

Believing In Oneself:
An Analysis of the Views of
R. Noson Sternharts of Nemirov on the Enlightenment

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ABSTRACT**Believing in Oneself: An Analysis of the Views of R. Noson Sternharts of Nemirov on the Enlightenment****Daniel Leibish Hundert, PhD****Concordia University, 2020**

This dissertation will map out a broad and complex picture of the theological universe of R. Noson Sternharts of Nemirov (1780-1844) on the Enlightenment and the Haskalah, as expressed in his magnum opus: *Likutei Halachot*. The analysis presented here will result in a substantial revision of the scholarly consensus regarding Noson's views, especially of the Enlightenment and the Haskalah: whereas his approach has been previously understood one-dimensionally, as harsh, obsessively and utterly rejectionist, here it will be shown that his rejection of the Enlightenment is nuanced and needs to be understood within the framework of his theology, which does include a place for the new scientific thinking of the era. In a broader context this study provides a careful analysis of the thinking of a European Jewish believer in the first half of the nineteenth-century confronting the challenges of modernity.

As the notion of God ascended to the abstract heights of an Aristotelian "unmoved mover," or receded into the immutable laws of nature of a Spinozist pantheism, the individual was left bereft of a sense of inherent self worth that is rooted in a living relationship with God. The personal religious experience, the religious sense of quest, came to be seen as outdated, laughable, and simply false. Hence a major aspect of R. Noson's polemic was the reinstatement of the human being to a position of being valued by God and capable of engaging in relationship with God. This reinstatement is not an abstraction, it must be believed personally: this is called *emunah b'atmo* or faith in oneself.

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Contents

Abbreviations	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter One The Rebbe's Scribe: R. Noson Sternharts of Nemirov	37
Chapter Two Emunat Chachamim vs. Chochmah Chitsonit: A Cosmic Conflict	59
Chapter Three Faith in Oneself: An Innovative Focus, a Private Practice	118
Chapter Four On the Rabbi's Boat: R. Noson's Approach to the Enlightenment	159
Conclusion	185
Appendix A: A Translation of Likutei Halachot, Pikadon 5:16-18	195
Appendix B: The Story of the Homeowner and the Guest	200
Bibliography	202

Abbreviations

(Books marked with * will be discussed in Chap.1)

BT = Babylonian Talmud (followed by the name of the tractate)

CC = *chochmah chitsonit* (external wisdom)

CM = *Chayei Moharan**

EB = *Emunah Be-Atsmo* (faith in oneself)

EC = *Emunat Chachamim* (faith in the sages)

HS'Y = Ha-Shem Yitbarach (This is an acronym for The Name may It/He be blessed, a reference to the Divine; this follows the style of the three letter Hebrew acronym often used by R. Noson)

LH = *Likutei Halachot**

LM = *Likutei Moharan**

m = Mishnah (followed by the name of the tractate)

SHR = *Sichot HaRan**

SSK = *Siach Sarfei Kodesh**

YM = *Yemei Moharnat**

Introduction

This introduction begins with a brief and broad contextualization of the author and the work under consideration, followed by a note on methodology. This will lead to a glance at scholarly disagreements over the notion of a unified Enlightenment that was in conflict with religion. A similar look at the Haskalah follows, ending with the particular example of an important Maskilic thinker whom R. Noson encountered indirectly. This will be followed by a summary sketch of scholarship on Hasidism in general, with a closer look at the study of Bratslav Hasidism in particular. The succeeding section provides a presentation of scholarship on R. Noson, followed by a look at the important relations between R. Nachman and R. Noson and the Maskilim who lived in Uman. After a critical analysis of the only scholarly work to date (an article by Shmuel Feiner) which chiefly examines R. Noson's views on the Enlightenment, the introduction concludes with a chapter outline of the dissertation.

This dissertation will map out a broad and complex picture of the theological universe of R. Noson¹ Sternharts of Nemirov (1780-1844) on the Enlightenment and the Haskalah, as expressed in his magnum opus: *Likutei Halachot*. He was one of the foremost disciples and the scribe of R. Nachman of Bratslav (1772-1810). The analysis presented here will result in a substantial revision of the scholarly consensus regarding Noson's views, especially of the Enlightenment and the Haskalah: whereas in the works of Weiss, Piekarz, and Feiner, R. Noson's approach has been understood one-dimensionally, as harsh, obsessively and utterly rejectionist,² here it will be shown that his rejection of the Enlightenment is nuanced and needs to be understood within the framework of his theology, which does include a place for the new scientific thinking of the era. In a broader context this study provides a careful analysis of the thinking of a European Jewish believer in the first half of the nineteenth-century confronting the challenges of modernity. Although there will be occasional allusions to general trends in European thought, the focus of the thesis is the revision of the understanding of R. Noson's thinking in light of a close reading of his *magnum opus*.

There are two foundational "poles" of R. Noson's polemic that this dissertation will highlight; each can be understood as responses, in turn, to two central challenges:

¹I have chosen to use the transliteration 'Noson' as is used in English-language Bratslav publications, because this is much closer to the Ashkenazic pronunciation of his name than the English 'Nathan.' For all other transliterations I will follow standard academic practice in using the Sephardic style.

² See e.g. Shmuel Feiner, "Sola Fide! The Polemic of R. Nosson of Nemirov against Atheism and Haskalah," in *Studies in Hasidism*, ed. David Assaf, Joseph Dan, Immanuel Etkes (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1999), 91.

1. The burgeoning “public sphere,” a key characteristic of Enlightenment times, challenged believers to defend their faith through use of the written word.³ R. Noson responded to this challenge by developing the notion that there are two “layers” of human consciousness. There is an outer layer that can be expressed in language, and an inner layer which is that realm of the human experience which lies utterly beyond the reach of language. Faith can and must be buttressed through the use of language and logic. But language cannot bring certainty: what ultimately carries the day for the believer are those experiences and understandings which lie within the inner layer: the languageless depths of the human experience. A person can be fully convinced of the validity of faith, yet quite legitimately be unable to “export” this certainty to someone else through the use of language.
2. The steady advances of science and technology challenged believers to find some kind of an objective “grounding” of their faith.⁴ R. Noson’s response was to highlight a wholly different *kind* of objectivity: an objectivity which relates mostly to that inner languageless layer of human experience briefly presented above; it is the Tsadik (saint) who achieves this and shares it with society. The assumption here is that there exists a spiritual “landscape,” common to the human experience that can be perceived through immense work with respect to nullifying one’s physical and emotional appetites, which leads to an ever-growing ability to perceive spiritual truths without being colored by any past experience.⁵ The truths that are unearthed are not static observations, but rather dynamic insights into how relationship with the Divine can be accessed and deepened.

These two poles of R. Noson’s polemic, namely, the use of language to highlight the existence of a crucial languageless dimension of the human existence, and the positing of a new kind of objectivity, are inter-related through the Tsadik. The Tsadik, who plays a crucial leadership role in Hasidism in general and in Bratslav Hasidsim in

³ Jonathan Israel has discussed how, in terms of debates concerning faith, there was an important shift from the 1650’s and onward, from confessional debate with certain basic shared assumptions (such as the existence of God and Revelation) to the “escalating contest between faith and incredulity.” The written word was one crucial vehicle of this debate. See Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2002), 4

⁴ See below in the section on the Romantic Period.

⁵ See e.g. Likutei Halachot Hoda’ah 6:49. [Henceforth, “LH”, followed by the name of the subject of law being treated therein, followed by the number of the section and the number of the paragraph therein; if the section is not divided into numbered paragraphs, I will provide a page number, based on its Jerusalem 1998 publication by *Keren Yisrael Dov Odesser*.]

particular, is able to communicate directly to the inner languageless layer in a number of ways: through the Tsadik's *niggun* (melody), or the experience of following the Tsadik's advice, the sound and intonation of the Tsadik's voice, the Tsadik's body language, the hints of the Tsadik's eyes, or the way the Tsadik's words point beyond language, what R. Noson called the "smell" of their teachings.

Furthermore, the "testing" of the Tsadik's objectivity involves both layers: on the outer language-based layer, one must hold the Tsadik to the clearly defined standards of Jewish law: if the Tsadik's behavior and teachings display and lead to authentic observance, then they are most likely trustworthy. When this is coupled, at the inner layer, with a profound languageless sense of the Tsadik's authenticity that is built through the kinds of communications just described, the combined effect creates a justifiable sense of certainty.⁶

To round off this preliminary presentation of the two poles of his polemic, it is crucial to mention that R. Noson's appeal to the languageless realm of the human experience carries with it more than just an admission that language alone cannot provide any sure victory for him in his polemic. His appeal to the languageless realm of the human experience also carries with it an understanding that even if a person becomes convinced, at that inner layer, of the truth of traditional Judaism, still, due to the fact that that very person can still make use of all kinds of language-based arguments to defend a rejection of faith, they may well still choose not to believe. Hence, the real value of polemic in matters of faith lies not in "cornering" someone into believing, but rather, in inspiring them to choose to believe.

Understanding R. Noson's Contextualizing of his Polemic

While the appeal to languageless experience and R. Noson's particular formulation of the Tsadik's objectivity can justifiably be called "responses" to modern challenges because they were employed as such in R. Noson's writings, it is crucial to understand that these were not formulated as stand-alone notions for the sake of debate. R. Noson understood the Enlightenment and its clash with Jewish tradition as a particularly marked manifestation of an ancient conflict, namely that of *emunat chachamim* (faith in the Sages) versus *chochmah chitsonit* (external wisdom). This conflict, R. Noson wrote, began in the Divine deliberation of Creation itself, and dates from the very dawn of human consciousness in the Garden of Eden.

Therefore, these concepts must be understood within the context of this greater, age-old conflict. Hence, a major thrust of this dissertation will be the analysis of what this greater, age-old conflict meant to R. Noson. His use of the terms *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit* was innovative: it departed from their previous rabbinic definitions.

⁶ LH Bircat HaReiach 4:34-40, LH Shabbat 5:13.

R. Noson understood *emunah b'atmo* (faith in oneself) to be a crucial component of *emunat chachamim*. This notion of faith in oneself was communicated to him by his Rebbe, R. Noson developed it greatly in his writings and it is of crucial importance in understanding his polemic against the Enlightenment. One might say, overall, that R. Noson was more worried about what the Enlightenment might do to one's ability to believe in oneself than he was about what it might do to one's theology. For R. Noson, faith in oneself, meaning faith in one's inherent value to God and the value of one's efforts in Divine service, is a crucial component of faith in God. Hence, even if one's official theology remains intact, if one has lost faith in oneself then one's faith in God has become, for R. Noson, damaged so severely as to become unrecognizable.

This component of faith in oneself is vital to R. Noson's polemic, for it is in that utterly personal, inner, languageless layer of experience that each person must choose to believe in themselves as being of inherent worth and capable of relating to God. Perhaps the most important thing that the Tsadik can inspire, through his ability to communicate to the inner languageless level of experience, is faith in oneself. Hence the title of this dissertation and the presentation herein of a focused analysis of how R. Noson received, developed, and presented this crucial notion of *emunah b'atmo*.

R. Noson's Teachings in the Context of the Romantic Period

A defining theologian of the Romantic period, Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) has been dubbed by many as "the father of modern theology."⁷ His chief innovation was his understanding of religion as being primarily a matter of subjective "feeling" (*Gefühl*) which is profoundly subjective and emerges from personal self-consciousness.⁸ In founding his theology on the human subjective feeling "Schleiermacher defended religion against its so-called cultured despisers by re-conceiving it as a nonquantifiable individual experience, a deep feeling, or an immediate consciousness." In this way he "takes what is all too public and social and tries to secure and protect it within the private and inscrutable realm of subjectivity and pure consciousness" and "presupposes that religion cannot be explained as a result of various cultural or historical factors and processes."⁹

⁷ See e.g. Andrew Dole, "The Case of the Disappearing Discourse: Schleiermacher's Fourth Speech and the Field of Religious Studies," *The Journal of Religion* 88, no. 1 (2008): 1.

⁸ Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, vol.1:1799-1870 (New Haven, Conn.: Yale U. Press, 1972), 68. See Friedrich Schleiermacher, *On Religion: Speeches to its Cultured Despisers*, trans. Richard Crouter (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1994), 105-110.

⁹ Russell McCutcheon, *Critics Not Caretakers: Redefining the Public Study of Religion* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 4-5.

Some describe this approach as “protectivist,” in that Schleiermacher was retreating from the “objective” world of science and philosophy in order to stake out an inner and unassailable “territory” for religion.¹⁰ His contemporary and colleague at the University of Berlin, G. W. F. Hegel, was, to put it mildly, highly unimpressed with this kind of formulation; in 1822 he penned the following scathing lines:

If feeling constitutes the basic determination of the essence of man, then man is established as the equivalent of the beast, for it is characteristic of the beast to have its determination or vocation in feeling, and to live according to feeling. If religion in man is based only on a feeling, then such a feeling rightly has no further determination than to be the feeling of his dependence, and the dog would then be the best Christian, for the dog feels this most strongly in himself and lives mainly within this feeling. The dog also has feelings of redemption, whenever his hunger is satisfied by a bone.¹¹

Thus began an unfriendly debate between Hegel and Schleiermacher, which centered on the issue of staking out the “territory” of religion and just how this might square with notions of subjectivity and the individual experience versus notions of objectivity, history, and public society.¹²

That this debate occurred in the first half of the nineteenth century which is the same period within which R. Nosen was writing his *Likutei Halachot* is not terribly surprising. Religious thinkers at that time felt a need to respond to challenges like those raised by Hegel as is spelled out in the title of Schleiermacher’s most famous treatise: “On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultured Despisers.”

Although certainly R. Nosen’s enterprise must not be seen as having been composed solely as a response to “despisers,” yet it surely can be said that this was a primary motivation. *Likutei Halachot* served this function much less in terms of actual readership of the despisers: it was directed mainly to his coreligionists who were among

¹⁰ Ibid. And see e.g. Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 211–12; Grace Jantsen, *Becoming Divine: Towards a Feminist Philosophy of Religion* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 117; Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 28. Not all agree, see Dole, “The Case of the Disappearing Discourse: Schleiermacher’s Fourth Speech and the Field of Religious Studies” 1–28.

¹¹ Eric Von der Luft, *Hegel, Hinrichs and Schleiermacher on Feeling and Reason in Religion: The Texts of Their 1821–22 Debate* (Lewiston, ME: Mellen, 1987), 260.

¹² See Richard Crouter, “Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin: A Many-Sided Debate,” in *Friedrich Schleiermacher: Between Enlightenment and Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 70–97; Jeffrey Hoover, “The Origin of the Conflict between Hegel and Schleiermacher at Berlin,” *Owl of Minerva* 20 (1988): 69–79; and Terry Pinkard, *Hegel: A Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 445ff., 498ff.

the convinced, yet whose faith needed strengthening in the face of the contemporary intellectual climate.

In light of the debate between Schleiermacher and Hegel on issues of subjectivity and objectivity, R. Nosen's formulations in his magnum opus of what I have called the fallible and "relational" objectivity of the Tsadik, and how this relates to the individual languageless experience, can be seen as a variation of a broader cultural quest for acknowledgement of the importance of experience as a genuine and significant reality. R. Nosen's formulations as a proponent of Hasidic Judaism in the context of the Romantic period can be explored along the lines that I have sketched out here.

The academic study of Hasidism has yet to engage in examining just how Hasidic thinkers might be compared and contrasted with contemporary European non-Jewish religious thinkers. In the only example to date of such a study, Abraham Joshua Heschel has painted a rich and fascinating picture of two important figures who also lived in the first half of the 19th century. He found much in common, particularly in terms of their ferocious and individualistic commitment to truth, between the Kotsker Rebbe, R. Menachem Mendel Morgenstern (1787-1859) and Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855). Heschel highlights that part of the commonality that can be found between them is that their thinking emerged through a profound sense of conflict with the intellectual/religious climate that they each experienced.¹³

This dissertation is not an examination of R. Nosen's thought in relation to more general trends such as those of the Romantic period. I offer the above merely as a kind of a "trail-head" for others who may wish to examine his thought, or Hasidic thought in general, in relation to the wider European context.

R. Nosen's Response: Profoundly Distrustful yet Ultimately Inclusive

R. Nosen's response to the challenges of modernity is deeply distrustful of newfound emphases upon language and objectivity: these emphases can lead (and did lead) to mass abandonment of traditional faith. R. Nosen's approach, however, must be recognized, not as a mere retreat, but rather as positing an innovative model that includes a place for both kinds of objectivity: that of the outer, language-based layer of the human experience, and that of the inner languageless layer.

R. Nosen's argument is that there is a mistaken degree of emphasis placed upon the objectivity of the outer layer (it cannot solve everything), and a total ignorance of the objectivity of the inner layer. R. Nosen's stance as a believer was not to feel ignorant or outstripped in his awareness of the nature of reality, but rather quite the opposite, it is the new scientific thinking which is ignorant of the reality of the human experience: it overemphasizes one layer and completely misses the other.

¹³ Abraham Joshua Heschel, *A Passion for Truth*, (NY: The Noonday Press, 1973).

Although emphatically decrying what he took to be a deeply mistaken degree of emphasis upon it, yet R. Noson wrote that there must needs be a place for the objectivity of the outer layer, for without a basic degree of, for instance, the conventions of language and the conveniences of technology, society would not function.¹⁴ Additionally, there is a kind of a subtle “undertow” that can be found beneath the far more obvious waves of attack against Enlightenment influences in R. Nosen’s writings:¹⁵ there is also an affirmation that, at the end of the day, these influences themselves have a Divine source. Indeed it is *thanks* to the struggle with ever expanding social, psycho-spiritual, economic (and more) obstacles and confusions of modern times, that the perception of simple Divine unity from within complexity can now be greater than ever before. This occurs, perhaps most importantly, through the personal process of learning to develop faith in oneself in the context of a deeply confusing world.

Furthermore, R. Nosen wrote that a Tsadik who achieves the objectivity of the inner layer becomes capable thereby of studying all language-based human wisdoms, because the Tsadik will be able to incorporate all that he or she learns into a deeply ingrained awareness of, and commitment to, Divine service.¹⁶ To illustrate this R. Nosen invoked the words of the Mishnah: “Who is wise? One who learns from all people.”¹⁷ As opposed to a rejectionist retreat, the person who reaches the highest degrees of saintliness becomes able to be open to the world and all of its wisdoms – even more, such a person becomes *obligated* to look deeply into the most heretical branches of human wisdom.¹⁸

While there certainly is profound distrust of modern influences, yet R. Nosen’s approach to the Enlightenment must also be understood as being ultimately inclusive as opposed to one-dimensionally rejectionist.

A Note on Methodology

This dissertation is based entirely on my own direct encounter with the text of R. Nosen’s *Likutei Halachot*. I did not make use of any secondary literature in arriving at my conclusions here, nor did any later Bratslav lore add in any significant way to the formulation of my thesis. This being the case, my methodology perforce must navigate the high-altitude realm of textual analysis. I will now do my best to express just what this methodology consisted of. To put it plainly, my attempt here is to extract a unified message from R. Nosen’s vast writings, and this results in a formulation (I will present this below) which he himself never used. The classic objections to such an analysis have been well expressed by Quentin Skinner:

¹⁴ LH Piryah v’Rivayah 3:19, Netilat Yadayim 6:90.

¹⁵ E.g. LH Perikah u’Te’inah 4:39.

¹⁶ LH Shabbat 6:8.

¹⁷ mAvot 4:1.

¹⁸ LMI: 64:3.

It may be (and indeed it very often happens) that a given classic writer is not altogether consistent, or even that he fails altogether to give any systematic account of his beliefs. If the basic paradigm for the conduct of the historical investigation has been conceived as the elaboration of each classic writer's doctrines on each of the themes most characteristic of the subject, it will become dangerously easy for the historian to conceive it as his task to supply or find in each of these texts the coherence which they may appear to lack. Such a danger is exacerbated, of course, by the notorious difficulty of preserving the proper emphasis and tone of a work in paraphrasing it, and by the consequent temptation to find a "message" which can be abstracted from it and more readily communicated.¹⁹

In all such cases, the coherence or lack of it which is thus discovered very readily ceases to be an historical account of any thoughts which were ever actually thought. The history thus written becomes a history not of ideas at all, but of abstractions: a history of thoughts which no one ever actually succeeded in thinking, at a level of coherence which no one ever actually attained.²⁰

The other metaphysical belief to which the mythology of coherence gives rise is that a writer may be expected not merely to exhibit some "inner coherence" which it becomes the duty of his interpreter to reveal, but also that any apparent barriers to this revelation, constituted by any apparent contradictions which the given writer's work does seem to contain, cannot be real barriers, because they cannot really be contradictions.²¹

There is no doubt that I am "guilty as charged." Does this mean that this dissertation is irrelevant, that it is useless even to try to formulate a "distilled" understanding of R. Nosen's perspective on the Enlightenment? I believe not.

Firstly, a mitigating factor is that R. Nosen himself saw his LH as possessing an inner consistency. Evidence of this is that R. Nosen often refers the reader to expanded explanations of his ideas as he writes of them, elsewhere in his work.²² This does not necessarily mean that it is in fact consistent, and even more so, it does not mean that I have successfully "discovered" that consistency with regard to my topic of interest. But it remains a mitigating factor that R. Nosen himself *intended* his writings in LH to maintain an inner consistency.

¹⁹ Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8 (1969): 16.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 18

²¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

²² See e.g. LH Rosh Chodesh (6:7); LH Hoda'ah (6:62); LH Giluach (4:5).

Secondly, there is a level of meaning that can be culled from textual analysis, which has been highlighted quite recently, that supports the legitimacy of this dissertation's enterprise. Adrian Blau has called attention to the importance of searching for and considering what he calls the "extended meaning" of a text, which can in fact shed light upon the "intended meaning" of a text, (which Skinner and many others have focussed upon almost exclusively):

Extended meaning is a simple idea: the extended meaning of a statement is what it implies logically.²³

On the one hand the logical implications of a text, Blau points out, were not necessarily intended by the author:

[I]ntended and extended meaning are analytically separate. Given the intended meaning of a statement, its implications do not depend on whether the author spots them ... Indeed, extended meanings become particularly interesting when they contradict what authors say. Rousseau claims to love liberty; we understand him differently if we think his ideas imply authoritarianism. Berlin claims to discuss two concepts of liberty; we understand him differently if we think he is wrong. We understand Mill's "one very simple principle" differently if we decide that it is neither one principle nor very simple. Extended meanings may thus let us see authors in ways they did not or could not.²⁴

Notwithstanding this important observation of their being "analytically separate," the extended meaning can still play an important role in an attempt to understand intended meaning:

In short, we will sometimes struggle even to grasp an author's intended meanings without thinking philosophically. Rousseau on "forced to be free" is one example. Similarly, without philosophical reflection on Hobbes's "foole" passage, we will have little idea about what Hobbes is actually doing in chapter 15 of *Leviathan*. This may explain why so few historians have advanced our understanding of this extremely tricky passage. One exception is Tuck, whose analysis here—revealingly—is philosophical not historical. It bears repeating, then, that historians can be very adept philosophers, and sometimes must be for a fuller understanding of authors' intended meanings. How much of Hobbes can we understand without thinking philosophically? Neglecting the value of philosophical reasoning for recovering authors' intended meanings has given

²³ Adrian Blau, "Extended Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 58, no. 3 (2019): 344.

²⁴ *Ibid*, 345.

historical reasoning an undeserved methodological dominance and stopped some historians from seeing the value of philosophical analysis.

Blau brings a textual example of this that is quite similar, methodologically, to my own analysis in arriving at the thesis of this dissertation:

The purely textual example is *On Liberty*'s comment about utility being grounded in man's permanent interests as a progressive being. What Mill means here is unclear. But Utilitarianism seems to depict autonomy and security as permanent interests. This is evidence, though not proof, about what *On Liberty* may be getting at. In effect, the syllogism is:

- (1) Utility should be grounded on man's permanent interests.
- (2) Man's permanent interests are autonomy and security.
- (3) Utility should be grounded on autonomy and security.

