course, for "I think," and alludes to human knowledge, reason and rationality; in his "Mr. Cogito" poems, Herbert presents Mr. Cogito as a rationalist and thinking individual who survived the Second World War and witnessed the atrocities of the Nazis and their collaborators committed during the Holocaust. Mr. Cogito also underwent the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe, as well as seeing the moral bankruptcy and ethical emptiness of the West. Accordingly, the Mr. Cogito poems are characterized by disillusionment with the false illusion of progress and the unrealized ideals of modern Western civilization, as well as a quest for deeper and more long-lasting values.

One of the Mr. Cognito poems deals specifically with Rabbi Nachman, and is, in my opinion, one of Zbigniew Herbert's finest poems (Herbert 1995:19-20).

MR. COGITO SEEKS ADVICE

by Zbigniew Herbert

So many books dictionaries
obese encyclopedias
but no one to give me advice
they explored the sun
the moon the stars
they lost me

my soul
refuses the consolation
of knowledge

so it wanders at night
on the roads of the fathers

and look

the small town of Braslav
among the black sunflowers

this place which we abandoned
this place which shouts

it is the sabbath
as always on the sabbath
a new heavens appear

— I'm looking for you *rebbe*

— he isn't here —
say the Hasidim
he is in the world of Sheol

— he had a beautiful death
say the Hasidim
— very beautiful
as if he passed
from one corner
to another corner
all black
he had in his hand
a flaming Torah

— I'm looking for you *rebbe*

— behind which firmament
did you hide your wise ear

— my heart hurts me *rebbe*
— I have troubles

perhaps Rabbi Nachman
could give me advice
but how can I find him
among so many ashes

In this poem, Herbert (alias Mr. Cogito) begins by looking at books like dictionaries and encyclopedias that are repositories of factual knowledge, and feels disappointment because all this wealth of rational, scientific knowledge and facts will not and cannot help him solve his spiritual unrest and existentialist dilemmas, or deal with his “troubles,” that is to say, his loneliness and his need for consolation. He returns to the world of tradition (“the

roads of the fathers”), and finds Rabbi Nachman’s town of Braslav and the memory of the Jewish Sabbath, when and where “a new heavens appear.” But Rabbi Nachman is no longer there; he is dead, like all the Jews who were killed in the Holocaust.

Although I think that this is a very powerful poem, I must disagree with the final stanza. I take issue with Herbert when he writes that it is no longer possible to find Rabbi Nachman, murdered in the Holocaust like all the Jews of Poland, Russia, the Ukraine and the rest of Europe. All that is left of him is his ash, mixed with the ash of all the other slaughtered Jews.

I disagree with Zbigniew Herbert because it seems to me that as long as there are people who read Rabbi Nachman’s stories, Rabbi Nachman is not totally dead, and his ideas, his thoughts and his characters live on. As long as his stories are read, the Lost Princess breathes. She may be imprisoned in a castle of pearl atop a mountain of gold; she may be kidnapped by a pirate and disguised; she may be sitting next to a sea of milk and crying for the Messiah; she may be wounded and poisoned and asleep in a coma in a castle of water. But as long as readers think of her and empathize with her fate, the Lost Princess lives, as does Rabbi Nachman. And like Rabbi Nachman, she too dreams of redemption.

APPENDIX ONE:

An English translation of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav’s story: “The Losing of the King’s Daughter,” translated by Adin Steinsaltz and Yehuda Hanegbi in “The Tales of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav” (Northvale, New Jersey, USA 1993), pages 3-11

APPENDIX TWO:

An English translation of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav's story: "The Merchant and the Pauper," translated by Adin Steinsaltz and Yehuda Hanegbi in "The Tales of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav" (Northvale, New Jersey, USA 1993), pages 23-50

APPENDIX THREE:

An English translation of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav's story: "The Master of Prayer,"
translated by Adin Steinsaltz and Yehuda Hanegbi in "The Tales of Rabbi Nachman of
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APPENDIX FOUR:

An English translation of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav's story: "The Six Beggars," translated
by Adin Steinsaltz and Yehuda Hanegbi in "The Tales of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav"
(Northvale, New Jersey, USA 1993), pages 219-251

GLOSSARY

Ari, the (): Rabbi Yitzchak Luria (1534- 1572), the most important Jewish mystic of the sixteenth century, and the dominant figure in the important Kabbalistic center in Zefat, Israel which created the Lurianic Kabbalah ()

Asiyah: see ‘world of action’

Atzilut: see ‘world of emanation’

Baal Shem Tov, the (- -), also known as the *Besht* (): Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (c.1700-1760), the founder of the Hasidic movement; Rabbi Nachman’s great-grandfather

Beriyah: see ‘world of creation’

