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**RABBI NACHMAN OF BRATSLAV'S *TIKKUN HAKLALI*:
ORIGINAL INTENT AND CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION**

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Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for Ordination

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SUMMARY OF THE THESIS

There has been a growing awareness of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav and his teachings within the progressive Jewish community in recent years. In particular, his teachings have been made more accessible with a range of booklets and guides related to themes of healing, prayer and joy. In this thesis, I begin by considering the predominant ideas of Rabbi Nachman and, in particular, the meaning of his *Tikkun HaKlali* (often translated as 'The General Remedy' in contemporary publications) as conveyed by some of these popular publications and by the use of his teachings in the context of Jewish healing services. The representation of Rabbi Nachman's ideas in these ways, I suggest, are at very least partial, and perhaps even misleading as to the original intent and meaning of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun*.

The *Tikkun HaKlali* has come to refer to a set of ten specific psalms that Bratslaver Hasidim recite on a daily basis, along with other associated rituals in particular circumstances (such as mikveh and giving *tzedakah*). In the substantive chapters of the thesis (2-6), I present an in-depth textual analysis of the Rabbi Nachman's lessons on the *Tikkun HaKlali* from the collection of his teachings, *Likutei Moharan*. I trace the ideas presented there back to their earlier roots, particularly in the Zohar. This analysis demonstrates that an understanding of the kabbalistic framework and reference points utilized by Rabbi Nachman are absolutely fundamental to understanding the true intent of his teachings. The *Tikkun HaKlali* is particularly concerned with matters of male sexual purity, the praise of the *tzaddik*, and the role of the *tzaddik* as potential messiah. Drawing on other scholarly studies of Rabbi Nachman's teachings, I also demonstrate the relationship between Rabbi Nachman and Sabbateanism.

In chapter seven, I conclude the thesis with a discussion of issues of authenticity and intellectual honesty with regard to Bratslav outreach materials that do not communicate the deeper meaning of Rabbi Nachman's words. I present a summary of conversations held with a scholar of Bratslav Hasidism, Dr. Shaul Magid, and a Bratslaver responsible for many of the recent Bratslav outreach booklets, Moshe Mykoff. Finally, I consider the broader, holistic system of thought that kabbalah and Rabbi Nachman's teachings bring to questions of suffering, melancholy and healing and present a justification for the ongoing use of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali* in a contemporary setting that is intellectually conjunctive with the original intent.

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The original seed from which my interest in Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav sprouted was a cassette of Breslover *niggunim*, bought in the old Jewish quarter of Paris, France, by my parents. I thank my mother and father for the multitude of gems that they bring to me from the places they have been, always choosing something that they sense I will take with me to new foreign places. There is much in the teachings of Rabbi Nachman that can guide and inspire along the journey that we have taken together over the last five years, and I am grateful that we have been lifted to a higher place by our love.

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The writing of a thesis is, in many ways, quite an isolated experience. Nevertheless, being part of a community of colleagues who listen, share, support and offer their presence in friendship, is a gift for which I am most grateful. I particularly thank Ruthie Gelfarb, Annette Koch, Ruti Abusch-Magder, Yael Shmilovitz and Zoe Jacobs.

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CHAPTER ONE

MY INTRODUCTION TO RABBI NACHMAN OF BRATSLAV'S 'TIKKUN HAKLALI': THE CONTEXT OF JEWISH APPROACHES TO HEALING.

Introduction

The Hasidic master Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (1772-1810) identified ten psalms as having special power to bring a true and complete healing: R'fuat HaGuf (Healing of the Body) and R'fuat HaNefesh (Healing of the Spirit). Rabbi Nachman designated these ten psalms the Tikkun HaKlali, the Complete Remedy (Weintraub, 1994, p.17).

This introduction to the *Tikkun HaKlali*, taken from the opening pages of *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body: Spiritual Leaders Unfold the Strength and Solace in Psalms*, from the Jewish Healing Center, encapsulates the framework in which Rabbi Nachman's writings have been introduced to many Jews. In recent years, Rabbi Nachman's aphorisms, and extracts from his lessons (*Likutei Moharan*) and other records about his life and teachings have increasingly been found in contemporary writings, resources and guides to help us through difficult times. In particular, Rabbi Nachman's writings have been a resource and inspiration in the realm of Jewish approaches to healing. In Jewish healing services, citing the words of Rabbi Nachman might almost be seen as a kind of 'liturgical talisman' (Magid, 2005), stamping a mark of authenticity on the spiritual and emotional struggles that the words are chosen to reflect.

People have turned to the Psalms as a source of solace and support for generations. Unlike many of the stories found in *Torah* which are so often missing information about the emotional

responses of our ancestors to the turn of events, psalms overflow with emotional content. Within them there is the potential to find the full spectrum of emotional states - from exaltation and joy (e.g. Psalm 31:12 *You turned my lament into dancing...*) to cries of deep despair (eg. Psalm 31:10: *Be merciful to me, Oh God, for I am in distress...*). In the course of providing pastoral care, a Rabbi learns that often the most important offering we can give to someone in distress is to listen to them, and recognize how they are feeling. When alone, turning to a psalm and seeing one's current emotional state of being reflected back in the words of these ancient texts can likewise be comforting and affirming. "I'm not alone; others have been here before me. Perhaps I, too, can get through this if I hold onto faith?"

Outline of the Thesis

This thesis is not about the healing power of psalms in general. It is about the ten psalms that Rabbi Nachman assigned as the *Tikkun HaKlali*. What was particularly special about these psalms? What was meant by the 'special power to bring a true and complete healing' that Weintraub (1994) cites? Within the Progressive Jewish community¹, stories and teachings from the Hasidic world are often mined and re-presented for their universal spiritual message or wisdom, in a tradition that can perhaps be traced back to Martin Buber². Rabbi Nachman's stories and teachings have particularly found a home in the sphere of studies about and prayer services for healing. I felt drawn to his words, as they were presented to me in these contexts,

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1. I use the umbrella term 'Progressive Jewish community' throughout this thesis to denote the spectrum of non-Orthodox Jewish movements.
 2. Buber's first work of translated Hasidic tales was, in fact, the *Stories of Rabbi Nachman*.

and desired to learn more about the Rabbi and his message.

This became the motivation for the study presented here. My purpose is to look back at Rabbi Nachman's teachings on the *Tikkun HaKlali* in their original context. Initially I hoped that by drawing more fully on the richness of the original teachings, I would be able to add more to their applicability in the context of healing and deepen the understanding of the progressive Jew who draws on these teachings for solace, support and guidance when in need of healing. As my studies progressed I discovered a great deal about the *Tikkun HaKlali* that bore little if any relation to the sphere of Jewish healing in which I was originally exposed to the teaching. I began to question the possibility of legitimately drawing on Rabbi Nachman as a source when the texts seemed to be so stripped of their original context.

These questions also point to a broader set of issues that arise from the specifics of this study. If, knowing the original meaning and context of Rabbi Nachman's teachings, a progressive Jew were to find that the world view they assumed to be unconvincing or problematic, what would be the motivation for continued application of these teachings in a contemporary mode for healing? Furthermore, might this raise problems with our cultural assimilation and appropriation of many stories and teachings drawn from other Hasidic traditions, if we only had a better understanding of their original meaning and message? These are the larger issues that have accompanied me throughout my study of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*, and I return to them for further discussion in the closing chapter of this thesis.

The thesis is organized as follows:

- In the remainder of this chapter I introduce Rabbi Nachman's teachings as I was originally exposed to them, in the context of contemporary, progressive Jewish healing services and study workshops. Some of the publications that have popularized Rabbi Nachman's writings in this context are discussed, drawn from both the Breslover community and beyond.
- In chapter two I present some of the most pertinent biographical information about Rabbi Nachman in order to contextualize the *Tikkun HaKlali* within the broader framework of his teachings and aspirations. Rabbi Nachman is, perhaps more than any other Hasidic leader, an exemplar of the Rabbi who sees the fabric of his own life, and particularly the struggles of his inner life, as a microcosm of all that requires spiritual attention and *tikkun* at the cosmic level. It is, therefore, impossible to truly grasp the role and significance of the *Tikkun HaKlali* without also understanding how it evolved in the context of Rabbi Nachman's own life.
- In chapters three through six I present an analysis on Rabbi Nachman's lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali* in depth, drawing primarily upon *Likutei Moharan* (LM) I:29, but also incorporating further insights from other primary sources where Rabbi Nachman explicitly discussed his *Tikkun*, namely LM I:205 and LM II:92, as well as the report on how Rabbi Nachman came to reveal the specific psalms that constituted his *Tikkun* in *Sichot HaRan* 141. This analysis is broken down into four major components. In

chapter three I discuss Rabbi Nachman's understanding of the 'rectification of the *Brit*', both in terms of kabbalistic significance and individual practice. Chapter four considers the two other kinds of *Tikkun haKlali* originally presented in LM I:29; the *Tikkun* of speech and the *Tikkun* of business practices (via *tzedakah*). Chapter five presents the role of the *Tzaddik*, Rabbi Nachman's identification as both *Tzaddik* and messianic soul, and other messianic hints that can be found explicitly in LM I:29. Chapter six offers a discussion of the role of ten psalms as the actual practice of the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

- In conclusion, chapter seven returns to the broader questions raised in this introduction. Having gained a fuller, contextualized understanding of the nature and significance of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun*, to what extent is it either intellectually honest, or helpful to appropriate this teaching in the contemporary context of progressive Jewish approaches to healing? Is there ongoing value in reinterpreting Rabbi Nachman's words if, at face value, they appear to speak to many people in a way that offers a different kind of guidance and support?

My introduction to the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, and their application in contemporary studies and prayer services for healing

כל העולם פלו גשר צר מאד והעקר לא לפחד כלל

The whole world is a very narrow bridge, but the most important thing is not to be afraid at all.

My first introduction to the Breslover, or Bratslaver Hasidic world was through the music that is

sung in that community, especially on Shabbat and the festivals. I was doing some freelance work in the Jewish community, using music as a tool to enable groups to explore Jewish spirituality. I had established a monthly singing gathering, *Shir B'Yachad*, whose sole purpose was to bring Jews together to sing Jewish music together with passion. I was also being booked for conferences, Jewish healing workshops, and Jewish festival gatherings, using Jewish music to tap into a deeper level of emotion and exploration of faith. Early in my exploration of Jewish music, I discovered the power of the *niggun*, the wordless melody. Nowhere was this musical form put to greater effect than within Hasidic communities. By chance, on vacation in Paris, my father heard a tape of Breslover music in a Judaica store in the old Jewish quarter, and brought it home for me. The music was filled with such passion - from the sound of deepest, heartfelt yearning to the overflowing of exuberant joy. I began to share the melodies at the monthly gathering and at music workshops.

From the beginning, I had the sense that I was taking something out of its original context - choosing to take and use the music traditions of the Bratslaver Hasidim without entering their world or adopting the halachic lifestyle of the Hasidic Jew. In justification, both for myself and those I taught, I drew on a story that I had heard told by the Jewish musicologist, Velvel Pasternak. Pasternak had been responsible for collecting and notating a great deal of music from the Hasidic communities. He noted that some of these melodies bore remarkable resemblance to other, secular, melodies that existed in the folk traditions of the countries from which these Hasidic groups had originated. Perhaps the most famous example of this is a *niggun* of the Lubavitch Hasidim that is drawn directly from the French national anthem - La Marseilles. Many Hasidic groups would deny these secular influences, believing that every *niggun* was a

holy melody drawn down from the higher realms and channelled by the Rebbe who had brought it to his Hasidim. Others, however, would simply dismiss the relevance of the similarity in the melodies altogether, declaring 'Why should the devil have all the best music?'. Borrowing from this forthright and amusing statement, in justifying my sharing of Breslover melodies in circles far removed from their original environment, I would say to people, 'Why should the Hasidim have all the best music?!'

When I began working with the Reform movement in the UK on Jewish healing prayer services and workshops, I became exposed to teachings of Rabbi Nachman that were making their way into this arena as a rich resource. Rabbi Nachman's words particularly recognized the very low places that people who were suffering could find themselves. Yet, while recognizing this reality, he implored people to find any means to bring joy back to their lives, for the sake of their own wellbeing. Take, for example, this excerpt from one collection of his teachings:

Depression is the worst thing of all, and once it gets a hold it is harder to break than anything else. The essential reason why people are far from God is only because of depression. This is why it is so necessary to try one's utmost to be happy, even when under great pressure, materially or spiritually. Even when things are at their worst one should still have unfaltering trust in God, remembering that in the end God will never abandon him. One should try and be as happy as possible. And this certainly applies when God sends a little respite from the pressures and suffering and things become easier for a while. Then one should be happier than ever (Chayay Moharan 551, transl. in Greenbaum, 1987, p.448).

This selection, published under the title '*Advice*' by the Breslov Research Institute, is found under one of the user-friendly chapter headings (Joy) by which the excerpts are arranged. More recently, Rabbi Nachman's aphorisms, many of which focus on the pain of human experience and the willpower and faith required to lift oneself from these dark places, with God's help, have

been arranged in even more bite-sized offerings in pocket-sized books produced by a Breslover Jew (Michael Mykoff) but published by the mainstream Jewish spirituality publishing house, Jewish Lights. Examples of single-sentence thoughts printed one per page, include:

Finding true joy is the hardest of all spiritual tasks. If the only way to make yourself happy is by doing something silly, do it (Advice, p.254, in Mykoff, 1996, p.101).

If you believe that you can damage, then believe that you can fix. If you believe that you can harm, then believe that you can heal (LM II:112).

The most direct means for attaching ourselves to God from this material world is through music and song. Even if you can't sing well, sing. Sing to yourself. Sing in the privacy of your own home. But sing (Wisdom, 273, in Mykoff, 1996, p.50).

Likewise, another Bratslaver Hasid who is a *Ba'al Teshuvah*, Avraham Greenbaum, has published many books of translated excerpts from Rabbi Nachman's teachings, embedded in his own commentaries and explanations, as well as translations of some of the original collections of Rabbi Nachman's teachings. In particular, his work focuses on the realm of Jewish approaches to healing (e.g. *The Wings of the Sun: Traditional Jewish Healing in Theory and Practice*, 1995, or *Under the Table & How to Get Up: Jewish Pathways of Spiritual Growth*, 1991). Greenbaum is also the founder of *Azamra* and runs an extensive website that teaches about kabbalah, Rabbi Nachman, and Jewish approaches to healing³.

Rabbi Nachman's words appear to offer simple guidance, resonating immediately with the feelings and experiences of many people when faced with life's challenges. He recognizes the

3. <http://www.azamra.org/>

temptation to abandon faith at these times *"but the process of healing is about developing and deepening one's faith wherever one begins"* (Olitsky, 2000, p.34). Faith requires the strengthening of a relationship with God and Rabbi Nachman emphasizes the power of prayer and the power of psalms to help in this task (Olitsky, 2000). These simple yet central ideas make their way into the contemporary context of Jewish healing services and Rabbi Nachman's affirmations on the value of speaking these words of prayer help to bring his teachings into the presence of Jews who create and attend these healing services. Take, for example, the beautiful rendering of one of Rabbi Nachman's prayers into English, with music, by Debbie Friedman.

You are the One. For this I pray,
That I may have the strength to be alone.
To see the world, to stand among the trees, and all the living things.
That I may stand alone and offer prayers and talk to You.
You are the One to whom I do belong.
And I'll sing my soul, I'll sing my soul to You
And give You all that's in my heart.
Make all the foliage of the field, all grasses, trees and plants,
Awaken at my coming, this I pray, And send their life into my world of prayer
So that my speech, my thoughts and my prayers will be made whole
And through the spirit of all growing things.
And we know that everything is one
Because we know that everything is You.

You are the One, for this I pray.
I ask You, God, to hear my words
That pour out from my heart. I stand before You,
I, like water, lift my hands to You in prayer.
And grant me strength, and grant me strength to stand alone.
You are the One to whom I do belong.
And I'll sing my soul, I'll sing my soul to You
And give You all that's in my heart.

Psalms have been a spiritual resource for Jews for centuries. When one who is suffering seeks to call out in prayer, but cannot find the words to say, the psalms can often provide language and

form that resonate deeply with the one suffering. The psalms, understood to have been created either in response to receiving the *Ruach HaKodesh* (holy spirit) or to bring down the *Ruach HaKodesh* on one reciting these words, are believed to be particularly powerful forms of prayer (BT *Pesachim* 117a). In *kabbalistic* terms, they are thought to be particularly effective at drawing down the Divine effluence through the *sefirotic* tree (Weintraub, 1994). Weintraub provides this explanation for Rabbi Nachman's recommendation of the ten psalms to recite for the *Tikkun HaKlali*. He goes on to explain how this provides the rationale for his book, *Healing of Soul, Healing of Body*:

Rabbi Nachman taught that the Psalms can have minimal value in mere recitation - one must identify with their contents in a deep and meaningful way, and seek to apply the words to oneself, to find oneself in every psalm. Towards this end, we have asked ten spiritual leaders - rabbis of different denominations, backgrounds, personalities, and ministries - to share with you their own personal 'bridge' to the psalms... All seek healing and meaning from Psalms (p.19).

Weintraub goes on to offer a brief summary of themes found in the ten psalms Rabbi Nachman selected, and explains that, for Nachman, the happiness of the individual can never be fully attained until the world is brought into a state of *Tikkun*, which Weintraub explains as being repair, correction, wholeness and perfection. "*In Rabbi Nachman's teaching, the tikkun comes to remedy a breach in the Covenantal relationship (p'gam ha-brit), to bridge the separation between people and God*" (ibid, p.20).

This explanation provides a good, simplified description of some of the main elements in Nachman's teaching on the *Tikkun HaKlali*, but it by no means provides a full explanation of Rabbi Nachman's intentions in instituting his *Tikkun* of the ten psalms. To what extent does the contemporary reader, being introduced to Rabbi Nachman's teachings in this way, gain more

from this overview than by simply being encouraged to read the psalms as a source of solace and guide to faith? If the fuller significance of Rabbi Nachman's teaching is important, the reader needs to know more. How is this *Tikkun* meant to work? Can I really bring 'healing', repair or perfection to the universe simply by reciting these words? What kind of healing or repair can they really bring to me in my time of need? Weintraub does go on to provide brief introductions to three other aspects of the *Tikkun HaKlali*, originally discussed in LM 1:29, namely the practice of giving tzedakah, immersion in a mikveh prior to reciting the *Tikkun HaKlali*, and invoking the names of Tzaddikim. His explanations for these specific elements are logical and helpful to one who seeks to adopt the practice, although the full extent of Rabbi Nachman's teachings on these aspects of the *Tikkun* are not provided. For example, on the subject of *tzedakah*, Weintraub explains:

... one realizes that even - especially?- those who are ill can reach out to those in need with empathetic concern and an acute sense of justice. [Tzedakah] ... brings new meaning and new life to their existence, and concretely builds a better society and a better world... Tangible Tikkun (p.22).

However, when discussing aspects that defy an explanation that would likely appear 'logical' to the average Jew, it is interesting to note that Weintraub shifts his language from addressing the potential behavior of the reader explicitly to describing the meaning of these behaviors to

Breslover Hasidim:

This explains why, to the Breslov Hassidim, it is such a great and powerful thing to mention the names of the Tzaddikim - summoning, as it were, their righteousness, good deeds, noble qualities, special accomplishments... the particular 'Torah' of their souls and spirits... Finally, according to the Breslovers, going to the gravesides of Tzaddikim to pray helps even more than merely invoking their names, since the sanctity of their burial place is seen as a tikkun for the Covenant (p.24).

If one is not a Breslover, does not know or does not believe that the universe moves in the ways assumed by the concepts that form the foundation of Rabbi Nachman's teachings, can the *Tikkun HaKlali* still provide something useful to someone in need of healing? Accepting the solace found in the psalms is one thing, but to adopt Rabbi Nachman's specific practice of reciting just ten of those psalms, yet stripping them of their original context and the other aspects of the *Tikkun* that Rabbi Nachman discusses, why recite even these psalms with reference to Rabbi Nachman? Likewise, if one understood more of the context from which the aphorisms that have made Rabbi Nachman a more familiar name were drawn, would this alter the way that these aphorisms are heard to the extent that we might question when or if we cite them?

These were the questions that arose as I began to dig more deeply into the teachings of Rabbi Nachman to come to a fuller understanding of the *Tikkun HaKlali* in its original context, and they drive the remainder of this thesis. Before an attempt can be made to address these questions, I return to the world of Rabbi Nachman, and his original teachings on the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

CHAPTER TWO

THE LIFE OF RABBI NACHMAN AS HOLY TEXT

The treatment and role of the biography of Rabbi Nachman

From the earliest days of the Hasidic movement, stories of events from the life of a *Rebbe* or *Maggid* were seen as important sources of insight and learning by their followers. Individual episodes, sometimes retold in just a few lines, were collected in volumes of teachings. Perhaps the best known example of this genre is *Shevchay haBesht* - in praise of the Baal Shem Tov. However this volume, like many other similar tales of other Hasidic *Rebbes*, was drawn together and published many years after the events that they claim to recount. There are, in fact, few historically authentic sources that describe the life of the Besht; *Shevchay haBesht* is a nineteenth-century hagiography, consisting of a collection of more than three hundred stories about him. It was first printed in 1815.