Mill says (1), and elsewhere seems to say (2), and we can deduce (3)—then inductively guess that this might have been what Mill meant in (1). Perhaps this inductive move is incorrect: authors are not always coherent. Inductive inferences are always guesses and may be wrong. But reading one text into another, or parts of one text into another part of the same text, is a powerful tool for making inferences about what authors may have meant.²⁵

The primary example of my own “connecting of the dots” that lies at the heart of the thesis of this dissertation, and which is perhaps its greatest weakness, is the following: R. Noson states clearly (at LH Shabbat 6:3) that the only thing that stands in the way of *emunat chachamim* is *chochmah chitsonit*, and states clearly (at LH Chezkat Ha-Metaltelin 5:2) that the Enlightenment thinkers, represent a particularly marked manifestation of *chochmah chitsonit*, and states clearly (at LH Pikadon 5:7) that the essential component of *emunat chachamim* is *emunah b'atmo*. However, he never states clearly that it follows from this that the central challenge of the rise of the Enlightenment is that it weakens *emunah b'atmo*.

This is a “connecting of the dots” that I have done, which results in a formulation that I believe that he *is* in fact “saying.” This is the most primary example. I am convinced that my presentation here of his views is far from being a projection of my own onto his words, but it certainly is colored by my own eye for, what I perceive to be, a “composite picture” of his teachings.

Part of how this connection of the dots is achieved is through using (almost even coining) terms such as “spiritual or relational objectivity” and “languageless layer of consciousness,” (each of which being quite important as they are key notions of the two

²⁵ Ibid.

poles outlined above); in order to best cut to the core of R. Noson's polemic and present this in English, I use terms that he never used.

"The" Enlightenment and "The" Haskalah

Scholars have challenged the more narrow view of a unified Enlightenment, which is characterized primarily by rationalist philosophy, is distinctly secularist, and challenges the *anciens regimes* of both church and state, as presented, perhaps most famously, in Peter Gay's two volume work *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation*.²⁶ For instance, JGA Pocock has pointed to a plurality of outlooks, arguing that the notion of a single unified Enlightenment is a theoretical projection which does not correspond to varied historical realities.²⁷

Regarding the issue of religion in particular, David Sorkin's *The Religious Enlightenment* and other relatively recent scholarship²⁸ have led Rachel Manekin to state that "as a growing body of scholarship has recently suggested, the Enlightenment contained a wide range of ideas; secularization and the attack on religion were not the dominant ones."²⁹ This perspective is not shared by all scholars. There does not seem to be clear consensus on the centrality of "secularization and the attack on religion" to the Enlightenment; Anthony Pagden, for instance, has recently argued that these were indeed

²⁶ Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (New York: Norton and Company, 1977).

²⁷ See JGA Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion 1: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon 1734-1764*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1999), 5-10. See also Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich, *The Enlightenment in National Context*, (Cambridge: Cambridge U. Press, 1981); Jonathan Israel, *Enlightenment Contested* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2006), 10-15. On positive Enlightenment attitudes to passion and sensibility alongside rational philosophy, see Susan James, "Passion and Action," in Mark Micale and Robert Dietle eds., *Enlightenment, Passion and Modernity*, (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 2008), and Ronald Schechter, "Rationalizing the Enlightenment: Postmodernism and theories of Anti-Semitism" in Daniel Gordon ed., *Postmodernism and the Enlightenment: New Perspectives in Eigtheenth Century French Intellectual History* (NY: Routledge, 2001) 110-113.

²⁸ Helena Rosenblatt "The Christian Enlightenment" in *The Cambridge History of Christianity, Vol. VII: Enlightenment, Reawakening and Revolution 1660-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 283-300; *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe*, ed. James E. Bradley and Dale K. Van Kley (Notre Dame, IN: U. of Notre Dame Press, 2001); Jonathan Sheehan, "Enlightenment, Religion, and the Enigma of Secularization: A Review Essay," *American Historical Review* 108 (2003): 1066-7.

²⁹ Rachel Manekin, "A Jewish Lithuanian Preacher in the context of religious Enlightenment: the case of Israel Lobel," *Jewish Culture and History* 13, no. 2-3 (2012): 10.

central, stating that “it is undeniably true that the Enlightenment was profoundly anti-religious.”³⁰ The crux of the disagreement here, it seems, is over where to draw the line between those thinkers and societal developments which can rightfully be seen as “part” of the Enlightenment, and those which, although coeval and innovative, ought to be seen as external to it.³¹

The Haskalah is a term which was used by Jews in the period of the Enlightenment, and continues to be used, for the Jewish Enlightenment. Andrea Schatz has pointed out³² that the term itself bears a distinctive Jewish flavor alongside terms for Enlightenment from other languages and cultures (such as *Lumieres* or *Aufklarung*) which tend to use metaphors of light or clarity. Haskalah means the act of acquisition of knowledge, and is rooted in the Biblical description³³ of the Tree of Knowledge.

Similar to the scholarly disagreement as to how narrowly to define the Enlightenment, there is controversy as to the definition of the Haskalah. For instance, on the one hand, Michael Meyer has defined the Haskalah as “the Jewish acculturation to the *aufklarung*,”³⁴ using the German term quite specifically. Meyer’s pinpointing of the Jewish Enlightenment to mid to late eighteenth century Germany, to the small but influential band of Berlin Jews of whom Moses Mendelssohn was the most well known, is paralleled in the writings of Shmuel Feiner, who saw in the achievements of that small group nothing less than “the French Revolution of the Jews,”³⁵ whereby a major shift in perspective across European Jewry was set into motion³⁶ by German Jewish Maskilim.³⁷

³⁰ Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and Why it Still Matters* (New York: Random House, 2013), see Preface, xiv, and Chapter 3 “The Fatherless World,” 96-148. See also Dan Edelstein *The Enlightenment: A Genealogy* (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 2010).

³¹ See for instance Adam Sutcliffe, “Enlightenment/Haskalah: What’s in a Name? Recent Work on Judaism and Enlightenment” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 102, no. 1 (2012): 120. Sutcliffe analyses this disagreement along these lines.

³² Andrea Schatz, *Sprache in der Zerstreung: Die Sakularisierung des Hebraischen im 18. Jahrhundert* (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009).

³³ Genesis 3:6.

³⁴ Michael E. Meyer, “Jewish Self-Understanding” in *German-Jewish History in Modern Times vol.2 Emancipation and Acculturation 1780-1871*, ed. M. A. Meyer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 118.

³⁵ Shmuel Feiner, “‘On the Threshold of the New World’ – Haskalah and Secularization in the Eighteenth Century,” *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 6* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007): p42

³⁶ See, for instance, Shmuel Feiner, “Toward a Historical Definition of the Haskalah” in *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*, ed. S. Feiner and D. Sorkin (London: Liverpool University Press, 2001): p 184-219.

³⁷ Sing. “Maskil,” this is the term used for those who identified with the ideals of the Haskalah. I will mention below in chapter one that R. Nosson never uses the term “Maskil” or “Maskilim” for those who identified with the ideals of the Haskalah; I will

On the other hand, scholars such as David Ruderman have pointed both to processes of Jewish modernization that took hold well before the times when the term Haskalah began to be employed, as well as to multiple developments across a much wider geographic area, thereby presenting a much less tidy picture.³⁸

There has also been similar disagreement among scholars of the Haskalah regarding the issue of religion in particular. For instance, the model of Haskalah as consisting primarily of forms of secularization, both through rationalist philosophy and various social forces of acculturation, as put forth by Jacob Katz,³⁹ whose model had for many years been foundational to scholarly understanding of Jewish modernity, has been considered by many to be, at best, an incomplete picture.⁴⁰ Olga Litvak, among others,⁴¹ has written of the importance of new developments in mystical thinking in the early modern period as being of critical value in setting the tone for the Haskalah. Litvak has recently identified the Haskalah as essentially a Jewish romantic movement, within which spiritual, ethical and scientific endeavors fuse to form a new redemptive whole.⁴²

Interestingly, Shmuel Feiner identifies what he calls the Maskilic “declaration of independence”⁴³ in the words of Naftali Herz (Hartwig) Wessely (1725-1805) in his

discuss how this may or may not have been out of intention to deny Maskilim the use of a term which was considered commendatory.

³⁸ David Ruderman, “Why Periodization Matters – on Early Modern Jewish Culture and Haskalah,” *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 6* (Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007): p23-32. See also David Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry: A New Cultural History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010) 1-21.

³⁹ See what is probably his most famous and important work: Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis*, (NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ See Jay Harris, ed., *The Pride of Jacob: Essays on Jacob Katz* (Cambridge: Harvard U. Center for Jewish Studies, 2002), and Israel Bartal and Shmuel Feiner eds. *Historiographia be-Mivhan: Iyyun Mehudash be-Mishnato shel Yaakov Katz* (Jerusalem: Mercuz Zalman Shazar, 2008).

⁴¹ See for instance: Jonathan Garb, *Mekubal be-Lev ha-Se'arah: R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto* (Tel Aviv: Chaim Rubin, 2014); Roni Weinstein *Shibru Et Ha-Kelim: Ha-Kabbalah ve-ha-Moderniyut ha-Yehudit* (Tel Aviv: Chaim Rubin, 2011); Eliyahu Stern, *The Genius: Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism* (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 2013).

⁴² Olga Litvak, *Haskalah: The Romantic Movement in Judaism*, (New Brunswick NJ: Rutgers U. Press, 2012), 32-33.

⁴³ Shmuel Feiner, “‘On the Threshold of the New World’ – Haskalah and Secularization in the Eighteenth Century,” *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook 6* (Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007): 44-45.

response to the intensive rejection that his programmatic treatise on Jewish educational reform, entitled *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet*,⁴⁴ was met with by the rabbinical establishment:

I have heard the shame and the invective of these rabbis [...] and I hold my tongue, not because I am in awe of a rabbi who has taught me wisdom, for I have never learned from them or others, the little wisdom I possess I have been taught by my brain, with the help of He who endows men with knowledge. Nor am I aware of the title of Rabbi, for this title does not attest to greatness of spirit [...], we are all laymen before God Almighty and His Torah [...], for these rabbis are not ministers or judges over us, but are our adversaries.”⁴⁵

I call this “interesting” because, although there certainly is a highly important defiance of the rabbinic *ancien regime*, and an equally important focus on Wessely’s own powers of critical reasoning, yet Naftali Herz Wessely, as Feiner has discussed,⁴⁶ can hardly be called a secularist. A fascinating illustration of this, brought to light by Edward Breuer, can be found in a conversation which took place, and was recorded, when the young maskil Moses b. Mendel Frankfurter of Hamburg (1782-1861), met Wessely in the autumn of 1804, when he was 22 and Wessely nearing 80. He recorded parts of this conversation with him, which later appeared in his posthumously published *Penei Tevel* (Amsterdam, 1872). In this conversation, Wessely, reports Frankfurter, made the following memorable statement:

The traditionalists distrusted me for being a modernizer, and the modernizers distrusted me for being a traditionalist.

This “double alienation,” as Breuer calls it, led to his having “lived for many years in Berlin, in poverty and privation, impeded and abandoned by members of his own community.”⁴⁷ Indeed, in Breuer’s ultimate estimation, Wessely was somewhat of a tragic figure, a brilliant, intense, myopic⁴⁸ and naïve⁴⁹ man who lived, so it seems, to both

⁴⁴ *Divrei Shalom ve-Emet* (Berlin: 1782), later published as “part one” thereof. Wessely’s response to widespread rabbinic condemnation, published that same year, was called “part two;” the quote above is from part two.

⁴⁵ *Divrei Shalom V’Emet* (part II) Berlin 1782, 46f

⁴⁶ Shmuel Feiner, *The Origins of Jewish Secularization in 18th Century Europe*, Shmuel Feiner, (Philadelphia: U. of Penn. Press, 2010), 171, 200-201.

⁴⁷ Edward Breuer, “Naftali Herz Wessely and the Cultural Dislocations of an Eighteenth-Century Maskil” in *New Perspectives on the Haskalah*, eds. S. Feiner and D. Sorkin, (London: Liverpool Universtiy Press, 2001), 46-47.

⁴⁸ “Taken together, Wessely’s published works seem to indicate a somewhat *myopic* individual who sometimes lost sight of the sensibilities of those around him.” Ibid, 28. (my emphasis)

⁴⁹ With the publication of *Divrei Shalom v’Emet* “Wessely had effectively strained his long-standing relationship with the cultural-religious world of the European rabbinate, a

defend Jewish faith and even, to a certain extent, tradition, *and* call for the reforms he felt were necessary due to the new realities of modernity.

Wessely is mentioned, in a work of Bratslav oral lore,⁵⁰ as having been perhaps the foremost influence upon the Maskilim living in the town of Uman that R. Noson had close and longstanding contact with. They had met with him in Germany, were highly impressed with his erudition and his program for Jewish modernization, and had studied his writings: in Bratslav lore he is called “their Rabbi.”

The influence of this key Maskilic thinker upon R. Noson’s perception of the new values he encountered is surely important, and requires further study. This dissertation, though, will consist of analysis of R. Noson’s thought as put forward through his own pen in his magnum opus, as mentioned above. The reason R. Wessely is highlighted here is to provide an introductory illustration of the confusing and ideologically frothy period that R. Noson lived in. As R. Noson wrote, it can be very difficult to distinguish “Rabbis from Rabbis,”⁵¹ and new interpretations of the purposes of the mitzvot and the meaning of verses in the Bible can indeed be convincing.⁵²

R. Noson’s awareness of impressive figures such as R. Wessely and their plausible language based arguments may well have been an important factor in determining that his foremost approach in his writings assailing Enlightenment influences was to the inner, language-less experience, wherein faith in oneself is paramount.

Hasidism

The recently published work *Hasidism: A New History*,⁵³ provides a comprehensive presentation of scholarship on Hasidism, summarizing the views of a generation of previous scholars such as Simon Dubnow, Ben Zion Dinur, Raphael Mahler and Gershom Scholem, and providing a clear presentation of what is more or less the perspective of most scholars presently in the field. Older scholarship had painted a picture of a clear rise of a theologically unified movement of pietistic mystical revival, through a single intentional founder who was relatively uneducated and galvanized the

strain partly born of the *naivety* and self-assured forcefulness with which he presented his argument.”Ibid, 28-29. (my emphasis)

⁵⁰ *Sippurim Niflaim*, first published by Avraham Chazin (Jerusalem, 1935). I will be referencing a more recent edition, where it is a chapter within the work *Kokhvei Ohr*, (Jerusalem: Keren R. Israel Odesser, 2010), the discussion of Wessely: 171-173.

⁵¹ Likutei Halachot, Simanei Off Tahor 4:1-3.

⁵² LH Nedarim (4:4)

⁵³ Authored by a team of scholars: David Biale, David Assaf, Benjamin Brown, Uriel Gellman, Samuel Heilman, Moshe Rosman, Gadi Sagiv and Marcin Wodzinski, (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 2018) see the Introduction: “Hasidism as a Modern Movement,” 1-11.

masses, in reaction to some kind of crisis such as anti-Jewish violence, economics, and/or theological instability due to the disappointment following the failed messianic figure of Sabbetai Zevi. The perspective of this new book is weighted heavily against the views of the older scholars, pointing to later research which shows a more complex picture than what had emerged previously. For instance, R. Israel Baal Shem Tov (a.k.a. “the Besht” 1699-1760) must not be seen, as he had been in the past, as a founder of a new movement:

The Besht and his associates were evidently part of a transition from old-style kabbalistic pietism to a new, popular type of ecstatic piety. The Besht certainly had his own distinctive teachings, but he did not invent this new Hasidism, nor, it seems, did he claim to do so. Only when an actual movement emerged a generation later did he come to be crowned as its founder. In reality, he was but one figure – if an influential one – in a spiritual revolution of his time.⁵⁴

Works by Moshe Rosman⁵⁵ and Ada Rapoport-Albert have shown that the Besht’s own circle was not characterized by the kind of leadership that arose later in the form of a Tsaddik who heads up a Hasidic court. It was also not the only circle of its kind. In addition to the novelty of a non-ascetic sense of an ability to find and experience the Divine within the physical,⁵⁶ and a greater sense of finding spirituality through the “x-axis” of human relationships in addition to the “y-axis” of prayer and Torah study, there was also an important new promotion, by these circles, of the importance of the redemption of the individual as, to a certain extent, a stand-alone dimension alongside the importance of national redemption.⁵⁷ These new messages were an important part of the birth, over time, of what can be described as a full-fledged movement of spiritual revival.

The spiritual movement of Hasidism, which consisted of courts headed by a Tsadik that branched off into different schools and sub-schools, was not homogenous. For instance, different branches of Hasidism related in different ways to asceticism; different branches also had differing degrees of antinomian tendencies. G. D. Hundert has written that “by the end of the eighteenth century, the term *hasid* had been transformed.” He charts how the term had at first referred to a member of the kabbalistic elite, then

⁵⁴ Ibid, 56-57.

⁵⁵ Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba’al Shem Tov*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), see ch. 11. Ada Rapoport-Albert, “Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change” in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert, (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1996), 80-94.

⁵⁶ Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba’al Shem Tov*, (Berkeley: U of CA Press, 1996) 115; Emmanuel Etkes *Ba’al Hashem: Ha-Besht: Magiyah, mistikah, hanhagah* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 2000), 443-446.

⁵⁷ See Gershon D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity*, (Berkeley: U. of California Press, 2004), 172 and 192-193.

briefly was used as a term for the early leaders of Hasidic courts. It finally came to rest as the term for the followers of a particular Tsadik, (who was called a *Rebbe*), and was used in the possessive: a person was a Hasid “of” a particular Rebbe. It was at this final stage that “a sense of the particularity of each Hasidic group ... emerged.”⁵⁸

R. Nachman of Bratslav

Historian Larry Wolf has called attention to a reconfiguring, with the Enlightenment, of Europe from a perceptual dividing line between the intellectual South and the barbarian North to one between the advanced West and the backward East.⁵⁹ For the western *maskilim*, it was the *Ostjuden* (Jews of the East) who were seen generally as backward, but it was the Hasidim, with their faith, their superstitions, their charismatic magic-working Rebbes, who carried this stigma to the greatest degree. Once the Haskalah reached Eastern Europe, the conflict between the Hasidim and Maskilim became, in many instances, quite bitter.

Within the subset of the Hasidim, Bratslav Hasidim came to be seen as somehow even more backward than the rest of them. Jonatan Meir⁶⁰ and others⁶¹ have written about the particular animosity between some of the earlier Eastern European *Maskilim*, and Bratslav Hasidim, (sometimes targeting R. Noson in particular.) Even other Hasidic sects at times opposed them, accusing them of being extreme in certain ways;⁶² recent scholarship has suggested that “in many respects, Bratslav in the nineteenth century represented Hasidism’s internal ‘other’: while it was ‘within the Hasidic camp,’ it never ceased to challenge it.”⁶³

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 187

⁵⁹ See Introduction in Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 1994.)

⁶⁰ Jonatan Meir, *Imagined Hasidism: The Anti-Hasidic Writings of Joseph Perl* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2013), 28–61; and idem, “Joseph Perl, Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov, and the Invention of Holy Books” [Hebrew], in *The Library of the Haskalah: The Creation of a Modern Republic of Letters in Jewish Society in the German-Speaking Sphere*, ed. Shmuel Feiner, Zohar Shavit, Natalie Naimark-Goldberg, and Tal Kogman (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2014), 350–391.

⁶¹ See e.g. Marcin Wodzinski, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict*. (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005), 170; Feiner, *Haskalah and History*, 301-2.

⁶² Even other Hasidic sects opposed them and saw them as “extreme,” see e.g. David Assaf, *Untold Tales of the Hasidim: Crisis and Discontent in the History of Hasidism* (Waltham: Brandeis U. Press, 2010), 120–121, and Tsvi Mark’s article “Lamah Radaf HaRav miSavran et Hasidei Bratslav” *Sivan* 69 (2004).

⁶³ Biale, *Hasidism*, 321-322.

This isolation of Bratslav within the rest of the Hasidic movement carried over into academia: Joseph Weiss, who was one of the earliest academic scholars of Bratslav, was emphatic in placing Bratslav Hasidic thought into a category of its own, distinguished by an even less intellectually alive stance than that of the mystically minded majority of Hasidim, in its being, he argued, radically faith-based.⁶⁴

With the publication, in 1979, of Arthur Green's book *Tormented Master: A Life of R. Nachman of Bratslav*, the perception of Bratslav began to change.⁶⁵ Green posited that the human dimension that is so apparent in Bratslav writings, coupled with his acknowledgment of the fact that not all theological questions have answers, (along with a number of other factors) might make R. Nachman into an appealing spiritual figure for Jews in modern times. More recently, Tsvi Mark, in his book *Mysticism and Madness: The Religious Thought of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav* (2009), has made a number of crucial corrections to Green's analyses of R. Nachman's thought, but at the same time continued in the direction Green started in seeing R. Nachman as an appealing spiritual thinker for Jews of modern times, highlighting, among other points, the joy, youthful energy and mystical union in the experience of 'not knowing,' as opposed to seeing it as 'torment.'⁶⁶

There is a fascination with the figure R. Nachman that tends to evoke, in the analyses of those who seek to describe him and his thought, attempts to try to name or explain just what it is that sets him apart. This as a rule entails some form of psychological diagnosis, using words such as "depressed" "grandiose" "immature" and "self-centered." This can be seen even in the titles of Green and Mark's books, where the words "torment" and "madness" reflect this tendency to, in some form, psychoanalyze this Hasidic master who lived over two hundred years ago. The following words of Thomas Kohut, despite having been written over thirty years ago, succinctly express an important and enduring dialectic involved in psychohistory:

What distinguishes the psychohistorical from the traditional historical approach is ultimately a matter of degree. To be sure, no historian comes

⁶⁴ Joseph Weiss "Contemplative Mysticism and 'Faith' in Hasidic Piety," *The Journal of Jewish Studies*, 4 (1953), 19-29.

⁶⁵ One might argue that this change in perception began even earlier, with the publication of Martin Buber's *Die Geshichte des Rabbi Nachman*, (Frankfurt Am Main, 1906). However, it seems that Buber presented a kind of Romantic view of Hasidism as a whole, which did not, in comparison with his other publications, present R. Nachman as distinguished in any particular way from the rest of the movement.

⁶⁶ Tsvi Mark, *Mysticism and Madness: The Religious Thought of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav*. (NY: Continuum, 2009). It seems to me that many of his corrections were presaged in Mendel Piekarz' book review of *Tormented Master*, see: Mendel Piekarz, "Tsadik Livnei Ha'olam Hachadash?!" *Tarbits* vol. 51, no. 1 (1981), 149-165.

to the past without certain theoretical possibilities in mind. But there is a difference between the historian whose understanding, perhaps facilitated by theory, derives basically from history and the psychohistorian whose understanding is the product of a theoretical model that is imposed on the past.⁶⁷

Kohut posits that some form of theoretical analysis on the part of the historian is virtually unavoidable, thus, it stands to reason that psychological theory should not be ruled out a priori as a type of theoretical understanding that a historian can apply in his or her scholarship. Nevertheless, to glibly superimpose a psychological theory onto the past without scholarly rigor is irresponsible.⁶⁸

In the section below, entitled “on the natural and the supernatural” I will discuss, in particular, Arthur Green’s analysis of R. Nachman as “tormented.” It is possible to understand the intensity of R. Nachman’s struggles in a way that is different from Green’s psychohistory, even if it may strain the contemporary reader’s sense of what can credibly be considered within the realm of human achievement. This different reading is fundamental to my understanding of R. Nosen’s intentions in his polemic against Enlightenment ideals, for his polemic, as will be shown, is related to his understanding of both his Rebbe’s extraordinary achievements and his arduous struggles.

R. Nosen Sternharts of Nemirov

The only comprehensive work on the life of R. Nosen, Through Fire and Water, has been written by R. Chaim Kramer.⁶⁹ Although not an academic work, it is thoroughly researched, based on all extant Bratslav sources. In this dissertation I will not be using his particular translations and formulations, but it is important to mention that his research

⁶⁷ Thomas A. Kohut “Psychohistory as History” in *The American Historical Review* 91, no.2 (1986): 336-354. In his article, (see 338-347), Kohut includes an important discussion of the book *Young Man Luther* by Erik Erikson, (including both praise and critique.) Green mentions *Young Man Luther* by name in the introduction to his own book as having been a kind of a model for his own form of psychohistory in his work. To my mind both the praise and the critique offered by Kohut regarding Erikson’s book could be applied to Green’s. More recent work on psychohistory, which elaborates further on the tension briefly outlined in the quote above, as well as other important issues, includes: J Straub, J. Rusen eds., *Dark Traces of the Past: Psychoanalysis and Historical Thinking*, (NY: Berghahn Books, 2011), see there, “Psychoanalysis, History and Historical Studies: A Systematic Introduction” 1-19; and see also, Michael Roth, "History and Psychoanalysis" in Anthony Elliott, Jeffrey Prager eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Psychoanalysis in the Social Sciences and Humanities* (NY: Routledge, 2016), ch.14.