‘breaking of the vessels’ (): an important concept in the Lurianic

- Kabbalah; after God created the world, His infinite light was too potent and too powerful for the created world ('the vessels') to contain, and they burst
- chaya* (): the fourth and next to the highest component of the human soul, rooted in the world of emanation
- devekut* (): 'cleaving' to God; being close to God
- derash* (): the second, homiletic level of understanding the Torah or a Biblical verse; the Talmudic and Aggadic interpretation
- Ein-Sof* (-): literally, 'the Infinite One;' a Kabbalistic name for God
- Frank, Jacob (1726-1791): a false messiah who lived in Poland; his followers were called *Frankists*, and their movement was called *Frankism*
- halachah* (): Jewish law and the legal traditions of Judaism; the legal sections of Rabbinic literature
- Hasid () [plural: Hasidim]: an adherent of Hasidism (), the pietistic and mystic movement of Judaism founded in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth century by the *Baal-Shem-Tov*
- hitbodedut* (): a form of Jewish meditation in which the mind isolates itself from any kind of distraction and focuses on God; according to Rabbi Nachman, it must be verbal, and the practitioner must speak to God aloud in his/her native language
- Kabbalah () [adjective: Kabbalistic]: the traditions and teachings of Jewish mysticism
- kelipot* (): the external, outer husks of impurity
- Knesset Yisrael* (): the community and union of the Jewish people in its entirety and its spiritual sense; the communal soul of Israel; often considered to be a manifestation of the *Shechinah*
- Malchut* () [usually translated as 'Sovereignty' or 'Dominion']: the lowest of the ten *sefirot* in the world of emanation; often considered to be a manifestation of the *Shechinah*
- midrash* (): a homiletic interpretation of a Biblical verse or passage, usually by the Rabbinic Sages; the literature (often in the form of an anthology or collection) of such homiletic passages

- mitzvah* () [plural: *mitzvot*]: a Biblical or Rabbinic commandment
- nefesh* (): the lowest and most fundamental component of the human soul, which is rooted in the world of action; often translated as ‘the animal soul’
- neshama* (): the third component of the human soul, which is rooted in the world of creation; often translated as ‘the divine soul’
- niggun* (): melody, music
- Pardes* () [literally, ‘orchard’]: usually refers to the ‘orchard’ of mystical knowledge and teachings
- peshat* (): the literal meaning of the Torah, or of a Biblical verse
- Rashi*: Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchak (1040-1105), the most important Jewish commentator on the Bible and Talmud in the Middle Ages
- rebbe*: the leader of a Hasidic group; when used by Braslav Hasidim, the term ‘the *Rebbe*’ always refers to Rabbi Nachman of Braslav
- remez* (): the third level of understanding the Torah or a Biblical verse
- ruach* (): the second component of the human soul, which is rooted in the world of formation
- Sabbatean, Sabbatian*: a person who believed that Shabbatai Zvi was the Messiah
- Sabbateanism, Sabbatianism*: the movement that believed that Shabbatai Zvi was the Messiah
- Sefirah* () [plural: *sefirot*]: the ten divine manifestations in the world of emanation which are the vehicles of expression through which God reveals His will and His attributes
- seraph* () [plural: *seraphim*]: the angelic creatures who inhabit the world of creation
- Shabbatai Zvi (1626-1716): a false messiah who lived in Turkey and eventually converted to Islam
- Shechinah*, the (): the presence of God that dwells immanent in the world; the feminine aspect of God; often identified with *Knesset Yisrael*, and with the *Sefirah* of *Malchut*
- Shimon Bar-Yochai, Rabbi: a leading rabbi and Jewish mystic who lived in the Land of Israel in the second century C.E.

Shulchan Aruch, the (): the standard code of Jewish law, written by Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575), and now usually accompanied by the glosses of Rabbi Moshe Isserles (c.1520 - 1572)

Sippurei Ma'asiot (): Rabbi Nachman's 13 'Stories from Ancient Times'

sod (): the fourth and highest level of understanding the Torah; the Kabbalistic and mystic interpretation of the Torah

tikkun (): rectification; redemption; perfection

Tisha B'Av (): the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av; the day the Temple was destroyed and therefore the Jewish national day of mourning

tzaddik (): a righteous person; often used in Hasidism as a synonym for *rebbe*

tzaddik ha-dor (): the term used by Rabbi Nachman for the one outstanding spiritual leader of a particular generation

tzimtzum (): God's contraction or self-withdrawal in order to create an 'empty space' into which the universe could be created and placed

world of action (): the lowest of the four dimensions of being; the physical universe

world of creation (): the third and next highest dimension of being; the world of the Chariot, or the Throne

world of emanation (): the highest dimension of being; the 'universe' of the ten *Sefirot*

world of formation (): the second dimension of being

yechida (): the fifth and highest component of the human soul

Yetzirah: see 'world of formation'

Zeide (the Yiddish word for 'Grandfather'): the Hasidic appellation given to Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Shpola (1725-1811), Rabbi Nachman's most aggressive and bitterest opponent

Zohar, the Book of the (): literally, 'The Book of Splendor': the most important and most fundamental book of the Kabbalah; first made public in manuscript form in Spain around the year 1300, although its authorship was attributed to Rabbi Shimon Bar-Yochai

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