For the most part these hagiographic collections provide a rich source of information about the philosophy of a *Rebbe*, and offer him as an exemplar of the spiritual life. To this extent, they tend to provide a picture of the *tzaddik* as a model of perfection, often associated with quasi-magical skills, sharing the fantastic events of mystical journeys. They seldom can be relied upon to provide an accurate biography of the actual lives of the men whose stories they recount (Rapoport-Albert, 1988; Robinson, 1995).

The same cannot be said of the collections of biographical material available on the life of Rabbi Nachman. One of his primary disciples, Rabbi Natan of Nemirov, was responsible for recording not only Rabbi Nachman's more formal teachings, eventually ordered and compiled during Rabbi Nachman's lifetime as *Likutei Moharan*, but also many conversations and descriptions of journeys made (in particular, Rabbi Nachman's trip to Palestine). These were collected in volumes such as *Sichot haRan*, *Shevchay haRan* and *Chayyey Moharan*. It might be assumed that these collections, despite being recorded during or shortly after Rabbi Nachman's life, would be characterized by the same hyperbole and fantasy found in other Hasidic hagiographic works, given that they are written by one of Rabbi Nachman's most dedicated disciples. However, as Green (1992) argues, Rabbi Nathan sought to record in immaculate detail, all of the actualities of Rabbi Nachman's life. He tells us when he is writing down words that he, himself, heard Rabbi Nachman utter, or when he is recording something that he received second hand. He will tell the reader when he has tried to put down the essence of a teaching, but cannot remember all of the details. Conversely, some trust can be put in those conversations and teachings that Rabbi Nathan manages to record almost verbatim, because he has taken the trouble to point out when this is not the case. Of course, even a 'verbatim' conversation cannot be taken as being a precise rendition of what was said, but these sources, nevertheless, remain a much more accurate accounting of Rabbi Nachman's life and teachings than many collections on the lives of Hassidic masters.

Green argues that what makes Rabbi Nathan's collections more reliable as a source than most biographies of *tzaddikim* is the sense that Rabbi Nathan had that he was recording a form of 'sacred history'. Whereas other *Rebbes* were regarded as exemplars among the *tzaddikim*,

Nachman believed himself to be the *tzaddik ha-dor* - *tzaddik* of the generation, as did his followers. The precise meaning and implication of this will be discussed at length in chapter five. But the significance of this title here is that the need for accuracy in recounting the words and actions of Rabbi Nachman was considered paramount by Rabbi Nathan.

Rabbi Nachman's teachings and conversations were also characterized by his ability to identify with his followers, revealing that he had been tempted and had thoughts and feelings just as challenging to pious practice as they had. The fact that Rabbi Nachman was willing to reveal his own flaws, albeit primarily to teach how he had overcome them, also characterizes Rabbi Nathan's written collections as a departure from many other Hassidic collections, where only the best of the *tzaddik* is recorded. Therefore, much can be gleaned from these collected writings of a biographical nature that can provide important context for gaining an understanding of the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

Perhaps even more significant than the information that is possible to derive from these sources, "... the philosophical teachings in Likkutei Moharan cannot be understood – as is also claimed by Bratslav Hasidim – without knowledge of the circumstances in which they were delivered because, rather than the doctrinal contents, the man who uttered them and his particular situation at the time are central" (Liebes, 1993, p.118).

Liebes points out that it is not simply that the accuracy of Rabbi Natan's accounts is related to the sacredness of his task because Rabbi Nachman is the *tzaddik ha-dor*. Rather, it is *because* Rabbi Nachman is the *tzaddik ha-dor* that the details of his life, both inner world and outer actions, are regarded by Breslover Hasidim as integral to the 'text' of his teachings that they study. I will now turn, therefore, to consider what aspect of this lived 'text' are most helpful in gaining a

deeper understanding of the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

Sufferings of Love

Rabbi Nachman was born in 1772 in Medzeboz, Ukraine. He was a great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov. He lived a short life, and suffered a great deal from illness, eventually succumbing to tuberculosis in 1810 and dying at the age of 38.

Rabbi Nachman's education was similar to that of the Hasidic elite of his time, consisting of the study of *Talmud* and codes, but also the *Zohar* and *Tikkunei Zohar*, and Lurianic mystical texts (especially *Peri Eitz Hayyim*). He also studied *Reshit Hokhmah*, an example of sixteenth century *hanbagot* literature (mystical ethical tracts), written by Elijah de Vidas (Fine and Jacobs, 1984). Rabbi Nachman had a better grounding in *Tenach* than many and also studied the *Eyn Ya'akov* - the fifteenth century compilation, ordered by tractate, of aggadic material from the Talmud, by Rabbi Yaakov ibn Haviv. This was also something that was less common among his contemporaries (Green, 1992).

This educational background is helpful for understanding some of Rabbi Nachman's early spiritual struggles and practices, and can guide the search for earlier sources that provide the foundation for some of the 'innovations' associated with Rabbi Nachman's later teachings. For example, Lurianic circles practiced a number of *minhagim* that promoted a more ascetic spiritual practice than was the norm in Judaism. They instituted various *Tikkunim* (most famously, *Tikkun Leyl Shavuot*, now adopted by many Jewish communities). Among these *Tikkunim* was the

Tikkun Chazot – the practice of staying up all night and studying to help bring about a *tikkun* of the sephirot realms. This is a practice that will be highlighted again in Rabbi Nachman's teachings¹. Likewise, *Reshit Chokhmah* particularly highlights *atzvut* ('depression') as the counterpoint to *simchah*, which will inhibit the manifestation of the *Ruach HaKodesh*. (*Reshit Hokhmah II: Sha'ar Ha-Ahavah* 10:1, in Fishbane, n/k). This teaching is drawn from earlier discussions of these concepts in the Zohar. The importance of always trying to be happy, experiencing joy, and staying far from depression, is perhaps the teaching that has most famously come to be associated with Rabbi Nachman, but here the earlier roots of these teachings can be identified. Keeping depression at bay and enabling God's presence to draw close was directly associated with Rabbi Nachman's other central focus – sexual purity.

The Rebbe said that true happiness is one of the most difficult things to attain in serving God. Another time he said that it seems impossible to achieve happiness without some measure of foolishness. One must resort to all sorts of foolish things if this is the only way to attain happiness. When a person attains true joy, then God Himself watches him and protects him from sexual defilement [p'gam habrit – literally blemishing or impairing the covenant] (*Sichot HaRan* 20, transl. Kaplan, 1973, p.122).

In later years, when Rabbi Nachman spoke of how he had overcome enormous obstacles, particularly in his attempt to rid himself of any kind of sexual desire, the struggles that he had with maintaining the strictures of the more ascetic kabbalistic practices in his youth were quite evident.

...there was a time in the Rebbe's youth when he had not yet subjugated this desire. At this time, he still had so many fearful sexual temptations that it is impossible to describe them in detail... Difficult as his trials were, the Rebbe still did not attempt to avoid them. Countless times he battled with his passions, until God helped him, and he was able to subjugate his impulse completely (*Shevchay HaRan* 16, transl. by Kaplan, 1973, p.16-17).

1. The practice of studying all night was not a specific innovation of Lurianic mystics, but they concretized the practice in relation to making a *tikkun*.

As a youth he seemed filled with inner torment (Green, 1992). Later, it was this very struggle and torment that served as the mark of the *tzaddik ha-dor* and pointed to a greater, messianic identification. *"His torments were to be seen as 'sufferings of love', the pain felt by Nachman the individual was transformed into that of the suffering servant, the zaddiq chosen by God for some great purpose"* (*ibid*, p.41) Unlike other *tzaddikim* among the *Hasidim*, Rabbi Nachman functioned as a *tzaddik* for his followers *"...not because he [had] always remained above the reaches of sin, but rather precisely because he himself [had] undergone all the conflicts and torments that even the most beleaguered of his followers could ever imagine – and [had] emerged triumphant"* (*ibid*, p.15). The role of Rabbi Nachman as *tzaddik* and the messianic implications of this, in relation to the *Tikkun HaKlali* are discussed in depth in chapter five.

These struggles became the focus of the young Rabbi Nachman's prayer life. He would speak his own prayers in his native Yiddish, pouring out his heart and pleas to God. Rabbi Nathan records Rabbi Nachman's memories of his childhood, often feeling abandoned by God, which would engender a deep depression within him. He would cease to pray for days and then, overcome by guilt, resume his practice again.

In *Shevchay HaRan*, Rabbi Nathan reports:

The thing that helped him most was his prayers in the language he usually spoke, which was Yiddish. He would find a secluded place and set it aside to express his thoughts to God... His father's house had a small garret, partitioned off as a storehouse for hay and feed. Here young Rabbi Nachman would hide himself, chanting the Psalms and screaming quietly, begging God that he be worthy of drawing himself close to Him... He also had the practice of chanting only the verses in the Psalms speaking of prayer and the cry to God. He would go through the entire Book of Psalms in one stretch, saying only these verses and leaving out the rest (*Shevchay HaRan* 10, transl. by Kaplan, 1973, p.10-11).

With regard to Rabbi Nachman's prayer practice, Green (1992) notes:

The very terms which are so frequently used to characterize Nachman's devotions, *hitqarevet* and *hitrahaqut* (nearness and distance), and so fill the literature of Bratslav Hasidism, are hardly to be found in the writings of other Hasidic masters in the eighteenth century. They are rooted directly in the Psalter, and in those very passages the child Nachman chose for his private prayers.

The role of the psalms in the *Tikkun HaKlali* will be discussed in depth in chapter six. Here, however, the source of Rabbi Nachman's intimate familiarity with these texts, and their association with deep, heartfelt prayer is evident. Drawing on these various prayer resources, Rabbi Nachman's life was marked by constant struggles from the age of thirteen until about eighteen. He encountered feelings of a rise or fall in relationship with God, depressions to the brink of utter despair, followed by redoubled efforts to come close to God. These experiences in his youth profoundly shaped his understanding of the spiritual life.

"Nachman believed that the core of the religious life lay in the inner world of the individual and in the intense struggle going on within each person's soul... Nachman's own inner life and struggles became paradigmatic for *hasid*, both within Nachman's lifetime and later in the history of Bratslav" (Green, 1992 p.144).

It was this centrality of the inner life of the soul that also drove his belief in personal outpourings of prayer in the vernacular, which is a *chiddush* in *Hasidism*.

As noted above, Rabbi Nachman speaks at length to his disciples about his struggles with sexuality in his youth, and this matter becomes of central importance to his institution of the *Tikkun HaKlali* (see chapter three). The specifics of these sexual torments are not revealed. The intense concern that Rabbi Nachman had with regard to this subject, however, was shaped by the discussion of these issues in the *Zohar* and *Reishit Hochmah*.

[The] Kabbalistic ethical literature he read was filled with dire warnings about the evils of masturbation or even of involuntary nocturnal emissions... [T]he great emphasis in Nachman's later teachings on the conquest of sexual desire, an emphasis far beyond that of other Hasidic writings, is clearly a direct result of his own youthful trials in this area (Green, 1992, p.37).

This recounting of Rabbi Nachman's early years, and the texts of his childhood studies, provides the foundation for his central teachings, all of which relate to the *Tikkun HaKlali*: the use of psalms in prayer to draw close to God, the struggle with sexuality, and the relationship between sexuality, depression and sin. The 'sufferings of love' endured by the young Nachman pointed the way to his role as *tzaddik ha-dor* and hint at deeper messianic meaning to his life journeys and his teachings. These are reinforced by many other events and conversations that can be drawn from Rabbi Nathan's biographical collections. Further examples will not be offered here, as they relate to specific issues that will be discussed in the following chapters. The 'texts' excerpted to illustrate Rabbi Nachman's teachings, as has been discussed and illustrated here, necessarily must include biographical information alongside the substance of the lessons found in *Likutei Moharan*. Therefore, further biographical material will be highlighted in the next four chapters, as they pertain to the analysis of the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

Rabbi Nachman's Lessons on the Tikkun HaKlali

In conclusion, and as an introduction to the next chapter that will review the central reason for Rabbi Nachman's teaching of the *Tikkun HaKlali*, accounts of how this teaching was introduced to his followers are presented.

Rabbi Nathan recollects how he first learnt of the *Tikkun HaKlali*. In *Chayyay Moharan* he writes:

During the Rebbe's stay in Lemberg he handed the Likutey Moharan to someone who had come from Medvedevka to visit him, and he gave him instructions to travel to our region and give the book for printing, which he did. Prior to this the Rebbe considered the question of printing very carefully... in the early years, we had always been careful to conceal the written versions of his teachings from the public eye. Later on, he gave me instructions to make a copy of his lessons arranged in order – before this I had written them out as separate entities, not in any order. It was in 5565 (1805) that he instructed me to copy them out in order and put them together in one volume... As soon as I came he spoke with me at length and encouraged me tremendously. It was on that day that I heard the first revelation of the Rebbe's teaching about the Ten Psalms, the *Tikkun HaKlali* – which are a remedy for an unclean experience at night. (*Chayyay Moharan* 81, transl. by Greenbaum, 1987 p.84-5).

This lesson was given on Shavuot 5566 (May 23 1806) in Breslov. This was the first time that Rabbi Nachman appeared before his disciples dressed all in white, something that he discusses during the lesson. In his later years, Rabbi Nachman only called on his disciples to gather for him to teach three times a year; on Rosh Hashanah, Chanukah and Shavuot². The Lesson is very long, and is regarded as one of his most complex and esoteric teachings. In it he raises a series of concepts, pausing along the way at several stages to regroup and reinforce connections between them. In brief, the concepts raised are:

- The concept of rectified speech (including praise of the *tzaddikim*).
- The wearing of white clothes, including references to blood and milk in the sephirotic realms.
- The underlying principle of the *Tikkun HaKlali*: Rectifying the higher levels atones for and rectifies the sins of a lower level, and the ability of the *Tikkun HaKlali* to awaken every

2. The theme of redemption is perhaps most explicitly related to these three festivals in rabbinic tradition and this would have influenced Rabbi Nachman's choice of these three occasions (see chapter five).

type of sinner.

- The *Brit* (covenant) encompasses the whole Torah. Therefore rectification of the *brit* is the General Remedy.
- The concept of 'Livelihood without struggle' and the *Tikkun HaKlali* for business practices and earning a living. Charity as a rectification for sins in these realms.
- Epilepsy: Nachman's association of spiritual sickness and physical sickness – epilepsy is particularly relevant because of its association with the brain, which is discussed earlier in the lesson.
- A potential allusion to Frankism and the onset of the struggle of Moshiach ben Yosef in the closing paragraphs of the lesson.

In this lesson no mention is made of the actual practices associated with the *Tikkun HaKlali*. The introduction of the recitation of ten psalms, and the revelation of ten *specific* psalms (presented in LM 1:205), came several years later, as did *mikveh* (ritual immersion), advised before the recitation. Rabbi Nathan describes the gradual revelation of the teaching in great depth, excerpted at length here to illustrate the point:

I was not with the Rebbe when he first revealed the concept brought in lesson #205. But God was with me and I came there shortly afterward and heard the entire lesson from someone exactly as the Rebbe had taught it. I then had the opportunity to discuss it with the Rebbe himself, and he reviewed it for me as it is brought in Likutei Moharan (Friday 17 Sivan 5565; June 14 1805). When the Rebbe first revealed this, he prescribed the remedy of the ten Psalms without specifying which ten must be said. He said, "The exact ten Psalms should be specified. However, any ten constitute the remedy, since any ten Psalms correspond to the ten types of song. These ten melodies are the true remedy". Before speaking of the Psalms, the Rebbe said, "The first remedy is Mikvah. You must first immerse yourself in a Mikveh. He then spoke of the Ten Psalms."...

Four long years then passed... It was during this interval that the Rebbe contracted the illness that would eventually take his life... One winter night we stood around him as he lay in bed. Suddenly he began to speak of the Ten Psalms. He told me to get a piece of paper and write down verses alluding to the ten types of song. He then revealed the ten

verses, dictating them as they appear in the second section of Likutei Moharan #92. The Rebbe expressed his desire to specify the Ten Psalms that must be said on the day one has an unclean experience. We stood there waiting, but were not worthy to hear them at that time. We then left.

When I returned for a Sabbath, I happened to see a manuscript where the Rebbe himself had written down the Ten Psalms. I did not think it proper to take the manuscript without permission. I attempted to memorize it, but was prevented by the fear that the Rebbe would mind me entering the room and seeing the manuscript without his permission.

On Sunday I went in to take leave of the Rebbe before going home. I asked him to disclose the Ten Psalms, knowing full well that he had already written them down. But the Rebbe demurred, saying that there would be another time. I then left for home without learning them.

A short time later while I was home in Nemirov, the Rebbe revealed the Ten Psalms to the Rabbi of Breslov and my good friend Reb Naftali of Nemirov. The Rebbe asked them to bear witness and said, "Everyone experiences a nocturnal emission at one time or another. I call you to bear witness that these Ten Psalms are a beneficial remedy for this unclean experience. They are an absolute remedy... These are the Ten Psalms: Psalms 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 147, 150." (excerpts from Sichot HaRan 141, transl. by Kaplan, 1973, p. 270-6.)

In his latter teachings, Rabbi Nachman only referred to the *Tikkun HaKlali* as a rectification of the *brit*, which refers to the circumcised phallus, and is specifically concerned with the sin of *keri* – accidental nocturnal seminal emissions. However, in LM I:29, Rabbi Nachman talks about three kinds of *Tikkun HaKlali* – one relates to *keri* – accidental seminal emissions (as opposed to seminal emission during intercourse with a woman). Another relates to the *Tikkun* of speech by praising the *tzaddikim* and a third relates to the *Tikkun* of business practice and earning a living through the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*. Yet, in his later teachings (LM I:205 and LM II:92) these latter two types of *tikkun* are no longer mentioned. There has been some debate on whether the *Tikkun HaKlali* is, in fact, a 'General Remedy' with application for several purposes or whether it is applicable only to the matter of *keri* (Mykoff, interview, 1/10/06). In chapter one, where I outlined Weintraub's (1994) introduction to the *Tikkun HaKlali* in the contemporary

context of Jewish approaches to healing, *p'gam habrit*, *zedakah* and praise of the *tzaddikim* were all given equal status. Furthermore, the matter of *keri* was not mentioned and no association was made between the meaning of *brit* and the circumcised phallus. In fact, it is the *tikkun haBrit* – the covenant, represented by the circumcised phallus (see chapter three) that provides a rectification for *all* sins, and therefore includes all other applications of the *tikkun*.

As Jews we are commanded to keep the covenant (*brit*). All of the *mitzvot* of the Torah are meant by this *brit*. *Mitzvot* encompass thought, speech and action, hence the three elements of the *Tikkun HaKlali* originally discussed in LM I:29. However, to understand the relationship between this concept of *brit* and the sexual sin, one must turn to the *Zohar* where the *tzaddik* is described as one who guards his *brit* (*Zohar* I, 59b). Precisely why this is so central in Zoharic and, later, Lurianic, teaching is explored in the next chapter. This will explain why the accomplishment of a 'remedy' for the sin of *keri* was understood to be so significant for Rabbi Nachman.

CHAPTER THREE
THE 'UNFORGIVEABLE' SIN OF BEING *BA'AL KERI*
& THE POSSIBILITY OF A *TIKKUN HAKLALI*

The notion that a *p'gam habrit* – a breach of the covenant – is primarily associated with sexual impurity, and especially the male sexual organ, lies at the heart of Rabbi Nachman's concern and need for a *tikkun haklali* that can address this specific problem. This is not an innovation of Rabbi Nachman; rather, it is a reflection of a long rabbinic tradition. As Greenbaum (1984) notes: "*Indeed in the eyes of the sages the concept of the Covenant is virtually identified with the maintenance of sexual purity*" (p.26).

The fullest expression of and explanation for this focus is found in the Jewish mystical tradition, and especially in Castillian Kabbalah and later. This chapter will explore some of these sources and demonstrate how Rabbi Nachman's teachings, in his lessons on the *Tikkun HaKlali* in *Likutei Moharan*, draw directly from them.

However, the mystical tradition is not the starting place for Jewish texts on the centrality and seriousness of the sin of sexual impurity. Rather, it offers a rich and complex *drash* on earlier sources that can be traced back to Biblical origins, themselves already explicated by *midrash* and *Talmudic* discourse. To trace all of these sources would be a thesis of considerable proportions in itself. A selection of texts are presented here for discussion, in order to illustrate the evolution of the concepts that create a direct relationship between *p'gam habrit* and *keri* – the state of sexual impurity for the male.

Biblical and early rabbinical sources on *keri*

Vayikra 15 lists four types of genital discharge that rendered one impure: abnormal male discharge (זר), normal male discharge (בעל קרי), abnormal female discharge (זבה), and normal female discharge (נדדה). With regard to the male, the זר has to count off seven days, cleans his clothes and his body, and on the eighth day must bring two turtledoves or pigeons to the Temple for the priest to make a sin offering to make expiation on his behalf (verses 13-15). The בעל קרי must wash himself and anything onto which the semen fell, but simply remains unclean until sundown. This applies also to seed discharged during sexual relations with a woman.