⁶⁸ See Mendel Piekarz’s sharp critique in this vein in his review of Green’s book “TsTsadik Livnei Ha’olam Hechadash?!” .

⁶⁹ Chaim Kramer, *Through Fire and Water* (Jerusalem: Breslov Research Institute, 1995).

was very helpful in terms of sending me to the relevant primary sources which he references. Ariel Burger, in his relatively recent dissertation, provides an excellent and much shorter biographical picture in its section on R. Noson's life.⁷⁰

Burger goes on to focus on the years 1834-1838, which are known in Bratslav sources as "the years of oppression," during which time R. Noson faced major opposition from the Hasidic Rebbe R. Moshe of Savran who led an intensive campaign against him and the Bratslav community, bringing to light R. Noson's form of spiritual (non-violent) resistance. The theme of opposition (*machlokes*) is important in Bratslav Hasidism; for instance, in one place⁷¹ R. Nachman refers to it as water which helps one grow. In R. Noson's life, his experience in weathering the social conflict of the "years of oppression" was probably, in a certain way, formative. The other major conflict that he dealt with was over matters of faith; this theological/spiritual conflict is not discussed by Burger.

Ada Rappaport-Adler wrote her dissertation⁷² on the unique role that R. Noson took on within the Hasidic movement, as leader after his Rebbe's passing, but without assuming the mantle as the next Rebbe or master. Joseph Weiss has discussed R. Noson's roles as student and scribe, but did not acknowledge him as a creative and important thinker in his own right.⁷³ More recently, Ro'ee Horen has written of R. Noson's use of his creative formulations in *Likutei Halachot* to explain and publicize R. Noson's perception of R. Nachman as a unique and irreplaceable Tsadik, such that succession by a student-leader as opposed to a new Rebbe could be more easily understood and accepted by his contemporaries and for the future of Bratslav Hasidism.⁷⁴

Jonatan Meir, in a recent article, has made a similar argument in reference to the prayers that R. Noson composed, writing that R. Noson's prayers which reference the search for a Tsadik are "primarily directed to encourage a relationship with the true hidden tsaddik, despite his recent departure from the world."⁷⁵ Meir, in that article, takes

⁷⁰ "Hasidic Non-Violence: R. Nosson of Bratslav's Hermeneutics of Conflict Transformation" (PhD diss., Boston University, 2008).

⁷¹ LMI:161.

⁷² "The Problem of Succession in the Hasidic Leadership with Special Reference to the Circle of R. Nachman of Bratslav," PhD diss., U. of London, 1974.

⁷³ Joseph Weiss, "R. Nosson Sternharz of Nemirov: Student and Scribe of R. Nachman", in *Mechkarim B'Hasidut Bratslav*, edited by Mendel Piekarz (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1974), 66-86.

⁷⁴ Ro'ee Horen, "Judaism as Viewed through the Prism of Faith in the Righteous: A Study of the Works of R. Nathan of Nemirov" [Hebrew], *Kabbalah* 24 (2011): 263-304. See also Mendel Piekarz, "The Lessons of the Composition *Likutei Halachot* by R. Nathan of Nemirov" [Hebrew], *Zion* 69 (2004): 203-240.

⁷⁵ Jonatan Meir, "R. Nathan Sternharts's *Likutei Tefilot* and the Formation of Bratslav Hasidism," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 24 (2016): 67.

this argument further, building on the analyses of Weiss⁷⁶ and Rappaport-Albert,⁷⁷ attempting to prove that R. Noson, despite a certain degree of protest from other senior Hasidim, wished to create a new comprehensive theology complete with particular practices such as the Rosh Hashanah pilgrimage, and in so doing to establish himself as sole representative of Bratslav Hasidism, albeit not as the next Rebbe, which he was indeed careful not to become. Meir goes so far as to say that R. Noson was creating what was “perhaps, even a new religion.”⁷⁸

While Meir’s marshalling of evidence is surely significant, and it is certainly true that the heterogeneity that existed among the original Hasidim of R. Nachman was to a large extent eclipsed over time by R. Noson’s formulations, literary and otherwise, still, there is not enough conclusive proof that R. Noson’s innovations were purely his own and were not set in motion previously by R. Nachman himself, at least to some extent.

For instance, there is an important entry in R. Noson’s diary (*Yemei Moharnat* I:67, this work will be discussed below in chapter one), which Meir quotes sparingly from.⁷⁹ In my opinion the entry ought to have been presented in full; I quote here from the end of the entry, wherein R. Noson wrote that R. Nachman had once told the story:

of a great Tsadik who spoke with his disciple about a number of issues. At the time, the student could not fathom what was being communicated to him. After the passing of that Tsadik, it was then that the disciple began to understand in retrospect, time and again: this was what he meant. And, with each of his life experiences, in all of them he was able to see his master’s teachings, and find, in retrospect, the meaning of the teachings of his master.

In Chapter One below I will discuss the credibility of R. Noson’s hagiographical writings, which have generally been taken by scholars to be reliable, with the exception of his writings on his own centrality as representative of his Rebbe’s teachings and directives. In this instance the story reported ought to be taken at face value: had R. Noson wanted to augment his own position of authority via “stretching the truth” he could have asserted himself much more unequivocally. It seems to me that, with regard to an understanding of just how much innovation belonged to R. Noson alone and how

⁷⁶ Weiss, “R. Nosson Sternharz”, 66-86.

⁷⁷ Ada Rapoport-Albert, “Bratslav Hasidism,” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 2008), 1:231.

⁷⁸ Meir, “R. Nathan Sternharts’s *Liqqutei tefilot*,” 85.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

much had previously been set in motion by his Rebbe, there is a gray area, due to a lack of conclusive evidence, that scholars must live with.⁸⁰

This dynamic of profound but ambiguous communication between Rebbe and Hasid, with the intention of it being deciphered after the passing of the Rebbe, while admittedly difficult to analyze, was clearly referred to and set in motion by R. Nachman in his lifetime, and should not be minimized. This is an important dynamic of their relationship, which will figure prominently below in chapter four, a focused discussion of the notion of faith in oneself. I will argue that although R. Nachman himself did not make faith in oneself into a major focus of his teachings, he, nevertheless, intended for R. Noson to emphasize this notion and expand upon it greatly in his writings.

There is an important discussion of R. Noson's role as scribe and biographer in the introductory chapter of Arthur Green's book. Green provides a sense of their relationship including R. Noson's self-understanding as chronicler of a unique Tsadik. He also includes an important discussion of R. Noson's hagiographical writings (and of later Bratslav hagiography) including his views on the extent of their credibility. I will present Green's views on this, within a larger discussion of R. Noson's scribal role, below in chapter one.

On the Supernatural and the Scholarly

Emanuel Etkes has, in my opinion, done a great service to the field of Jewish studies by emphasizing the importance of scholarly suspension of credulity for the sake of gaining a correct perception of the self-understanding of Jews in earlier times, and in particular the self-understanding of important historical figures. For instance, Etkes has written that:

... it is not the historian's business to establish whether the Besht indeed was endowed with powers of prophecy and far-sightedness. What the historian is to do is determine whether these abilities of the Besht played a substantial part in how he perceived himself, in how his associates perceived him, and perforce also in the relations formed between him and those who surrounded them.⁸¹

Although, as will be discussed below in chapter one, stories of R. Nachman's miraculous abilities have tended to be downplayed in Bratslav literature, yet there is one supernatural feature which was not: R. Nachman's victory over his body's physical and emotional appetites is presented front and center as having been, after some years of

⁸⁰ See LH Shluchim 5:22, for what might be interpreted as an expression of R. Nosson's self-perception in this regard.

⁸¹ Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader*, (Boston: Brandeis U. Press, 2005), 223.

intensive spiritual work, absolute and total.⁸² As will be discussed below in chapter two, a cornerstone of R. Noson's thought which is central to his response to the Enlightenment is the existence or possibility of a "spiritual objectivity," which is achieved through the Tsadik's total victory over the physical and emotional appetites of his or her body. It is on this point that scholarly incredulity must be suspended if one is to gain a correct understanding of R. Noson's thought, as he himself understood it. Few scholars, if any, have done so.

For instance, Arthur Green does not take this claim to have been true *even for R. Nachman's own self-understanding*. A key dimension of Green's understanding of R. Nachman's "torment," as referred to in the title of his book, is based on the idea that the emotional and physical appetites of his body continued to haunt him. He bases this mostly upon his reading of R. Noson's descriptions, which he holds to have been flawed in this regard:

... one has to constantly read between the lines and gather from half-spoken hints, perhaps not fully understood even by the closest disciples themselves, what Nahman's inner situation was really like. Accounts of his master's *childhood* might be rather open in describing him as a deeply conflict-ridden person. With respect to his adult years, however, such writings would need see their chief task as one of assuring the reader that Nahman indeed had been victorious in his twin struggles against temptation and despair. The fact is that while maintaining an air of apparent frankness, Nathan's biographical writings serve to hide the master's true character as much as they reveal it.⁸³

Green has written about the uniqueness of R. Noson's religious faithfulness to factuality in his biographical writings about his Rebbe: as opposed to other similar accounts from different Hasidic groups, which are less trustworthy, R. Noson, says Green, was writing a "sacred history."⁸⁴ R. Noson, Green points out, specifically wished to paint the most realistic and most human picture possible of his Rebbe. Indeed, R. Noson is reported to have once said that until he became close to R. Nachman he could not understand how it could have been that Moses was a human being "but after I came close ... and have seen his greatness ... and yet I see that he is a human being, I have come to understand that Moses our teacher [too] was a human being."⁸⁵ However,

⁸² See e.g. *Shivchei HaRan* (This is a biography of R. Nachman written by R. Nossou. Its nature and history will be presented below in Chapter One. References here are to numbers of the entries, not page numbers.)16-18.

⁸³ Green, *Tormented Master*, 163

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 9. Green's analysis of the reliability of R. Nossou's hagiography will be discussed in greater detail below in Chapter One.

⁸⁵ The full statement attributed to R. Nossou is recorded in an important later work of Bratslav lore, see *Kochvei Or*, section "*Avaneha Barzel*," par. 1. First published as

Green's willingness to trust R. Noson's biographical descriptions of his Rebbe has a limit:

... Our claim will be, Nathan to the contrary, that Nahman never did fully overcome the problems that plagued his early life; some trace of them, and often more than a trace, always remained with him.⁸⁶

It was this "trace," argues Green, which led to the "tormented" nature of R. Nachman's life. To Green's understanding, the struggles that R. Noson described, yet which R. Noson did not wish to interpret plainly, pointed to dark inner discord:

... We may now understand more fully the nature of Nahman's ... tortured self image ... Out of his own struggle with his passions, he had come to determine that absolute victory over those passions was the defining characteristic of the true zaddiq. Yet here he was claiming to be the greatest of all zaddiqim, indeed the only true zaddiq hador, still secretly torn by his own inner conflicts, and feeling that his claim to leadership was, on some level, nothing but a lie.⁸⁷

It may be that this limit, for Green, of R. Noson's credibility, is at least partly due to an a priori assumption that such a total victory in R. Nachman's "twin struggles against depression and despair" is impossible. It may also be that Green simply felt that his analysis through "reading between the lines" and "half-spoken hints" was convincing enough evidence that total victory was not achieved, and R. Noson's reports, after all, are those of an adulating Hasid. In any case, the extremely difficult tension between what was an unachievable, or at least unachieved, goal, and the imperfect reality of his life, is a crucial dimension of Green's understanding of R. Nachman's tormented psyche.

How, on the other hand, can a scholar understand R. Nachman in any way other than Green's presentation? What else could R. Nachman's struggles, regarding which he was not reticent, indicate, if not incomplete victory in his "twin struggles against depression and temptation"? As Green writes, for instance:

A man who was struggling to ascend from one high place within the upper worlds to one still more elevated does not cry out: 'How does one merit to become a

separate pamphlets in Jerusalem in the 1930's and later integrated into a single volume under the title *Kochvei Or*. In referencing this and other hagiographical works I will use the paragraph number instead of the page number, in order to facilitate the use of different publications which have differing paginations. For scholarly discussion of the reliability of this work as a historical source, see Chaim Lieberman "Rabbi Nakhman Bratslaver and the Maskilim of Uman," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 6 (1951), and Green, *Tormented Master*, 6-9.

⁸⁶ Green, *Tormented Master*, 162. See there also, 37-39.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 169.

Jew?’ ...when he said “I know *nothing* now,” he meant it quite literally and seriously. Why else would he *swear* to his disciples that what he had said of himself was the simple truth? At the same time, however ... Nahman had a need, along with admitting the bitter truth, to maintain the mystery of his own person. So he added: “My teachings are completely new, but my ‘I don’t know’ is even higher than my teachings!”⁸⁸

In order to understand R. Noson’s perspective on his Rebbe’s struggles, it is necessary for the scholar to be open to the idea that painful struggles, and the ability to admit, or, one might even say, achieve,⁸⁹ a sense of real and simple not knowing, *are indeed precisely* indicative of the experience of a human being ascending “from one high place within the upper worlds to one still more elevated.”⁹⁰ In other words, complete victory over “depression and temptation” is not a contradiction to a life of intensive struggle, *au contraire*, the prior stage of victory over one’s physicality is actually an initiation into infinite struggle,⁹¹ within which one lives the greatest paradox: oneness with the Divine whilst simultaneously constantly struggling to get past the limitation of

⁸⁸ Ibid., 163-164.

⁸⁹ There is precedent for this notion in Rabbinic literature, see e.g. BT Bava Metsia 85A wherein there is a description of Rabbi Zeira fasting no less than 100 days in order to forget the Torah of Babylon so that he can imbibe the Torah of Land of Israel with a “clean slate.”

⁹⁰ Other Hasidic masters have indicated a similar message. See for instance Kalonymous Kalmish Shapira, *Tsav Ve-Zeruz* [printed as the third section within a larger volume, the first two are *Hachsharat Ha-Avreichem* and *Mevo Ha-Sha’arim*] (Jerusalem: 2001), paragraph 19.

⁹¹ See *Likutei Moharan* [The two-volume *Likutei Moharan* “Collected Lessons of our teacher R. Nachman,” a collection of 411 lessons, was first printed (first volume only) in Ostraha by R. Noson in 1807. The second volume was printed (after R. Nachman’s passing) in Bratslav under a false city name (Mohlev) to protect R. Noson’s illegal press. Both volumes were later reprinted together in Lemberg (1829) and Jerusalem (1933 and 1968), among other editions, its authorship will be discussed below in Cha 1]; henceforth: “LM” followed by a numeral I or II indicating the first or second section thereof, followed by the number of the teaching and the number of the paragraph within that teaching). LM I:72, in which R. Nachman provides an in-depth understanding of what the Tsadik’s struggle entails *after* the Tsadik has achieved total victory over his body. He teaches that it is only post-physical-victory that the Tsadik’s most profound struggles *begin*; this is connected to the notion that even G-d “struggles” with the *midat ha-din* (attribute of strict judgment), a notion which appears in Rabbinic literature, see e.g. BT Brachot 6A. This teaching is given, to the best of my observation, no treatment by Green in his book. See also LH *Shabbat* 7:50 (this is just one example of the many discussions therein on the importance of the Tsadik’s total victory over his or her body, and how the struggles that ensue are particularly inspirational for those who are struggling with the physicality of their bodies, see also, for instance LH *Tefillin* 5:36).

each level of awareness to one still higher.⁹² The sense of longing and incompleteness are themselves the greatest pleasure of all.⁹³

The notion of a “spiritual objectivity” that is achieved through the Tsadik’s total victory over his or her body, is, as mentioned in the thesis statement above, one of the two crucial poles of R. Noson’s polemic *vis a vis* the Enlightenment. The new and enhanced levels of dynamism and intensive struggle that ensue, and the special ability thereby to aid others in their journeys of faith and Divine service, will be discussed at greater length below in chapters two and three. For now, I simply wish to draw attention to the alignment of this dissertation with Etkes’ methodology *vis a vis* suspension of scholarly credulity, in our case, regarding R. Noson reportage of R. Nachman’s total victory in his “twin struggles,” for the sake of achieving a correct understanding of R. Noson’s thought, as he himself understood it.

Why R. Noson and not R. Nachman?

It is important to answer the following question: Why focus this dissertation upon the writings of the R. Noson, the disciple, and not R. Nachman, the Rebbe? The answer to this question is that the focus here is on identifying and analyzing a clear response to the Enlightenment. While R. Noson explicitly responds to the Enlightenment/Haskalah, it is difficult to isolate clear responses in the writings of R. Nachman with confidence.⁹⁴

G. D. Hundert has written about the striking phenomenon of parallel (Christian) spiritual movements in the eighteenth century, and argued that Hasidism must not be seen as arising due to the influence of these other movements.⁹⁵ Nor, he writes, should Hasidism, along with parallel spiritual movements, be seen “*ab initio* as a reaction to the Enlightenment. Rather, they were coextensive with the Enlightenment. What the spiritual

⁹²See e.g. LH *Shluchim* 3 395 for a description of the paradox of oneness with the Divine and constant growth; LH *Arev* 3:15 for a description of the role of longing in heaven; *Tefillin* 5:5 for a description of the greatness of what might be described as both the admission and the achievement of “not knowing.”

⁹³See LH *Arev* 3:7 in which R. Nosson identifies the pleasure and delight of the Sabbath (*oneg Shabbat*) as essentially consisting of a heightened sense of longing. (See also LH *Arev* 3:40 where he relates longing with joy).

⁹⁴ There are some instances in *Likutei Moharan* where there are references to, and disagreements with, philosophic stances, such as LMI:52 and LMII:19; there are also instances of references to philosophic stances which R. Nachman agreed with, such as LMI:25 and LMI:63.

⁹⁵ Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*, 176-177. Not all agree with this view, see for instance Biale, *Hasidism*, 30-32, and Moshe Idel “R. Israel Ba’al Shem Tov ‘In The State of Walachia’: Widening the Besht’s Cultural Panorama,” pp. 69-103, in Glenn Dynner, ed. *Holy Dissent* (Wayne State U. Press, 2011). See also Dynner’s “Hasidism and Habitat” in the same volume.

movements and the Enlightenment shared was, most particularly, the emboldening of the individual to independence in matters of thought and spirit.”⁹⁶ There was, he writes, simply the “appearance of a similar *Geist* at a similar *Zeit* among both Jews and Christians.” In this sense, it seems to me, R. Nachman’s teachings, too, are a part of this fascinating phenomenon.

I think there is an important distinction to be made between the origination of R. Nachman’s teachings themselves, which remains, to me, difficult to demonstrate conclusively as being “responses” to the Enlightenment, and the application and formulation of these teachings by his creative scribal Hasid R. Nosen as explicit arguments in response to proponents of Enlightenment ideals. Just as the rise of Hasidism itself was not a “response” to the Enlightenment, but did share a similar *Geist* with it, in its focus on the individual, as above, the same, I think, must be said of R. Nachman’s teachings: they ultimately are not, essentially, “responses” to the Enlightenment.

R. Nosen’s application of these teachings, on the other hand, provides the researcher with a fascinating glimpse into an actual (one-sided) picture of conscious debate, in which he formulates direct and unambiguous arguments, which reach us directly from his authorial pen. This is the main reason why I have chosen to focus this dissertation on the response to the Enlightenment as found in R. Nosen’s writings, as opposed to the writings of his Rebbe. Although it is only in a small percentage of his writings in *Likutei Halachot* (LH) that R. Nosen speaks directly to the philosophic and societal challenges of his times, mentioning them explicitly and responding to them, still, his clear situating of his polemic within the theme of external wisdom versus faith in the sages, which is an important motif across LH, allows for the researcher to develop a fuller picture of R. Nosen’s views on the Enlightenment.

As to what one may be able to infer from R. Nosen’s writings about the views of R. Nachman himself, I provide the following quote from *Likutei Moharan*, which speaks to this issue. Certainly, R. Nosen’s enterprise was based upon expressing his Rebbe’s ideas, not his own. At the same time, his creativity was unquestionably at work, as his Rebbe expressly desired.⁹⁷ What the reader of R. Nosen receives is, as described below, an “impression” of R. Nachman:

As for the Tsadik himself, it is impossible to grasp him,⁹⁸ for one has no way to take hold of him in one’s mind, for he is above one’s consciousness. Only, it is through those people who are close to him that one can have an understanding of the greatness of the Tsadik. For it is through seeing his people, who are men of

⁹⁶ Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 177.

⁹⁷ This will be discussed below in Chapter One.

⁹⁸ Heb.- *ee efshar lehasigo*.

action, people of awe and wholeness, and it is possible to ‘grasp’ them, and take hold of them in one’s mind, for the world is not yet as far from them as they are from the Tsadik himself. Hence, one who desires truth can know of the Tsadik’s greatness through his people. And this can be likened to a seal, whereby the writing that is engraved upon the seal cannot be read because the letters are reversed; it is only when the seal is stamped upon the wax and the letters make their impressions, that one can see the letters impressed upon the wax and understand the writing ...⁹⁹

Hasidism and the Haskalah

Part of the way Hasidism developed was through encountering and relating to different forms of opposition.¹⁰⁰ In addition to the opposition it faced within the religious camp (there arose a “counter-movement,” the proponents of which became known as *mitnagdim* or “opposers,”)¹⁰¹ there was also its relationship with the Haskalah. In certain ways, each movement crystallized its own identity through its conflict with the other.¹⁰²

It is important to point out that proponents of Hasidism and of Haskalah were not always in such clear conflict. Although one was more spiritual and parochial and the other more philosophic and universal, yet, there were also important examples of positive relationships between the two. In Hasidism: A New History, some recent findings are highlighted which provide evidence of Hasidic groups and their leaders having positive relationships with Maskilim:

Isaac Ber Levinson, known for his anti-Hasidic statements, received financial assistance from R. Israel of Ruzhin toward the publication of his famous treatise *Te’udah b’Yisrael* (1828) and produced, at his request, *Efes Damim* (1837) a tract

⁹⁹ LMI:140. See also LH Chezkat HaMetaltelin 5:15.

¹⁰⁰ On the notion of opposition as a fundamental part of spiritual development, see LH Yom Tov 5, and in particular paragraph 6.

¹⁰¹ See Alan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mitnagdim: Rabbinic Responses to Hasidic Rapture*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 1997). See also Mordechai Wilensky, *Hasidim u-Mitnaggedim: Le-toledot ha-pulmus beineihem*, 2 vols, 2d ed. (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1990.) On the particular importance of the opposition of Rabbi Elijah Kramer (1720-1797, known as the “genius of Vilna”) to Hasidism, see Emmanuel Etkes, *Yahid be-doro: Ha-Ga’on mi-Vilna – demut ve-dimui* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1998) 84-163; H. H. Ben-Sasson, “Ishiyuto shel ha-Gra vehashpa’ato ha-historit,” *Zion* 31 (1966): 39-86, 197-216.

¹⁰² See Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* Tr. Eugene Orenstein, Aaron Klein, and Jenny Klein (Philadelphia: JPS, 1985); Marcin Wodzinski, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2005).

demolishing the accusations against the Jews of ritual murder. ... Maskilim who advocated for agricultural settlements to provide a more “productive” Jewish economy found acceptance with some Hasidic leaders ... Gerrer Rebbe Y.M. Alter issued a call that every Jewish teacher of religion should teach some Polish, and even bring in a Polish teacher who is a native speaker. He also approved, in 1863, a call for bills of sale of chamets (leavened products) to be written in Polish... Maskilim are described as hosting visiting Rebbes, traveling to their courts for blessings, advice, or “a simple courtesy call.” In Warsaw, the Hasidim and integrationists formed a political coalition, which ran the local Jewish community for four decades. Thus beyond the well-known polemics, relations between Haskalah and Hasidism were far more varied than later historiography has portrayed them.¹⁰³

Bratslav Hasidism and the Haskalah

The relations between between R. Nachman and his student R. Noson, and the Maskilim in Uman were another important example of positive connectivity between Hasidim and Maskilim. The earliest study of the respectful and enduring relationships that R. Nachman and R. Noson built with leading Maskilim in the town of Uman (in today’s Ukraine) was presented by Chaim Lieberman.¹⁰⁴ This was followed by a more comprehensive study by Mendel Piekarz,¹⁰⁵ and was relatively recently given important treatment by Shmuel Feiner.¹⁰⁶

In September 1802 R. Nachman passed through Uman for the first time, sojourning there for a Sabbath. Chaikel Hurwits (1749-1822), who was a leading figure there, in what was one of the earliest groups of Maskilim in Russia, came to pay his respects to the visiting Rebbe. According to Bratslav lore, R. Nachman asked Chaikel why he had come to visit him. When Chaikel responded that he had heard that an important visitor had arrived in the city, R. Nachman asked him, perhaps tauntingly, why he did not go across the road to visit the important Russian general who was also visiting at the time. Chaikel, undaunted, returned later on with a small entourage of interested parties, entering while R. Nachman was in the middle of a Torah discourse. The Rebbe,

¹⁰³ Biale, *Hasidism*, 494-495. See also Wodzinski, *Haskalah and Hasidism*, 142-153 and 188-199; see Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, 151, for other important examples of positive relations between Maskilim and Hasidim.

¹⁰⁴ C. Lieberman, “Rabbi Nakhman Bratslaver and the Maskilim of Uman.”

¹⁰⁵ Mendel Piekarz “Parashat Uman B’Chayey R. Nachman M’Bratslav U’mashma’utah B’toldoteiha U’vemasechet Ra’ayoneteha Shel Chassidut Bratslav” *Zion* 36 (1971).

¹⁰⁶ Shmuel Feiner, “Sola Fide!”

noticing them, related what he was teaching to a complex mathematical analysis from the Talmud and its commentaries.¹⁰⁷

Chaikel and his entourage were impressed with R. Nachman's knowledge of mathematics; they saw in him, it seems, a Rabbinic personality to whom they could relate. They even quite seriously asked him to remain in Uman. R. Nachman replied that the time was not yet ripe: he told them that he would do so when they sent him the book *Yeyn Lavanon*, by their mentor R. Naftali Herz (Hartwig) Wessely.

Over seven and a half years later, on May 5th 1810, the Maskilim in fact sent the book to R. Nachman, and he set off for Uman quite soon afterwards, arriving there on May 9th.¹⁰⁸ In Uman R. Nachman and R. Noson especially connected with the younger generation,¹⁰⁹ particularly with Chaikel's son Hirsh Ber (1785-1857) and son-in-law Moshe Landau (1786-1862). R. Nachman spent real amounts of time with them, including going for long walks, playing chess, and speaking with them about all kinds of worldly matters. Feiner references a few lines in *Likutei Halachot* which speak of the Tsadik "lowering himself" in these kinds of ways only for the sake of drawing close those who are far.¹¹⁰

This is, as with most of Feiner's presentation of Bratslav theology, a superficial slice of the picture. For instance, there is a far more profound and revealing teaching that R. Noson presents elsewhere in his *Likutei Halachot*,¹¹¹ over several dense pages, in which he dissects the Lurianic intentions for the donning of phylacteries, presenting them as a kind of a picture of what it looks like to draw people close to Judaism. The following is a very brief summary of this teaching.

At first, the teacher or Tsadik takes the fascinating step of actually forgetting what he knows, even forgetting that he is an insider relating to outsiders, thereby becoming able to simply relate, on a purely human level. Together, they just explore life; along the way, a sense of the importance of Divine service makes its way in edgewise, perhaps due to a subconscious motivation of the teacher, or perhaps from some other source. As the student or outsider becomes enamored (even at a minute level) with a sense of the possibility of Divine service in their life, the teacher or Tsadik actually becomes jealous of the student or outsider's newfound sense of possibility. This catapults the teacher or Tsadik back to their higher consciousness, at which point their roles as teacher and student become solidified and a kind of formal relationship based upon this can begin.

¹⁰⁷ At BT Succah 8A-B

¹⁰⁸ See YMI:45-46 for more on the account of R. Nachman's move to Uman.

¹⁰⁹ See CM, R. Nachman taught that it is easier to have an impact upon younger people.

¹¹⁰ LH Hashkamat HaBoker 4:16.

¹¹¹ At LH Tefilin 5:25-26.

The act of forgetting, R. Noson also refers to this as intentional “falling,” is crucial. There is no conniving or contriving here, but rather a desire to relate. While it is true that there is a motivation at first to draw the outsider “in,” still, the respect for free choice and the unfettered human experience¹¹² is paramount. Hirsh Ber and Moshe Landau indeed became actual friends of R. Nachman’s and also of R. Noson’s: the relationships built were respectful and longlasting (as Feiner and others have noted) and it is a mistake to see them as having been anything less than genuine.

R. Nachman died later that year, on October 16th, 1810. According to Bratslav tradition, Hirsh Ber had been present at R. Nachman’s final Torah discourse, on Rosh Hashanah of that year. There was a great crush of several hundred followers straining to hear the faintly uttered words of the ailing Rebbe; Hirsh Ber, however, due to his societal standing, was not affected by this and was able to hear clearly, and after the holiday he was among those who aided R. Noson to transcribe the teaching from the combined memories of those in attendance.

R. Noson was in regular contact with Hirsh Ber and Moshe Landau (and other Maskilim) for the next thirty-three years, until his passing on December 20th 1844. There are a number of stories in Bratslav lore about R. Noson’s relations with the Maskilim;¹¹³ I will mention two of these, which highlight the human dimension:

Moshe Landau, upon returning from a business trip and hearing that R. Noson was in town (R. Noson lived in Bratslav), went straight to speak with him before going home. R. Noson received him warmly, and began as usual to deride the successes of this world as being as naught compared to Divine service. Landau smiled and retorted that, having just returned from a successful trip, he is perfectly happy and cannot imagine anything being amiss. R. Noson then said that even if a man returns from a successful trip with great gifts for his family, and even presents his wife with a fancy ring, still, she might not like it. She might start an argument, and the man will feel so despondent that he would rather be dead than alive. Landau returned several hours later exclaiming to R. Noson “Oy! Were you right...”

In another anecdote, R. Noson once became so entangled in a philosophical argument with Hirsh Ber, that he cried out (referring to R. Nachman’s assigning importance to his continued connection with the Maskilim): “Gevalt – what did the Rebbe want of me?”

While the first is a story of “besting” Landau, still, it is not a cut and dry story of “winning him over” to the side of traditional Judaism, which indeed never happened.

¹¹² Unfettered even by tradition and theology; this notion will be discussed further below in chapter four.

¹¹³ See the above mentioned academic studies; see also Kramer, *Through Fire and Water*, 180-201, 339-349. The reader will notice that I have made indirect use of Kramer’s translations here.

Rather, it is a story of two men, respectful of each other but with differing theological outlooks, relating to what was for them the plight of the married man. The second story displays R. Noson in a moment of weakness, expressing his frustration with philosophical argumentation. It may well have served as an affirmation of sorts for Hirsh Ber that his own position was indeed defensible. It may also have created a greater and *shared* of sense of living in a world in which language-based philosophical argumentation is, ultimately, unresolvable.

When R. Noson faced the intensive opposition of R. Moshe of Savran, Hirsh Ber Hurwits and Moshe Landau told him that with their governmental connections they could be of great assistance. R. Noson refused this, but the account is important for it shows that the cause of helping out R. Noson was important enough to them to be deemed worthy of troubling the Russian authorities.

Hirsh Ber was the most influential among the group of Maskilim in Uman. A brilliant man with a special proficiency with languages, he traveled to Germany and, under the influence of the Maskilic thinkers there (and of his father and associates at home), assumed an outlook that was called “Mosaitic.” Derived from the name Moses, this denotes a kind of a Jewish deism. This meant an utter rejection of the Talmud with its “old world casuistry,” and a focus on the Bible as a source of ethics, including a favorable outlook on the New Testament in this regard. It also meant a rejection of backward Jewish customs and distinctive Jewish dress, which were perceived as shameful in the new developing world. He was instrumental in establishing a Maskilic Jewish school in Uman, the first of its kind in Russia.¹¹⁴

Feiner has argued correctly that the theological universe of the Maskilim in Uman that R. Nachman and R. Noson encountered most probably did include a place for God.¹¹⁵ This need not negate, however, the accounts in Bratslav lore of R. Noson and Hirsh Ber arguing about the existence of God. The debate was not about theology, but about a modality of lived experience: *Is there a “personal God” who values human beings and their service? Is there a God who cares about the details of halakhic observance? Is there a God who listens to prayer?* These were the kinds of questions that were on the table.

This understanding of the core of their debate is an important factor that has led me to highlight the notion of faith in oneself, (as a crucial aspect of faith in God, for it is a faith that God cares), as constituting what may well have been R. Noson’s primary concern in his response to the Enlightenment.

As the notion of God ascended to the abstract heights of an Aristotelian “unmoved mover,” or receded into the immutable laws of nature of a Spinozist pantheism, the individual was left bereft of a sense of ultimate and inherent self worth that is rooted in a

¹¹⁴ Shmuel Feiner, “Sola Fide!” 95-96.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 122-123. And see LMII:19 in which R. Nachman argued against a Maskilic/philosophic outlook which included a notion of G-d and even an Afterlife. See also SHR 38.

living relationship with God. The personal religious experience, the religious sense of quest, came to be seen as outdated, laughable, and simply false. Hence a major aspect of R. Noson's polemic was the reinstatement of the human being to a position of being valued by God and capable of engaging in relationship with God. This reinstatement is not an abstraction, it must be believed personally: this is called *emunah b'atsmo* or faith in oneself.

R. Noson Sternharts on the Enlightenment

The only study to date which deals chiefly with R. Noson's response to the Enlightenment is Shmuel Feiner's article "*Sola Fide!* The Polemic of R. Noson of Nemirov against Atheism and Haskalah."¹¹⁶ Feiner based his analysis entirely¹¹⁷ on two anti-Maskilic pamphlets which were published anonymously. Although these have generally been attributed in Bratslav tradition to R. Noson,¹¹⁸ I must point out that an important, relatively recently published, work of Bratslav oral lore has stated, of the much longer and more detailed of two, that that "the matter is unclear if the holy work *Kinat Hashem Tsvakot* was composed by R. Noson himself or by one of the other great Bratslaver Hasidim of his time."¹¹⁹

Although Feiner highlights R. Noson's own close reading of many important Maskilic works,¹²⁰ as well as R. Noson's admission that throughout Jewish history there have always been exceptional cases of those who studied secular wisdom, he does not unearth any deeper theology that might explain why the study of these wisdoms is ok for some but dangerous and forbidden for others. Instead, Feiner advances a facile one-dimensional understanding of R. Noson's position which, although it is consistent with earlier scholarship, is in need of important revision.

Feiner's conclusion is that R. Noson's position was that of fideism; he maps R. Noson's thought onto the contemporary European landscape as being virtually identical to that of Johann Hamann. For Hamann, language based rationality is manifestly

¹¹⁶ Shmuel Feiner, "Sola Fide!"

¹¹⁷ The few instances in which he does make reference to Likutei Halachot are used merely to show that very similar formations to some of the arguments in the pamphlets can be found therein.

¹¹⁸ For instance, their more recent publication by Bratslav Hasidim (Jerusalem, 1965) includes mention of R. Nosson as their author. See also Feiner, "Sola Fide!" 97-99 for his arguments in this regard.

¹¹⁹ A multi-volume collection of transcriptions by Avraham Weitshandler, from conversations with Levi Yitschak Bender, entitled *Siach Sarfei Kodesh*, vol.4 paragraph 178. [The first two volumes were published in Jerusalem, 1988. It has subsequently grown to be a six volume work with an additional index volume, published in 2001].

¹²⁰ Feiner, "Sola Fide!" 105; he also notes that R. Nosson's reading was closer and more extensive than any of his traditionalist contemporaries.

incapable of reaching objectivity. It always remains a mere human construction, as he wrote in a letter to Herder: “reason is language, logos. On this marrowbone I gnaw, and I shall gnaw myself to death on it.”¹²¹ Hence it is through the lived experience of faith alone that reality can be perceived. Isaiah Berlin summarized Hamann’s position in this regard thusly:

Faith is the basis of our knowledge of the external world. We may crave for something else: logical deduction, guarantees given by infallible intuition. But Hume is right, all we have is a kind of animal faith. This is the great battering ram with which Hamann seeks to destroy the edifice of traditional metaphysics and theology ... In this way Hamann turns those very empirical weapons that were earlier used against dogmatic theology and metaphysics, against rationalist epistemology – Cartesian, Leibnizian, Kantian – as his admirer Kierkegaard used them against the Hegelians.¹²²

Although it may sound strange to our ears today, Immanuel Kant and Johann Hamann were actually friends; they were both raised in the German Pietistic tradition, and both struggled with relating the religion they grew up with to contemporary thinking. They certainly came to vastly different conclusions about which they argued, yet they remained friends. Although Kant did affirm the ultimate mystery of the noumena, still, his argument was that people can only live and function in accordance with reason’s ability to systematically understand phenomena. Hamann, on the other hand, rejected reason quite fiercely: “do not forget,” wrote Hamann, “for the sake of the *cogito*, the noble *sum*.”¹²³ In this way, Kant and Hamann can be seen as representatives of two sides of a spectrum.

I submit here, with this dissertation, that it is a mistake to lump R. Nosen in with Hamann’s “camp.” R. Nosen’s appeals to faith in his writings such as the pamphlets and the prayers he composed (both of which Feiner highlights) are indeed intensive and often “total:” he certainly believed that a person could have a great life through relying on faith alone, and held that for most people this is the safest and by far the most preferred way to go in modern times, given the powerful social dimension that accompanied rational/philosophic inquiry, which pulled people away from tradition. However, this does not mean that in R. Nosen’s theological universe language-based rational inquiry is an utter dead end, a mere human construction. Indeed, in R. Nachman and R. Nosen’s

¹²¹ Johann Georg Hamann, *Samtliche Werke*, vol. 5: *Briefwechsel*, ed. Arthur Henkel (Frankfurt am Main: Insel-Verlag, 1965), 177 (in a letter to Johann Gottfried Herder, August 6, 1784).

¹²² Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critiques of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann, Herder* (Princeton: Princeton U. Press, 2000), 281-282.

¹²³ *Hamanns Briefwechsel mit Jacobi*, ed. C.H. Gildemeister (Gotha: Perthes, 1868) 497.

teachings¹²⁴ there are important instances of explicit agreement with certain findings of rationalistic inquiry.

As charted out above in the thesis statement, for R. Noson there are two layers of human perception, one language-based and the other ungraspable through language. Each has a corresponding kind of objectivity. As will be shown below in chapter two and especially in chapter four, the further a person advances in the languageless dimension, the less dangerous the language-based dimension becomes.

Feiner's analysis of the two pamphlets, which together total a mere eighty five pages, is surely of interest, particularly in their illustration of how much and how deeply R. Noson read Maskilic literature. The pamphlets cannot, however, provide a comprehensive sense of R. Noson's intellectual stance in his response to the Enlightenment. For that one must wade into the vast pool of his *Likutei Halachot* which is an eight volume work comprising over three thousand pages; its character will be presented in chapter one below. My analysis here is based solely on that work, which, unlike the longer of the two pamphlets, is uncontestedly the fruit of R. Noson's own pen.

Thesis Outline

The first chapter will, after providing a brief biography, discuss R. Noson's role as R. Nachman's primary disciple and scribe. It will show how there was an important degree of mutuality in their relationship. Just as R. Noson needed a Rebbe, R. Nachman had a real need for R. Noson's particular scribal and creative abilities. R. Nachman put R. Noson through an important grooming process, the climax of which was the commissioning of *Likutei Halachot*; this process will be presented and discussed. It will highlight the importance of literary output for R. Nachman and Bratslav Hasidism. The chapter will provide a basic analysis of the nature of R. Noson's massive and intricate magnum opus. It will end with the observation that R. Nachman emphasized two particular topics that he wished R. Noson to focus upon in particular. These two topics may have been taken by R. Noson as hints towards the two poles of his polemic against the Enlightenment, as outlined above.

These two poles, namely (1) the appeal to languageless experience and (2) R. Noson's particular formulation of the Tsadik's objectivity, can justifiably be called "responses" to modern challenges because they were employed as such in R. Noson's writings, but it is crucial to understand that these were not formulated as stand-alone notions for the sake of debate. R. Noson understood the Enlightenment and its clash with Jewish tradition as a particularly marked manifestation of an ancient conflict, namely that of *emunat chachamim* (faith in the Sages) versus *chochmah chitsonit* (external wisdom). The second chapter will discuss the meaning of these terms through history, starting with the term *emunah* followed by the term *emunat chachamim* and lastly the term *chochmah*

¹²⁴ For R. Nachman's teachings see e.g. LMI: 25, LMI: 52, LMI: 63. For R. Noson's see e.g. LH Shevuot 2:2, LH Metaltelin 5.

chitsonit. It will provide an in depth discussion of R. Noson's novel understanding and formulation of both the terms and the conflict. It will highlight the importance of faith in oneself, and it will end with a presentation of the Tsadik's spiritual objectivity as understood within this context.

The third chapter will be about the crucial notion of faith in oneself. It will point out that the term *emunah b'atsmo* as it is used in Bratslav Hasidism is innovative; although teachings about faith in oneself are hinted at in certain ways in Rabbinic literature, still as a "term" and as a central focus, it is innovative, and fits in with the usage of the notion of faith in the sages in Bratslav Hasidism. It will present how faith in oneself was first taught by R. Nachman, whereafter R. Noson took the notion and emphasized it greatly, illustrating its centrality in a way which was unprecedented in his Rebbe's teachings..

The fourth chapter will be, primarily, an analysis of what I have found to be the most unvaryingly focussed piece in *Likutei Halachot* on R. Noson's polemic against the Enlightenment. It will highlight the two poles of his polemic as discussed above, as understood within the context of the conflict between faith in the sages and external wisdom, and particularly as understood through the highlighting of faith in oneself as the primary component of faith in the sages.

Chapter One

The Rebbe's Scribe: R. Noson Sternharts of Nemirov

R. Noson was born on the fifteenth of the Hebrew month of *Shevat*, (January 22nd) 1780, to Naftali Herz and Chayah Laneh Sternharts, a successful textile merchant in Nemirov. His youthful excellence in Talmudic scholarship won him a matrimonial match with Esther Shaindel, the daughter of R. Dovid Zvi Auerbach (d.1808) who was one of the important *poskim* (Rabbinic judges) of his region. Married at thirteen, (this was customary in his day, the young couple would then move in with the bride's parents), R. Noson was groomed in his teenage years to one day replace his father-in-law as Rabbi of three cities and their environs, which included some eighty smaller towns and hamlets. At first, the young prodigy absorbed his father-in-law's opposition to the Hasidic Rebbes and their spiritual paths, but as he grew older, he became swayed enough by a *chavrutah* (study partner) to begin to travel to some of the great Rebbes of his day,¹²⁵ in line with a trend at that time of spiritual searching/pilgrimage among young men.¹²⁶

After spending some time with other masters such as R. Zusia of Anipoli, and R. Levi Yitschak of Berditchev,¹²⁷ R. Noson found R. Nachman. The details of their initial encounters form a fascinating story in and of itself;¹²⁸ the result was that R. Noson rather quickly and radically changed the direction of his life.

Chaim Kramer has pointed out¹²⁹ that R. Noson's diary/journal/autobiography, entitled *Yemei Moharnat*,¹³⁰ covers the first sixteen years of his life in just a few short lines, and the next six years, during which he conducted his initial encounters with Hasidic Rebbes, in just one entry that is a single page long. Effectively, his autobiography begins from the time of his meeting his Rebbe. This is one of many signs of the degree to which R. Noson understood the significance of his own life as essentially a function of his relationship with R. Nachman.

¹²⁵ The story of the influence of his *chevrutah* is recorded in an important work of Bratslav oral lore: Avraham Chazan mi-Tulchin, *Kochvei Ohr*, in the section entitled "*Avaneha Barzel*," par.6.

¹²⁶ For an introduction to Hasidic pilgrimage, see Aaron Wertheim, "The Hasid, the Zadik, and Their Mutual Obligations", 372-400, in Gershon David Hundert, ed., *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present* (New York: New York University Press, 1991).

¹²⁷ See Avraham Chazan mi-Tulchin, *Kochvei Ohr*, in the section called "*Anshei Moharan*" paragraph 2, for a list of the Rebbes that R. Nosson spent time with, and further details on this stage of his life. [see also section "*Avaneha Barzel*" par. 1-5.]

¹²⁸ See Ibid, "*Avaneha Barzel*," par. 6-8.

¹²⁹ Kramer, *Through Fire and Water*, 684

¹³⁰ First published in 1856 by Nachman Goldstein of Tcherin (1825-1894), I will be using the version published in Beitar Illit, Israel, 2009.

R. Noson's "conversion" to Bratslav Hasidism caused a high degree of concern on the part of his family, to the point where, as later Bratslav oral lore records, it was suggested that a divorce may be in order. It was the intervention of his esteemed father-in-law, the story goes, that saved his marriage, as a result of his inquiry into the state of R. Noson's Torah study. When his daughter Esther Shaindel replied that his Torah study had actually increased significantly since he became a Hasid of R. Nachman, he is reported to have been impressed enough to convince her to stay in the marriage.¹³¹

The most direct window into R. Noson's personality is probably the collection of four hundred and seventy eight of his letters, published under the title *Alim Li-Trufah*.¹³² While this dissertation is not meant to provide a complete biography, still, it is my intention to at least provide a partial glimpse into the life and personality of R. Noson, with the hope that an incomplete picture is better than none at all. I will highlight just one aspect of his personality, to which, it seems to me, there are the clearest references in his writings. The focus of this dissertation is upon R. Noson's role as scribe; it seems to me that the following aspect of his personality may well have contributed to the assiduousness (and the creativity, an aspect which will be discussed below), of his writing. R. Noson wrote that Rebbe Nachman had pronounced, upon meeting R. Noson, the following:

I heard that when he drew me close that he said [with reference to me] that it is very difficult, and so on, because he is a *ba'al machshava*,¹³³ for a *ba'al machshava* is one of the twenty four traits which obstruct repentance,¹³⁴ yet, even so, *anasseh at atsmi* -I will try myself [i.e. to see if I can draw him close.]¹³⁵

¹³¹ R. Nosson also faced familial issues on his side of the family, related both to Bratslav Hasidism as well as his (lack of) bread-winning efforts. Eventually both sides came to accept his Hasidic "career" as student and scribe of R. Nachman. See Avraham Chazan mi-Tulchin, *Kochvei Ohr*, "Avaneha Barzel," par. 10 (on R. Auerbach's convincing of his daughter to stay in the marriage) and par.9 and 15 (on R. Nosson's difficulties and resolutions with his father.) On this topic there are also a number of important entries interspersed within the first section of *Yemei Moharnat*.

¹³² Upon R. Nosson's passing in 1844, Nachman Goldstein of Tcherin collected his letters. So did his primary disciple Nachman Chazan of Tulchin (1814-1884). The two collections were published separately, under the titles *Alim Li-Trufah* (Berditshev, 1896) and *Michtavei Moharnat* (Jerusalem, 1911), respectively. They were first published together in Jerusalem in 1930. Today it is generally published together with letters from R. Nachman and a few other prominent early Bratslav Hasidim.

¹³³ Lit. "master of thoughts," meaning, one who thinks too much or over-analyzes, thereby bringing one to negativity.

¹³⁴ See Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, Laws of Repentance, Ch. 4, where the term is *ba'al machshavah ra'ah*, meaning one who thinks negative thoughts.

¹³⁵ *Chayei Moharan* 323.

It seems that R. Noson's quickness of mind brought with it a painful and difficult tendency to slip into negative thought patterns. In many of his letters, (the majority of which are addressed to his son Yitschak,)¹³⁶ R. Noson identified with his son's struggles with this same issue, of being a *ba'al machshava*. For instance, in a letter he writes:

And believe me truly, that all that you have written to me is not novel to me whatsoever, because I faced such challenges many times, and they lasted for long periods, such that it seemed to me that I could not live another day, or even another hour. But I said to myself- come what may, I will uplift myself at every moment, and I will see to it at every moment to separate my consciousness from that which I must forget, and this is the essence, to "sit and not do [evil]"¹³⁷ at the very least. And whatever good I can grab onto here and there, great. And the main thing is to get through the day without doing bad, in sitting and not doing. And even to achieve just this required much crying out to God may He be blessed and praying many prayers. And I had to spend many hours in silliness and dissipation [in order to avoid bad thoughts] and I imagine I surely learned Torah for a few hours, especially my daily studies, and so the day would pass, for many days and years. If I were to try to be comprehensive in describing all of this, my dear son, there would be no room. For surely no two men are exactly the same, and surely there are many differences in the details, but still all that you write of, all of it, I have really and truly experienced myself (*avar alay ka'eleh ve'cha'eleh mamash*).¹³⁸

This is one of many letters in which R. Noson speaks quite openly in the first person about his own struggles with harnessing his over-active mind. At a certain point in his letter-writing, R. Noson became aware that his letters would have value for posterity; he instructed his son to take care to save them, hinting that they might one day be published for the good of many.¹³⁹ This awareness of the value of his own letters, based as they were upon the wisdom of his Rebbe grew, it seems, out of his sharp awareness of a need to record everything he could about R. Nachman.