Koren (1999) notes that differences in opinion on whether accidental emission of seed or intentional emission of seed during sexual relations with a woman necessitate a different response with regard to purity laws continue to be voiced in the Talmud. She explains:

...Babylonian and Palestinian Jews differ in their observance of the laws of ba'al qeri. Babylonian Jews did not immerse themselves after ejaculation, reasoning that they were already subject to corpse impurity and that they lived in an 'impure land'. They submit further that their impurity should not impinge upon prayer or Torah study because, according to Rabbi Judah ben Betayra, 'the words of Torah are not subject to impurity'. Palestinian Jews, by contrast, required ritual immersion after ejaculation of all those who wished to participate in the sacred [BT *Berakhot* 21b- 22a].

Most later halakhists subscribed to the Babylonian tradition and did not require ejaculants to immerse themselves before observing religious rites. Jewish mystics, by contrast, believed that seminal pollution blocked mystical experience... spilled seed engenders demons (p.23-4).

The stricter interpretation of the mystics can be found in the writings of German Pietists, and in the 'lost' *Baraita d'Niddah*, cited by Nachmanides but not published until 1890. This is of relevance in relation to the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav because he had studied the writings of the pietists and followed a more ascetic set of practices, especially in his youth.

Koren (1999) notes that, while the *ba'al kerī* shares some aspects in common with the *niddah*, ... [t]he normal genital discharges of men and women can be compared but they cannot be and were not equated. Normal male discharge can be controlled. And by controlling ejaculation, men gain mastery of their sexuality. Talmudic rabbis, in fact, defined masculinity in terms of self-restraint (p.24).

While *Vayikra* 15 provides the biblical source for the *ba'al kerī* with regard to ritual practices required after a seminal emission, it is much earlier in the Torah, within the narrative sections of the text, that the first mention of spilling seed can be found:

בראשית לח:ו-י

וַיִּקַּח יְהוֹדָה אִשָּׁה לְעֵר בְּכוֹרוֹ וְשָׁמָּה תָמַר: זָוְיָהּ עֵר בְּכוֹר יְהוֹדָה רָע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה וַיָּמָתָהּ יְהוָה: ח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹדָה לְאוֹנָן בֶּן אֵל-אִשְׁתִּי אַחִיד וַיְבִם אֹתָהּ וְהָקָם זֶרַע לְאַחִיד: ט וַיֵּדַע אוֹנָן כִּי לֹא לוֹ יִהְיֶה הַזֶּרַע וְהָיָה אִם-בֶּן אֵל-אִשְׁתִּי אַחִיו וְשָׁחַת אֶרְצָה לְבִלְתִּי נָתֹן-זֶרַע לְאַחִיו: י וַיֵּדַע בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וַיָּמָת גַּם-אוֹתוֹ:

Judah took a wife for Er, his first-born and her name was Tamar. It came to pass that Er, the first-born of Judah did evil in the eyes of God, and God caused his death. Then Judah said to Onan, 'Come to the wife of your brother and fulfill *yibum* [duty of a brother-in-law to marry his brother's widow] with her and establish a descendant for your brother. But Onan knew that the descendant would not be his and it came to pass that when he came to the wife of his brother, he spilt it on the ground [his seed] so as not to give a descendant to his brother. And he evil in the eyes of God by what he did, and He also caused his death (Gen 38:6-10).

The episode above marks the first explicit biblical mention of spilling seed (וְשָׁחַת אֶרְצָה). God's displeasure at the act, causing the death of Onan, makes clear that this is regarded as sinful behavior, and leads to the rabbinic establishment of the purposeful spilling of seed as negative commandment. The appropriateness of the Divine punishment of death is reinforced by a line found toward the end of *Vayikra* 15 where the biblical laws of *ba'al kerī* were presented. The text there adds:

וְהִצַּתֶּם אֶת-בְּנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל מִטְּמֵאֹתָם וְלֹא יָמָתוּ בְּטִמְאֹתָם בְּטִמְאָם אֶת-מִשְׁכְּנִי אֲשֶׁר בְּתוֹכָם:

You shall put the Israelites on guard against their uncleanness, lest they die through their uncleanness by defiling My Tabernacle which is among them (v. 31).

These more drastic consequences of spilling seed are raised elsewhere in rabbinic midrash and many of these narratives evolve as they make their way into the Talmud. The explicit reference in *B'reishit* 38, leading to the death of the perpetrator, also leads to the rabbis regarding death as an appropriate Divine response to this sin. As they state in *Bereishit Rabbah* 26:

הקב"ה מאריך אפו חוץ מן הזונות

The Holy One, Blessed be He, is slow to anger [with regard to everything] except sexual immorality.

This lays the groundwork for later commentary in the mystical literature which will grapple with the question of whether there is the possibility of repentance after committing the act of spilling seed. Sources in the Talmud also grapple with the seriousness of spilling seed, going far beyond the ritual consequences first laid out in *Vayikra* 15, for example from tractate *niddah*:

דא"ר יוחנן: כל המוציא שכהת זרה לבטלה חייב מיתה, שנאמר וירע בעיני ה' (את) אשר עשה וימת גם אותו. רבי יצחק ורבי אמי אמר: כאילו שפוך דמים שנאמר ... שוחטי הילדים בנחלים תחת סעיפי הסלעים ... רבי אסי אמר: כאילו עובר עבודת כוכבים.

Rabbi Yochanan said: Anyone who wastes his seed is liable to the death penalty, as it is written, 'And the thing which he did was evil in the sight of the Lord, and he slew him also' (Genesis 38:10). Rabbi Yitzchak and Rabbi Ami said: It is as if he were a murderer, as it is written ... 'Slaughterers of children in the valleys, under the clefts of rocks' (Isaiah 57:5). Rabbi Asi said: It is as if he were an idol-worshipper. (BT *Niddah* 13a).

ואמר ר' אלעזר: מאי דכתיב ידיכם דמים מלאו - אלו המנאפים ביד. תנא דרבי ישמעאל: לא תנאף - לא תחא בכ ניאוף, בין ביד בין ברגל.

Rabbi Eliezer said: It is written, 'Your hands are full of blood' (Isaiah 1:15). This refers to people who arouse themselves with their hands. Rabbi Yishmael taught, 'You shall not commit adultery' (Exodus 20:13) - not with your hand and not with your foot. (BT *Niddah* 13b).

Although Onan provides one of the names by which the act of masturbation becomes known, rabbinical commentary suggests that there are even earlier episodes in the Bible to which God responds with similar judgment, namely with respect to the generation of the Flood, and with

Sodom and Gemorrah.

... לרוב על פני האדמה שהיו שופכים את זרעם על העצים ועל העבנים, ולפי שהיו שטופים בזנות לפיכך הרבה להם נקבות, הה"ר ויהי כי החל האדם ובנות יולדו להם.
'To multiply on the face of the earth'. This teaches that they spilled their semen upon the trees and stones, and because they were steeped in lust the Holy One, blessed be he, gave them many women, as it is written, 'And it came to pass when man began to multiply... and daughters were born unto them' (*B'reishit Rabbah* 26: 4 on *B'reishit* 6:1).

This midrash on the beginning of *B'reishit* 6 leads immediately to verse 5: *'The Eternal saw how great was man's wickedness on earth...'*. Later, the Zohar makes the link between the comment above and 'wickedness on earth' even more specific. Likewise, where *B'reishit rabbah* hints at a connection between the sin of the generation of the flood and the sin of Sodom and Gemorrah in 27:3, the Zohar will also speak more explicitly of this later (see below):

וירא ה' כי רבה וגו', רבי חנינא אמר רבה והולכת. רבי ברכיה בשם רבי יוחנן אמר שמענו בדור המבול שנדונו במים והסדומים שנדונו באש ליתן את האמור להלן כאן, ת"ל רבה רבה לגזרה שוה.

'And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great'. R. Hanina interpreted: It waxed even greater. R. Berekiah said in R. Johanan's name: We know that the generation of the Flood was punished by water and the Sodomites by fire: whence do we know to apply what is stated here to the case below [sc. The Sodomites], and the reverse? Because 'great' is mentioned in both places, affording an analogy (*B'reishit rabbah* 27:3).

It is, therefore, sexual immorality in both of these cases that brings about the Divine punishment.

In reviewing some of the key sources from the Zohar the question of whether spilling seed is an unforgivable sin or not will be further explored.

Jewish mysticism and the Zohar

A survey of texts from the Zohar provides a perplexing picture on the question of whether it is possible to repent after the sin of spilling seed. For example, in I:62a it states:

תא חזי, כל חטאוי דבר נש כלהו חבלותא דיליה תליין בתשובה וחטאה דאושד זרעא על
ארעא ומחבלה ארחיה ואפיק זרעא על ארעא מחביל ליה ומחביל ארעא ועליה כתיב
נכתם עונך לפני וכתוב ביה כי לא אל חפץ רשע אתה לא יגורך רע בר בתשובה סגי וכתוב
ויהי ער בכור יהודה רע בעיני ה' ומיתתו ה', והא אתמר.

Come and behold¹: for all of man's sins and all of his corruptions it is possible to do repentance. But the sin of spilling seed upon the earth he causes the corruption of his path and of the earth. About him it is written: "The stain of your iniquity remains before me (Jeremiah 2:22) and "You are not a God that gains pleasure from evil; evil shall not dwell with you. **Only after great repentance.** And it came to pass that Er, Judah's firstborn, was wicked in the eyes of the Eternal and the Eternal slew him (*B'reishit* 38:7), as we have already said.

While the severity of the sin is in no doubt from this text, the potential of repentance does exist.

However, in I:219b we find the opposite message. The willful spilling of seed is punishable

more than any other transgression. Furthermore:

כלהו סלקין והוא לא סלקין מ"ט אינון קטילו בני נשא אחרא והאי קטיל בנוי ממש אשיר
דמין סגיאין. תא חזי בשאר חייבי עלמא לא כתיב וירע בעיני ה', וכאן כתיב וירע בעיני ה'
אשר עשה. מ"ט, משום דכתיב ושחת ארצה

Everyone ascends [from Gehennom] except this one, who does not. Would you say that others who do evil who killed people [ascend]? Come and see: everyone goes up but he does not go up. What is the reason? These killed other human beings [murderers] but he [the one who spills seed] killed his own children and spilled a great deal of blood. Come and see, it is not written about any of the other wicked of the world that 'it was evil in the eyes of God (*B'reishit* 38:10), only here it is written, "and the thing that he did was evil in the eyes of God". What is the reason? Because it is written, "He spilled it on the ground" (*B'reishit* 38:9).

1. This translation is my own, taken from the *Hebrew* translation of the Zohar, Adirai edition.

In I:188a, the spilling of seed is likewise likened to the shedding of blood through reference to Isaiah 1:15 – *'Your hands are full of blood'*. After repeating the statement that this sin defiles more than any other sin, the text concludes:

זכאה חולקיה דבר נש דדחיל למאריה, ויהא נטיר מאורח בישא וידכי גרמיה לאשתדלא
בדחילו דמאריה.

The man who fears his Lord and is guarded from the evil path, and purifies himself to be occupied by the fear of his Lord merits a portion [in the world to come].

These texts from the Zohar clearly articulate how serious the sin of spilling seed is considered – perhaps even the act that defiles the earth more than any other – while also indicating the potential opening for repentance that Rabbi Nachman will later come to exploit in his teachings. The question that now arises is, within the mystical frameworks that underpin the Zohar and other mystical sources, why is this sin considered so significant? A full answer to this question would necessitate a survey that goes beyond the Jewish sources illustrated here, to draw on teachings of early and medieval Christian pietists, among others, but such a survey is beyond the remit of this thesis. Given that Rabbi Nachman studied Zohar, Tikkunei Zohar and mystical ethical tracts that emphasized strict pietistic practices in his childhood and it is these sources that shaped his cosmological understanding, the illustrative sources cited here will only be drawn from these texts.

From a purely physical point of view, the spilling of seed was regarded as sinful in rabbinic tradition because it was believed that the potential for creating human life lay solely within the seminal flow of the male; the woman and the egg that could be fertilized were understood to be entirely passive recipients/receptacles for the male seed of creativity. This understanding contributed to the reading of the biblical precept of פְּרֹו וְרָבֹו – be fruitful and multiply – as the

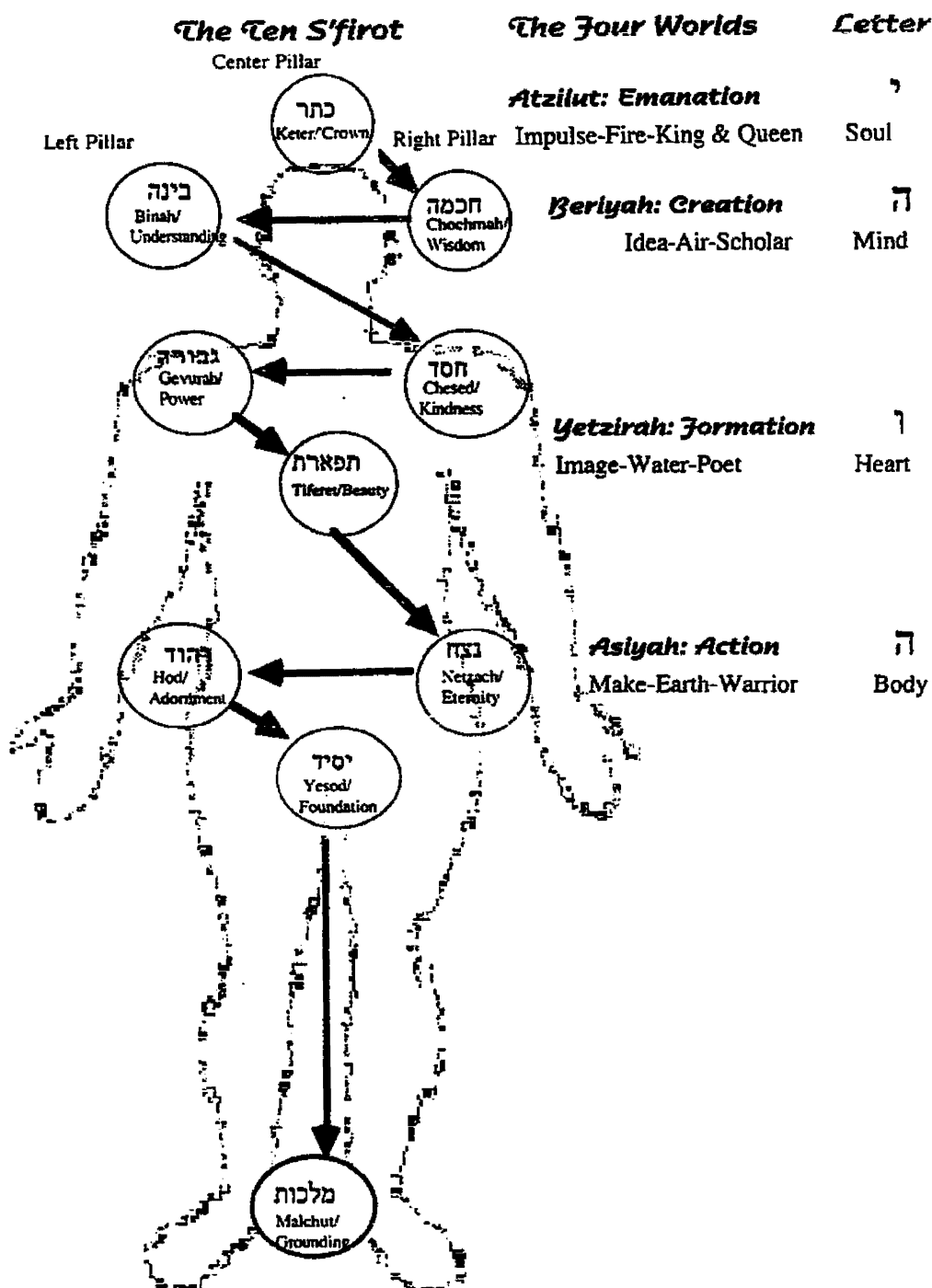
obligation of the male; only he had the necessary means to create, albeit with his wife being a necessary element, and so the onus was on him. Likewise, to purposefully spill seed was to waste the God-given spark that can create human life. Not only did this show the ultimate in contempt for God's gift, but was also regarded, as was shown above, as equivalent to spilling the blood of one's own potential children.

In Jewish mysticism, our physical world and our physical bodies are understood to be a microcosm for the cosmic realm and, so to speak, God's 'body'. This concept is fundamental not only to understanding the mystic's concern with *keri* but also the relationship between physical and spiritual ailments, and Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*, which seeks to correct both the physical and spiritual by addressing the spiritual realm.

While the Zohar speaks of these realms and the relationships between them by piling on metaphorical images, including those of the physical body, later mysticism comes to explicitly map the *sephirot* – the cosmic 'Tree of Life' onto these earlier images, drawing from older mystical material that has already introduced variations on this 'map' of reality. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the *sephirotic* map to demonstrate the cosmic significance of spilling seed. Among the multiple associations that are made with each of the *sephirot* in the Tree of Life are parts of the human body (see Figure 1). The flow of Divine energy from the highest realms to the physical realm of our world travels through the upper eight *sephirot* and the combination of all of these upper attributes combine in *Yesod* – foundation – which, mapped onto both the human and heavenly 'body', is represented by the phallus. Below *Yesod* is *Malchut*, the receiving *sephirah* for all of the supernal energy that has emanated through the other *sephirot*.

This is the *sephirah* from which the flow is brought into our physical world. *Malchut* can be understand as the feminine receiver, and is often identified with *Shechinah* – the feminine aspect of God. The flow between *Yesod* and *Malchut* clearly mirrors that of sexual intercourse between a male and female.

Figure 1: Map of the Sephirot (Zaslow, 1997, p. 226)



At the cosmic level it becomes quite evident why the purposeful spilling of seed becomes so problematic. If the Divine flow is broken, and is not brought down to our world then the relationship with the Divine Source is shattered. In the Zohar I:62a, on the destruction by the flood in *parshat* Noah, the break of the masculine (*yesod*) and the feminine (*malchut*) is described:

אמר לו אמאי דאין קדשא בריך הוא עלמא במיא, ולא באשא ולא במלה אחרא. אמר לו
 רזא הוא דהא אינון חבילו ארחייהו בגין דמיין עלאין ומיין תתאין לא אתחברו דכר ונוקבא
 כדקא יאות מאן אינון דחבילו ארחייהו כגוואה דא מיין דכורין ונוקבין. ועל דא אתדנו
 במיא במה דאינון חבו.

He [Rabbi Yehuda] said to him: 'Why did the Holy One Blessed be He judge the world with water, and not by fire or something else?' He [Rabbi Shimon] said to him: 'This is a secret. Behold they destroyed their path, because waters of above and waters of below could not join as they should. They that destroy their path like this [prevent] the male and female [waters joining] as they should. Regarding this, they were punished by water, just as they had sinned².

Of further significance and concern is what happens to the flow if it cannot continue on its intended path. The Zohar, drawing on earlier sources, identifies this misguided flow as being drawn to the *Sitra Achra* (the other side), the realm of evil, causing the creation of demons and this, in turn causes suffering in the world. While the biblical and midrashic sources cited above did not identify the occurrence of the sin of spilling seed until the generation of Noah, rabbinic sources trace the root of the behavior to Adam. According to this tradition, Adam remained apart from his wife for 130 years after Cain murdered Abel. In B'reishit Rabbah 20:11, R. Shimon states:

כל מאה ושלשים שנה שפירשה חוה מאדם היו רוחות הזכרים מתחממין ממנה והיא
 יולדת מהם ורוחות נקבות מתחממות מאדם ומולידות ממנו ה"ד אשר בהעוותו
 והוכחתיו בשבט אנשים ובנגעי בני אדם בנוי דאדם קדמאה

2. In commentaries on the Zohar, the 'upper waters' are generally associated with the *sephirah* *Binah* rather than *Yesod*. This is because the originating point of the flow, corresponding with the source of seminal flow, is *Binah* (see chapter four).

Throughout the entire one hundred and thirty years during which Adam held aloof from Eve the male demons were made ardent by her and she bore, while the female demons were inflamed by Adam and they bore, as it is written, 'If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of man [Adam]' (II Sam. 7:14), which means the children of the first man.

A little later in B'reishit Rabbah, 23:4, Lamech goes to seek advice from Adam after he accidentally kills his son:

אמר להן איתא ניזיל גבי אדם. א"ל עשו אתם שלכם והקב"ה עושה את שלו, ואמרין ליה אסיא אסי חגרתך, כולם פרשת מחוה הרי ק"ל שנה אלא כדי שלא תעמיד ממנה בן, ואתמהא כיון ששמע כן נזקק להעמיד תולדות. וידע אדם עוד את אשתו.

He [Lamech] said to them [his wives]: 'Come, let us go to Adam.' So they went to him. He said to them: 'Do your duty, while the Holy One, Blessed be He, will do His. 'Physician, physician, heal your own limp!' retorted the other. 'Have you kept apart from Eve a hundred and thirty years for any reason but that you might not beget children by her!' On hearing this, he [Adam] resumed his duty of begetting children, 'And Adam knew his wife again' (Gen 4:25).