¹³⁶ R. Nosson wrote many more letters than those published in this collection. The reason why these letters survived is because R. Nosson had told his son to preserve them; see below footnote 16.

¹³⁷ This is a Talmudic expression, see e.g. BT Eruvin 100A.

¹³⁸ *Alim Li-Truafah*, (Jerusalem: 1983), Letter #124, [written in autumn of 1834].

¹³⁹ See Ibid, Letter 42: "Preserve the letters. They will be very precious in time to come." See also Letter 91, in which R. Nosson tells his son to show his letters to other Bratslaver Hasidim, and to take care to save them: "since they are valuable, and need to be saved, for they will be needed, with the help of G-d may He be blessed, to enliven many souls, in G-d's great kindness, may He be blessed."

R. Noson wrote¹⁴⁰ that from the very beginning of his association with his Rebbe he felt the need to record everything about him. He did not, however, begin to do this until several years later. Instead, from the outset he recorded only R. Nachman's teachings and the conversations that related directly to those teachings. It was later, when R. Nachman returned from his trip to the Land of Israel in 1804 and proclaimed that from now on his every action and utterance should be recorded, that R. Noson began to compile *Chayei Moharan*.¹⁴¹ This is a work which is comprised of a large assortment of chapters on diverse topics, including such areas as dreams and jokes, alongside other chapters on more conventional topics such as service of God. There are also chapters on the greatness of R. Nachman's level of awareness, and on the greatness of being his follower, and there are chapters which record R. Nachman's journeys and stays in different cities. R. Noson also composed *Shivhei Ha-Ran*, a biography of R. Nachman's childhood years until he became a known Rebbe, and *Sichot Ha-Ran*,¹⁴² a recording of R. Nachman's conversations which were related to Divine service.

R. Noson's sense of the existence of a tremendous need to record everything he could about his Rebbe was due, it seems to me, to his acute perception of R. Nachman as being of unique importance to future generations. It is hard to overstate the importance which R. Noson ascribed to his Rebbe, and in particular his literary legacy. For instance, in a letter R. Noson wrote that:

All of the salvations of all of Israel forever, depend on the printing of the books of R. Nachman.¹⁴³

R. Noson's perception of his Rebbe as unique was not without basis within R. Nachman's self-presentation. R. Nachman was the great grandson of Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov who, as discussed above, by the time of R. Nachman was seen, by what was by then a full-fledged movement, as having been its founder. R. Nachman himself was a Hasidic Rebbe, but he has been recognized, both within Hasidic and academic circles¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ In his introduction to *Chayei Moharan*, (see the next footnote.) See there also: paragraphs 126, 357 and 479.

¹⁴¹ *Chayei Moharan* was first published in 1873 by R. Nachman of Tcherin. On the involvement of the publisher(s) and issues of censorship, see Green, *Tormented Master*, 8.

¹⁴² Both of these works were first published in Ostrog in 1815-16 (the Hebrew year is recorded, but not the month, hence it is unclear if it was 1815 or 1816) as an addendum to the first edition of R. Nachman's stories, *Sippurei Ma'asiot*. That first edition of *Sichot Haran* included 111 entries or paragraphs, subsequent publications added another 197.

¹⁴³ *Alim Li-Trufah*, Letter #56.

¹⁴⁴ See, e.g. Yehuda Liebes. "The Novelty of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav" *Daat: A Journal of Jewish Philosophy & Kabbalah* 45 (2000): 91-103. See also Green, *Tormented Master*, 9-14 and 116-123.

as having been less self-defined by the Hasidic movement than other Rebbes. For instance, whereas virtually all Hasidic Rebbes traced their teachings and spiritual paths back to the Besht, rooting their authenticity as spiritual masters in that they saw themselves as espousing, albeit each in their own way, the original “light” of the Besht, R. Nachman saw himself as being just as much an originator in his own right as the Besht. This may mean that he saw himself as originator of a new spiritual path that is built upon, but not ultimately part of, Hasidism. Here is an example of an expression of R. Nachman’s, along these lines, that R. Noson recorded:

I heard in his [R. Nachman’s] name that he said that from the time of R. Shimon Bar Yochai¹⁴⁵ who was a great *chidush* [innovative personality] as is well-known, until the time of the *Arizal*,¹⁴⁶ the world was quiet. Meaning that from R. Shimon Bar Yochai until the *Arizal*, there were no *chidushim* [innovations] revealed like those of R. Shimon Bar Yochai, until the *Arizal* came along, who was a great *chidush* as is well-known, and he revealed total innovations (*chidushim legamrei*) such as were not revealed until his time. And from the *Arizal* until the Baal Shem Tov, the world was again quiet, with no *chidush*, until the Baal Shem Tov, who was a wondrous *chidush*, who revealed innovations. And from the Ba’al Shem Tov until now, the world was also quiet, with no *chidush* such as this, and the world was run only in accordance with the *chidush* that the Baal Shem Tov revealed, until, now, when I [R. Nachman] came along. And now, I am beginning to reveal wondrous innovations such as have never been revealed before by any created being (Heb. *chadashot niflaot legamrei sh’adayin lo nitgalu al yedei shum nivra.*)¹⁴⁷

R. Noson’s perception of his Rebbe as a unique Tsadik with peerless relevance to future generations was central to his roles as his Rebbe’s disciple, biographer and scribe. Ariel Burger has pointed out that R. Noson’s hyper-sensitivity to his Rebbe’s life and teachings led to a focus, in his relationship with his Rebbe, that differed from the general script of the Hasid-Rebbe bond:

R. Noson’s relationship with and view of his Rebbe, in contradistinction to that of many other Hasidim of other sects, can be apprehended in an anecdote related to a lesson in *Likutei MoHaRaN*, Lesson 282. R. Nachman taught the lesson in two

¹⁴⁵ One of the sages of the *Mishnah*, to whom Jewish tradition has attributed authorship of the central kabbalistic work called the *Zohar*.

¹⁴⁶ R. Isaac Luria, a central and highly influential kabbalist of sixteenth-century Safed.

¹⁴⁷ *Chayei Moharan* 279. See also e.g. *Chayei Moharan* 280, 381. In Avraham Chazan mi-Tulchin, *Kochvei Ohr*, “*Avaneha Barzel*,” 15, wherein R. Nachman is reported to have told his uncle R. Boruch of Medzibozh that he had reached the level of the Besht when was thirteen years old, implying that he had far surpassed him. This, reports the author of that work, was the beginning of the strife between them.

parts, the second of which when he was journeying to Lemberg. According to the tale, as R. Nachman's carriage was pulling away from Bratslav, R. Noson ran after and caught up with it. R. Nachman offered his disciple the choice of a blessing or a Torah lesson. R. Noson replied, "A blessing you will give us when you return in good health from Lemberg. For now, teach us Torah!" Populist Ukrainian Hasidic culture (as well as the majority of its counterparts in Poland, Galicia and elsewhere) was predicated on the role of Tsadik as intercessor and font of blessings. Students and householders alike traveled hundreds of miles to receive a blessing from the Rebbe. In a sense the currency of many Hasidic communities was the blessing, and this was expressed especially in tales of the wonder-working abilities of this Tsadik or that. R. Nachman deemphasized this aspect of the Hasidic world, preferring to influence his followers to effect changes themselves through the spiritual practices he taught. R. Noson's choice of a teaching over a blessing was reflective of his teacher's own preferences, but it also is typical of R. Noson's view of R. Nachman's importance as a teacher, a fountain of replicable practices and lessons of relevance to all types of people and future generations. As R. Noson himself remarked of this decision, "I knew that if we did not hear the lesson now it would be lost forever."¹⁴⁸

R. Noson recognized not only the need to record all that he could about his Rebbe, but also the uniqueness of each passing moment, which contained an irreplaceable opportunity to receive a new teaching; this far outweighed the value of a blessing which is limited to the here and now.

With the passing of his Rebbe in 1810, R. Noson's writing continued for decades, until his own passing at the end of 1844. His refusal to assume the mantle of "Rebbe" after his Rebbe's passing reflected their atypical Hasid-Rebbe bond: he had always been, for R. Noson, a unique Tsadik, and R. Noson saw himself as always remaining his disciple:

R. Noson said, "When people mention our teacher Moses, they mention his disciple, Joshua. When they mention R. Shimon bar Yochai, they mention his student, R. Abba. When they mention the Arizal, they mention his student R. Chaim Vital. When they mention the Besht, they mention his disciple, the Mezritcher Maggid. And, when they mention R. Nachman, they will mention me."¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Ariel Burger, "Hasidic Non-Violence: R. Nosson of Bratslav's Hermeneutics of Conflict Transformation," Phd diss., (BU, 2008), 37. The anecdote he references is from *Yemei Moharnat* 26.

¹⁴⁹ From an important multi-volume collection of transcriptions by Avraham Weitshandler, from conversations with Levi Yitschak Bender (1897-1989) who was a

The unusual type of leadership that R. Noson provided after his Rebbe's passing, and the varied difficulties he had to face, have been discussed, as mentioned above, by a number of scholars. The focus of this dissertation is upon his thought as expressed in his *Likutei Halachot*, which he worked on continuously, beginning before his Rebbe's passing and continuing until the end of his life. As he matured and faced different challenges, such as Hasidic opposition during the "years of strife," as well as his many theological debates with the Maskilim,¹⁵⁰ his writing in his magnum opus, too, developed, reflecting his growing abilities to navigate new kinds of challenges. In a way, his writing in *Likutei Halachot*, particularly those passages that date to his later years, represents the height of his development as his Rebbe's disciple and scribe, reaching, simultaneously, profound rootedness in his Rebbe's teachings, alongside high levels of creativity. Before presenting a discussion of that work, a note on the distinctiveness of R. Noson's hagiography is in order.

R. Noson and Hasidic Hagiography

R. Noson's relaying of the life and teachings of his Rebbe has received an extraordinary degree of scholarly credibility; his works have been seen as quite distinct from other Hasidic hagiographical writings, as Arthur Green reports:

The assumption of the basic veracity of these sources has been a cornerstone of all modern scholarship on Nahman, and it is also the general presupposition of this work.¹⁵¹

Green has explained why the scholarly world has tended give more credence to R. Noson's biographical writings than other Hasidic hagiography, the main reason being that for R. Noson, factuality was nothing less than a religious obligation:

The fact is that proper attention to biographical detail is essential to the *religious* task which Nathan of Nemirov has set for himself. Not only is Nathan more than a mere teller of tales; he is also not simply a chronicler of events. Nathan is a self-

student of Avraham Chazan, entitled *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* vol.2, par. 701. [The first two volumes were published in Jerusalem, 1988. It has subsequently grown to be a six volume work with an additional index volume, published in 1994.

¹⁵⁰ These discussions and their reflection in R. Nosson's writings will be discussed below in chapter four.

¹⁵¹ Green, *Tormented Master*, 8, referring to R. Nosson's biographical writings, particularly *Chayei Moharan* and *Shivchei HaRan*. On Hasidic Hagiography see Ada Rapoport-Albert, "Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism," *History and Theory* 27 (1988): 119–159.

conscious creator of a *new sacred history*, one in which the life of his master stands as the unique and all-important center of events in recent times.¹⁵²

Additionally, as opposed to other hagiographic works which tend to focus upon miraculous wonder-working, it is particularly the humanity of R. Nachman, writes Green, which appealed most to R. Nosen. R. Nosen did not include miracle stories, preferring instead to highlight the human dimension of his Rebbe:

Nathan recalls that he had visited various other Hasidic courts before he settled upon a master who suited him. That which most impressed him about Nahman was his humanity, including his willingness to talk about his own failings and the struggles of his life. Nathan did not forget this impression as he took on the roles of faithful disciple and biographer; it is to this awareness of his master's humanity that we are indebted for the rich and balanced portrayal of Nahman that emerges from his writings. If anything, it may be that Nahman's conflicts are disproportionately magnified by the repeated way in which Nathan makes reference to them, particularly in *Shivhei HaRan*. The reader must be given the full story of Nahman's life and struggles, with no omission of the very human conflicts which many a saint's biographer would prefer to pass over in silence.

As mentioned above, notwithstanding R. Nosen's drive to portray his Rebbe's humanity with careful factuality, there is a limit to scholarly credulity, for Green, with regard to R. Nosen's reports of his Rebbe's "total victories:"

Of course there is some idealization in Nathan's description of the total victory his master won over various areas of personal conflict.¹⁵³

Another limit that Green mentions is with regard to the credibility of R. Nosen's accounts of the importance of his own place within the Bratslav community. I have discussed this above in the introduction.

Likutei Halachot

In turning now to a presentation of R. Nosen's *Likutei Halachot*, it is helpful to begin more broadly, by appreciating the role that his scribal abilities played in his relationship with his Rebbe. R. Nachman, it seems, had a real need for a scribal Hasid who could make his teachings more accessible, and who could also clarify and mediate esoteric kabbalistic notions:

I [R. Nosen] heard in his name that in the earlier days before I came close, he was longing for a highly learned man (*lamdan*) who is a master of wondrous

¹⁵² Ibid, 9 (italics are in the original).

¹⁵³ Ibid, 14.

expression (*ba'al lashon niflah*) to be drawn close to him, for such a person would then [upon coming close to R. Nachman] be able to explain the writings of the *Arizal* even to young lads who have become familiar with learning, such that they could learn and understand all of the writings of the *Arizal*.¹⁵⁴

Why did R. Nachman long for such a *lamdan*? Was he not himself a *lamdan* and *ba'al lashon niflah*? I think the answer to this can be gleaned from the following quotes:

He said that he struggles to such a degree before teaching Torah because it is extremely hard for him to bring his conceptions of his Torah into “clothing” and speech such that he can give it verbal form and reveal it ... His way, before teaching Torah, was to sit for an hour or two and struggle, with a number of physical movements and groaning. And even when he sat in silence one could tell from his body movements that he was going through very great struggles. Only after this would he open his mouth and begin to speak.

He [R. Nachman] said, I only teach you the dregs (*psoles*) of my Torah, which is many thousands upon thousands, myriads upon myriads, of levels below the way I myself understand it, and I cannot communicate any lower [than the way I do.]¹⁵⁵

It seems that the Rebbe understood his own weakness. As high as he was able to reach in his perceptions of Torah, the ability to express them such that his teachings could be easily integrated and applied into the lives of his listeners/readers was a task for which he desperately needed¹⁵⁶ a partner.

Whereas on the one hand the more biographical and anecdotal works *Shivchei Moharan*, *Chayei Moharan* and *Sichot HaRan* were composed by R. Nossan at his own initiative,¹⁵⁷ on the other hand the *Likutei Moharan*,¹⁵⁸ *Kitsur Likutei Moharan*, *Sefer*

¹⁵⁴ *Chayei Moharan*, 363. See 362, 364, 365 on R. Nachman's Torah and how it explains Lurianic teachings, but is also beyond them.

¹⁵⁵ *Chayei Moharan*, 360-361.

¹⁵⁶ See also *Chayei Moharan*, 368. It must be noted that R. Nachman still considered his own way of expressing himself to be closer to what he actually meant to say, than R. Nossan's, even if it might have been less accessible. See *Chayei Moharan*, 349, 362, 378.

¹⁵⁷ There was also a degree of encouragement from R. Nachman, as mentioned above.

¹⁵⁸ A relatively small percentage of the teachings in *Likutei Moharan* were written in Hebrew by R. Nachman himself; in most publications these are prefaced with the words “*lashon rabeinu*” (lit. the language of our master.) Nearly all of the rest were written by R. Nossan in Hebrew after having heard them taught in Yiddish. A very small number are from written accounts by Hasidim other than R. Nossan and are prefaced with the words “*lashon chaverim*” (lit. the language of friends.) The first section of *Likutei Moharan*

HaMiddot and *Sippurei Maasiyot* were directly commissioned and even, to differing degrees, edited or even partially written by R. Nachman himself.

The literary preservation of his teachings for the future was of paramount importance to R. Nachman. There are numerous examples of his expression of this point, which further explains the requirement of a primary student who functions as a scribe, such as the following:

He [R. Nachman] spoke, saying “I am not a man of my times at all (*anachnu einenu clal mizeh ha'olam shel achshav*), and this is why the world cannot bear us right now. Leadership does not belong to me now at all, for no leadership in the world of today can really reach me. And even the little bit of leadership I do have is truly no leadership at all, on the contrary it is really just a joke.”¹⁵⁹

He [R. Nachman] spoke, saying that, if ... the Messiah does not arrive soon, the world will long for me very much, much more than they long for the Baal Shem Tov.¹⁶⁰

He [R. Nachman] said [to his Hasidim] “Each of you has a portion in my Torah. But Noson has a greater portion than any of you.” He spoke, saying “You know this, that were it not for him [R. Noson] you would not have even one page of the book [Likutei Moharan.]”¹⁶¹

In R. Nachman’s lifetime he never had more than a few hundred Hasidim. He had a keen sense of the requirement of literary output for the sake of major future influence, and hence the need to find and train the right man to fulfill that key task of creating a kind of “Torah time-capsule.” That man was R. Noson, and his role as scribe included not only the crucial preservation of his Rebbe’s teachings, but also the charge to use his own creative powers to create his magnum opus: *Likutei Halachot*. I will now present the story of R. Nachman’s commissioning of LH; this will be followed by a discussion of the nature of this massive and intricate work.

R. Nachman commissioned LH upon the culmination of a kind of a “grooming” process that R. Nachman put R. Noson through, which lasted about three years. Although, as noted above, R. Nachman was aware of R. Noson’s talents upon his arrival, still there was a particular program he created for his beloved Hasid, which involved

was edited and approved by R. Nachman, whereas the second section, published posthumously, was not. (See also *Yemei Moharnat* 3).

¹⁵⁹ *Chayei Moharan* 345.

¹⁶⁰ *Chayei Moharan* 354.

¹⁶¹ *Chayei Moharan* 370, see also R. Nosson’s introduction to that work.

specific achievements. The following is a description of the steps through which R. Nachman brought R. Noson from new-initiate to the point of readiness to be charged with authoring *Likutei Halachot*. I will begin with an account of the factual history that I was able to put together, this will be followed by a brief analysis. Except where otherwise indicated, the information below has been culled from the first eleven entries in R. Noson's *Yemei Moharnat*.

R. Noson first met R. Nachman in Elul (September) 1802. R. Noson returned to him several times, making the trip from his home town of Nemirov, including for Rosh Hashanah. It was just after that first Rosh Hashanah that R. Nachman began to accustom R. Noson to recording R. Nachman's teachings (*hitchil lehargileni lichtov Torato hakedosha*).¹⁶²

R. Noson, however, did not begin to write these in his Rebbe's presence until after *Shabbat Hanukah* (December) of that year. R. Noson went in to him privately after he delivered his teaching orally, and the Rebbe would go over what he had said in public with him one on one, piece by piece. This was done in Yiddish, and R. Noson would write in Hebrew. Most of the time, he would then review it with him again, once he had completed the teaching.

Shushan Purim (March 8th) 1803, speaking with R. Noson, R. Nachman started to add to the teaching he had related about five months earlier, on *Shabbat Shuvah*, but then, when R. Noson asked a question, R. Nachman said, "This, you say!" [meaning, you yourself can provide an explanation for your query.] R. Noson then went and wrote out an answer, and showed what he had written to R. Nachman the next day. R. Nachman laughed with joy and said "You will be able to learn if you are persistent!" After this, however, R. Noson relates that he was told to stop writing down his own insights until he had learned a great deal of halachic literature and kabbalah.¹⁶³

The next winter, after *Shabbat Chanukah* (December 1803) R. Nachman told R. Noson to start an intensive study of the Code of Jewish law (*Shulchan Aruch*); the charge

¹⁶² At some point in that first year he bestowed on R. Nosson the long and important promise/blessing reproduced in *Chayei Moharan*, 594. It included the following lines: "I will open up the paths of the mind to you, and you will travel the paths of all my lessons like one who goes touring through the most wondrous, awesome palaces ... even so, it still not *yours*. You are like a mere visitor to something that belongs to someone else. What I want is that it should become all yours. And so it will be. You think it is because of your good deeds. No. It is only because I want it so."

¹⁶³ *Chayei Moharan*, 2. See also *Chayei Moharan*, 435 on the processes of studying legal codes and kabbalah.

was to finish the entire work in just one year, at a pace of five pages a day.¹⁶⁴ Then that summer (1804,) he charged R. Noson with the intensive study of kabbalah.¹⁶⁵

In the fall of 1804, R. Nachman told R. Noson to start thinking new Torah thoughts,¹⁶⁶ but not to begin writing them, saying that he would tell him to begin writing at a later date. That same fall¹⁶⁷ of 1804, he told him to gather the advice and practical lessons from each of R. Nachman's teachings, and write them down. R. Noson's first attempt was not acceptable, but then afterwards he better understood what the Rebbe intended (*v'achar kach hevanti kavanato*), and what he wrote was deemed good. This became the "*Kitsur Likutei Moharan*." This was, to my mind, an important step in R. Noson's development since it developed his ability to simplify the teachings of his Rebbe. It will be discussed further below.

In the winter of 1804/05 R. Nachman suddenly changed his tune, telling R. Noson to go and ask his father-in-law R. Dovid Tsvi Aurbach to install him as the Rabbi of a town, as had been R. Noson's expected life's route upon marrying his daughter-in-law. R. Noson, presumably in relative shock at this suggestion, then asked his Rebbe: "Is accepting the rabbinate the true and right thing for me?" R. Nachman answered, "Yes, this is what is true." R. Noson again asked, "But is this the 'real' truth [*der emessen emes*]?" R. Nachman answered, "If you want *der emmesen emes*, do not be a Rabbi!"¹⁶⁸

The winter then became a time of intensive scribal work, during which time R. Noson was charged by his Rebbe with copying over all of R. Nachman's teachings. He

¹⁶⁴ *Chayei Moharan* 435.

¹⁶⁵ See *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 2:197 that this mainly involved the study of the book *Eits Chayim* by R. Chaim Vital, see there regarding the interesting methodology that he was to use.

¹⁶⁶ See *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 2:609 where the Rebbe instructed R. Nosson to try to come up with a chidush every single day. R. Nosson related that one time on a Friday he was unable to come up with a single chidush, so he went out of the city to pray about this, until, he said, he was able to "squeeze out a passable chidush (*epis a chidush*) from my little finger." I did not put this on the timeline because it is unclear exactly when R. Nachman made this charge.

¹⁶⁷ It seems this occurred then, since it appears in R. Nosson's diary in an entry that comes before the entry mentioning the winter charge to go become a communal Rabbi or *Possek* (Judge), which is next in my account here. The "year" 1804/05 is the Hebrew year 5565.

¹⁶⁸ The account of the dialogue appears in *Siach Sarfei Kodesh*, 2:175. In *Yemei Moharnat*, 8, he simply wrote that "in the winter of 5565 he ordered me to travel to my father-in-law in the holy community of Mahlov, to ask him to install me as Rabbi of some town, and, thank G-d, I was saved from this."["*Tsivah alai linsoa l'chotni ... levakesh me'ito sheyiten li eizeh rabanut be'eizeh ir, uvaruch Hashem shenitsalti mizeh.*"] See also *Chayei Moharan* 444.

did this together with R. Naftali Herts Weinberg¹⁶⁹ (1780-1860). R. Naftali would read them out loud and R. Noson would write; their task lasted from February through May.