While the relationship of these sources to the sin of spilling seed may not appear entirely obvious, the Zohar further interprets these earlier sources to make the connection quite explicit in

I:55a:

רבי שמעון אמר: מאה ותלתין שנים אתפרש אדם מאתתיה וכל אינון מאה ותלתין שנים הוה אוליד רוחין ושדין באלמא. בגין ההוא חילה דזוהמא דהוה שאיב ביה. כיון דחסיל מניה ההוא זוהמא תב וקני לאנתתיה ואוליד בר. כדין כתיב ויולד בדמותו כצלמו.

Rabbi Shimon said: For one hundred and thirty years Adam held back from his wife and for all of these one hundred and thirty years he begot spirits and demons into the world because of the force of impurity that was sucked from him. When this force of impurity was exhausted, he returned and became jealous of his wife and begot a son. So it is written, 'he begot in his likeness, in his image.'

Liebes (1993) explains that it is the engendering of demons and the strengthening of the *Sitra Achra* that are the concerns that lie at the heart of the prohibitions against spilling seed among Jewish mystics: "*Sexual chastity and the sefira of yesod are regarded in the Zohar as a shield protecting man from all evil.*" (Liebes, 1993, p.135). The separation of the Shechinah (*malchut*) from the Godhead, highlighted by I:62a in the Zohar, and the connection of the Shechinah with

the *Sitra Achra* and the creation and strengthening of the demonic forces associated with this realm are the most serious and devastating cosmic events. Mirrored in human behavior, and especially sexual behavior, this concern lay at the heart of many mystical and pietistic writings that warned the follower to guard the *brit* (ie. the organ that carried the sign of the *brit* – the circumcized phallus) above all else.

In the modern commentary on Rabbi Nachman's second lesson (I:205) on the *Tikkun HaKlali*, given shortly before his death, the centrality of these concerns at the heart of his teachings is quite evident. Paraphrasing a lengthy explanation (Mykoff, 2000, p.30), it is explained:

Shefa (Divine Holy flow) passes from *Keter* to *Yesod* [*brit*] and from *Yesod* to *Malkhut* [the representative of this world]. If *Yesod* and *Malkhut* do not unite, bounty is passed into *kelipot* – the evil forces of the *Sitra Achra* (Other Side). This brings suffering into the world. The strengthened *Sitra Achra* can keep *Yesod* and *Malkhut* apart, creating a cycle that is hard to break. In the human realm, wasting seed transfers souls and sparks of holiness to the *Sitra Achra*. *Kelipot* then trap the holy sparks. But our role in the world is to do *Tikkun* – gathering holy sparks. Masturbating further scatters the sparks and therefore delays the final redemption. The souls of the wasted seed never become human; they remain a disembodied soul - a demon - and these afflict humans with suffering. Demon souls remain, perhaps for millennia, until a very great *tzaddik* comes along who is capable of rectifying it.

These texts and their commentaries help to explain the functioning of the cosmic 'body' and its mirror in the human body that provide the foundation for Rabbi Nachman's lessons on the *Tikkun HaKlali*. In addition to the requirement of all to resist sexual urges that could lead to the

spilling of seed, for the *tzaddik* or mystical adept to be able to fulfill their function, their ability to overcome these urges and be a model of sexual purity, sublimating all desire, is paramount. This also requires some further explanation.

In *Hekhalot* mystical literature (approximately first century CE to tenth century CE) for the mystic to engage in practices that will enable him to draw closer to God, he must be in a state of complete purity, especially with regard to sexual purity (Scholem, 1969). Koren (1999) explains: "*Impurity represents the antithesis of heavenly sanctity. Any attempt to mix the pure and impure worlds would prove extremely dangerous.*" (p.66).

Hekhalot literature, like the Beraita of Pinhas Ya'ir, specifies seminal pollution as the impurity that impedes the spiritual quest. Rabbinic literature forbids ejaculants to engage in earthly liturgy and Torah study; Hekhalot literature bars ejaculants from the divine Temple liturgy and Torah secrets (ibid, p.70).

Rabbi Nachman's concern with sexual purity, including his own work to entirely nullify his sexual desires is, therefore, influenced by a long tradition of teachings about the spiritual significance of sexual impurity. While not every era of Jewish mysticism has focused on male sexual purity to such an extent, this focus is found in the early *Hekhalot* mysticism, the Jewish pietistic teachings of *Hasidei Ashkenaz*, and the oft-repeated warning about spilling seed in the Zohar. Rabbi Nachman's claim to have overcome his desires would appear to make him a living example of many of these teachings. For example, Eleazar of Worms states in Sefer ha-Shem that "*the unique name is not revealed except to one who has nullified the lust for women.*" (Wolfson, in Koren, 1999, p.119). Likewise, it is reported in *Chayey Moharan*, 233, regarding

Rabbi Nachman:

The Rebbe said: "If the Rabbis had not explicitly said it is forbidden to say 'An arrow in Satan's eye' (*Kiddushin* 30a), I would say it. I simply cannot understand the stories we are told about the sages of the Talmud who found sexual desire a very hard and burdensome thing to deal with. For me, it is nothing. Nothing at all. I find it no temptation at all. There must certainly be some secret behind what we find in the Torah about this desire being a trial. For the truth is, it isn't a trial at all. If a person knows a little of the greatness of the Creator – as we find in the Psalms, 'For I know that God is great' (Psalms 135:5), I know specifically – this cannot be considered a trial at all. For me, there is no difference between a man and a woman. I look at this desire just as I'm looking at you. I had innumerable opportunities, but it isn't a trial at all." But at the time when it was a trial for him, he too had many temptations (in Greenbaum, 1987, p.248).

In a more extensive report of Rabbi Nachman's struggle and eventual success with regard to his

sexual urges, Rabbi Nathan shares:

The Rebbe's holy qualities were very apparent in his conquest of the universal desire, namely that of sex. He told us that he had had countless temptations. Still, he insisted that sex was not really desirable and certainly not a difficult test to withstand. The Rebbe said, 'Any person, Jew or gentile alike, will not even think of sex as desirable if he is truly wise. If one knows anatomy and understands bodily functions, he should be absolutely repulsed by this desire.' He spoke at length, but unfortunately most of the discussion was forgotten. However, the general trend of his conversation was that the sexual act was ultimately repulsive. He emphasized this to such an extent that he once flatly said, 'A man with even the smallest amount of true intelligence will not find this a temptation at all.' But there was a time in the Rebbe's youth when he had not yet subjugated this desire. At this time, he still had so many fearful sexual temptations that it is impossible to describe them in detail... But he was a stalwart warrior and overcame every evil desire. In this manner, he surmounted his temptations many times. Despite this, the Rebbe did not seek to avoid such temptations. He actually wanted to be tested, and he prayed to God to set temptations before him... Difficult as his trials were, the Rebbe still did not attempt to avoid them. Countless times he battled with his passions, until God helped him and he was able to subjugate his impulse completely. The Rebbe finally destroyed the fiery chamber of this universal desire completely. He then became very holy, totally separating himself from such pleasures. His separation was absolute, a great and awesome level of holiness...

The Evil One was willing to let the Rebbe overcome every single desire, as long as the Rebbe conceded to one thing. In all probability this refers to sex, the most universal temptation. But the Rebbe said that he would do the opposite. He would ignore his other desires and not work to control them at all. But the sexual desire he would eradicate completely. This is actually how the Rebbe began. At first he directed all his effort toward this one goal, to annihilate every vestige of sexual desire...

The Rebbe discussed this with us very often, telling us how he annihilated this desire and actually made himself be repulsed by it. He said 'It is impossible to speak to people about

this. They have already defiled themselves. This is so intermingled with their blood that it has become part of their very minds. And so, they cannot comprehend this. It cannot enter their heart. They do not know that a person can have so much self control that he is actually repelled by sex...

The Rebbe said, 'The true Tzaddik has such a degree of self control that even marital relations do not give him any pleasure. He is so far removed from these instincts that they cause him as much suffering as that of a child when circumcised... He said, 'Every person can attain this level.' (in Kaplan, 1973, p.16-19).

The image of sexual impurity impacts on the *sephirotic* tree in multiple ways that go beyond the specifics of seminal emission. The German Pietists (*hasidei ashkenaz*) are one of the earliest groups of mystics (eleventh to thirteenth centuries) to raise the issue of women's menstrual impurity being a major obstacle for the male mystic. The concern about menstruation in the physical realm parallels the incorporation of a feminine aspect of God at the cosmic level. Koren (1999) explains:

Their appeal to strict niddah laws was both a sociological phenomenon and a theological development: *hasidei ashkenaz* cultivated a bisexual conception of the Godhead. Once mystics conceive of an aspect of God as feminine, female biology can become significant in both the human and the divine realms, and the initiate encounters menstruants both on earth and in the heavens. Castilian mystics incorporate these ideas into theosophical kabbalah (p.102).

Rabbi Nachman discussed male sexual purity and sexual desire extensively, but focused little in his teachings on the need to keep distant from feminine temptations. In fact, he explains to his followers how, as he struggled to overcome his own desires as a youth, he would intentionally put himself in temptations way, to test his ability to overcome these desires, much in the way that the German Pietists describe in *Sefer Hasidim*. Nevertheless, an understanding of the image of the Shechinah as either in a state of purity (flowing with milk) or a state of impurity (menstruating) in kabbalah is necessary to understand Nachman's references to these concepts in his first lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

"In the Zohar, Eve sins by cleaving to the force of impurity which then pollutes her with the menstrual flow." (Koren, 1999, p.2) Menstruation is conceived of as a mark of the serpent in zoharic mythology. As Koren point out, this association has much older roots, including those beyond Jewish sources. *"If the uterus is understood to be demonic in essence, its byproducts must also be demonic. Sassanian Zoroastrianism attests to the belief in Geh, a demonic spirit of menstruation" (ibid, p.47)*

The idea of a pure Shechinah flowing with milk but an impure Shechinah menstruating is, like the belief that the seminal drop alone contains the source of procreative potential, derived from pre-existing 'scientific' understandings of the female reproductive organs.

Aristotle claimed that menstrual blood surrounds the womb and provides necessary nutrients for the child. After birth, this blood is converted into milk for lactation. When a woman is neither pregnant nor lactating, the unused blood is expelled through menstruation (ibid, p.133).

To complicate the significance of this imagery further, both in terms of theosophical belief and the consequence for human behavior, Wolfson (1997) highlights the fact that the Godhead, by consisting of both phallus (*yesod*) and the feminine 'receiving' *sephirah*, *Malchut/Shechinah* is, in effect, an androgynous being containing both sexes. Furthermore, because it is always that which is associated with the feminine that has the ability to either tempt evil, or itself join with the *Sitra Achra*, all positive behaviors become associated with the masculine, even those which we would normally associate with the human female, such as breastfeeding. *"Breast-feeding ... is valorized as a phallic activity (the milk obviously taking the place of the semen) insofar as anything that sustains by overflowing is automatically treated as an aspect of the phallus"*

(Wolfson, 1997, p.95). In the context within which Rabbi Nachman draws on these concepts, the *tzaddik* becomes like the breastfeeding mother, nourishing his followers and also, due to his own sexual purity and ability to rectify sin, a conduit through which the connection between the upper and lower worlds can be sustained. *"By means of the rectification of the holy phallus (tikkun berit qodesh) he is saved from the face of the Other Side, and by means of the blood of circumcision the blood of menstruation is rectified..."* (Wolfson, 1997 p.127).

The concepts of sexual purity, seminal emissions and menstruation discussed here are all necessary to understand not only the language of Rabbi Nachman's lessons, but also why he was so concerned with these issues and what he saw as the purpose of the *Tikkun HaKlali*. In his own education, he would have found many sources, in addition to the Zohar and the Talmud, that highlighted the seriousness of the spilling of seminal seed that he sought to address, especially in the ethical pietistic literature that he studied so intensely. For example, Green (1992) highlights examples in *Reishit Hokhmah*, *sha'ar ha-kedushah* 17. In *Taharat ha-kodesh* II 24b-25b (a non-Hassidic eighteenth century mussar text from Poland) it describes the spilling of seed as 'one of the worst sins of the Torah' and prescribes penance and great mortifications practically unto death. The authors of *Reishit Hokhmah* (Elijah de Vidas) and *Shney Luchot ha-Brit* (Isaiah Horowitz) are deeply troubled by the notion of unforgivable sin and offer various attempts to resolve the issue. Rabbi Nachman, when he presents his *Tikkun HaKlali*, states that many before him have tried to find a *Tikkun* for this sin and have failed, but his *Tikkun haKlali* is the resolution – a way to relieve oneself of the burden of this greatest and most basic of sins (*Sichot HaRan* 141).

Sexual purity and seminal emission in Rabbi Nachman's lessons on the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

In LM I:29, a long and complex lesson, Rabbi Nachman presents a teaching that begins primarily with a focus on sin and the consequence of sin. In the first section of his lesson he is focused on speech (see chapter four), and then moves onto sin in general. Out of this he then turns to focus on sexual sin in particular. However, he explains the kabbalistic understanding of the consequence of sin in general as a necessary precursor to understanding why the sexual sin is so central. In 29:3 he states:

ועל-די-זזה עושה פרד בין קדשא בריך הוא ושכינתה בבחינת 'נחש משיך לה לגבה ואטיל בה זהמא' בבחינת דם נדה ... על-די-זזה נפרדת בחינת המלכות הנ"ל שהיא שכינת עוז מקדשא בריך הוא... ואז שולטת שפחה בישא שהוא מלחות דסטרא אחרא.

And by means of this [sin] he makes a separation between the Holy One, blessed is He, and His Shechinah, with the aspect of 'the Serpent drew her to him and placed poison/impurity in her'. This is the aspect of the blood of a menstruant...

And by means of this the aspect of *Malchut*, which it says there [Zohar] is 'the Shechinah of his strength', is separated from the Holy One, blessed is He...Then the wicked handmaid rules – she is the *Malchut* of the *Sitra Achra*³.

Rabbi Nachman, therefore, draws directly from the classical mystical understanding of the separation of the masculine Godhead from the Shechinah caused by human sinful behavior. He also draws on the imagery of the menstruating Shechinah when she is attached to the *Sitra Achra*. He further draws on this imagery in his discussion of the meaning of wearing white garments and the need to prevent these white garments from becoming stained or blemished. Rabbi Nachman delivered this teaching on Shavuot 5566 (1806) and this was the first time he

3. For the purposes of this research I have worked with the texts in the volumes produced by the Breslov Research Institute. Due to the complexity of this teaching, I have gathered considerable insight from the English commentaries provided in these translated volumes. However, the translations of the excerpts of the lessons themselves are my own. In general, these are somewhat more literal than those provided by the Breslov Research Institute.

appeared before his followers dressed all in white⁴. "The holiday of Shavuot is significant because it celebrates the giving of the Torah, which is likened to milk (BT Hagigah 13a); for this reason, at the Shavuot morning Kiddush it is customary to eat dairy products." (Deutch, 2002, p.198).

Rabbi Nachman explains:

וצריך להכניע שפחה בישה שהיא עת רעה. בבחינת "בכל עת יהיו בגדיך לבנים" "בכל עת" דיקא. "בגדיך לבנים" הינו בלא רבב הינו בחינת טהרת השכינה מנדתה בבחינת "דם נעכר ונעשה חלב"

It is necessary to subdue the evil handmaid, for she is 'a bad time', as in (*Kohelet* 9) 'At all times let your garments be white' – specifically 'at all times'. 'your garments be white' – they are without a stain. This is the aspect of purifying the Shechinah from her menstrual impurity, according to 'the blood is decomposed and becomes milk.'

Rabbi Nachman goes on to repeat that it is through sin that the Shechinah is separated from the Godhead and it is because this generates menstrual blood that they are called 'men of bloodshed'. Earlier sources, discussed above, highlighted how those whose sin is specifically the spilling of seed are guilty of bloodshed, because this causes the 'death' of potential offspring. Here, however, Rabbi Nachman applies this idea to sin in general, and explains that the 'bloodshed' at the cosmic level is the menstruation of the Shechinah. Menstruation is, of course, also a sign of a potential conception that has not taken place.

It is at this point in the lesson, having laid down the problem of sin at the cosmic level, that Rabbi Nachman introduces his teaching on the *Tikkun HaKlali*. While every sin can cause

4. The white clothing and white knitted kippah continue to be a feature of appearance of some Breslovers to this day (although primarily among the younger, 'hippy' elements that can be seen dancing and singing in the streets, and not among those more centrally within the Hassidic community).

'blood' to flow through the cosmic system, there is one aspect that can encompass the totality and which, therefore, requires greatest attention, and that is in the realm of sexual impurity; specifically, the sin of spilling seed. To understand Nachman on this subject, his play on words in the Hebrew, and their symbolic meaning, are important. Primarily, his focus is on the divine phallus (*Yesod*), which transforms red menstrual blood into white semen and rectifies the entire *sephirotic* corpus when it ejaculates. The phallus is referred to as *gid* (vein or penis), *Berit* (covenant) and *Shaddai* (Deutch, 2002, p.198). *Shaddai*, which we would normally recognize not only as a name of God, but also referring to breasts, here refers also to the *sephirah* of *Yesod* – the phallus of the *sephirotic* body. This is because all overflow of positive Divine energy is incorporated into the masculine, and the white milk of the breast is equivalent to the appropriate flow of seminal fluid from the phallus, as discussed above. It is in this context, requiring a *tikkun* that can rectify the *sephirotic* realm and turn the menstruating *Shechinah* into a lactating *Shechinah*, that Rabbi Nachman first introduces his *Tikkun HaKlali*:

כי כמה מיני דמים יש. בכן צריך להמתיק את הדמים האלו הינו לתקן הלאוין שהם הגידין ולהמשיך להם לבנונית בבחינת "דם נעכר ונעשה חלב" ...
ולתקן כל העברות בפרטיות הם רבים מאד וכבד על האדם ואי אפשר לתקן אותם כי יש דקדוקים ופרטים רבים בכל לאב ולאב. בכן צריך לתקן כלליות הגידים שהוא בחינת "ויגד לכם את בריתו" ואז על ידי תקון הברית שהוא כלליות הגידין נתתקן ממילא כל הלאוין שעבר ונמשך להם לבנונית. ועל שם זה נקרא כלליות הגידין שהוא הברית-קדש "שדי" על-שם ששדי ויורה כחץ - לבנונית ותקונים לכל פרט ופרט כפי צרכו. ואפילו למקומות הצרים והדקים. כי יש מקומות צרים ודקים שאי אפשר לבוא לשם שום תקון כי אם על-די תקון הכללי

29:3 For there are many kinds of blood. Therefore it is necessary to sweeten [whiten] all of these bloods, that is to rectify [*tikkun*] the prohibitions that are the '*gidim*' and bring whiteness to them, as in 'blood is decomposed and made into milk.'...

29:4 To rectify [*tikkun*] all of the sins in their specificity – they are very many, and this is a great burden on man. It is impossible to rectify them because there are many precise points and specifics in every prohibition. Therefore it is necessary to rectify the generality of the *gidim*, as in 'And He announced (*YaGed*) to you His covenant (*Brit*)'. And so, by means of the rectification of the covenant (*Tikkun haBrit*), which is the generality of the *gidim*, all the prohibitions that he transgressed are rectified and whiteness is drawn into

them. Because of this the generality of the *gidim*, which is the Holy Brit (*Ha-Brit Kodesh*), are called '*Shaddai*', because it shoots(*Shadai*) and aims forcefully to whiten and rectify each and every detail according to its need, even to places that are narrow and very small. For there are narrow and small places where it is impossible to go there and rectify except by means of the General Remedy (*Tikkun HaKlali*).

This is the first time that Rabbi Nachman has introduced the *Tikkun HaKlali*. In this lesson he does not discuss the recitation of ten psalms, or specify any other aspect of the practice that becomes the *Tikkun HaKlali*. These are presented in lesson I:205 and II:92, and the significance of the recitation of ten psalms will be discussed in chapter six. Rather, he is teaching an overall principle and concept. There are so many ways in which it is possible to sin that to try and rectify the ways in which each and every transgression causes a separation of the Shechinah from the Godhead is simply overwhelming, and could lead one to simply give up hope. Over and over again, in many of Rabbi Nachman's teachings and aphorisms he inspires his followers to 'Never give up hope!' or 'Never despair!'. It is from this that his many teachings on fostering *simchah* – joy – are derived.

The Rebbe said that true happiness is one of the most difficult things to attain in serving God. Another time he said that it seems impossible to achieve happiness without some measure of foolishness. One must resort to all sorts of foolish things if this is the only way to attain happiness. When a person attains true joy, then God Himself watches him and protects him from sexual defilement (LM 169) (from *Sichot haRan* 20, in Kaplan, 1973, p.122).

A *Tikkun HaKlali*, by bringing a *tikkun* of the aspect that can restore a pure flow (milk) of Divine energy throughout the tree by drawing the Shechinah back to reconnect with *Yesod*, then enables this pure Divine energy to flow through the entire system. Because 'whiteness' shoots from the Divine phallus (*Yesod*) and the elements of the cosmic map are a macrocosm of the human world, the focus in our physical world must be on the human phallus and, therefore, the

rectification of sins pertaining to sexual purity. The Talmudic and Zoharic sources reviewed earlier make it quite clear that, in this realm, there is no sin as serious as the wasting of seed, and so it is this above all else that Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali* must address within the human realm.