A compendium of much shorter teachings, arranged according to topic in the order of the alphabet, called “The Alef Bet book” (later published as *Sefer Hamidot*) written by R. Nachman in his early youth, was written out by R. Noson at his Rebbe’s behest. It had been barely begun in the summer of 1803 (just one page,) slightly expanded upon in 1804, and completed and mostly written in the winter of 1806, just after the holiday of *Chanukah*. R. Nachman would read out each word from his own manuscript and R. Noson would write. The intensive work in 1806 lasted a total of about three weeks, with numerous hours per day devoted to it, six days a week.¹⁷⁰

Finally, in the fall of 1805, “just after the holidays, at the beginning of the winter, he ordered me to begin writing what I innovate.”¹⁷¹ In his introduction to *Likutei Halachot* R. Noson wrote:

The reader will see that this work is founded upon and ordered according to all of the laws in the four sections of the *Shulchan Aruch*. For so I was charged from his holy mouth, to think and look deeply into each and every law, until HS’Y would light up my eyes to see some *chidush* (novel idea.) And all that HS’Y gave me the merit to innovate in them (meaning, in each topic of law), all is based in accordance with the introductory notions¹⁷² and foundational concepts that I received from our holy Rebbe, may his holy and righteous memory be a blessing.¹⁷³

Thus began R. Noson’s writing of this colossal work, which continued until his passing in 1844. I will now present my own analysis of the above grooming process.

¹⁶⁹ R. Naftali was a close childhood friend of R. Nosson’s, who became a follower of R. Nachman together with him. He was a very important Hasid; R. Nachman once said that of all his Hasidim only R. Nosson, and R. Naftali a little (*a bissel*) know him. *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 1:416.

¹⁷⁰ See *Chayei Moharan* 434.

¹⁷¹ *Yemei Moharnat* 11.

¹⁷² See *Sichot HaRan* 200, where R. Nachman is reported to have said: “my Torah is all introductions- *hakdamot*.”

¹⁷³ According to Avraham Chazan’s (1849-1917) commentary to the *Likutei Moharan* called *Biur Halikutim*, the format of connecting each new insight with a law in the *Shulchan Aruch* began a year earlier when R. Nachman first told R. Nosson to think of *chidushim*, see *Biur Halikutim* to LMI 54:4. It is quite possible that he heard this from his father R. Nachman Chazan of Tulchin (1814-1884), who had been R. Nosson’s primary disciple and was responsible for the first printing of *Likutei Halachot*.

R. Nachman's grooming of R. Noson, it seems to me, involved two major tracks of development. One was a kind of "streamlining" of R. Noson's awareness through gaining a total and holistic sense of both *halakhah* and *kabbalah* by studying each in a comprehensive manner. Coupled with this was a thorough acquainting with the Rebbe's own teachings, through recording and copying them.

The second track involved the developing of a "nose" for practical application of his Rebbe's Torah, in the composition of the *Kitsur Likutei Moharan*, which involved isolating the advice and practical applications of each of R. Nachman's teachings. That the composition of the *Kitsur Likutei Moharan* was understood by R. Noson as involving, albeit in a limited sense, his powers of innovation is clear from his introduction to that work:

Anyone who wishes to add [to the way I have formulated the advice and practical lessons of each lesson] should by all means add. For one whose knowledge is whole can find much more, double or triple the amount, in each Torah and each lesson in the great book [*Likutei Moharan*.]¹⁷⁴

In stating that the formulation of the advice and practical lessons of each Torah cannot be limited to just one expression, R. Noson makes clear that *any* formulation is going to involve the particular powers of innovation of its author. This being said, R. Noson does go on to mention that his work was largely reviewed by R. Nachman himself and met with his approval. (Although this is an obvious advantage, yet it does not prevent R. Noson from making crystal clear that his own formulation is not to be seen as definitive.)

It seems to me that this second track of developing a "nose" for practical application also involved the realm of *halakhah*, in that R. Noson was forced to go through the psychological motion of facing the real possibility of becoming an active Rabbi of a real-life community, as is illustrated in the following conversation that R. Noson recorded:

I asked him [about his charge for me to become a Rabbi], for I had much *marah shechorah*¹⁷⁵ and many doubts on the issue of making actual rulings on what is permitted and what is forbidden, and that I am greatly awed and afraid (*mityarei umitpached*) about the issue of making rulings. He answered, saying 'What do

¹⁷⁴ Although there is no explicit similar statement regarding LH, it seems clear to me that LH, too, was not meant to be seen as "the" way to explain and apply R. Nachman's teachings. Rather, it was meant to be a crucial aid and a leading example, such that others can follow suit in explaining and applying R. Nachman's teachings on their own. See more below on R. Nachman's wish for his Hasidim to interpret his teachings creatively.

¹⁷⁵ Lit. "black bile," connotes sadness and dejection.

you have to be nervous and worried about? Since you will find upon whom to rely [in your rulings,] you need no longer be worried at all.’ His meaning was that since there is a valid opinion that rules “kosher,” and you depend on that opinion, you no longer need be perturbed at all.¹⁷⁶

The ability to relate, even if only through a theoretical discussion, to the actual life of a Halakhic decisor, was perhaps something that R. Nachman wanted R. Noson to experience in order to be able to write with greater awareness of, and sensitivity to, the world of applied Halakha.

Another possible “gain” from putting R. Noson through the psychological motion of actively considering the rabbinate, it seems to me, was related to R. Noson’s sense of self-definition. Perhaps his Rebbe wanted to bring about an “official,” spoken and decisive, change of career paths, from “Rabbi in training” to “disciple and scribe of R. Nachman,” so as to add further gravity to this latter role.

Musically speaking, one might say, the first track of the grooming process involved R. Noson “knowing his scales,” (representing facility with the full gamut of Jewish law and mysticism and his Rebbe’s teachings), and the second track involved a preliminary level of improvisation (*chidush*), through learning to apply his theoretical knowledge to an expression of real-life application, both in terms of the practical advice embedded in R. Nachman’s teachings through the creation of the *Kitsur Likutei Moharan*, as well as through a taste of the psychological dimension of being a source of applied *halakhic* rulings. Preparing R. Noson through these two tracks, it seems to me, was an important part of how R. Noson was groomed for a lifetime¹⁷⁷ of innovation in composing his *Likutei Halachot*.

Having presented a picture of the story of the commissioning of LH, I will now discuss its nature. Its title translates as “collected laws,” but this is almost a misnomer, as will be explained. The gigantic achievement that was the creation of *Likutei Halachot* (LH), which is an eight volume work of three thousand eight hundred and forty eight double columns of Hebrew text, written over the last forty years of R. Noson’s life, was clearly (even just from a purely quantitative perspective) a major expansion upon his Rebbe’s teachings in *Likutei Moharan* (three hundred and twenty five pages). The work is composed of discourses (ranging from half a page to over a hundred pages) based on one hundred and fifty two areas of law, in the order that these are found within the four sections of the *Shulchan Aruch*.

¹⁷⁶ *Chayei Moharan* 444. R. Nosson’s sentiments here seem to reflect the *ba’al machshava* dimension of his personality, as presented above.

¹⁷⁷ R. Nosson composed his *Likutei Halachot* over a time span of about forty years.

As discussed above, R. Nachman knew that his teachings can be difficult to decipher; they are also not clearly spelled out in terms of how they relate concretely to real application across the entire gamut of Jewish life. LH is the written expression of R. Noson rising to the daunting task of making these teachings understandable, *through* relating them to that entire gamut of Jewish life. Here are some of R. Noson's own words in introducing his magnum opus:

For through the words expressed in these books [of *Likutei Halachot*], every person can come to understand “from afar”¹⁷⁸ the great awesome wonders of each and every mitsvah, and each and every law regarding the details of each mitsvah. And even those laws that are between man and man¹⁷⁹ which are set down in the *Choshen Mishpat* section of the *Shulchan Aruch*,¹⁸⁰ which most people don't take to heart in terms of understanding through them hints and pathways in service of Hashem. With the grace of HS'Y¹⁸¹ in these books one can quench one's soul's thirst to hear the words of HS'Y. For it is known that from the entire Torah with all of its laws and legal structure in each and every area, one needs to find advice and pathways and hints to come close to HS'Y, truthfully ... With HS'Y's help and His wondrous salvation, in these books I have opened the door somewhat (*patachti shaar ktsat*) to finding true pathways in every area of the holy Torah. And in most instances, these [hints and pathways] are not merely by way of hinting (*remez*) and hermeneutics (*drush*), but rather they are [in accordance with] the true concept [of the mitsvah being studied] as it is understood at the deepest esoteric level (*kefi sod kavannat hamitsvah*).¹⁸²

According to R. Noson's introduction to his work,¹⁸³ he undertook the writing of *Likutei Halachot* with the goals of explaining the *Shulchan Aruch* through *Likutei*

¹⁷⁸ This is a reference to Exodus (20:18), in which the Jewish people are described as standing “from afar,” as they heard the revelation at Sinai.

¹⁷⁹ These include laws of courts, business law and torts.

¹⁸⁰ Lit. “set table;” this is the Code of Jewish Law compiled by R. Joseph Cairo.

¹⁸¹ This acronym for *HaShem Yitbarach* which means “G-d (lit. ‘the Name’) may He be blessed,” will be used throughout this dissertation, since it is closest to R. Nosson's use of a three Hebrew letter acronym, and it thereby carries over into the translation a similar form of reference to the Divine.

¹⁸² This is an excerpt from R. Nosson's written introduction to his *Likutei Halachot*.

¹⁸³ [Quoted above: “The reader will see that this work is founded upon and ordered according to all of the laws in the four sections of the *Shulchan Aruch*. For so I was charged from his holy mouth, to think and look deeply into each and every law, until HS'Y would light up my eyes to see some *chidush* (novel idea.)”]

Moharan, and explaining *Likutei Moharan*¹⁸⁴ through the *Shulchan Aruch*.¹⁸⁵ In truth, he actually makes use of far more than just the *Shulchan Aruch*, as he writes in that same introduction:

HS'Y has lit up my eyes to find them [R. Nachman's lessons] well explained (*ba'er heitev*) in the verses of the Pentateuch, Prophets and Writings, in statements of the Sages in the Talmud and Midrashim, and in the books of the Zohar and writings of R. Isaac Luria, such that HS'Y has lit up my eyes to integrate all of these.... into all the particularities of the mitzvot according to their order as expressed the four sections of the *Shulchan Aruch*.

If a person would flip open the *Likutei Halachot* at random, they might find R. Noson explaining any of the above, which includes virtually any area of Torah study. To be sure, they would certainly see a heading at the top of the page indicating that they were located within a certain area of law, as contained within a certain section of the *Shulchan Aruch*, and if they would look at the beginning of the discourse they opened to, they would indeed find a (usually quite brief) description of that area of law and a synopsis of the teaching from *Likutei Moharan* that R. Noson is using to explain it. But, undeniably, there also is a sense of an intellect taking flight, relating in a stream of consciousness styled manner, discourses which begin with the section of law at hand, but quite often move across all aspects of Torah study, forming a kaleidoscopic pastiche. It is not uncommon that only a minority of a given discourse discusses the area of law at hand. The focus upon the teaching from R. Nachman that each discourse is based upon is unwavering, thus providing the reader with a multi-dimensional sense of its meaning.¹⁸⁶

Given that R. Noson was by no means limited in his *Likutei Halachot* to explaining the laws of the *Shulchan Aruch*, the question arises: why was the *Shulchan Aruch* chosen as the framework for the work?

Since this was the directive of his Rebbe¹⁸⁷ with no explicit reason given, any answer to this question will be based on conjecture. This being said, it seems to me that the

¹⁸⁴ He also bases some discourses upon his Rebbe's stories in *Sippurei Ma'asiot*, as well as upon teachings from *Sichot HaRan* and *Sefer HaMidot* in rare instances.

¹⁸⁵ "For all of my words here are as a commentary and clarification of his holy words, may his memory be a blessing."

¹⁸⁶ There are also instances where he integrates two or more teachings from *Likutei Moharan*, but this too is done within a shared thematic context.

¹⁸⁷ See Ro'ee Horen, "Judaism as Viewed through the Prism of Faith in the Righteous: A Study of the Works of R. Nathan of Nemirov" [Hebrew], *Kabbalah* 24 (2011): 269. Horen claims that R. Nosson's "choice" to base his novellae upon the *Shulchan Aruch*, and the similar choice reflected by Shneur Zalman of Liady's *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, bear witness to the influence of the literature of Safed of the 16th century upon Eastern European Jewish thinkers, in that R. Caro's *Shulchan Aruch* gained such popularity.

choice of encasing the reams of creative output of his most talented disciple within the framework of the most important work of *halakhah* was wholly in consonance with R. Nachman's clear veneration of the place of *halakha* in Jewish life.

Arthur Green has written that R. Nachman had "antinomian tendencies [which] ... were not acted out in his life [but] ... did occupy a significant place in his speculations."¹⁸⁸ His strongest proof to this effect is R. Nachman's statement that had he been taken captive on his way to Israel, he would have been able to fulfill the commandments in a spiritual form. The lack of any discussion by Green of the legal notion of *oness* (one who is unable, due to circumstances beyond their control, to follow the law) is puzzling, for this would provide a clear legal context for R. Nachman's statement.¹⁸⁹ Mendel Piekarz has critiqued Green for having basically left out R. Nachman's important focus on the traditional study of legal codes.¹⁹⁰ He references a number of important sources on this from *Likutei Moharan*, *Sichot HaRan*, and *Chayei Moharan*, such as the directive that the study of law is incumbent upon "every single Jew, each day, with no exception ... even if [on one day] one has no time due to extenuating circumstances, one must study at least a minor sub-section of the Code of Jewish Law."¹⁹¹ Furthermore, R. Nachman was not reticent in critiquing antinomian tendencies that he saw in other Hasidic Rebbes, having stated that: "the tsaddikim are mistaken in this, that they pray later than the legal time limit."¹⁹²

The Rebbe's clear veneration of the role of law can be seen in a number of lessons in *Likutei Moharan*. Here are two examples:¹⁹³

- A) The way to rectify the conflict in the heart is at its root. Meaning to say that, in essence, the dispute of the evil inclination is rooted in the dispute of holiness. When [the latter] descends level after level until it descends below, it becomes conflict of the evil inclination, in the aspect of 'their heart is divided' (Hosea 10:2). It instills one with heresy and conceals the paths of the intellect, such that one does not know how to answer.

Horen makes no mention of R. Nossan's own words in his introduction to *Likutei Halachot*, (quoted above), that R. Nossan had been clearly instructed by R. Nachman to base his work upon the *Shulchan Aruch*.

¹⁸⁸ Green, *Tormented Master*, 78.

¹⁸⁹ On the legal notion of *oness*, see *Sichot HaRan* 260 which reports that R. Nachman referenced the legal opinion of the *Magen Avraham* (gloss to *Shulchan Aruch* OC: 62) that a person who is unable to recite the *sh'mah* due to their being situated, beyond their control, in a place that is so unclean that one is forbidden even from reciting it in one's mind, can still receive heavenly reward by wishing that they could say it.

¹⁹⁰ See his review of Green's book: "TsTsadik Livnei Ha'olam Hachadash?!" 153.

¹⁹¹ At SHR 29.

¹⁹² CM 487.

¹⁹³ Quote A here is from LMI: 62 and B is from LMII: 21.

Conflict of holiness is the conflict between the *Tannaim* and the *Amoraim* in the Talmud: one prohibits, while the other permits. But as a result of their conflict descending below, it becomes conflict of the evil inclination. Thus, when one rectifies the conflict of holiness, conflict of the evil inclination is consequently eliminated, since its hold is solely from there.

The rectification for conflict of holiness is legal rulings. A legal ruling is the peace and resolution of the dispute of the *Tannaim* and *Amoraim*. By studying Codes of Law, a person binds himself to the peace of holiness and rectifies the dispute of holiness. Then, the dispute of the evil inclination in their heart is eliminated, and they are able to worship God “with all your heart- with both inclinations.”¹⁹⁴ The gates of the intellect are thus open, such that one knows how to answer the heretic.

- B) When one originates new Torah insights, there are those infamous ones¹⁹⁵ who watch and look forward to this. It is thus necessary to post sentries in front and back of them, so that no stranger can get close.

This is accomplished by studying the Codes of the Law. A person should study the Codes before the new insight that they originate and also afterwards. This creates sentries in front and in back. Then the Torah descends and travels securely between them, because the sentries are armed and those aforementioned are unable to get close.

The first quote (A) is an example of the centrality of the role that the study (and practice) of *halakha* plays in the spiritual life of a Jew in facilitating victory over his or her inner battles. The second quote (B), it seems to me, bespeaks a profound awareness of the dangers of the act of innovating new Torah insights, which might awaken antinomian tendencies. This is addressed perhaps most clearly in *Sichot HaRan 267*:

The Rebbe said, “You may expound the Torah and innovate in any area you wish. The only condition is that you may not use your interpretations to innovate or change any law. This is particularly true of innovations based on *Drush* and *Sod*.” From what the Rebbe said, we understood that you may expound and innovate according your intellectual attainment, even in such kabbalistic works as those of

¹⁹⁴ BT *Berachot* 54a based on Deuteronomy 6:5.

¹⁹⁵ R. Nachman is referring to some form of negative spiritual forces. Here, I understand this to be referring to those forces that might entice the one innovating in antinomian directions. It is altogether possible that this refers to other kinds of negative directions as well, such as different kinds of ulterior motives which might lead to the new insights straying from truthfulness. An example of such an ulterior motive might be the desire to impress others.

the *Arizal*. The only stipulation is that you may not derive any religious practice or law in this manner.

There is a similar statement from R. Nachman about his own teachings that is recorded in Bratslav lore:

When one of his Hasidim asked the Rebbe to explain something from his book *Likutei Moharan*, he did not answer him at all. He only said “you can bend my book as you wish, only do not damage even one sub-section of the *Shulchan Aruch*.” [Yiddish: *kenst kneitshin meyn sefer vi azoy du velst, ober zolst nisht tsheppen kein sif kotton fun Shulchan Aruch.*]¹⁹⁶

One might say that *Likutei Halachot* is an example *par excellence* of the above directive. It is a bubbling, effervescent work that is throbbing with creative energy, yet one which is safely ensconced within the vast castle-like contextual sturdiness of the *Shulchan Aruch*.¹⁹⁷

R. Noson, it seems to me, understood his role as scribe and student of R. Nachman as reaching its highest expression specifically through his creativity. In the following quote, R. Noson relates the three levels of performing the mitzvah of lighting candles for the holiday of Hanukah (as detailed in the Babylonian Talmud and codified in the *Shulchan Aruch*) to three levels of relationship between student and teacher. The first level, which is one candle per household per night, represents the basic level of the light of the teacher filling the ‘house,’ which represents their ‘school’ (*yeshiva*) or group of students. The second level, which is one candle per person within the household, represents a higher level wherein each student becomes able to shine with the teachings of their teacher. As for the third level:

“And those who take the most care to pursue/beautify their mitzvot add [a new candle each night of the holiday of Hanukah.]”¹⁹⁸ This is to say that it is not enough for them to shine and teach the Torah of their teacher itself to others. Rather, they even add and continue to add each day, innovating new true Torah insights which inspire action. And they dig deeply to reveal profound advice which was not clearly spelled out within the teachings of their master, through which they are able to strengthen their friends and awaken them to Divine service.

¹⁹⁶ *Siach Sarfei Kodesh II:131*

¹⁹⁷ On general Hasidic perspectives on Halakha (aside from a minor footnote mentioning his denigration of extra stringency (*chumrah*) in LMI: 44, the article does not discuss the perspective of R. Nachman of Bratslav, nor that of R. Nosson), see Maoz Kahana and Ariel Evan Mayse “Hasidic Halakha: Reappraising the Interface of Spirit and Law” in *AJS Review* 41, no. 2 (2017): 375-408.

¹⁹⁸ The quotation in LH is from BT Shabbat 29B.

For all of this is the aspect of “increasing each day,” which is the aspect of additional light of Torah, which is the aspect of new Torah insights which they themselves innovate based upon the Torah that they received from their true teacher. And this is the aspect of “those who take the most care to pursue/beautify their mitsvoth [who] add [a new candle] each day.”¹⁹⁹

The innovation that Rebbe Nachman wished to bring forth from R. Noson was meant to be based, as detailed above, upon all of R. Nachman’s teachings and related to all aspects of Jewish life. But there were two topics upon which, according to Bratslav oral lore, R. Nachman laid special emphasis to expand upon:

When Rabeinu charged our teacher R. Noson to innovate new Torah insights, he told him: “when you write about the subject of faith and about the subject of the Tsadik, let your pen fly and write all the more.” [Yiddish: *Zolst tsu lozen di pen un geschrieben voss mer.*]²⁰⁰

These special emphases, it seems to me, were based on Rebbe Nachman’s sense of the importance of the creation of LH not merely as an explanation and expansion upon his own teachings, but also as a crucial tool in the battle against the secularizing forces of the Enlightenment.

These two emphases can be understood as presaging, perhaps even as hinting at, the two poles of R. Noson’s polemic presented above in the thesis statement. The notion of faith relates chiefly to the languageless dimension of the human experience, and the notion of the Tsadik relates chiefly to the Tsadik’s immense accomplishments in physical and emotional refinement, and the corresponding achievement thereby of the spiritual objectivity that is required in order to perceive deeper theological truths. This spiritual objectivity is the root of the Tsadik’s ability to be a true spiritual leader.

The role of the written word, and his own production and promotion of it, was paramount to R. Noson’s understanding of the long term task of Bratslav Hasidism, particularly as a form of promoting faith in the modern world. This can be seen from the following letter, written by the Hasidim²⁰¹ who had been with R. Noson at his deathbed on Friday the 10th of the Hebrew month of Tevet, (December 20th 1844):

He spoke at some length, as if giving his last will and testament ... and then suddenly he said to those present: “three calamities befell the Jews in the month of Tevet, what were they?” And no one remembered, and he answered his own question, saying, “in this month (9th of the month) Ezra the scribe passed away,

¹⁹⁹ LH *Nezikin* 5:35.

²⁰⁰ *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 2:103.

²⁰¹ Published at the end of *Alim Litruifah*, 800.

and the Torah was translated into Greek (in the time of King Ptolemy, 8th of the month) and Nebuchadnezzar's army laid siege to Jerusalem (10th of the month.) And then he said, in these words: "Well, when Ezra the Scribe is passing on, and [atheism and heresy] (lit. "that which is unkosher and unfit") is now growing thousand and myriad-fold, yet I hope, that one page of the books of our Rebbe will be able to be a remedy for all of this. Well, I tell you that your task is to print the books, such that "your wellsprings will burst forth." You must be strong with finances, with willpower, and with maintaining effort.

R. Noson, by the end of his life, in identifying himself with the historical figure of Ezra the scribe,²⁰² saw his scribal role as having major importance in what he perceived to be a kind of a cosmic war over faith, through propagating the teachings of his master Rebbe Nachman of Bratslav, and publishing them for posterity. This sense of a "cosmic war," as expressed in R. Noson's formulations in LH, will be discussed at length in the coming chapters. In recorded Bratslav oral lore it is reported that:

R. Noson used to say that [the fact that] the [physical] war of Gog and Magog is not mentioned in the *Megillat Setarim* ("scroll of secrets"),²⁰³ implies that there will be great heresy in the world, and [contending with] this will be our trial and the trial of the Messiah.²⁰⁴

The next chapter will investigate R. Noson's understanding of just what this "cosmic war" consisted of, what were the two sides, and how it can be navigated.

²⁰² This is the only place to my knowledge where R. Nosson self-identifies as Ezra. There are a number of places in LH where R. Nosson writes about the role of the Talmid (student) of the Tsadik which I think one can comfortably say are also to a large extent parallel his understanding of his own relationship with R. Nachman. In those places I have found him evoking the Biblical figures of Joshua and Betsalel, but not Ezra. Some of these will be discussed below in chapter three. In the commentary by R. Nachman of Tcherin called *Parpraot L'Chochmah* to LMI: 61, which discusses the story of R. Nosson's passing, there is mention of the fact that in LH Ta'anit 4, R. Nosson ties together the three calamities commemorated on the fast of the 10th of Tevet; it seems that his teachings there were the source of the words quoted above.

²⁰³ See Tsvi Mark *Scroll of Secrets: The Hidden Messianic Vision of R. Nahman of Bratslav* (Israel: Bar Ilan University Press, 2006).

²⁰⁴ Avraham Chazan mi-Tulchin, *Kochvei Ohr*, "Avaneha Barzel," 60.

Chapter Two

Emunat Chachamim (EC) vs. Chochmah Chitsonit (CC): A Cosmic Conflict

There were, as mentioned above, two poles of R. Noson's polemic against the Enlightenment, namely: (1) the appeal to languageless experience and (2) R. Noson's particular formulation of the Tsadik's objectivity. These can justifiably be called "responses" to modern challenges because they were employed as such in R. Noson's writings. It is crucial, however, to understand that these were not formulated as stand-alone notions for the sake of debate. R. Noson understood the Enlightenment and its clash with Jewish tradition as a particularly marked manifestation of an ancient conflict, namely that between *emunat chachamim* (faith in the Sages) and *chochmah chitsonit* (external wisdom).