Toward the end of 29:4, Rabbi Nachman explains that his *Tikkun HaKlali*, which he uses interchangeably with *Tikkun HaBrit*, is '*the essence of Israel bringing themselves close to their Father in Heaven*'. Israel in relation to God is the physical incarnation of the Shechinah (she who dwells among us) in relation to the Godhead. Therefore, "[t]hrough *ha-tikkun ha-kelali* the people of Israel will overcome cosmic evil and redeem the Shekhina (the "Princess") from its exile. The redemption of the Shekhina in the Kabbala means, first and foremost, the redemption of Israel, its symbol." (Liebes, 1993, p.137).

A *Tikkun HaBrit* can reverse the damage caused by sin, which creates a *p'gam habrit* – a breach in the covenant (a separation). If the purpose of the commandments is to turn us toward God and bring ourselves closer to Hi, sin causes a separation from God. Every sinful act removes a person from God in a particular way, and God's presence is concealed correspondingly. Since the goal of the Covenant is to reveal God's presence, sin is a *p'gam habrit*, a breach of the Covenant. This is what the *Tikkun HaKlali* comes to remedy (Greenbaum, 1984, p.17).

In the next part of his lesson, Rabbi Nachman goes on to discuss the possibility of 'earning a livelihood without struggle'. This, he explains, is also dependent on the *Tikkun HaKlali*. The relationship between these two things must be understood at the cosmic level. Just as the 'evil

handmaid' (*Shechinah/Malchut* in the *Sitra Achra* is most commonly identified as the demon *Lilith*) draws away God's *shefa* (abundance) in the cosmic sphere, so our sinful behaviors, namely wasting God's abundance (ie. wasting seed) corresponds with an increase in suffering in our world, and our experiencing a lack of abundance. A focus on prosperity and livelihood, while drawing on a long-existing rabbinic tradition of relationship with sin, is clearly a topic that would resonate in the communities in which Rabbi Nachman was teaching. This is but one example of how the sexual sin is at the core of everything, impacting on suffering in all other areas of life. In the realm of money, Rabbi Nachman teaches that the *Tikkun HaKlali* is to give charity from his earnings (LM I:29, 9). Rabbi Nachman demonstrates the relationship of charity to the overall concept of the *Tikkun HaKlali* through a series of quotations and word-plays. For example in 29:9:

כי הצדקה הוא בחינת כלליות הגידין בבחינת "זרעו לכם לצדקה". בבחינת "זרע גד" הוא טפה חורא שעל-ידי התקון הזה נתרומם המחין בבחינת "מחה חורתא ככספא".

For tzedakah is an aspect of the generality of the *gidim*, as in (*Hoshea* 10:12) 'Sow [*ZiRu*] for yourselves for tzedakah' – 'Zera Gad' (the seed of coriander) is a white drop. By means of this remedy the mind is elevated, as in 'a mind white as silver'.

This latter comment, relating to the mind, is alluding to the source of the seminal drop that shoots from *Yesod* being *Chochmah*. The role of the mind in the *Tikkun HaKlali* is another central element, discussed further in chapter four.

For Rabbi Nachman, the sexual sin includes all sins. As Greenbaum (1984) explains:

The mark of the Covenant is in the very place where man's greatness and weakness are most readily apparent. The power of procreation gives man the role of a partner in creation. If he checks his passions and channels his powers for good, he attains the pinnacle of greatness. But if he fails, his passions can reduce him to the ultimate in degradation (Greenbaum, 1984, p.7).

In essence, therefore,

"... amending this sin is ha-tikkun ha-klali, the *tikkun* of all human sins and of the whole

of Israel, ... The struggle for sexual purity becomes the messianic activity par excellence, and the Messiah's main worldly concern is to guard from sexual sinfulness; all his Hasidim share in this war, perfecting the Messiah's stature through their own chastity." (Liebes, 1993, p.127).

Rabbi Nachman claimed that no-one before him had been able to establish a *Tikkun HaKlali* for the sin of spilling seed, though many had tried. Liebes (1993), however, has uncovered an earlier source that sounds very similar – a *tikkun kelali* from the teachings of Nathan of Gaza (the highly respected mystic who declared Sabbatai Zvi to be the messiah):

Like R. Nahman, Nathan of Gaza also claimed in the text of his *tikkun* that the sexual sin subsumes all others, and its *tikkun* is that of all others. Moreover, this *tikkun* is also closely linked to thought and the mind, which are also repaired through sexual chastity, and Nathan hence referred to sexual chastity as *tikkun gamur* [complete *tikkun*]. ...Following is a quote from Nathan of Gaza's *tikkun kelali*:

A man seeking his own *tikkun* must first amend his sexual sins and be severely punished, and whoever incurs a sexual transgression harms the brain too, which is the source of semen, as well as the body, because semen goes through the body and through the spine, and he therefore harms his spirit and his soul... But the *tikkun* of the brain and of *yesod* is a *tikkun gamur* – when man seeks his own *tikkun* he must first repair his sexual sins, as mentioned, thereby repairing other flaws affecting God, and because semen stemming from *yesod* comes from the brain, the brain also requires *tikkun gamur*. These are the two aspects of *tikkun gamur*. (Liebes, 1993, p.143-4).

This teaching appears to be strikingly similar to Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali* and it would seem improbable that Rabbi Nachman was unaware of this teaching. The fact that the teaching is from Nathan of Gaza, and inextricably linked with Sabbateanism is not coincidental either. This connection is of central importance in uncovering the messianic implications of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*, to be addressed in chapter five.

Nathan of Gaza's teaching also explains clearly why there is a relationship between the brain (mind) and sexual sin. As mentioned earlier, the source of the Divine 'semen' that can effect a

tikkun of the entire sephirotic system, delivered via *Yesod*, is *Chochmah*, which corresponds with mind. In the next chapter I turn to discuss this idea further, demonstrating how this topic is conveyed in Rabbi Nachman's lessons (29 and 205) on the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

CHAPTER FOUR
THOUGHT AND SPEECH IN RABBI NACHMAN'S
TIKKUN HAKLALI

The power of speech

In kabbalistic thought there is a direct relationship between the tongue, or speech - which is activated by thought from the mind - and the phallus. Rabbi Nachman draws on this tradition to make an analogy between *tikkun habrit* (rectification of the covenant, i.e. male sexual purity) and the perfection of sacred language (*lashon hakodesh*). The *brit* is associated with the phallus, while the tongue is associated with *malkhut* - the *shechinah* and the *sephirah* into which the

Divine seed should flow from the *sephirah* of *yesod* (phallus):

By means of the sacred language the lust of temptation for adultery is tied up and bound ... The rectification of the phallus is dependent on the sacred language ... The one without the other cannot possibly be, that is, the rectification of the phallus and the perfection of the sacred language are dependent on one another ... for the one who blemishes the phallus destroys the sacred language (LM I:19,3 transl. in Wolfson, 2002, p.117).

Due to the interrelationship between language and *tikkun habrit*, holy prayer and holy or 'good' speech, according to Rabbi Nachman, can be involved in making a *tikkun habrit*. Rabbi Nachman begins his first lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali* on the subject of speech. The role that speech plays arises from the mystical relationship between thought, speech, and the phallic locus of sexuality and, therefore, plays a role in the *Tikkun HaKlali* that goes beyond the actual practice of reciting the ten psalms. As with Rabbi Nachman's teachings on the *brit* and sexual

purity, one can find the foundation for his lesson on speech and thought in the Talmud and Zohar.

At the most fundamental level, the Jewish mystic believes that, 'in the image of God' we, like God, as it were, create realities with words. God spoke words, consisting of combinations of letters, and the world was created. This is the essence of the teachings in the mystical text, *Sefer Yetzirah*, and is reflected in our daily liturgy:

בְּרוּךְ שֶׁאָמַר וַהֲיָה הָעוֹלָם, בְּרוּךְ הוּא

Blessed is the One who spoke, and the world came into being, Blessed is He.

Likewise, there are examples to be found in the Talmud of a very literal belief that we, similarly, create our 'worlds'. In an aggada from Moed Katan 18a, the point is further made in a dark tale where the death of a relative is directly associated with the careless utterances of one person:

פנחס אחוה דמר שמואל איתרע ביה מילתא על שמואל למישאל טעמא מיניה חזנה לטופרי דהוו נפישן אמר ליה אמאי לא שקלת להו אמר ליה אי בדידיה הוה מי מזלזלת ביה כולי האי הואי (קוהלת י) כשגגה שיוצא מלפני השליט ואיתרע ביה מילתא בשמואל על פנחס אחוה למישאל טעמא מיניה שקלינהו לטופריה חבטינהו לאפיה אמר ליה לית לך ברית כרותה לשפתים דאמר ר' יוחנן מנין שברית כרותה לשפתים שנאמר (בראשית כב) ויאמר אברהם אל נעריו שבו לכם פה עם החמור ואני והנער נלכה עד כה ונשתחוה ונשובה אליכם. ואיסתייעא מלתא דהדד תרוייהו.

An unfortunate thing happened to Pinchas, brother of Mar Shmuel [Rashi: his child died]. Shmuel went in for the purpose of consoling him [lit. to ask what reason] and saw that his nails were long. He [Shmuel] asked him 'Why haven't you cut them?'. He [Pinchas] replied to him [Shmuel] 'If this had happened to you [him] would you treat it so lightly?' This was like a mistake that came forth from a Ruler, and an unfortunate thing happened to Shmuel [loses a relative]. Pinchas his brother went in for the purpose of consoling him [lit. to ask what reason]. He [Shmuel] took his nails and hurled them at him. He said to him. 'Do you not hold that a covenant has been made with the lips? As R. Yochanan said, from where do we learn that a covenant has been made with the lips? As it says, 'Abraham said to his lads, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the lad go over there; we will worship and we will return to you." It was effective because both of them returned.

The term בריתה כרותה לשפתים - 'a covenant has been made with the lips' is understood to mean that whatever is pronounced with the lips, even insincerely, comes to pass.

The citation from *B'reishit* is highlighting the fact that Abraham spoke of his return *with* his son *before* he went up the mountain to follow God's orders to sacrifice his son. His words were clearly effective, as Isaac was not, ultimately, sacrificed (although in the biblical text it only explicitly mentions Abraham's return to his servants).

Mind and Speech in Kabbalah

In the Zohar, the relationship between thought and act is apparent due to the interconnectedness of the upper and lower worlds. Later interpreted through the lens of the *sephirot* (see chapter three), all Divine flow that arrives in *Yesod* has come from *Keter* through *Chochmah* and *Binah*, and all of the *sephirot* inbetween. *Keter* is understood to be beyond all possible comprehension, but drawing close to God involves **mind** for the Jewish mystic adept. Therefore, *Chochmah* and *Binah* are often identified as a higher 'source' for that which flows to *Yesod*. This is conveyed in the Zohar with the layering of metaphorical imagery. For example, in I:247b:

ברכות אביך גברו על ברכות הורי. ברכותטביך גברו ודאי דהא יעקוב אחסין שבחא דכלא יתיר מאבהן דהא הוא שלים הוה בכלא. וכלא יהב ליה ליוסף מ"ט. בגין דהכי אתחזי דהא צדיק כלא נטיל ואחסין כלא כחדא וכל ברכאן ביה שריין. הוא אריק ברכאן מרישא לעילא וכל שייפי גופא כלהו אתתקנן לארקא ביה ברכאן וכדין אתעביד נהר דנפיק מעדן.

The blessings of your father are more powerful than the blessings of my fathers/parents. The blessings of your father are surely more powerful. For behold Jacob inherited far more praise than the patriarchs, for behold he was perfect in everything. And everything he gave to Joseph. What is the reason? Because it is appropriate for the righteous to take and inherit all as one, and all blessings dwell in him. He draws down blessings from the head up above, and all the limbs/parts of the body, all of them prepare to draw down blessing into it, and so it is made into a river that comes forth from Eden.

When this text is explicitly 'decoded' by later commentators through the lens of the *sephirot*, Joseph is the ancestor assigned to the *sephirah* of *Yesod*. Jacob is assigned to *Tiferet*, which is understood to be the perfect balance of *Gevurah* and *Chesed*, assigned to Abraham and Isaac. But the blessings of the 'father' is assigned to *Chochmah*, which is the highest *sephirah* into which Divine energy flows out of *Keter*. Kramer (in Mykoff and Bergman, 1993) more fully explains these associations and their relationship to *Shefa* - God's flowing bounty in his annotations to LM I:29:

In brief: God constantly sends bounty to this world by systematically channeling it through each of the individual sefirot. From the word of God, *shefa* descends to *Keter*, and from there to the mentalities (*Chochmah* and *Binah*, and compound-*sefirah* of *Daat*). It is then channeled through the six *sefirot* of the Divine persona *Z'er Anpin*, from where it is passed on to *Malkhut*, which is the Divine persona/*sefirah* representative of this world. Thus, for bounty to descend it must first pass through the *mochin* (*Chokhmah*, *Binah*, *Daat*) (p.206).

This kabbalistic system provides the foundation for Rabbi Nachman's teachings in LM I:29 about the role of the mind and speech in the *Tikkun* that is effected by the *Tikkun HaKlali*. At the beginning of the lesson, Rabbi Nachman explains that only words that contain 'good' can be 'accepted':

וַיֵּאָדָר עוֹשֵׂין הַטּוֹב בַּהֲדָבָר? הוּא עַל-יְדֵי שְׁלוֹקָחִין הַדְּבָר מֵהַדְּעַת אֲזִי יֵשׁ בּוֹ טוֹב. אֲבָל כְּשֶׁהַדְּבָר בְּלֹא דַעַת אֲזִי אֵין בּוֹ טוֹב. בְּבַחֲיִנַת "גַּם בְּלֹא דַעַת נֶפֶשׁ לֹא טוֹב" "נֶפֶשׁ" הוּא הַדְּבָר כְּמוֹ שֶׁכָּתוּב "וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה" וּתְרַגְמוֹ "לְרוּחַ מִמְּלָלָא".

And how do we create good in the speech? This is by our taking speech from *daat*. Then it has good in it. But when speech is without *daat* then there is no good in it, as in (Proverbs 19:2) "Also, for the soul to be without knowledge is not good". *Nefesh* (soul) is speech, as it is written (Gen 2:7) "Man became a living soul"; the Aramaic translation is "a speaking spirit".

If the mouth is associated with *malkhut*, then this cannot speak 'good' (ie. the opposite of sin) unless it is drawing down *shefa* from *daat*, which is the combination of the *sephirot chochmah*

and *binah*, known together as the *mochin*. If this flow is broken then a person is further from God, i.e. closer to sin and the forces of the *Sitra Achra*.

Later in the lesson, when Rabbi Nachman comes to speak of drawing whiteness into the *gidim* (see chapter three), he demonstrates how this rectification of the *brit* is directly associated with a rectification of the *mochin*:

כי כל הלבנונית נמשך מן המח בחינת "ונחלים מן לבנון" - "מן לבונא דמחא". ועל-די תקון כלליות הגידין נתרום המוחין בבחינת "כנשר יעיר קנו". נשרא דא רוחא שהוא כלליות הגידין בחינת "ולא קמה עוד רוח באיש". יעיר קנו - שהוא מעורר "קנה חכמה קנה בינה" מבחינת שנה.

על גזליו ירחף - שהוא מרחף ומגן על המחין שהיו מתחלה נגזלין בבחינת "גזל אביו ואמו" הם המחין שהם אב בחכמה ואם לבינה.

For all the whiteness is drawn from the mind (*mo-ach*), as in (Song of Songs 4:15) "flowing from Lebanon" - from *LiBuNa* (whitness) of *Mocha* (the mind). By means of the *Tikkun HaKlali* of the *gidim* the *mochin* is raised, as in "like an eagle (*nesher*) arousing its young (*kein*)". *Nishra* is the spirit which is the generality of the *gidim*, as in "And there did not again arise a spirit in man". 'Arousing its young (*kein*)' - that he arouses "the acquisition (*knei*) of *chochmah* and the acquisition of *binah*" from the aspect of sleep.

"Hovering over its young (*GoZeL*).". He hovers over and protects the *mochin* that were at first stolen (*niGZaLin*), as in (Proverbs 28:24); "He steals (*gozel*) from his father and his mother." These are the *mochin* that are Father in *chochmah* and Mother in *binah*.

This passage is extremely dense and complex, exemplifying Rabbi Nachman's technique of turning words and word-play in multiple directions to allude to the framework and concepts outlined above from the kabbalah. Whiteness of the mind is representative of pure thoughts (ie. not lustful and not sinful in other ways). Whiteness is also akin to the seminal drop that descends from the *mochin* to the lower levels. The above passage is clarified in Kramer's (in

Mykoff and Bergman, 1993) commentary on this passage:

As Rebbe Nachman explains, the *mochin* is where rectification actually takes place because "man does not sin unless a spirit of folly enters him. If a person sinned sexually, wasting his seed and thereby blemishing the 365 *gidim*, it was because his intellect was blemished. Effecting the General Remedy therefore requires a rectification of the *mochin*, which is a rectification at the source (p.222-3).

Epilepsy - symptom of a blemish of the mind

Later in the lesson, Rabbi Nachman discusses 'constricted mentalities' through allusion via further wordplay and imagery that is then related back to the image of the eagle and her young. Constricted mentalities/constricted consciousness is caused by sin. In order to move out of this constricted place, a 'child' must be 'nursed' by its 'mother's breast' (*Shaddai*). This means that the *mochin* must be rectified and then whiteness can be drawn down to *malchut* from them, bringing about a *tikkun* in the whole system, which is also described as breaking down the blood of menstruation and turning it into milk (see chapter three). This description of constricted consciousness, caused by sin, is also discussed through another series of symbols related to epilepsy. According to a description of events surrounding the actual giving of this lesson Shavuot, one of Rabbi Nachman's followers had brought his daughter, who suffered from epileptic fits:

Another occasion when Rebbe Nachman channeled healing through a Torah teaching was almost a year a half later, on the festival of Shavuot 1806. Shavuot was one of the fixed times for Rebbe Nachman's followers to gather at his side. One man came with his daughter, who was epileptic. Her fits came at regular intervals. In Rebbe Nachman's Torah discourse that Shavuot (LM I, 29) he included a discussion of epilepsy, in the course of which he quoted the verse, "She has fallen but will no more; rise, O virgin of Israel" (Amos 5:2 according to the talmudic interpretation in *Berachot* 4b). The expected time for the girl to have a fit passed without incident, and from then on she was cured (*Chayay Moharan* 146 and commentary of Rabbi Gedaliah Koenig, in Greenbaum, 1995, p.69).

Greenbaum cites this as one example of several where, according to Rabbi Nathan's biographical records, Rabbi Nachman actually brought about a physical healing through his words of Torah. This, in itself, is of considerable significance and I will shortly turn to discuss Rabbi Nachman's

specific role as *tzaddik* as a central aspect of the *Tikkun HaKlali*, as it relates to speech in particular. But first, the significance of *epilepsy* deserves further attention. When the kabbalistic symbolism of this disease is traced it becomes clear that Rabbi Nachman's mention of this illness during his Shavuot lesson is not a mere coincidence due to the epileptic daughter's presence. Rather, it fits within his extended explanation of the constriction of the *mochin* caused by sin and the means by which a *Tikkun* can be brought to the higher *sephirot* that constitute these mentalities in the cosmic system. First, I cite Rabbi Nachman's discussion of epilepsy in LM I:29, and then illustrate its earlier foundation in the writings of the Zohar.

זה בחינת חלי נופל רחמנה לצלן הינו כשהדמים מתגברין והם מתיזין להמח ועל-די-זה נלחץ המחין. ועל-די לחיצת המחין רועשין האיברים... ועל-די תיקון הכללי שמעורר המחין כנ"ל וממשיך לבנונית להגידין בבחינת "בכל עת יהיו בגדיך לבנים" אזי נתרפאת מחולאת הנפילה. ואז "נפלה ולא תוסיף קום בתולת ישראל". ואז הדבור מתר בבחינת "פתח פיק".

This is the aspect of the illness of *nophel* [epilepsy], may the Merciful One spare us, when the blood is strengthened and shoots up to the brain [*mo-ach*] and by this the mind is put under pressure. Because of the pressure on the mind the limbs tremble... But by means of the *Tikkun HaKlali* [General rectification] which arouses the mind and causes whiteness to be drawn into the *gidim*, as in "At all times let your garments be white", therefore she is healed from the illness of epilepsy. And so "She fell and will no longer arise, Maiden of Israel" (Amos 5:2). And then speech is permitted, as in "Open your mouth".

In his commentary on this passage, Kramer (in Mykoff and Bergman, 1993) explains that the shaking of the limbs is related to the wasting of the seed of the *brit*. Epilepsy is, therefore, a symptom of a blemish in the *mochin* and the *brit*. The *Tikkun HaKlali* brings about the rectification of both. The association of epilepsy with the sin of wasting seed is also found in the

Zohar (I:55a):

תא חזי כל ב"נ דאזיל לסטר שמאלא וסאיב ארחוי כל רוחי מסאבי משיך על גרמיה. ורוח מסאב אתדבק ביה ולא אעדי מניה... אמר ר' חייא מאי דכתיב "ואחות תובל קין נימה" מאי איריא הכא דקאמר קרא דשמה נעמה. אלא בגין דטעיין נשא אבתרה ואפילו רוחין ושדין... רבי שמעון אמר אמן של שדים הות דמסטרא דקין נפקת והיא אתמנת עם לילית באסכרה דרביי. אמר ליה רבי אבה והא אמר מר דהיא אתמנת לחייכא בבני נשא. אמר לו

הכי הוא ודאי דהא איהי אתיית וחייכאת בהו בבני נשא. ולזמנין דאולידת רוחין בעלמא
מנייהו. ועד כאן איהי קיימת לחייכא בהו בבני נשא.

Come and see, all men that go to the left side and defiles his way, all spirits of impurity he draws to himself, and spirits of impurity cling to him and do not leave him ...Rabbi Hiyya said, 'Why is it written "and the sister of Tuval Kayin was Naamah" (Gen 4:22)? Why is it taught thus that the verse says that her name was Naamah? It is because of the men lusted after her, even spirits and demons... Rabbi Shimon said 'She was the mother of demons'; she came forth from the side of Cain, and she is responsible during the night, with Lilith, for the choking [epileptic death¹] of babies. Rabbi Abba said to him, 'Behold, sir, she seduced men for pleasure [aroused them in their sleep]'. He said to him, 'It is exactly thus, behold she came and seduced men and sometimes she gave birth to spirits in the world from them, and until now she still exists to seduce men.

This text directly relates to those sources reviewed in chapter three that describe the birthing of demons into our world through the spilling of seed that bring about our suffering. Here, the same demon that is identified with causing lustful thoughts in men that could lead to an emission of seed at night is also identified as causing epilepsy in their children. This is almost certainly the allusion that Rabbi Nachman was drawing upon with regard to the father and daughter in his community through whom he could symbolically discuss the whole kabbalistic interrelationship between sexual purity and purity of thought and speech. In the final section of this chapter, I consider Rabbi Nachman's instruction on how to rectify the *mochin* - this is the first instruction found within his teachings on the *Tikkun HaKlali* that prescribe a particular action to initiate this *Tikkun*.

1. Berg's translation identifies אסכרה as an epileptic death.

Praise of the Tzaddikim

As Rabbi Nachman tells us, true speech must contain good: it must be informed with our knowledge of the spiritual truth of the creation. Thus the complete remedy for the defects in the way we speak must begin with the enhancement of our intellect, the enhancement of our holy knowledge. How do we achieve this? The answer Rabbi Nachman gives us is through hearing and speaking about the greatness of the Tzaddikim. The Tzaddik is one whose life is in accordance with God's truth and will. Praising the Tzaddik sets him in his true light as the exemplary man, the one who lives to his full potential in harmony with the truth of existence. (Greenbaum 1994, p.19)

Rabbi Nachman's first reference to an 'eagle arousing its young' in LM I:29, 2 identifies the *nesher* as the spirit (*nishra*) of the *tzaddik*. He states, (as summarized by Greenbaum, above, in a contemporary explanation of Rabbi Nachman's teaching):

ולחקים ולרומם את הדעת הוא על-ידי שבח הצדיקים.

Establishing and raising daat is by means of praise of the tzaddikim.

Rabbi Nachman does not go on to describe exactly what such praise should consist of, although other lessons and biographical accounts offer further explanation. Kramer (in Mykoff and Bergman, 1993) explains that, by mentioning and praising *tzaddikim*, a person will invoke their merit and spiritual power and this will elevate that individual's *daat* which, in turn, will elevate his speech to contain 'good'. However, while not explicit in this lesson, the role of the *tzaddik*, placed so centrally in this short statement in LM I:29, is as one who possesses the necessary virtue (ie. sexual purity) to rectify *daat* and draw down 'whiteness' to effect a *tikkun* on behalf of one of his followers. Rabbi Nachman, therefore, by identifying not only as *tzaddik* but *tzaddik hador* (see chapter five), becomes an essential intermediary on behalf of his followers to bring about a *Tikkun HaKlali*. Deutch (2002), interpreting this idea through the lens of the kabbalistic

allusions that Rabbi Nachman draws upon in his teaching, states: "... *the zaddik serves as a microcosm or homologue of the divine phallus, inseminating disciples with his advice/divine effluence.*" (p.200)

In LM I:7, 3, Rabbi Nachman describes the advice one receives from a *tzaddik* as 'the semen of truth'. *Etsah* (advice) is associated with the *sephirah* of *hesed* (mercy) which is assigned the color white. The whiteness, as explained in chapter three, is described alternately as both semen and milk. Deutch (2002) explains:

The *tikkun ha-klali* or General Remedy must be undertaken by the *Zaddik Ha-Dor* (*Zaddik* of the Generation) through the constant maintenance of sexual purity, that is by guarding his '*berit*' or phallus. When this occurs, the *zaddik*, in this case Nachman, becomes a conduit for the divine effluence, identified in this text as milk or semen. (p.199).

This central role of the *tzaddik* in the concept of the *Tikkun HaKlali* points to a further dimension of Rabbi Nachman's system of belief for which one can find only the merest hint of clues in his lessons - his messianic aspirations. This aspect of the *Tikkun Haklali* is explored in chapter five.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE MESSIANIC MISSION OF THE TIKKUN HAKLALI

The Suffering Tzaddik

At the end of chapter four the practice of 'praising the tzaddikim' proposed by Rabbi Nachman was introduced as one element of the *Tikkun HaKlali* that could bring about a *tikkun* of speech and thought. In fact, this appears relatively early in the lengthy lesson in LM I:29 that introduces the concept of the *Tikkun HaKlali*. Within the text of the lesson Rabbi Nachman does not divulge much detail about this practice, but says enough to make it clear that the *tzaddik* plays a central role in enabling *shefa* to be drawn down to *malchut*. This, essentially, is what constitutes the *tikkun*. In chapter three it became clear that the focus on sexual purity was related to the central position of the *sephirah* of *yesod* as the conduit between the upper *sephirot* and *malchut*. What now becomes evident, as it becomes possible to piece together the different elements of the lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali*, is that the *tzaddik* (who must himself maintain the highest level of sexual purity and the highest levels of holy speech) is the physical manifestation of the *sephirah* of *yesod*.

The positioning of the *tzaddik* so centrally within the system to bring about *tikkun* highlights an aspect of Bratslav Hasidism that is emphasized far more than almost any other Hasidic group.

Liebes (1993) explains:

The main innovation of Bratslav Hasidism is the elevation of the personal tie with the *tsaddik* – Rabbi Nahman – to the rank of the highest religious value ... In this context, naïve faith is, first and foremost, faith in the *tsaddik*, the only one able to mediate Jewish faith... All that is required from the Hasidim is simple piety and identification with the *tsaddik's* destiny, which mitigates the *tsaddik's* terrifying loneliness and alleviates his spiritual burden. The *tsaddik* is indeed involved in a hard and cruel strife and Bratslav texts speak mainly of R. Nahman's inner struggle, but this struggle has now assumed cosmic significance. R. Nahman's victory over his evil inclination and his doubts reflects the triumph and the rise of the community that depends on him, as well as that of the people of Israel and even of the whole world. This victory thus takes on the meaning of a

messianic *tikkun* (Liebes, 1993, p.117).

The latter comments by Liebes shed some light on the greater significance of the detailed accounts of Rabbi Nachman's conversations, journeys and experiences, emotional highs and lows, as recorded by his devoted follower Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov. These details, in addition to the many occasions when Rabbi Nachman himself speaks of the suffering of the *tzaddik* on behalf of Israel, may seem to share some characteristics with the centrality of Jesus' life journeys in the Christian gospels. For example:

... יש צדיקים שמקבלים מעצמם יסורים עליהם בשביל ישראל ...

There are *tzaddikim* who receive afflictions upon themselves for the sake of Israel ... (LM I:71).

These words reflect the mystic's understanding of the rabbinic precept that states 'All Israel are responsible for one another'. This is understood to mean that each individual is bound to every other, and all of Israel is bound to the *tzaddik*:

As a result of this principle, suffering and pain may be imposed on a *Tzaddik* (righteous person) as an atonement for his entire generation. This *Tzaddik* must then accept the suffering with love for the benefit of his generation, just as he accepts the suffering imposed upon him for his own sake. In doing so, he benefits his generation by atoning for it, and at the same time is himself elevated to a very great degree. For a *Tzaddik* such as this is made into one of the leaders in the Community of the Future World ... All this involves a *Tzaddik* who is stricken because his generation is about to be annihilated, and would be destroyed if not for his suffering. In atoning for them through his suffering, this *Tzaddik* saves them in this world and greatly benefits them in the World to Come (Greenbaum, 1990, p.28-9).

Rabbi Nachman had told his followers that, even after death, he could intercede to bring about a *tikkun* for their sins:

The Rebbe said he would have great pleasure from every single person who came to his graveside and recited a psalm with heartfelt fervor. When the Rebbe said this he gestured

and moved his body in such a way as to suggest the bodily strength it would give him there in the grave when people would come there to recite psalms. He spoke about this many times. Then afterwards he revealed the Ten Psalms of the *Tikkun HaKlali* and he said that whoever will come to his grave and give a penny to charity and recite these ten psalms, no matter how great his sins, "I will do everything in my power, spanning the length and breadth of the creation, to help this person." The Rebbe appointed two witnesses to his words (*Chayay Moharan* 59, in Greenbaum, 1987. p.70).

In fact, as Liebes (1993) demonstrates, Rabbi Nachman's concept of the suffering *tzaddik* is, in fact, more akin to ideas found in Sabbateanism than Christianity, as I will explain a little later in this chapter. But first, how does the idea of the suffering *tzaddik* relate to the *Tikkun HaKlali*?

The role of the tzaddik in bringing about tikkun

Tikkun, as has been demonstrated in the preceding chapters, is *tikkun* of both the cosmos and the individual soul; the latter is a microcosm of the former, and vice versa, and the two are therefore inextricably connected. The greatest threat from sin is the damage it does in the upper worlds, variably described as a separation from *daat* (the combination of *chochmah* and *binah*, collectively referred to as the *mochin*) or a *p'gam habrit* (where *yesod* has been defiled by sexual impurity, so that the Divine flow from above is diverted to the *Sitra Achra* instead of flowing into *malchut*). Therefore the unification of the sephirotic realm is retarded by sin because sin nourishes the forces of evil. Rabbi Nachman's emphasis on sin is eschatological in nature. If he is *the tzaddik* who can help bring about redemption through *tikkun*, and the real import of a person's sin is what it contributes to universal alienation, then the salvation of each sinner will also lead to the salvation of the universe and bring us a step closer to the ultimate *tikkun*, which is the advent of messiah (Green, 1992). Zeitlin (2002) remarks that many think that it is simply the *tzaddik* that is the central concept in Bratslaver teachings; in fact, it is the Messiah. The *tzaddik* is a *bridge* to the Messiah. He is a premonitory reflection/revelation of Messiah; perhaps even a manifestation of the soul of the Messiah itself.

The tzaddik ha-dor as carrier of a potential messianic soul

A further word is necessary on the concept of the 'messiah soul'. There is a belief that particularly manifested itself in Hasidic thought, that certain *tzaddikim* carry within them the 'messiah soul'. Whether or not this spark of potential messiah manifests itself in the lifetime of that particular *tzaddik* depends on several things. In part it depends on whether the *tzaddik* in question is of sufficient holiness and purity to merit it. But, in addition and also interrelated with this, it is dependent on whether Israel as a whole is in a state of sufficient purity. When Israel is behaving sinfully the *tzaddik* must 'descend' into the locus of that sin in order to perform a spiritual *tikkun* and bring healing to that community. In the process the *tzaddik* may suffer enormously (see above) and, should this suffering become too much, he may fail to manifest the spark/soul of potential messiah.

According to this strand of kabbalistic tradition, Moses carried the potential messiah soul within him, but failed to enter the promised land (which is understood as bringing about the final redemption) because of a sexual flaw caused by the community of Israel who troubled him throughout their wanderings in the wilderness. In *Shevchay Moharan* (402), Rabbi Nathan records a teaching that he heard from other followers of Rabbi Nachman, where Rabbi Nachman likens his own suffering caused by those who oppose him to that of Moses:

There are levels and palaces which it is impossible to reach except through the opposition one encounters. There is proof of this in the fact that Moses himself had opposition. Moses certainly had the power to draw the whole of the Jewish People after him. It is written of him that 'Moses assembled all the congregation of the Children of Israel' (Exodus 35:1) - because Moses was the collective consciousness of the Jewish People, and it was within his power to assemble them all and draw them towards him. Yet, in spite of this, it is written that 'they looked after Moses' (Exodus 33:8) which the Rabbis interpreted negatively (*Kiddushin* 33b). There are other examples of opposition to Moses as well. For there are certain levels which cannot be reached except through the opposition one suffers (in Greenbaum, 1987, p.333-4).

Likewise, Rabbi Nachman teaches that Moses raises fallen souls (in *Gehennom*) even to this day, which is akin to the work that Rabbi Nachman told his followers he would do on their behalf if they came to recite the *Tikkun Haklali*, (along with the giving of *tzedakah* and, preferably, preceded by *mikveh*) at his grave:

The great *tzaddik* [Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai] is indeed taken on the path to *Gehennom* after his death - so that he can raise souls up from there. This is how the great *Tzaddik* serves God even after his death, because even then he labors to raise the fallen souls from where they have fallen and restore them to God. This explains the verse, 'And it was after the death of Moses the servant of God' (Joshua 1:1). Even after his death, Moses was 'the servant of God' for he still served God after his death and continues to do so even now. He is busy raising the fallen souls to God (*Sichot Moharan* 602, in Greenbaum, 1987, p.454).

This passage also mentions Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, to whom the Zohar was traditionally attributed. Elsewhere, Rabbi Nachman states that the Zohar is the received teachings that can be traced back to Moses. There is a sense that the teachings of the kabbalah are the key to the wisdom of the *tzaddik* and, in particular, is an important part of the chain through which the potential messiah soul travels through a *tzaddik ha-dor* - the *tzaddik* of the generation, with whom Rabbi Nachman identified himself. In carrying the potential messiah soul, Green (1992) concludes: "*Nachman's soul is none other than that of Rabbi Simeon [bar Yochai], reincarnate in a later generation.*" (p.13).

Rabbi Nachman saw himself as one of the phases of Messiah, although he didn't claim to be the Messiah explicitly in his writings. He did imply it at times, and at times he implied that it would be one of his descendants (Liebes, 1993). In so doing, he was drawing on a tradition that identifies two messianic figures - Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David. The former is the one who will do battle against the powers of evil (*Sitra Achra*), suffering and dying in the process, but making way for the Messiah ben David who will bring about the final redemption (and also have the ability to bring about the revival of the dead, including Messiah ben Joseph). Rabbi Nachman seemed to primarily identify as the stage of Messiah ben Joseph, although sometimes his allusions appeared to suggest that he carried the soul of both. The greatest period

of messianic hope and fervor gleaned from his teachings are in the period of 1804-1806, during which time he taught his lessons on the *Tikkun HaKlali*. It was also during this time that he fathered a son. In fact, he gave his lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali* just a few weeks after his son's birth. Tragically, his son died a few months after birth, and this seems to have brought an abrupt end to Rabbi Nachman's messianic hints, and several practices that were introduced because of a messianic connection; the practice of *tikkun ha-zot* (a midnight ritual originating with Rabbi Isaac Luria aimed at restoring the *Shechinah* to the side of good), the wearing of white, and private fast days. Only the practice of the *Tikkun HaKlali* remained, but the centrality of the messianic element has lessened over time, as it has become a ritual for men regarding sexual purity.

The two aspects of the messiah soul also have specific associations with the *sephirot* and this helps to elucidate the reasons for Rabbi Nachman's particular concerns with sexual purity. The Messiah ben Joseph is aligned with *yesod* and the Messiah ben David is aligned with *malchut* (Deutch, 2002). The battle of Messiah ben Joseph, or the *tzaddik ha-Dor*, is a battle in the spiritual domain – it is about *inner* striving. Prior to Rabbi Nachman, the Safed Kabbalists claimed that both Isaac Luria and Hayyim Vital were incarnations of Messiah ben Joseph, but that the sins of their unworthy generations had caused them to pass away without effecting the great and final *tikkun* (Green, 1992). Rabbi Nachman explained that the Messiah's chief weapon would be power of prayer and the power of prayer comes via Joseph, which is *yesod*. Therefore, sexual purity was an integral and necessary part of the purity of speech, which is an important aspect of the power of prayer. These connections were discussed in greater depth in chapters three and four, but their role in an overall messianic goal now becomes evident.

Given that the failure of Moses, Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai, Isaac Luria and Hayyim Vital to actualize the potential of the messiah soul in their generations had traditionally been attributed

to the degradation of their generation, particularly in relation to sexual impurity, it is very possible that this is what drove Rabbi Nachman to concentrate so intently on the sexual sin, even the accidental spilling of seed. His *Tikkun HaKlali*, which he claimed many other great *tzaddikim* had searched for but never succeeded in finding was, in his mind, the ultimate and vital tool to be able achieve, through spiritual *tikkun*, what these previous *tzaddikim* could not - the actualization of the messiah soul.

As an aside, there is a particular message associated with Rabbi Nachman that can be re-read in a different light given this messianic context. After Rabbi Nachman there was to be no other Rebbe of the Bratslaver Hasidim. He told his followers that '*... his fire would burn until the Messiah comes,...*' (Green, 1992, p.186). Many contemporary Bratslaver publications will emphasize how Rabbi Nachman taught his followers that they were all equally capable of manifesting the *tzaddik* within them by following his example in matters of purity of speech and sexual purity, sublimating all desire (eg. Kramer, in Mykoff and Bergman, 1993; Greenbaum, 1984, 1995). This emphasis might imply that no Rebbe was necessary because Rabbi Nachman passed on the mantle of the Rebbe, symbolically, to all of his followers. However, given the absolute centrality of Rabbi Nachman as the *tzaddik ha-dor* and the central role that he played as '*yesod*' to Israel's '*malchut*', it seems strange that the need for a central Rebbe figure as *tzaddik* would then disappear in the next generation, by Rabbi Nachman's own instruction. However, if he believed that he was the *last tzaddik ha-dor* and he was pathing the way for the arrival of Messiah, then there would be *no need* for another Rebbe after him. This would seem to be more a more likely explanation for his not appointing a successor.

The sin of Sabbateanism and the role of the Tikkun HaKlali

Finally, Liebes (1993) has argued convincingly that there is another specific context for Rabbi Nachman's intense concern with the sexual sin and, in fact, the origins of the *Tikkun HaKlali* - Sabbateanism. Sabbetai Zvi (1626 - approximately 1676) had been one of the most significant Jewish claimants of the title 'messiah', leading many followers astray and causing enormous trauma to the Jewish community when he finally converted to Islam rather than be put to death by the Sultan. Zvi was also a kabbalist. A group of his followers, the Sabbateans, continued to follow his teachings and engage in his form of religious practice, in which many precepts of Judaism were abandoned, and it is believed that many of the sexual images and metaphors of kabbalah were regarded as inspiration for literal behavior. Hence a strong association has traditionally been made between the Sabbateans and acts of sexual defilement, along similar lines to those that the Zohar had associated with the generation of the flood or Sodom and Gemorah (see chapter three).

In 1759, Jacob Frank (born 1726) declared himself the successor to Sabbetai Zvi. He associated himself with the Sabbateans, adopting many of their practices, including sexual practices. Frank identified Jesus as a valid incarnation of the messiah and urged his followers to convert to Christianity, as a precursor to a future 'Messianic religion'. Frank travelled to Lemberg, and he and his followers were baptized in churches in Lvov. Although Frank died in 1791, his daughter continued to lead the movement until her death, and the Frankists became active supporters of Napoleon Bonaparte in the Napoleonic wars, regarding him as a potential messiah¹. This movement therefore, in its latter stages, was contemporaneous with the life and teachings of Rabbi Nachman.

1. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Frank, accessed 2/5/06

Liebes (1993) believes that Rabbi Nachman identified the sinful acts of the Sabbateans and the Frankists as the primary cause of suffering among his people during his lifetime. "*For Rabbi Nahman, the Sabbatean heresy was the root and the symbol of all worldly evil, and he believed that he had come into the world to repair it*" (Liebes, 1993, p.128).

Liebes goes on to analyze a segment of LM I:207 in which Rabbi Nachman is quite explicit about the task of the *tzaddik ha-dor* to battle against Sabbateanism. In his analysis, Liebes explains:

The Frankists' transgression is seen as rooted in the cosmic-historical circumstances prevailing at the time as well as in their own sin that, in my view, was sexual. It was the Frankist sin that caused the death of the *tsaddik ha-dor*, R. Israel Baal Shem Tov, who died soon after the Frankist apostasy. The Frankists were able to cause the Besht's death only because of his relatively low spiritual rung. A higher-ranking *tsaddik*, by whom R. Nahman obviously intended himself, shall repair and temper the Sabbatean teachings and turn them again into Torah (p.128-9).