This second chapter will discuss the meaning of these terms through Jewish history, starting with the term *emunah* followed by the term *emunat chachamim* and lastly the term *chochmah chitsonit*. It will provide an in-depth discussion of R. Noson's novel understanding and formulation of both the terms and the conflict, which hinges upon the notion of the languageless experience. It will highlight the importance of *emunah b'atmo*, faith in oneself, as a crucial component of *emunat chachamim*. The chapter will end with a presentation of the Tsadik's spiritual objectivity as understood within this context.

Introductory Presentation: On the Sociological and the Theoretical

Once in my youth I heard a preacher speak, using the technique of philosophical investigation, about the unity of God. Several times he said, 'if God is not one, then such and such must necessarily follow [leading to a *reductio ad absurdum*]. Finally, one of the leaders of the synagogue, a deeply religious man, rose and said, 'they seized all of my property in the massacres of Seville [in 1391]; they beat me and covered me with wounds until they left me for dead. All this I endured through my faith in 'Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One.'²⁰⁵ Now you come upon the tradition of our ancestors saying "if God is not One, such and such must follow!" I believe more in the tradition of our ancestors, and I have no desire to hear this sermon.' With that, he walked out of the synagogue and most of the congregation followed.²⁰⁶

This fascinating account of the goings on in a synagogue in Spain at the beginning of the fifteenth century illustrates a very real sense of conflict between a philosophic

²⁰⁵ Deut. (6:4)

²⁰⁶ Hayyim Ibn Musa, "Letter to His Son," as cited by Marc Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching, 1200-1800: An Anthology*, (New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1989) 56-57.

outlook and an outlook of loyalty to tradition. As will be discussed at length below, the term *chochmah chitsonit* has often been understood to refer to bodies of knowledge “external” to Torah knowledge; there was often a particular association of this term with Greek rationalist philosophy. The term *emunat chachamim*, as will be shown, was understood, by and large, to refer to a kind of loyalty to the Jewish sages, their teachings and their faith.

The championing, in the above account, of faith in “the tradition of our ancestors” over “philosophic investigation,” was motivated not only by a disagreement about abstract theory, but also (perhaps even primarily) by a profound sense of allegiance to these ancestors. On the other hand, the preacher, who was aligned with the conceptual world of philosophy, was also, to an important extent, aligned with a particular social group. In other words, the conflict here is both theoretical and sociological.

The following quote from Isadore Twersky’s review of Jacob Katz’ *Tradition and Crisis* highlights important historical changes in the sociological dimension of the conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit* that arose in the modern period:

It is to be regretted that the author did not even attempt to grapple with the fascinating problem which he poses in passing (p.18): how does eighteenth century rationalism differ from its medieval predecessor and counterpart? Why was the latter – equally explosive in theory – less disruptive in practice?²⁰⁷

“Disruptive in practice,” for Twersky, it seems to me, refers to the fact that the sociological dimension of CC, which had always been present, became far more prominent in the eighteenth century and onward, playing an important “disruptive” role in precipitating major changes in Jewish society. Alignment with rationalist philosophy carried with it, from the eighteenth century and onward, alignment with and allegiance to rising new forms of social constructions. In earlier centuries, however, it had been the cerebral, theoretical dimension of rationalist philosophy which was dominant, whereas the social dimension was less pronounced.

An explanation for why rationalist philosophy was less “disruptive in practice” in earlier centuries can be found in Bernard Septimus’ account of a fascinating ‘thought experiment’ conducted by R. Isaac Arama (1420-1494):

Arama had a historical theory that seems surprising for a Spanish Jew on the eve of the Expulsion: that Exile among Christians is providential grace! To understand this theory, we must realize that Arama is taking the political and conversionary

²⁰⁷ Isadore Twersky, *Studies in Jewish Law and Philosophy* (NY: Ktav Pub. House, 1982), 227.

pressure of Exile as a constant; his sole variable is the identity of the oppressor. Arama performed a remarkable “thought experiment:” he imagined, as an alternative to Christian Spain, *galut*²⁰⁸ among Aristotelians! In such an Exile, Jews would be just as downtrodden; but they would also be surrounded by a rigorous and powerful thought-world, fundamentally inimical to biblical belief. A Christian environment seems tame, by contrast: the basic beliefs of biblical religion are “in the air,” and are acquired quite naturally, without an exhausting intellectual struggle.²⁰⁹

One might say that R. Arama’s response to Twersky’s desideratum, in a nutshell, would be that in his own day, rationalist philosophy (of which R. Arama was most certainly a fan, quoting from Aristotle on almost every page of his Biblical commentary *Aqedat Yitshak*) was, in general Christian society, the ‘handmaiden of religion.’ This means that although open philosophic speculation and inquiry was encouraged, yet this spirit of investigation, this mode of cognition of truth, was safely encased within certain religious “givens” which were rooted in an altogether different mode of cognition of truth, and the acceptance of this “encasing” was not only dictated by Jewish parameters, but was embraced by the general Christian society.

Take away this encasing, though, and Arama sees danger, in that the underlying tenets of religion themselves become challenged, and this theoretical and theological challenge would now be “in the air” (read: built in to society itself) as opposed to “basic beliefs.” The “natural acquisition” of faith would now require an “exhausting intellectual struggle,” not just because of the more acute theological challenge, but also because society itself would fuel a constant challenge to those aberrant people who hold on to religious belief. It seems that R. Arama’s feared scenario became, by the time of the eighteenth century, a lived reality for a great many.²¹⁰

This does not mean that, with the rise of Hasidism, the focus of the responses formulated by Hasidic leaders was solely sociological. Ron Margolin has written an important chapter about the need for, and content of, Hasidic responses to the theoretical

²⁰⁸ Eng. “exile.”

²⁰⁹ Bernard Septimus, “Yitshaq Arama and Aristotle’s Ethics,” in Y.T. Assis and Y. Kaplan eds. *Dor Gerush Sefarad*, (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 2007), English Section, 9.

²¹⁰ Jonathan Israel has written that up until roughly the year 1650, Western civilization “was based on a largely shared core of faith, tradition and authority,” which provided a faith-based ‘encasing’ of rational and intellectual inquiry. But after this date, the spread of secularization and rational philosophy changed the very subject of intellectual debate from what had once been “confessional,” meaning a kind of jousting between different churches or even religions, to an “escalating contest between faith and incredulity.” See Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity*, 4.

and theological challenges of rationalist philosophy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He calls attention to the fact that scholarship to date has focussed mostly on the theology of Hasidism as an outgrowth of Kabbalistic thought,²¹¹ which overlooks the fact that an important part of the theological thinking of Hasidism has to do with responses to the philosophic challenges of the times. Margolin writes that his aim in his chapter is specifically to fill in the theological side of Hasidic responses to modernity:

In *Tradition and Crisis*, Jacob Katz argued from the perspective of a sociologist of history that Hasidism reflects an attempt to deal with the crisis of the weakening of traditional social frameworks in Eastern Europe of the late eighteenth century. This chapter seeks to add the aspect missing from Katz's book: the Hasidic engagement with religious doubts and the crisis of faith within European life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.²¹²

For R. Noson, as will be presented below, there is both a sociological and a theoretical dimension to his formulation of the conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit*. The sociological dimension of *emunat chachamim*, which consists in a profound sense of loyalty, entails belief “in” the sages. In order to achieve or inspire this end, R. Noson presents a highly developed discussion of the theological dimension of *emunat chachamim*, which entails certain principles that can be phrased as beliefs “that.” These two usages are important keys to understanding the Hebrew term *emunah*.

Emunah Be- v'Emunah She-, Belief “in” and Belief “that,” *Fides Qua* and *Fides Quae*

In defining “*emunah*,” the Hebrew term for belief, I have found a helpful starting point in Menachem Kellner's²¹³ illustration of the two major usages of the term. His illustration is as follows: if a woman states that she has faith “in” her husband, yet she hires a P.I. to follow his every move, it follows that she does not in fact have faith in him.

²¹¹ He writes: “I find the prevalent view of Hasidism in Jewish Thought departments in Israeli universities, which sees it as an integral part of the medieval kabbalistic world, to be quite misleading. This position owes much to the decisive influence of Gershom Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, whose concluding chapter discusses Hasidism. The movement, which Scholem himself perceived as characterized by a focus on the individual's mental life, reflects a complex process of struggle with the doubts of faith that slowly began to seep into East European Jewry following the rise of the new science, technology, industrialization, and philosophical materialism.” Ron Margolin “Hasidic Faith,” in Avi Sagi and Dov Schwartz eds. *Faith: Jewish Perspectives* (Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013) 149-150.

²¹² *Ibid*, 150-151.

²¹³ Menachem Kellner “Emunah Datit be-Yemei Ha-Beinayim u-Veyameinu,” in *Al Ha-Emunah*, ed. by Moshe Halbertal, David Kurzweil, and Avi Sagi (Jerusalem: Keter, 2005), 312-327. There are both Hebrew and English versions of this book; Kellner's chapter appears only in the Hebrew.

On the other hand, if she states that she believes “that” smoking is injurious to human health and hence that people ought not to smoke, yet she herself continues to smoke, it does not follow that she does not in fact believe that smoking is injurious to human health. He emphasizes, to a large extent, a clean division between the two usages.

Moshe Halbertal, in his chapter “On Faith and Believers,” complicates the matter.²¹⁴ He shows how the sentence ‘I believe in Simeon’ and the sentence ‘I believe that Simeon is trustworthy’ are basically interchangeable. However, he does grant that ultimately one cannot say that the only difference between the sentences ‘I believe in God’ and ‘I believe that God exists’ is that belief “in” God simply entails *more* beliefs “that”- such as belief “that” God can be trusted. Instead, belief “in” does entail something that cannot be reduced to a number of statements of belief “that.” At the same time though, belief “in” can never be emptied of all content of belief “that.” The relationship between the two usages is complex, and hence the ultimate definition of the term “*emunah*” is elusive.

The “clean” versus the “messy,” in the approaches of Kellner and Halbertal respectively in distinguishing between the above two usages, is to a large extent paralleled in the earlier differences in approach of Martin Buber (to whom Kellner and Halbertal both refer) and R. J. Zwi Werblowsky. Buber wrote of the divergence of Christian notions of faith from Jewish notions of faith as being rooted in a “clean” difference between the two usages outlined above, whereby Jewish faith is based upon notions of trust and Christian faith upon dogma.²¹⁵ Werblowski, on the other hand, called attention, for instance, to “a long history of Christian appreciation of this same distinction which is ignored by Buber: *fiducia* versus *notitia*, *fides qua creditor* versus *fides quae creditor* – none of these is mentioned.” He notes that “at about the same time that Buber wrote *Two Types of Faith*, Karl Jaspers pondered the same problem of *fides qua* and *fides quae*, but saw complementarity and not (as would have been natural for an existentialist thinker) dichotomy.”²¹⁶ Werblowski goes on to discuss, and agree with, Jaspers’ understanding that the two usages can be seen as reflecting complementary aspects of a single phenomenon of faith which is difficult to define monochromatically.

Kellner builds upon Buber’s observation that the word *emunah* in the Torah virtually always is employed in the first usage, namely as belief “in,” denoting loyalty and trust, whereas belief “that” begins with Pauline expressions in the New Testament. Kellner adds that Jewish thinkers began to use the term *emunah* in the second usage, namely belief “that,” based upon the strong influence of Greek, particularly Aristotelian, rationalist philosophy which called forth a need to express creed using different forms of

²¹⁴ In *Ibid*, 37.

²¹⁵ Martin Buber, *Two Types of Faith: A Study of the Interpenetration of Judaism and Christianity* (NY: Syracuse U. Press, 2003).

²¹⁶ R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Reflections on Martin Buber’s Two Types of Faith,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 39, no.1 (1988): 92-101 (Quote above is from 99).

postulates or tenets, beginning with R. Saadia Gaon (882-942) who, in producing his seminal work *Emunot ve-De'ot* “is the first Jew that we are aware of who wrote a comprehensive theology within the framework of Rabbinic Judaism.”²¹⁷ There were many who followed him in this regard, into the medieval period and beyond, the most prominent of which being Maimonides.²¹⁸

Perhaps the first Jew in the modern period to write about the usage of the word *emunah* in the Torah as denoting trust and loyalty, and the contrast between this and the more dogmatic tendency of Christianity, was none other than Moses Mendelssohn. Unlike Kellner, however, he did not see rational philosophy as an external addition, instead, he understood the Torah as exhorting the Jewish people, and even all of humanity, not to believe, but to “know” the rational philosophic truths which he saw as inherently self-evident.²¹⁹

Among all the prescriptions and ordinances of the Mosaic law, there is not a single one which says: *you shall believe or not believe*. They all say: *You shall do or not do*. Faith is not commanded, for it accepts no other commands than those that come to it by way of conviction. All the commandments of the divine law are addressed to man’s will, to his power to act. In fact, the word in the original language that is usually translated as *faith* actually means, in most cases, *trust, confidence*, and firm reliance on pledge and promise. *Abraham trusted the Eternal and it was accounted to him for piety* (Gen. 15:6); *The Israelites saw and trusted*

²¹⁷ Menachem Kellner, “Emunah Datit be-Yemei Ha-Beinayim u-Veyameinu,” 318. Kellner notes that it seems that Maimonides understood Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1 to be an attempt by the Tannaitic sages to spell out Jewish doctrine, which would have been long before R. Saadia Ga’on. Kellner argues against Maimonides’ understanding of that Mishnah in his book *Must a Jew Believe Anything?* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1999), 33-38.

²¹⁸ Kellner’s builds his analysis of the shift from belief “in” to belief “that,” as beginning with Saadia Ga’on’s *Emunot ve-De’ot*, upon the work of Alexander Altmann in his “Translator’s Introduction to Saadia Gaon’s book of Doctrines and Beliefs” in Altmann, *Three Jewish Philosophers*, (NY: Toby Press, 2006), 19-20. Kellner’s position, [which is most developed in his book *Must a Jew Believe Anything?*] that the use of philosophic postulates as tenets of faith (*emunah* as belief “that”) is inherently alien to Judaism, grafted on from the outside, and hence the exclusionary dogma of modern day Jewish Orthodoxy in fact harks back to “Rabbi Aristotle” as he dubs him, is challenged by Zev Levi in his review of said book. As I mentioned above from Moshe Halbertal, it is difficult to claim that belief “in” contains no element(s) of belief “that.”

²¹⁹ Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: Or On Religious Power and Judaism*, Allan Arkush (trans.), Introduction and Commentary by Alexander Altmann, (Waltham: Brandeis U. Press, 1983), 100. See there in Altmann’s “Introduction,” 15, at which he writes that: “natural religion, which, in Section I, is said to form the core of all positive faiths and, as a moral force, to qualify for special protection by the state, turns out, on closer inspection to be identical with the creedal part of Judaism as defined in Section II.”

in the Eternal and in Moses (Ex. 14:31). Whenever it is a question of the eternal truths of reason, it does not say *believe*, but *understand* and *know*. *In order that you may know that the Eternal is the true God, and there is none beside Him* (Deut. 4:39). *Therefore, know and take it to heart that the Lord alone is God, in heaven above and on earth below* (ibid). *Hear, O Israel, the Eternal our God, is a unique, eternal being!* (Deut. 6:4). Nowhere does it say: *Believe O Israel, and you will be blessed; do not doubt, O Israel, or this or that punishment will befall you*. Commandment and prohibition, reward and punishment are only for actions, acts of commission and omission which are subject to a man's will and which are guided by ideas of good and evil and, therefore, also by hope and fear. Belief and doubt, assent and opposition, on the other hand, are not determined by our faculty of desire, by our wishes and longings, or by fear and hope, but by our knowledge of truth and untruth ... Hence, ancient Judaism has no symbolic books, no articles of faith. No one has to swear to symbols or subscribe, by oath, to certain articles of faith. Indeed, we have no conception at all of what are called religious oaths; and according to the spirit of true Judaism, we must hold them to be inadmissible.

220

Mendelssohn's formulation here is important in that it underscores the degree to which rational philosophy had become the intellectual "ground" for him and his contemporaries, to such an extent that it became, for him, (in a way that is hard to understand in the twenty first century,) virtually synonymous with religious faith. His critique of Christian dogma is that it takes positions that are alien to human logical perception and commands belief in them, whereas Judaism expects fealty not to imposed tenets, but rather only to those notions, such as Divine existence and oneness, which are (for him) readily perceptible to the rational human mind: self-evident truths thanks to rational philosophy.

For Mendelssohn *belief* "that" has become reduced to *knowledge* "that," and belief "in" simply means to live up to what one knows with one's logical mind to be true. This position, in line with notions of natural religion of his time,²²¹ is (by 21st century standards) radical in its understanding of the powers of human cognition of truth. However, the appreciation of the crucial place of rational cognition of truth in terms of its help in reaching a willing acceptance to believe "that," is certainly of great importance.

²²⁰ Mendelssohn is referring here to an earlier passage, Ibid, 63-70 in which he argues spiritedly against the practice, particularly of the Anglican Church, to have its members join by means of oaths on what are called the Thirty Nine Articles.

²²¹ See note 16.

Shubert Spero's article "Faith and its Justification,"²²² is highly informative and helpful in his discussion of belief "that" and belief "in," in this regard. Spero discusses belief "that" and belief "in" as successive stages. The first, cognitive in nature, is "an intellectual judgment one arrives at after considering alternative theories in the light of whatever arguments or evidence are available." The second, "which includes valuational, emotive and behavioral aspects," is when "one makes a free decision to act on the possibility presented by [the above] and commits oneself to the religious life associated with the theory." Hence, while acknowledging the importance of rational inquiry in becoming sufficiently convinced to believe "that," yet, Spero also acknowledges (unlike Mendelssohn) that this can at most lead to a sense of a strong "possibility" of truth, which one then needs to take to a different, non-intellectual, dimension through believing "in." Spero discusses how both of these elements are necessary, since:

An analysis [of faith] in purely cognitive terms provides no room for the peculiarly religious elements of commitment and passionate conviction. On the other hand, an exclusively voluntaristic analysis would give us a theory akin to William James' *Will to Believe* or Pascal's *Wager* leaving us vulnerable to the charge of 'issuing unrestricted licenses for wishful thinking.'²²³

Even Maimonides, (of whom Mendelssohn was surely a fan), Kellner convincingly shows, was concerned not only with establishing tenets of belief "that" in his famous thirteen principles of faith, but also with calling attention to, and demanding, the dimension of faith "in." Kellner's proof to this effect is convincing. He quotes an important passage from the section entitled "the foundations of Torah"²²⁴ from Maimonides' highly influential legal code²²⁵ in which Maimonides wrote that:

Moses, our Teacher, was not believed in by the people of Israel because of the miracles he performed. For one who believes due to wonders will retain in his heart some doubt, that perhaps the wonder was performed through sorcery or witchcraft. Rather ... upon what did they base their faith in Moses? Upon the gathering at Mt Sinai, when our own eyes saw, and not the eyes of a stranger, and our own ears heard, not someone else's the fire, the sounds, and the lightning, and Moses approaching the thickness of the cloud. And the voice spoke to him, and we all heard: "Moses, Moses, go and tell the people such and such" ... and how

²²² In *Tradition* 13:1 (1971):54-69. The article is a compacted version of the author's doctoral dissertation.

²²³ Ibid, 62, [the phrase in quotation marks is from the critique of William James in Wallace Matson, *The Existence of God* (NY: Cornell U. Press, 1965), 202. This critique is similar to Levi's critique of Kellner as mentioned above.]

²²⁴ Heb. *Yesodei ha-Torah*, the section quoted is at chapter 8, law number one.

²²⁵ This is called *Mishneh Torah*.

do we know that it was the gathering at Sinai that was the proof of Moses' prophecy? ... for it is written²²⁶ "Behold I come to you in the thickness of the cloud, in order that the people shall hear when I speak with you, and thereby in you (Moses) they shall believe forever." We find that up until this even they did not believe in him with full loyalty, such that it would stand forever, but rather only with a loyalty that still had left room for questioning.

Maimonides' appeal to the personal experience, as opposed to the rational faculty, as being grounds for trust in the veracity of all of Moses' teachings, is an important classical source which touches upon the intersection between faith in God and *emunat chachamim*. The notion of Rabbinic authority in general as being anchored in personal experience, as opposed to blind acceptance, is an important tenet of Bratslav Hasidism, I will show and discuss this further in chapter three.

Emunat Chachamim

The term *emunat chachamim* appears in Rabbinic literature, as Lawrence Kaplan notes, "just once,"²²⁷ as twenty third on the list of the forty eight ways of acquiring Torah, as listed in M-Avot 6:6.²²⁸ It seems clear to me that there is a history of the meaning that this term has carried. I have found R. Dr. Nachum Rabinovitch's reading of the term to be most convincing as having been the "original intent"²²⁹ of the author of the list of forty eight ways. His reading is that the term *emunat chachamim* refers to faith that the words of the sages as encountered in Rabbinic texts or in oral lectures can be trusted to have a depth of meaning which one must strive to uncover, even when they may seem suspect for various reasons. In other words, *emunat chachamim* is a form of acquiring Torah in the sense that it is a motivating factor: one trusts that the teachings of the sages that they encounter are worthy of intensive study for they contain great wisdom, even if at times they may seem to be odd or perhaps even erroneous.

Rabinovitch's argument is based upon the placement of the term *emunat chachamim* as twenty third on the list. If, he argues, *emunat chachamim* refers to such a

²²⁶ Exodus 19:9.

²²⁷ Lawrence Kaplan "Daas Torah: A Modern Conception of Rabbinic Authority" in Moshe Sokol ed., *Rabbinic Authority and Personal Autonomy* (Northvale NJ: J. Aronson, 1992), 28.

²²⁸ The sixth chapter of the tractate *Pirkei Avot* in the Mishnah was added on to that tractate in the Ge'onic era, it was originally the 17th and 5th chapters of tractates *Seder Elyahu Zuta* and *Kalla Rabbati*, respectively. (Hence, technically, one might say it appears more than just once in Rabbinic literature.)

²²⁹ Nachum Eliezer Rabinovitch "What is *Emunat Chachamim*?" *Hakirah* 5 (2007): 35-45. He does not say that he is attempting to unearth "original intent." It is my own opinion that his reading corresponds most closely to what may have been the original intent of the author(s).

grand matter as the general acceptance of Rabbinic authority, as for instance the commentary *Mahzor Vitri*²³⁰ writes: “to believe in the words of the *chachamim*, unlike the Sadducees and Boethusians,” then it would not have been given such an undignified station as twenty third on the list:

There is no doubt that faith in the Oral Torah and in the authority of our Sages is mandatory and that without such faith we cannot acquire Torah. This was emphasized by Rabbi Yehudah haNasi in the opening statement of Tractate *Avot*, in which he lays out the chain of tradition: “Moshe received the Torah at Sinai, he passed it on to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua to the Elders...” In the introduction to his *Perush ha-Mishnah*,²³¹ Rambam²³² explains this *Mishnah* in great detail. The *Mahzor Vitri*'s explanation is thus difficult to accept— precisely because this point is so fundamental. Had this been the tanna's intent, he would have mentioned *emunat hakhamim* as number one rather than list it somewhere amongst the details: “with minimal...slumber, banter, pleasure, hilarity; with *derekh erez*, tolerance, a good heart, *emunat hakhamim*, and acceptance of suffering...”²³³

Another argument, not raised by Rabinovitch, is the fact that, on the larger issue of Rabbinic authority as a whole, it is the negative term *apikorus* which is employed in the Mishnah and the Talmud; we find important discussions of what constitutes an *apikorus*²³⁴ and the importance of being capable of refuting an *apikorus*, but nowhere is

²³⁰ By R. Simcha b. Samuel of Vitry, (a disciple of Rashi), d.1105. See also the commentary of the Meiri to mPirkei Avot, quoted (and translated) by Kaplan: “*Emunat Chachamim*: that is to say, that one should believe the sages of the Torah in whatever they say, even in matters that one's intellect does not grasp.”

²³¹ Eng. “commentary on the Mishnah.”

²³² This is the Hebrew acronym for Rabbi Moses Ben (=son of) Maimon, referring to Maimonides.

²³³ Rabinovitch “What is *Emunat Chachamim*,” 36.