How, precisely, does Rabbi Nachman intend to make a *tikkun* for the cosmic rift caused by the Sabbatean and Frankist sin? From records of his journeys, and allusions made in his teachings, as well as Liebes' tracing of a number of facets of the *Tikkun HaKlali* to Sabbatean origins, it would appear that this was a major concern in his life's work. For example, Green (1992) describes Rabbi Nachman's detour and journey to Kamenets en route to Palestine, which he journeyed to once in his life. There had been a previous Frankist presence in the town, and Rabbi Nachman believed his presence, and recitation of prayers, could bring about a *tikkun* in Kamenets. The concept of a *tzaddik* descending into a realm of impurity before he could rise to an even higher rung of perfection is a Lurianic concept that took deep root in Sabbatean thinking, used to justify many of their acts that intentionally contravened a commandment. Just as Moses or Rabbi Simeon bar Yochai had to descend to *Gehennom* to redeem the souls of those that had sinned, so Rabbi Nachman would spiritually 'descend' at the location of a previously-incurred sin in order to bring about the *tikkun* of the trapped souls or demons that remained there, bringing

about the ongoing suffering of the community of that place.

Likewise, just as Moses endured the antagonism of the people toward him, so Rabbi Nachman taught of being lenient toward those who criticized him, or those whose beliefs and practices were seen as in error by the Hasidim, namely the *mitnaggedim* (pious, non-Hasidic Jews) and the *maskilim* (secular, 'enlightenment' Jews). "*His lenient view of the tsaddik's opponents resembles the notion of the Messiah bringing redemption through his suffering, which is often found in R. Nahman's writings and apparently originates in Sabbateanism...*" (Liebes, 1993, p.131). Just as with his visit to Kamenetz, Rabbi Nachman's acceptance of these views, and even going as far as to highlight aspects of 'good' that he saw in them, was akin to "...*descending into evil in order to uplift wrongdoers ...*" (*ibid*, p. 132). Liebes explains further:

A well-known tradition claims that the Besht had attempted the *tikkun* of Sabbatai Zevi until he himself was almost tempted into Sabbateanism and conversion to Christianity. But R. Nahman went so far as to be taken for a true Sabbatean and, indeed, several indications suggest that the misgivings on this matter were a crucial factor in the controversy about him.

R. Nahman himself admitted that his views could arouse suspicions of Sabbateanism and, when carefully examined, his statements indeed attest to his deep links with this movement (in line with the doctrine of *tikkun* through affinity) (*ibid*, p.132).

In chapter two I mentioned that the concept of a general or complete rectification, which is Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*, shared much in common with Nathan of Gaza's *Tikkun kelali* or *Tikkun gamur*. It was Nathan of Gaza, a mystic and highly respected scholar, who declared Sabbatai Zvi as a true messiah. Not only do the details of this specific practice share much in common (particularly the recitation of a set of psalms, although not the same ones),

"... the critical parallel is in Rabbi Nahman's personality as a leader, which is very close to that of Sabbatean messiahs, whose doctrines also hinge on their own fate and their personal experiences. Thus, Sabbatean literature includes many descriptions of the torments suffered by Sabbetai Zevi when lured by heresy and by his evil inclination and of the profound cosmic meaning of his victory over these temptations" (*ibid*, 1993, p.134).

Not only was a significant element of Rabbi Nachman's messianic mission to bring about a *tikkun* of the sins of Sabbateanism and Frankism, but the *Tikkun HaKlali* was a vital 'weapon' for

achieving this goal. This *tikkun* was the most difficult to achieve, because of the scale of the Sabbatean sin, but it was ultimately part of the greater purpose of *tikkun* - to restore the Shechinah from out of the clutches of the *Sitra Achra*, enabling the flow of the pure seed/white milk to once again flow through the *sephirotic* system. The ultimate repair of the cosmic tree was, at the spiritual level, what was required to bring about the final redemption.

In chapter six, the recitation of the 10 psalms that Rabbi Nachman eventually declared as a central ritual part of the *Tikkun HaKlali* is explored in order to demonstrate how the specifics of this practice also resonate with the aspects of the *Tikkun HaKlali* already explored - sexual purity, purity of speech and holy words, and the overall messianic aspirations of Rabbi Nachman. In conclusion to this chapter, one brief excerpt of the initial lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali*, LM I:29 will be discussed to illustrate how Rabbi Nachman left a clue as to the deeper significance of his lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali* with regard to the *tikkun* of Sabbateanism and Frankism.

Rabbi Nachman's final word on the Tikkun HaKlali

Toward the end of his lesson, in 29:11, Rabbi Nachman teaches:

וכן כלם צריך לתקן כל דבר על-ידי תקון הכללי השיך לו. וזה מחמת שצריך להרים את המחין להמשיך משם לבנונית לתקן וללבן כל הפגמים וזה אי אפשר כי-אם על-ידי תקון הכללי כנ"ל.

וזה בחינת: "האי נמי אתרמי לה בת מזלה" בחינת: "ונזלים מן לבנון" מן לבונא דמחא כנ"ל.

"כס"ף נבח"ר לשון צדי"ק: (באור זה הענין ומה שיכות יש לפסוק זה להתורה הנ"ל יתבאר במקום אחר).

And thus all of them need to make a *tikkun*; each thing by means of the *Tikkun HaKlali* that belongs to it. This is because it is necessary to raise up the *mochin* to draw whiteness from there, to rectify and whiten all the breaches/blemishes, and this is impossible except by means of the *Tikkun HaKlali*, as has been explained.

This is as in "That one too has found his destined one (*bat maZLeh*). This corresponds to 'noZLim from LeBaNon' (flowing from Lebanon) - from whiteness of the *mo-ach* (mind), as has been explained.

'*keseF nivchR leshoN tzaddik*' (choice silver is the tongue of the *tzaddik* (Proverbs 10:20). [The last letters of the words in this phrase spell FRANK] (the explanation of this matter and what the connection of this verse is to the lesson will be explained in other place).

The final section of the text, as presented in *Likkutei Moharan* goes back to discuss more on the topic of wine which was initially discussed in 29:8. Therefore, without the additional material of 29:12 that relates to 29:8, the text above would be concluding point of the lesson. Rabbi Nachman concludes with a repetition of the key points he has made throughout the lesson regarding the role of the *Tikkun HaKlali* to raise up the *mochin* and enable whiteness to be drawn down through the *sephirot* system to rectify the breach (*p'gam brit*) of *yesod*. This final repetition of this point is connected to a line from the passage from *B. Tal Berakhot* 8b that Rabbi Nachman begins his lesson with. The entire lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali* is a drash of this text:

A certain man went seeking a wife, but they didn't give [her] to him. What did he see that made him go to where there was a better one? He took a peg and pressed it in below. It did not go in. He raised it up and pressed it in higher up. It went in. He said "That one, too, has found his *bat mazleh* (destined mate)".

At the end of the lesson Rabbi Nachman matches each part of this text to all that he has explained about the *Tikkun HaKlali*. The details of this explanation are not relevant here, other than to state that the concept of trying to fix the pin 'higher' up when it couldn't be fixed in a lower place corresponds to the *Tikkun HaKlali* which works at rectifying the *mochin* from where the Divine flow can then be restored to the whole cosmic system, because it is too difficult to work at individually rectifying every sin at the lower level.

However, it is the very last line that is of most interest here. Standing alone is this coded phrase about the tongue of the *tzaddik*. As discussed in chapter four, the tongue can symbolize both holy speech (referring to the rectification of the *mochin*) and *yesod*, where the *tzaddik* becomes the earthly representative of the holy phallus; the bridge by which the Divine *shefa* can be brought to the whole community of Israel.

In Kramer's (in Mykoff and Bergman, 1993) commentary to this line in the Breslov Research Institute's translation and commentary, he refers to a commentary by the Be'lbe' HaNachal who claims that this line relates to France and the French language. He states, "*Then, as now, France was known for its sexual promiscuity and lack of charity*" (p.254). Kramer does go on to say that "*[f]rank is the very antithesis of each of the rectifications...*" (p.257). However, it would seem much more likely, given the messianic context discussed in this chapter, with particular reference to the sins of the Sabbateans and the Frankists, that Rabbi Nachman has provided a coded message that makes his *Tikkun HaKlali* the ultimate rectification for the sins of the Frankists. While Jacob Frank was no longer alive when Rabbi Nachman delivered his lesson, the Napoleonic wars were still raging. It is quite possible that Rabbi Nachman, like the Frankists, identified these wars of continental scale as the apocalyptic battles that precede the birthpangs of the messiah, according to rabbinic tradition. If my interpretation of this coded verse is correct, Rabbi Nachman left no clearer sign as to the true purpose of the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

CHAPTER SIX
THE RECITATION OF TEN PSALMS
FOR TIKKUN HAKLALI

Rabbi Nachman's teaching on the 10 psalms

In LM I:29, the concept of *Tikkun HaKlali* was explained in great depth. Certain practices were explicitly mentioned along with the overall concept of the *Tikkun*: praising the *tzaddikim*, speaking words of prayer, and giving *tzedakah*. However, the practice that has come to be most specifically associated with *Tikkun HaKlali* - in fact, almost wholly identified with it - is the recitation of ten psalms. Rabbi Nachman first discussed this practice a short while after the original lesson. Initially, in LM I:205 he discussed the concept of reciting ten psalms and the existence of ten kinds of melody (see below). It was not until 1809 or 1810, shortly before his death, that Rabbi Nachman stated that ten specific psalms would contribute to the practice of enacting *Tikkun HaKlali*.

What is merely alluded to in I:29 is explained quite explicitly in I:205,1, with regard to the primary intent of the *Tikkun HaKlali* as a response to male sexual impurity, and the kabbalistic foundation for this concern:

תקון למקרה לילה רחמנא לצלן לומר עשרה קפיטל תהלים באותו היום שארע לו חס
ושלום. כי יש כח באמירת תהלים להוציא הטפה מהקלפה שלקחה אותה. כי תהלים
בגימטריא ליל"ת עם החמש אותיות של שמה שמיא הממנה על זה כידוע.

The *tikkun* (rectification) for a nocturnal emission, may the Merciful One spare us, is to say ten psalms on the same day that it happens to him, God forbid. This is because there is power in the recitation of psalms to extract the drop from the *kelipah* (husks of the *Sitra*

Achra that trap holy sparks) that took it. This is because *TeHiLYM* (psalms) in gematria is [equivalent to] *LYLYT* (Lilith) with the five letters of her name [added], she being the one appointed over this, as is known.

The reference to Lilith as the temptress that causes *shefa* to flow to the *Sitra Achra* was explored in chapter three. Rabbi Nachman explains that *Tehilim* are a counter-element on the positive side to the power of Lilith to draw holy sparks to the other side. In 205:2, Rabbi Nachman continues to explain how the psalms are the antithesis to the *kelipot* in general, and Lilith in particular. Before discussing this in further detail, an explanation is required for the 'ten types of song' that constitute the Book of Psalms. The rabbinic presentation of the ten types of song is found in the

Babylonian Talmud, *Pesachim* 117a:

דאמר ריב"ל מאי הללויה? הללוהו בהלולים הרבה. ופליגא דדיה אדיה דאמר ריב"ל בעשרה מאמרות של שבח נאמר ספר תהלים בניצוח בנגון במשכיל במזמור בשיר באשרי בתהלה בתפלה בהדאה בהללויה גדול מכולן הללויה שכולל שם ושבח בבת אחת.

R. Yehoshua ben Levi said 'What is the meaning of Halleluyah? : Praise Him with many praises.' (ie. it is one word meaning 'many praises'). And R. Yehoshua ben Levi contradicts himself for R. Yehoshua ben Levi said the Book of Psalms was said in ten different styles of praise: *nitzuach*, *niggun*, *maskil*, *mizmor*, *shir*, *ashrei*, *t'hilah*, *t'filah*, *hoda'ah* and *halleluyah*. The greatest of them all is halleluyah for it incorporates the Name (*Yah*) and a praise together (two words in one).

Immediately following this reference to the ten kinds of song, the Gemara shifts to a new topic, enquiring about the authorship of Hallel. A little later, some of the varieties of song are further mentioned, which is noteworthy because the associations made with a messianic context have some resonance with Rabbi Nachman's teachings:

ניצוח וניגון לעתיד לבא משכיל על די תורגמן לדוד מזמור מלמד ששרתה עליו שכינה ואחר כך אמר שירה מזמור לדוד מלמד שאמר שירה ואחר כך שרתה עליו שכינה ללמד שאין השכינה שורה לא מתוך עצלות ולא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך דברים בטלים אלא מתוך דבר שמחה של מצוה שנאמר (מלכים ב ג) ועתה קחו לי מנגן והיה כנגן המנגן ותהי עליו יד ה'.

[Psalms introduced with] *Nitzuach* and *Niggun* [refer] to the world to come (Messianic future)¹.

Maskil [were said] through a spokesman (said quietly to a spokesman who says them out loud to the public).

L'David Mizmor teaches that the Divine Presence [first] rested on David and afterward he recited the song. *Mizmor L'David* teaches that [first] David recited the song and afterward the Divine Presence rested upon him [and this comes] to teach you that the Divine Presence (Shechinah) does not rest [on a person] amidst laziness nor amongst sorrow, nor amidst laughter, nor amidst lightheadedness, nor amidst idle conversations, rather amidst joy associated with a mitzvah, as it is stated: 'And now, bring for me a musician; and it happened, that when the musician played, God's hand rested upon him [Elisha] (II Kings 3:15)².

The relationship between the talmudic text and Rabbi Nachman's messianic goals (see chapter five) is not a direct one, but the mention of the messianic theme in such close proximity to the listing of the ten kinds of song suggests further development of this relationship in the zoharic sources. This messianic theme is not lost on a contemporary Bratslaver Hasid, explaining the significance of the ten psalms to the *Tikkun HaKlali*:

It is because the Ten Psalms of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun* contain the Ten Kinds of Song that they have the power to transform sadness and sighing into joy. This is why they are the remedy for sin. And the remedy will be complete with the coming of Mashiach, for then the joy will be very great. King David himself was the Messianic King, and it was because of this that he devoted his life to the songs in the Book of Psalms, all of which are founded on the Ten Kinds of Song... (Greenbaum, 1984, p.68).

Greenbaum (1984) presents the correspondence between the ten kinds of song and the *sephirot*, derived from Zohar III:223b: *Ashrei* corresponds with *keter*, *shir* with *chochmah*, *bracha* with

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1. Rashbam states that this is from tradition and is not implied by these two words themselves.
 2. This verse records that Elisha sought to elevate Elijah's mood through music so that he would be receptive to prophecy. The joy he experienced through music was considered the 'joy of mitzvah' because Elisha's intent was to allow God's spirit to rest upon him.

binah, *nigun* with *chesed*, *zemer* with *gevurah*, *hallelu* with *tiferet*, *lamneatzeach* with *netzach*, *hodu* with *hod*, *rinah* with *yesod* and *tehilah* with *malkhut* (p.49). It should be noted that some of the terms here are not identical to those listed in *Pesachim* 117a. Rabbi Nachman's own list in LM I:205 more closely accords with the talmudic text, but he replaces *tehilah* with *bracha*, found in the list above. Greenbaum (1984) states: 'It is because the Ten Kinds of Song build and strengthen the ten sefirot to which they correspond that they are the remedy for this sin [wasting seed] (p.49).

How, precisely, can the ten varieties of song make *tikkun* for sin, and especially the sin of wasting seed? Liebes (1993) offers an overview of the process: "*The ten varieties of song intimated in the ten psalms of ha-tikkun ha-kelali not only redeem the Shekhina positively and directly but also indirectly; namely, by defeating the opposing forces of evil that confine it and harm it*" (p.138). In LM I:205, 2 Rabbi Nachman illustrates the means by which some of the varieties of song act as the antidote to the *Sitra Achra* and possess the ability to redeem holy sparks:

כי אשרי הוא לשון ראיה והסתכלות הפך הקלפה הנ"ל שעקר כחה מקלקול הראות מבחינת "ותכהין עיניו מראות" בבחינות "יהי מארת" חסר ודרשו רבותינו זכרונם לברכה: "דא לילית" נמצא שעקר כחה מקלקול הראיה ואשרי שהוא לשון ראיה היא הפך ממנה. וכן משכיל כי היא בחינת משכל ומשכיל הוא הפך מזה וענין זה עין במקום אחר: כי עקר כחה להחטיא את האדם במקרה חס ושלוש הוא על-ידי לשון תרגום שהוא בחינת משכיל על ידי תרגמן שהוא מערב טוב ורע לפעמים משכל ולפעמים משכיל עין שם. וכן הללויה הפך הקלפה ששמה לילית על שם שהיא מיללת ביללה תמיד והלל הפך יללה כי אותיות הללי הם הפך ילל"ה: והשאר לא פרש.

For *Ashrei* is the language of seeing or gazing, the opposite of the aforementioned *kelipah*, whose essential strength is from the damaging of the sight, as in "his eyes had dimmed from seeing" (Gen. 27:1). This is as in "let there be *me'orot*" (Gen. 1:14) (with a missing *vav*)³. Our Sages, may their memory be for a blessing, expounded: "This is Lilith"

3. Kramer (in Mykoff and Bergman, 2000) expounds this to explain that there is a rabbinic

(*Tikkunei haZohar* 44). Hence it is found that the essence of her strength comes from damaged sight and *Ashrei*, being the language of sight, is the opposite of her.

And likewise with *Maskil*. For she [Lilith] is an aspect of *MeShaKeL* (to bereave/make childless), whereas *Maskil* (to enlighten) is the opposite of this. And the essence of this matter is discussed elsewhere⁴. For the essence of her power to cause a man to have a nocturnal emission, God forbid, is by means of the language of Targum, which is the aspect of *Maskil* by means of a translator, which is the mixing of good and evil; sometimes *MeShaKeL* and sometimes *MaSKil* - see there (LM I:19, 4-5).

And likewise Halleluyah is the opposite of the *kelipah* whose name is *LYLyT* (Lilith) because she is always *myaLeLeT biyelalah* (wailing/whining). Hallel (praise) is the opposite of *yelalah*, because the letters *HaLeLY* are the opposite of *YeLaLaH*.

He did not explain the rest.

These three examples make it quite clear that each of the ten kinds of song, through the power of the letters and their meaning, have an effect on the cosmic level. Rabbi Nachman is describing a way of doing spiritual battle with the forces of the *Sitra Achra*, most specifically the temptress *Lilith* who causes men to have lustful thoughts and commit the sin of wasting seed, by means of the weapon of prayer (specifically the psalms). He never completed the detailed explanation above for the remaining seven kinds of song for his followers. However, Rabbi Nachman of Tcherin (died 1894), a follower of Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov who wrote a commentary to *Likutei Moharan* called *Parparaot LeChochmah*, does attempt to provide an explanation of the relationship of each type of song to the matter of defeating the forces of the *Sitra Achra*, the

tradition, found in *Pesachim* 117a, that the missing vav alludes to the word *מארה* (curse). The curse came with the diminishing of the light of the moon, and afflicts young children with disease (p.35)

4. In LM I:19, 4-5. The essence of this teaching is that one should make even one's mundane speech about spiritual matters, so that the *kelipot* cannot cling to you and cause a nocturnal emission. Rabbi Nachman's reference to *Targum* in the next sentence is a reference to turning everyday speech into holy speech, which is akin to opposing the forces of *meshakel* (Lilith) with *maskil* (Kramer, in Mykoff and Bergman, 2000, p.36-7).

temptations of the night and the sin of wasting seed. A detailed account of these other relationships is not necessary here; it is sufficient to note that he continues to demonstrate how these terms can oppose the negative forces that create a *p'gam habrit*.

When Rabbi Nachman declared the ten specific psalms that would constitute his *Tikkun HaKlali*, it was not at all obvious how his selection related to the ten kinds of melody. Prior to announcing the specific psalms he had earlier provided ten verses of scripture which 'alluded' to the ten psalms (see LM II:92), which were likewise difficult to interpret. The ten psalms he provided are 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137 and 150. Rabbi Nachman provided no explanation of why he had selected these particular psalms. Not until Rabbi Nachman of Tcherin's commentary on *Likutei Moharan* were these psalms investigated for their resonance with the ten kinds of melody and the theme of *tikkun habrit* (*Parparaot LeChochmah* II:92, in Greenbaum, 1984, p. 51-53). In his commentary, he shows that some of the psalms contain more than one of the ten kinds of song, while others do not appear to make explicit mention of any of them, but have some other kind of thematic strand that can be related to the broader aim of the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

The overall complexity of the linguistic and interpretative tools required to fully understand the choice of the ten psalms is not of central importance here. Even Rabbi Nachman of Tcherin states that his interpretations only deal with the most obvious allusions but that the true depth of reason for the choice of the ten "... is something which is as far beyond our ability to comprehend as the heavens are high above the earth" (*Parparaot LeChochmah* II:92, in Greenbaum, 1984,

p.53). However, there is more that can be said about the relationship of the ten kinds of song to messianic redemption and, following the convincing presentation of Liebes (1993), further associations that can be made with Sabbateanism.

The restoration of the Shechinah through song and pulse

In chapters three and four the symbolism of the menstruating Shechinah and the concept of Divine *shefa* being cut off when the *mochin* are suffering from an epileptic disease were discussed. The *Tikkun HaKlali* is understood both to purify the Shechinah, turning blood into milk, and curing the epilepsy by restoring the flow from the *mochin* to the lower levels of the sephirotic system. The *Tikkunei haZohar* offers an interpretation of the ten kinds of song that sheds further light on the role of Rabbi Nachman's ten psalms in the *Tikkun HaKlali*.

Sefer Tikkunei ha-Zohar interpreted these ten varieties in a messianic context, as the ten knocks with which God (or perhaps the Messiah) awaken the Shekhina asleep in Exile, in an exegesis of Song of Songs 5:2 "I sleep but my heart wakes: hark, my beloved is knocking..." This certainly points to the messianic connotations of *ha-tikkun ha-kelali*, chiefly because of its association with the first of R. Nahman's tales in *Sippurei Ma'asiyyot*, "The Loss of the Princess," which all agree is concerned with a messianic theme – redeeming the Shekhina from exile ... An even more explicit parallel is found at the end of the tale of "The Seven Beggars", where the handless pauper boasts of his ability to heal the "princess" [the Shekhina], who had been injured by ten arrows smeared with ten kinds of poison. He then boasts further; "I can remove the ten different arrows from the princess. I know all the ten kinds of difikin [pulse] and can heal the princess with the ten varieties of song (Liebes, 1993, p.137).

In the context of Rabbi Nachman's stories, the beggar healer who knows the ten kinds of pulse and ten varieties of song and is therefore able to heal the Shechinah is Rabbi Nachman himself. He explains the relationship of the story to the power of the ten kinds of song to his followers, as

recorded in *Sichot HaRan* 273:

... The Tale of the Seven Beggars also alludes to the importance of melody...

The divine soul in every Jew is a princess – a king's daughter. She is weary and faint because of her sins. She is held captive by an evil king and is shot with ten poisonous arrows. Only a great *Tzaddik* has the power to enter every place where the soul has fallen and remove all ten arrows from her. In order to heal her, he must be able to discern all ten types of pulsebeat. He must know all ten categories of song, for her main cure is through melody and joy. Taking this as a clue, you can understand the entire story. Use it as a means of returning to God in truth. For the main thing is not study, but deeds' (*Sichot HaRan*, in Kaplan, 1973, p.400-1).

If the healing of the Shechinah, which is also described as turning the menstrual flow into milk, or making *tikkun* for the *p'gam habrit*, is the ultimate aim of the *Tikkun HaKlali*, then the way in which the ten kinds of songs are seen to be linguistic oppositional forces to the power of Lilith is important beyond even her role as the demoness whose temptations lead to the wasting of seed. Lilith is the female aspect of the *Sitra Achra*. In other words, she is the counterpart to the Shechinah. The restoration of the Shechinah/*malchut* to its place receiving the Divine *shefa* from the *mochin* and, more directly, from *yesod*, is the ultimate overthrow of Lilith. "*Lilith rises from the ruins of the Shekhina, and redemption will come through Lilith's downfall*" (Liebes, 1993, p.138).

It is interesting to note that many of the contemporary booklets on Rabbi Nachman's teachings that have particular appeal to a wide audience are those that focus on ways of lifting oneself out of a state of despair or melancholy⁵. Examples of titles include '*Under the Table & How to Get Up*' (Greenbaum, 1991), '*Healing Leaves: Prescriptions for Inner Strength, Meaning and Hope*'

5. See chapter seven for further discussion of the contemporary presentation of Rabbi Nachman's teachings.

(Bell, 1999), '*Garden of the Souls: Rebbe Nachman on Suffering*' (Greenbaum, 1990), and '*Courage!*' (Becanson, 1983). However, in the context of the role of Lilith and the opposing forces of the ten kinds of song in the *Tikkun HaKlali*, the deeper significance of despair and the redeeming role of joy becomes apparent. Lilith is the root of all despondence, and joy that emerges from this place of despair can defeat Lilith, helping to bring about redemption. In the context of the story of the seven beggars, joy both defeats melancholy (see above for the wailing associated with Lilith) and helps to overpower the sexual instinct. The story begins: '*What do you know of joy surging from melancholy?*', setting the stage for the story that conveys this message of redemption (Liebes, 1993).

In *Likutei Halachot*, Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov also explains the explicit relationship between the ability of the psalms to transform sadness and sighing into joy and the messianic goal of redemption. He states:

And the remedy will be complete with the coming of Mashiach, for then the joy will be very great. King David himself was the messianic king, and it was because of this that he devoted his life to the songs in the Book of Psalms, all of which are founded on the ten kinds of song. It was through the strength of his prayer that he was able to turn sadness and sighing into joy (*Likutei Halachot, Hilchot Peria u'Revia v'Ishut* 3, in Greenbaum, 1984, p.66).

The ten kinds of song, the ten psalms of the *Tikkun HaKlali* and the messianic goal of redemption also have a Sabbatean connection (introduced in chapter five). In addition, and perhaps beyond all that has been explained above to demonstrate why ten psalms are a central element of the *Tikkun HaKlali*, the Sabbatean connection bring us back to Rabbi Nachman's life mission - to make *tikkun* for the Sabbatean sin that has brought so much suffering into the world.

The Sabbatean source of reciting psalms to bring about tikkun

Liebes (1993) explains that, at the time of the messianic fervor that surrounded the pronouncement of Sabbatai Zvi as messiah by the mystic, Nathan of Gaza, Nathan initiated a movement of intense repentance. This was more than just a general call for the repentance of the community; it also consisted of rituals for the *tikkun* of individual sins. To facilitate the *tikkun* of all different kinds of sins, Nathan taught ways of attaining *tikkun kelali* for all one's sins. Liebes (1993) claims that he has "... found no precedent for this usage of the expression *tikkun kelali* before Nathan of Gaza" (p.143).

Liebes (*ibid*) goes on to demonstrate that the core ritual of this *tikkun kelali* shares the recitation of psalms in common with Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*, although Nathan did not develop this aspect of the ritual as fully as Rabbi Nachman. Nathan's *tikkun* spoke of thirty psalms without being specific as to which ones to recite, as well as texts taken from Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the last chapter of Proverbs (the 'Woman of Valor', understood in kabbalah to refer to the Shechinah). While the fact that Nathan speaks of thirty psalms may appear to be a significant difference with Rabbi Nachman's practice, in fact he describes three groups of ten, each group enabling *tikkun* of the lower three of the four worlds in Lurianic mysticism (*Assiyah*, *Yetzirah* and *Briyah*). Therefore, while Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali* clearly is not identical to Nathan of Gaza's *tikkun kelali*, it would appear that the specific use of psalms for *tikkun* could be seen as a Sabbatean innovation. Liebes does not find earlier roots to this practice in

kabbalah⁶. "*Nathan's tikkun kelali implies a further connotation – not only the tikkun of all of man's sins, but also that of the whole people, or of all the souls of Israel as embodied in Sabbatai Zevi*" (*ibid*, p.144). In both chapter four on the role of the praising the *tzaddik* and chapter five on Rabbi Nachman's identity as the messianic *tzaddik ha-dor*, it was clear that he, like Sabbatai Zvi, identified his central role to be as both the conduit of *shefa* to all the souls of the Jewish community, and the sum total of all of those souls, suffering when they suffered.

Taking Sabbatean practice as the foundation for his own *Tikkun HaKlali* was, for Rabbi Nachman, the ultimate mode of *tikkun* by imitation; descending into the depths of the source of sin in order to redeem the trapped sparks from the cosmic rift caused by Sabbateanism. It was not enough to simply proclaim this as the task; Rabbi Nachman believed that by reclaiming some of the very practices of Sabbateanism he could bring about a *tikkun* for their sins. His emphasis on absolute sexual purity was an opposing force to the sexual immorality associated with the Sabbateans and, even more so, with the Frankists. Yet he used their own *tikkun* - the recitation of psalms - as the central constituent of his *Tikkun HaKlali* to achieve redemption.

6. In Lurianic kabbalah one can find the practice of reciting *mishnayot* as the most important form of *tikkun*, because the same Hebrew letters appear in *Mishna* and *neshama* (Liebes, 1993).

CHAPTER SEVEN

RABBI NACHMAN'S *TIKKUN HAKLALI*:

THE SEARCH FOR A CONTEMPORARY MESSAGE

In chapter one of this thesis I raised a series of questions that prompted me to research the background and original intent of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*. In particular, I questioned whether the presentation of the *Tikkun HaKlali* to a contemporary, non-Bratslav Jew as a remedy for 'healing' was an accurate portrayal of the *Tikkun*. In choosing to conduct an in-depth analysis of Rabbi Nachman's teachings in their original context, I have demonstrated that the *Tikkun HaKlali* was central to Rabbi Nachman's theosophical and messianic belief system; systems that are not commonly known or adopted by contemporary, progressive Jews. The specifics of the practices that he focuses on, especially with regard to male sexual purity and the issue of accidental nocturnal emissions, can be understood as a concretization and human bodily manifestation of a cosmic system of thought that draws on kabbalistic sources. The rectification (*tikkun*) of a rupture in the *sephirotic* system between *yesod* and *malchut* is manifested as a *p'gam habrit*, which is understood to be a sin with the organ and locus of the *brit* - the male phallus. When an analysis of Rabbi Nachman's teachings demonstrates this original context, one would expect most progressive Jews, upon learning of this, to withdraw from the thought of bringing such teachings into the realm of a Jewish healing service.

However, does the original meaning and context matter to a Jew who, not knowing anything of this original context, has gained emotional and spiritual sustenance from extracts of Rabbi

Nachman's teachings that, at face value, seemed to speak to their needs? Does a deeper knowledge and understanding of the *Tikkun HaKlali*, as explained in the preceding chapters, have any bearing on Jewish leaders, such as rabbis and educators, who frequently draw on these same texts as sources for use in classes and services related to Jewish approaches to healing?

This thesis has pointed to the significant gap between original meaning and contemporary application, beyond the realm of the Bratslav Hasidic community, of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*. However, it does not answer these latter questions. These questions cannot be addressed by a textual analysis of the sources; rather they demand a sociological study of contemporary communities and Jews who have been exposed to Rabbi Nachman either through the purchase of the outreach-focused books of the Breslov Research Institute, or through the context of a Jewish healing service. Such a study is beyond the remit of this rabbinic thesis.

However, these questions will be explored and discussed in further depth in this chapter, in order to articulate some of the most important issues that arise from this thesis. Phone interviews were conducted with Dr. Shaul Magid, scholar of Bratslav Hasidism, and Moshe Mykoff, one of the primary editors of the translated volumes of *Likutei Moharan* and the pocket booklets of Rabbi Nachman's teachings published by Jewish Lights. These conversations offer some insightful perspectives on the questions I have raised about authenticity and the purpose of outreach to non-Bratslav Jews (and even non-Jews). Finally, I will consider some of the ways that the findings of this thesis point towards themes that demonstrate a continuity between original intent and contemporary application that could provide an intellectual basis for the adoption of Rabbi

Nachman's teachings in new contexts.

The outreach materials of the Breslov Research Institute

In many ways, the booklets and volumes that excerpt Rabbi Nachman's teachings in more user-friendly aphorisms and uplifting words of encouragement can be understood as the Bratslav equivalent of a four-course Shabbat meal in a Chabad house. Both function as outreach tools that resonate with a social, emotional and spiritual need within the Jewish community, and both have behind them the ultimate hope that, once drawn into a halachic Jewish community, the Jew will want to learn more and want to practice a more traditionally observant kind of Judaism.

In a phone interview, I asked Moshe Mykoff, editor of many of these outreach booklets (eg. 1996; Mykoff and Mizrahi 1999) whether it was problematic for the Breslov community that many Jews who had been exposed to Rabbi Nachman's ideas through these booklets were not motivated to explore Breslov Hasidism further and did not understand the texts to be a call to live a more halachic Jewish life. He recognized that, while the hope was to draw people closer to Breslover Hasidism and, through an understanding of the role of Rabbi Nachman, closer to God, even a little exposure and the taking on of just an aspect of Rabbi Nachman's approach to life was desirable. Even someone saying the ten psalms of the *Tikkun HaKlali* for something other than a sexual sin, and not understanding the cosmological impact of the practice of the *tikkun* was not problematic, merely limited. One could effect the *tikkun*, albeit at a lower level, and if one later came to a deeper understanding and applied the practice with a *kavannah* more akin to

Rabbi Nachman's original teaching, this would be a higher level of *tikkun*, without nullifying the positive effect of the practice when less-informed.

However, Mykoff also correctly pointed out that even the original lesson on the *Tikkun HaKlali*, in LM I:29, described the application of the *tikkun* to more than solely the sexual sin. Within the Bratslav Hasidic community he believed that the predominant view is that the *Tikkun HaKlali* is an appropriate practice in response to any kind of situation. For example, the part of the lesson that talks about epilepsy would imply the appropriateness of using the *Tikkun HaKlali* in response to physical illness; likewise, the discussion on making a living and the *Tikkun* of giving *tzedakah* is another realm of application. In this way, to teach about the *Tikkun HaKlali* as something suitable for everyone, whatever their sense of deficiency or need is not, in the eyes of a Bratslav Hasid, a misrepresentation of the essence of the teaching. I will return to discuss ways of articulating this broader essence to a contemporary, non-Hasidic Jewish community toward the end of this chapter.

Leaving aside the potential intellectually authentic way of applying the *Tikkun HaKlali* to a broader context for a moment, there remains the fact that the full context and system of belief that is the foundation to the *Tikkun HaKlali*, as presented in the preceding chapters of this thesis, is noticeably absent from the most popular of the outreach booklets on the teachings of Rabbi Nachman. Only if one chooses to study at a higher level, even in English, will one come to learn the deeper significance of the *Tikkun HaKlali* and, even then, explicit messianic implications are absent. For example, booklets that are likely to appeal to a 'beginner' audience have titles such as

The Empty Chair: Finding Hope and Joy (Mykoff, 1996) and *The Treasury of Unearned Gifts: Rebbe Nachman's Path to Happiness and Contentment in Life* (Kramer, 1996). A book that presents a much more detailed explanation of the *Tikkun HaKlali* exists, but it is clearly aimed at the more advanced learner, both in terms of the complexity of its content, and by the fact that the title, *Rabbi Nachman's Tikkun* (Greenbaum, 1984), does not draw on terms such as 'healing', 'joy', 'hope', etc. to catch the eye of the uninformed.

I asked Moshe Mykoff whether there was a question of intellectual honesty with regard to the booklets that were clearly marketed in a different way to introduce new people to the writings of Rabbi Nachman. He recognized that, in many ways, the Breslov Research Institute was in the business of popularizing a tradition to make it more widely known and available (their ultimate goal) in a way that accords with modern-day marketing tactics and that, inevitably, this leads to simplification and some teachings being taken out of context. Dr. Magid felt that this form of outreach is a Breslov understanding of what Rabbi Nachman himself would have wanted - to share his teachings and world view with a broader audience.

Ultimately, while the materials of the Breslov Research Institute may sometimes only offer a partial presentation of the ideas of Rabbi Nachman, if they misinform it is by omission and not by inaccurate renderings of the essence of the lessons. It may be coincidental, but the first Breslov Research Institute booklet to be published by Jewish Lights - a mainstream and progressive Jewish spirituality publishing house - came out in 1996. Weintraub's book on healing, that used Rabbi Nachman's ten psalms and the *Tikkun HaKlali* as the basis for inviting

ten rabbis to offer their own interpretations of the psalms through the lens of healing, was published by Jewish Lights in 1994. Magid posited the possibility that the Breslov Research Institute was, in part, established to re-appropriate Rabbi Nachman's teachings and the representation and interpretation of those teachings in response to earlier popularizations of Rabbi Nachman's stories and teachings by Martin Buber and Aryeh Kaplan. If this hypothesis is correct then the decision to move beyond only publishing materials themselves, and using the very same publishing house as Weintraub would seem to, likewise, be a way of controlling the ways in which the broader Jewish community is exposed to Rabbi Nachman's teachings. While there may be a negative connotation to this, for example if there was a desire to keep certain legitimate interpretations and explanations from the public, overall this policy would appear to reinforce the notion that Bratslav Hasidim are concerned with an 'authentic' and accurate presentation of Rabbi Nachman's lessons.

Finally, I raised the question at the beginning of this chapter of whether accuracy of presentation according original intent and context is, ultimately, the central issue when considering the impact of Rabbi Nachman's teachings in a contemporary, non-Hasidic context. In this final discussion, I consider other ways to understand the meaning of Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*, and ways of assessing the contemporary representation of his teachings.

The Tikkun HaKlali - a rectification for modern-day ruptures in our daily lives

In a recent lecture¹, Dr. Chava Weissler provided a historical overview of the popularization of the Zohar and other kabbalistic texts in booklets and compilations in the eighteenth century. These publications were in the vernacular language and aimed at bringing what had previously been reserved for elite circles of scholars to a general public, including women. This was, in fact, one explicit goal of the Sabbateans and something that they were severely criticized for by the learned rabbinic elite. Dr. Weissler, having demonstrated a long-standing and historical precedent for the re-presentation of Jewish mysticism and its popularization, applied this lens to consider the modern-day draw of Jewish mysticism. Leaving aside secular popular culture and the specific realm of the Kabbalah Center, Dr. Weissler's research has been focused on the community in which I was originally exposed to and drawn toward the language of Jewish mysticism, namely Jewish Renewal. Dr. Weissler has been asking questions that are remarkably similar to my own: Is the use of kabbalistic material today 'valid' or accurate by the standard of classical kabbalistic texts? How are kabbalistic ideas being transformed or adapted to today's cultural context and spiritual needs?

Dr. Weissler's sociological study of Jewish Renewal has drawn a conclusion that demonstrates remarkable resonance with the focus of the popularization of Rabbi Nachman's teachings. She notes that many Jewish Renewal rabbis and teachers, through an adapted 'neo-Hasidic'

1. "The Popularization of Kabbalah in the Early Modern Period and Today" (the Gerson D. Cohen Memorial Lecture).at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Wednesday, February 8, 2006.

interpretation of the cosmic map offered by kabbalah, provide spiritual seekers with both a language and a framework for healing. She describes a 'rupture in experience' in people's lives that leaves them uncertain of their path and direction, disconnected from the Judaism of the past, but seeking a Jewish language to express their own desire for meaning and spiritual experience.

By contextualizing her analysis of this current need that draws on and adapts teachings from Jewish mysticism and hasidism within a historical framework, Weissler demonstrates that this use of kabbalistic materials is not a new phenomena. The popularization of these kinds of materials and their re-presentation in ways that resonate with a contemporary culture and society, while being freed from the language and culture of their original contexts, is meeting a real need among Jews today. Not unlike almost any body of text that constitutes Jewish tradition, whether it be Torah, midrash, or liturgy, Jews today just as Jews in the past continue to appropriate these textual sources and re-read them through a contemporary lens that meets a contemporary need while maintaining a relationship with our past. The very fact of this process being one that has accompanied us throughout our history confirms its legitimacy.

Rabbi Nachman's *Tikkun HaKlali*, resonating with the concept of healing a breach that effects our daily life, our sense of spirituality, and our sense of purpose, offers a potentially exciting, 'authentic' Jewish voice and vocabulary that meets a contemporary search for meaning. While a deeper exploration of the teaching and a true dedication to think, speak and act according to Rabbi Nachman's instruction is a challenging spiritual path, and not one that all would choose as a desired expression of Jewish practice, initial exposure to his ideas through Bratslav outreach

materials suggests an all-encompassing, holistic solution to the most significant struggles and questions of life that is extremely appealing.

Moshe Mykoff, in his discussion of the applicability of the *Tikkun HaKlali* to all situations and not solely the matter of male sexual purity, explained that the underlying principle of Rabbi Nachman's lesson is that the three major components of our reality and perception of reality - *machshevet* (thought), *dibur* (speech) and *ma'aseh* (deed) - are all aligned and interconnected. The *p'gam habrit*, in its broadest sense, is the breach between the human being and God that is caused when one of these facets of our existence are out of balance and alignment. Rabbi Nachman provides simple guidance to encourage someone who is weighed down with melancholy, or guilt, or a sense of failure, to focus on joyful thought, positive words, and positive or charitable acts, rather than becoming obsessed with the cause of our suffering, whether it be physical or emotional. It is this version of Rabbi Nachman's teachings that has made his sayings and ideas so popular among many different kinds of Jews, and even non-Jews. There is much to be found in his simple advice on choosing one's state of mind, choosing one's acts and speech that has a parallel in psychology; even the focus on sexuality shares a common bond with Freudian and post-Freudian thought.

Therefore, Rabbi Nachman offers a Jewish psycho-spiritual approach to responding to the suffering in our lives that is both familiar and reassuring, and yet also draws on the 'other-wordly' images and ideas of kabbalah that offer the promise of a reality beyond our own in which ultimate meaning can be found. Ultimately, any scholarly reading of Rabbi Nachman's original

teachings cannot fail to recognize the long-standing concern among ascetic mystics regarding male sexual purity, or be struck by Rabbi Nachman's messianic aspirations. Nevertheless, a contemporary appropriation of the broader scope of his ideas, offering a holistic and reassuring bridge from Hasidic teachings of the past to spiritual yearnings of the present, while no doubt a selective reading of his teachings, has made Rabbi Nachman a voice of authority that continues to speak to us today.

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