²³⁴ See e.g. BT Sanhedrin 99B, 100A where the Talmud defines the term *apikorus* as deriving from the word *hefker* (Eng: lit. “ownerless;” connotes cheapness and unimportance), and refers to one who treats the sages in a deprecatory manner. See the 11thC Talmudic Dictionary *Aruch* which defines the term as the name of a Greek philosopher who denied the eternity of the soul, and then wrote: “*u'mah shebiaru chazal shehu mevazeh talmid chochom, toratam emet.*” Maimonides, in *Moreh Nevuchim* (2:13, 3:17, 32) speaks of the views of the Greek philosopher Epicure, yet, in his Commentary on Mishnah Sanhedrin (10:1) he states that the term *Apikoros* is “*lashon Aramit.*” I think that what he means is that in its *usage* by the sages it means as defined above in the Talmud, but not that the word itself derives from the Aramaic. [A similar instance, wherein a term taken from an outside language is transliterated into Aramaic, and then defined etymologically by the Talmud based upon the local Aramaic meaning of the transliteration can be found in the commentary of *Maharits Chayes* to BT Megillah

there an exhortation to, instead, *have* EC. True, it is always problematic to make an argument based on omission, yet the total non-usage of EC in the context of Mishnaic and Talmudic discussion on Rabbinic authority is suggestive enough to add a not insignificant measure of weight to Rabinovitch's point above.

The *Machzor Vitri*'s reading of the term *emunat chachamim* as referring to faith in the basic authority of the Sages and their interpretation of scripture refers to a type of faith that is weighted more to the sociological side of faith "in" the sages, as opposed to what seems to me to have been the earlier meaning, which was more weighted to the side of faith "that" the sages were people of great wisdom whose formulations are therefore worthy of intensive study.

As mentioned above, the notion of *emunah* in general incorporates, at least to some degree, both theoretical and sociological dimensions of belief "in" and belief "that." *Machzor Vitri*, a relatively early (pre-modern) commentary, was, possibly, inserting more of a sociological dimension to the term than it had previously contained. This reading became, it seems to me, more widespread particularly from the eighteenth century and onwards: when general and state-sponsored Rabbinic authority began to be undermined there arose a need for an affirmative term (in addition to the negative term *apikorus*) to proclaim the importance of allegiance to Rabbinic authority: *emunat chachamim* was the perfect candidate.²³⁵

7B on the name "Tiberias." I thank R. Shmuel Weinbaum for this reference. I later found in the commentary *Tosfot Anshei Shem* to mShevi'it 10:3 who wrote, in explaining the term *pruzbul*, that the sages of the Talmud often (he cites BT Shabbat 77b) provided Hebrew or Aramaic interpretations for words they knew to be of foreign origin. They did not intend these interpretations to be etymological, but explanatory.] See also R. Nachman's discussion of the term, as reported at CM 410.

²³⁵ Not that this was the sole reason for the shift in meaning; it seems to me that, in addition to other possible reasons, the more individualistic tenor of the modern *zeitgeist* stimulated a kind of a search for paradigmatic 'individuals' who would serve as examples of 'individualism' for others, even if this might paradoxically undermine the individuality of those who styled themselves after those more 'famous' than they. I am unable to present a full argument for my formulation of the history of the meaning of EC; I use the argument here for the sake of providing food for thought and as a format for presenting the notion of EC, whose definitions as presented by different commentaries over the centuries can largely be classified within one of the two major formats I have presented (1- belief that the words of the sages contain wisdom and 2- belief in Rabbinic authority in general.) Whether or not this represents a historical process of largely moving from definition one to definition two is a matter that requires further investigation. See, for instance, Piekarcz' important presentation of a number of definitions of EC, culled from commentaries on the Mishnah, mostly from the modern era, in Mendel Piekarcz *Hasidut Polin: Megamot Raayoniyot bein Shetei HaMilhamut u-bi-Gezerot 1940-1945*

Lawrence Kaplan, in an informative essay on the present day notion of *da'at Torah*,²³⁶ presents an important discussion of the Rabbinic term EC as it has been used by many over the last eighty or so years, as a ‘proof’ from classical Rabbinic terminology for an extreme sense of authority, bordering upon a kind of infallibility, of living Jewish religious leaders.²³⁷ He takes his cue from the important work *Michtav Me-Eliyahu*, by the highly influential thinker R. Eliyahu Dessler (1892-1953), who wrote that “the absence of self-negation toward our rabbis is the root of all sin and the beginning of all destruction, while all merits are as naught compared with the root of all – faith in the sages.”²³⁸ R. Dessler based his notion of submission upon what Kaplan calls “two key classical concepts;” the first being the mitsvah of *lo tassur* (“do not stray” from the hermeneutics and adjudications of the sages of each generation, as formulated at Deuteronomy 17:11)²³⁹ and the second being the notion of *emunat chachamim*.²⁴⁰

Kaplan notes that, although he takes issue with the contemporary concept of *da'at Torah*, it is surely true that some notion of living Rabbinic authority is an authentic part of Jewish religious life, however difficult this may be to define precisely. I have made mention here of Kaplan’s chapter for two reasons. The first is to present the “two

(Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1990), Ch. 3: “*Emunat Chachamim* and absolute obedience to *Daas Torah*,” and Mendel Piekarz, *The Hasidic Leadership: Authority and Faith in Tsadikim as Reflected in Hasidic Literature* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1999), 60-77. See also Shalom Rosenberg “*Emunat Hakhamim*” in Isadore Twersky and Bernard Septimus eds. *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard U. Center for Jewish Studies, 1987), 285-341.

²³⁶ This term, which might be translated as “the opinion of the Torah,” refers to the ability of contemporary sages to decide upon matters both within and beyond the precise delineations of Jewish law. It is perhaps most succinctly defined in the quote Kaplan provides from R. Bernard Weinberger, who wrote that “*Gedolei Yisrael* possess a special endowment or capacity to penetrate objective reality, recognize the facts as they really are and apply the pertinent halakhic principles. This endowment is a form of *ru'ach hakodesh* (holy spirit), as it were, bordering, if only remotely, on the periphery of prophecy ... *Gedolei Yisrael* inherently ought to be the final and sole arbiters of all aspects of Jewish communal policy and questions of *hashkafa* and ... even knowledgeable rabbis who may differ with the *gedolim* on a particular issue must submit to the superior wisdom of the *gedolim* and demonstrate *Emunat Hakhamim*” - Bernard Weinberger, “The Role of the *Gedolim*,” *Jewish Observer* 1, no. 2 (1963), 11. See below in the section on the Objectivity of the *Tsadik* for a discussion of infallibility and submission to rabbinic authority in matters outside the scope of Jewish law in Bratslav thought.

²³⁷ Lawrence Kaplan “*Daas Torah*.”

²³⁸ *Michtav Me-Eliyahu* 1:75-77

²³⁹ See Kaplan’s discussion of the varied Rabbinic interpretations of this mitsvah, “*Daas Torah*,” 38-46.

²⁴⁰ Kaplan, “*Daas Torah*,” 46-51.

classical key classical concepts” detailed above, with *emunat chachamim* being one of them. This highlights how *emunat chachamim* became an important rallying notion for traditionalist voices in modern times, (which began long before the newer notion of *da’at Torah*.) The second is to mention Kaplan’s important observation that the contemporary concept of *da’at Torah* has its roots in, among other historical developments, Hasidic formulations of allegiance to living Rabbinic authorities.²⁴¹ These too, often invoked the term *emunat chachamim*.

Hasidic Usage of the term *Emunat Chachamim*

A prominent feature of the rise of Hasidism was the phenomenon of the charismatic leadership of Hasidic Rebbes.²⁴² Mendel Piekarz has noted that Hasidic texts often speak of faith in contemporary Tsadikim (*emunat Tsadikim* or *emunah ba-Tsadik*), which, he argues, is a rehashing of the term *emunat chachamim*.²⁴³ He also advances that when the term *emunat chachamim* is used in Hasidic texts, it must be understood as:

... A form of apologetics, whereby it is easier to use the [recognizable] term EC, even in contexts where it is clear that they mean faith in Tsadikim. One small example of this is to be found in the [popular Yiddish] prayer “*Gott Fun Avrohom*” (Eng. “God of Abraham”) composed by R. Levi Isaac of Berditchev that he would say every Saturday night in parting ‘from the holy Sabbath,’ he asked, among other requests, to merit to come to ‘whole faith, to EC and to love of friends’ – and there is no doubt that the intent here is actually for faith in Tsadikim.²⁴⁴

²⁴¹ “Considered together, Piekarz’ discussion of Hasidic theology, Bacon’s treatment of Agudist ideology, Ross’s analysis of musarist hermeneutics ... seem to tell the following story. *Daas Torah*, in its modern sense, originated in Hasidic circles in the late nineteenth century. It soon spread to mitnagdic circles, taking root first in the extremist *haredi* community of Jerusalem... (The *Mussar* movement appears to have played a secondary and supporting role in the entire process. Gradually it entered the more mainstream separatist Orthodox circles of Agudas Yisrael [in America].” Kaplan, “*Daas Torah*,” 54, note 84. It seems possible that extreme notions of the authority of Hasidic Rebbes began earlier than the late nineteenth century, but this is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

²⁴² See the seminal article: Arthur Green “The Zaddiq as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45, no.3 (1977): 327-347; and a summary of more recent scholarship dealing with various aspects of Hasidic leadership, in Biale, *Hasidism: A New History*, chapters 1 through 6 and chapter 9.

²⁴³ “*ein emunat Tsadikim ela gilgulah hahasidit shel emunat chachamim*” (Eng. -the term ‘faith in Tsadikim’ is nothing more than a Hasidic incarnation of the term EC). Piekarz, *The Hasidic Leadership*, 32.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 41. To my understanding, (as presented above), it might be said that the ‘history of meaning’ of the term EC would go as follows: from faith that there is wisdom behind

Another important classical source which Piekarcz highlights, and which needs to be added to the two aforementioned classical sources from Kaplan's chapter, is the Biblical verse from Exodus 14:31: "... and they (the Jewish people) believed in God and in Moses, His servant." The description of belief not only in God but also in God's servant, in no less than a Biblical verse, made this a flagship source for the notion of faith in the Tsadikim in many Hasidic texts.²⁴⁵ The attendant Midrash to this verse was also used:²⁴⁶

If they believed in Moses then *a fortiori* they believed in God, so why mention their belief in God? Rather, this is to teach you that whoever believes in the shepherd of Israel is considered as if they believe in the One who spoke and there was a world.²⁴⁷

In line with the discussion presented thus far, faith in the Tsadikim entailed both sociological and theological dimensions. Hand in hand with belief "in" the new Tsadikim, there was an espousal of an important set of beliefs "that" these Tsadikim were quite exceptional human beings, in ways that could be defined and spelled out in different forms, be they stories or theological teachings.²⁴⁸

It is difficult to express what these new "tenets" were in an exhaustive fashion, but an excellent starting point is the six ways in which Piekarcz argues that faith in Tsadikim added an innovative dimension to earlier definitions of *emunat chachamim*. Briefly, they are: faith in (1) the ability of the Tsadik to change nature; (2) the need for a connection with a particular Tsadik which forms a new group identity, is rooted in one's soul, and both pre-dates birth, (3) continues after death, (4) incorporates every detail of one's life, even the most mundane, (5) is made manifest often through the practice of *pidyonot*,²⁴⁹ and finally, (6) that faith in the Tsadik is so central that it can even serve, when necessary, as a substitute for faith in God.²⁵⁰

the teachings of the Sages, to faith in Rabbinic authority as a whole, to faith in living Hasidic Tsadikim.

²⁴⁵ Piekarcz cites Wilensky as having been the first to bring this to the attention of academic scholarship, in Mordecai Wilensky *Hasidim u-Mitnagdim: Le-Toldot Ha-Pulmus she-beineihem be-Shanim 5632-5775* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1970), Vol. 2, 301.

²⁴⁶ See, for example, R. Yaacov Yosef of Polnoyeh *Toldot Yaacov Yosef* (New York: 1999), Parashat Bo. [See citation and discussion in Ron Margolin, "Hasidic Faith," 160.]

²⁴⁷ *Mechilta* to Exodus 14:31.

²⁴⁸ See Ira Robinson, "Hasidic Hagiography and Jewish Modernity" in E. Carlebach, J. M. Efron, and D.N. Myers eds. *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Boston: Brandeis U. Press, 1998).

²⁴⁹ Eng 'redemptions,' means the giving of a monetary gift to a Tsadik. See e.g. *Noam Elimelech* (New York: 1942), 159, that a monetary gift creates a bond with with the

It is important to note that, while something like the above comprised the general Hasidic theoretical/theological side of faith in the Tsadikim, it was the sociological side of that faith which was its dominant aspect, as Piekarz writes: “We must remember that it was not the teachings of the leaders of Hasidism on self and self-nullification, on cleaving to the Divine, on divestment of one’s physicality and more, which conquered the spirit and soul of so many of the House of Israel in their day.” Rather, he writes, it was the excitement and sense of holiness that they were able to find in aligning themselves with these new leaders, who were perceived “as representatives of Divine providence upon earth.”²⁵¹

Chochmah Chitsonit

The term *chochmah chitsonit*, it seems clear from my research, began to be used in the Ge’onic era.²⁵² For instance, these words of R. Hai Ga’on (939-1038) were deemed important enough to be quoted by at least three major later sources:²⁵³

I am, thank God, uneducated in your *chochmah chitsonit*, for the wisdom of the Torah and the wisdom of nature are not of matching paths; [rather] ‘all who go after her do not return.’²⁵⁴

This decidedly negative outlook, which brands *chochmah chitsonit* as “the wisdom of nature,” was a different way of speaking to the same rationalist philosophic climate that prompted R. Saadia Ga’on, as mentioned above, to produce his seminal (and

Tsadik, and saves person from sin. On Rabbinic parallels see Rambam *Mishneh Torah*, De’ot (6:2) which states that physical support of a Torah scholar is part of the mitzvah of cleaving to G-d.

²⁵⁰ Piekarz, *The Hasidic Leadership*, 35-36.

²⁵¹ Ibid, 31.

²⁵² In the Talmud, the term *chochmat Yevanit* or Greek wisdom can be found in several places (e.g. BT Sotah 49B, Bava Kama 82B, Menachot 64B) and in the *Midrash Rabbah* there is an important reference to the notion of *chochmah bagoyim* or wisdom in/of the nations (*Eichah Rabbah* 2:17.) [On the phraseology of the Talmudic term (particularly its use of the letter “tav” in “*chochmat*”) see R. Tsvi Infeld *Chochmah Penimit ve-Chochmah Chitsonit: Chochmat Yisrael ve-Chochmat Yavan* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 2011), 129.] The Talmudic term itself is a subject of debate among commentators. According to Rashi and others it refers to a special kind of aristocratic linguistic prowess and etiquette. According to Meiri (to Bava Kama 82B) and others, it refers to Greek philosophy.

²⁵³ R. Isaiah Ha-Levi Horowitz, *Shenei Luchot Ha-Brit*, “Ner Mitsvah,” par. 54; Responsa of Rabeinu Asher, *Shu”t Ha-Rosh*, Teshuvah Klal 25, no.9; and the commentary known as “Ha-Koteiv” to *Ein Yaqov*, BT Chagigah 12B. It seems likely to me that there are additional sources which quote the above words of R. Hai Gaon.

²⁵⁴ Heb.: *lo yadati me-chochmah chitsonit shelachem, baruch Hashem, ki chochmat ha-Torah ve-chochmat ha-tevah einan al derech echad, kol ba’eha lo yeshuvun.*

philosophic) work *Emunot ve-De'ot*. A similarly rejectionist stance is echoed a few centuries later in the work of R. Meir Ibn Gabbai (1480-1540). He argued that the wisdoms of the nations of the world must not be considered wisdom at all, for two reasons. Firstly, each successive generation tends to challenge and often disprove the perceptions of the previous one, and secondly, since human senses are imperfect, hence any wisdom gained from them will be overwhelmingly flawed.²⁵⁵

A more multi-dimensional, yet still distrustful, approach can be found in the teachings of R. Shlomo b. Aderet (1235-1310). His attitude, reflecting a moderate anti-rationalist stream which was to be found among important Jewish thinkers from the Ge'onic era and on, was that although some of the *chochmot chitsoni'im*²⁵⁶ may indeed be positive, yet, on the whole, the negative outweighs the positive, in that the study of the sciences, and especially philosophy, can lead one astray from religious faith.²⁵⁷

On the other hand, there was also a constant and prominent strand of thinkers who viewed philosophic speculation with much favor. The best known of these is undoubtedly Maimonides, but I quote here the words of R. Avraham Bibago (circa 1420-circa 1500) whose brief formulation succinctly and forcefully expresses the perspective of those who saw nothing “external” whatsoever in philosophic speculation:

... for the wisdom of rational philosophic inquiry appeals to human intelligence at its most basic level, and hence it must be dubbed ‘human wisdom’ and not ‘Greek wisdom.’²⁵⁸

The picture of the attitudes of major Jewish thinkers towards philosophy is not a tidy one. Whereas there were always those who were at extreme ends of the spectrum, which, (with the increasing popularization of kabbalah from the twelfth century and on) comprised anti-rationalist proponents of kabbalah at one end and anti-kabbalistic proponents of philosophy at the other, yet there was quite a lot of overlap and even synthesis in the middle. I provide the following somewhat lengthy quote from Isadore Twersky, (which focuses on the particularly fecund sixteenth century) to illustrate this point, and also for his important observation that ultimately both kabbalah and

²⁵⁵ R. Meir Ibn Gabirol, *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, Section 3, Ch. 3.

²⁵⁶ This is the plural form of CC.

²⁵⁷ *Shu"t Ha-Rashba*, Teshuvah 419. See what seems to be the similar attitude of Nachmanides (who was *Rashba*'s teacher,) in his letter entitled “*Terem E'eneh*” in R. Moses b. Nachman, [ed. R. Chayim Dov Shevel,] *Kitvei Ramban*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem: 1982), 339.

²⁵⁸ Heb. “*Ki chochmat hachakirah hi chochmah sichlit ve-hee la-adam be-mah she-hu adam, im ken hee chochmah enoshit ve-lo chochmah yevanit.*” R. Avraham Bibago, *Derech Emunah*, Gate 3, no. 2.

philosophy served a similar purpose in supplying forms of spirituality to energize the legal dimension of Jewish life:

Much to their chagrin, kabbalists witnessed the continued study and cultivation of philosophy in [the sixteenth century.] There was a substantial philosophic legacy in Italy, Eastern Europe and the East as reflected in different ways, directly or obliquely, for example in R. Solomon Luria, R. Moses Isserles, MaHaRaL, R. Mordekhai Jaffe, R. Joseph b. Isaac Ha-Levi, R. Eliezer Ashkenazi, Judah Abravanel, R. Obadiah Sforno, R. Azaria Figo, R. Judah Moscato, Elijah and Joseph Solomon Del Medigo, R. Abraham Horowitz, R. Manoah Hendel, R. Abraham ibn Migas, R. Joseph Taitatsak, R. Moses Almosnino, and others. Awareness of this fact is important not only for the proper assessment of this confrontation but also for the correct understanding of an antithetical, yet cognate phenomenon: the degree of conscious harmonization of philosophy and Kabbalah by many of these authors. I refer not only to the well-known cases of MaHaRaL in his diverse works and of R. Moses Isserles, especially in part three of the *Torat Ha'Olah*, but also to the case of Yosl of Rosheim (*Sefer HaMikneh*) R. Joseph Taitatsak (*Porat Yosef*) and, partially, R. Abraham ibn Migas (*Kevod Elokim*), or the intriguing statement reported by Leone da Modena in the name of the Lurianic disciple R. Israel Sarug that he could explain all kabbalistic teachings philosophically. The point is that meta-halakhic elements even of diverse provenance could be merged in the attempt to provide positive law with a spiritualistic leaven. Moreover, if not merged, they could be used successively – i.e. , one disenchanted with philosophy could rapidly replace the latter with a form of Kabbalah ... as I have observed elsewhere, this spiritual-ideological movement, this meta-halakhic restlessness, illustrates most clearly that Kabbalah and philosophy are *phenomenologically* alike in their tense relation to Halakha.²⁵⁹

It is important to note that, as can be gathered from the above, rationalist philosophy was to a large extent not seen as alien or external. Indeed, there were even some who considered rationalist philosophy to be so inherently natural to human inquiry and perception that it was actually the esoteric and symbol-laden kabbalah that they considered to be “external,” such as R. Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591-1655), who wrote that:

²⁵⁹Isadore Twersky, “Talmudists, Philosophers, Kabbalists: the Quest for Spirituality in the Sixteenth Century” in Bernard D. Cooperman (ed.), *Jewish Thought in the Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge MA, 1983), 442.

Nahmanides is generally right on target. I am passionately attached to his Commentary on the Torah, with the exception of those places in which he ‘embraced the alien woman [kabbalah].’²⁶⁰

Perhaps emblematic of those thinkers who did not reject rationalist philosophy but also did not accord it central status was the view of *Maharal* (R. Judah Loew of Prague, 1520-1609). Citing a number of important Rabbinic sources on the positivity of the wisdom of the nations,²⁶¹ his position, as analysed recently in the work of R. Tsvi Infeld,²⁶² seems to have been that, while the wisdoms of the nations are not essential to one’s spiritual service, yet they can play a positive role in uniting the inner (prophetic) and outer (rational) dimensions of the human psyche, when used correctly. (It is possible, as Infeld notes, that the chain of kabbalistic tradition itself, of which *Maharal* was an important link, might have had a degree of openness to rationalist philosophy which *Maharal* noted and echoed.)²⁶³

As mentioned above, from about the eighteenth century and onward the alignment with rationalist philosophy involved a much stronger sociological dimension than it had in earlier centuries. Although, for instance, Maimonides’ books had been burned in the twelfth century, still, no less a figure than (the kabbalistically oriented) Nachmanides rose to write a well-known and pivotal defense of his illustrious, though controversial,

²⁶⁰ Bernard Septimus, “Open Rebuke and Concealed Love: Nahmanides and the Andalusian Tradition,” in I. Twersky (ed.), *Rabbi Moses Nahmanides: Explorations in His Religious and Literary Virtuosity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U. Center for Jewish Studies 1983), 20, note 32, quoting from J. Perles “Ueber den Geist des Commentars des R. Moses ben Nachman zum Pentateuch,” *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 7 (1958), 90, n.5.

²⁶¹ Such as *Eichah Rabbah* (2:17) which states “*chochmah ba-goyim ta’amin*” (lit.- the wisdoms of gentiles can be trusted) and BT Brachot 58A that there is a blessing to be recited upon seeing a gentile who is exceedingly wise in the wisdoms of the nations.

²⁶² Tsvi Infeld, *Chochmah Penimit ve-Chochmah Chitsonit: Chochmat Yisrael ve-Chochmat Yavan* (Jerusalem: Mossad HaRav Kook, 2011) 107-117, (based mainly upon *Maharal*’s writings at *Nativ ha-Torah*, ch.14, and *Be’er ha-Golah, be’er heh.*)

²⁶³ While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to provide a full discussion of the appreciation of Greek philosophy in the kabbalistic tradition, still, the following fascinating quote, (which R. Infeld references), I found to be worth including. From *Zohar Chadash* (Yitro- ma’amar ru’ach se’arah): “*ru’ach se’arah- da malchut bavel. Anan gadol da malchut maday. Ve-eish mitlakachat da malchut edom. Ve-Nogah lo saviv da ihu malchut yavan, de-sachrah lon nogah, ve-lo be-hu nogah, dichtiv be-hu ‘saviv.’ Begein de-leit bechol malchevan de-inun kreivin le-orach meheimanuta.*” (Eng. “there is no other kingdom/culture that is as close to the way of faith as that of Greece.”) See also a parallel in Rabbinic thinking: *Midrash Pesikta Rabbati* on Numbers (19:2): “and you shall take a red heifer that is whole with no blemish” – “with no blemish- this is the kingdom of Greece.”

contemporary. However, no such voice from the traditionalist camp arose in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries to defend, for instance, Moses Mendelssohn's rationalist formulations. One explanation for this, in line with my presentation here, is that Mendelssohn's stance was "too embedded" within his sociological milieu, which was perceived, by the traditionalist Rabbinic authorities, as assimilationist.

This does not mean that with the rise of Hasidism there was a unilateral rejection of all rationalist philosophy in the Hasidic camp. Although Hasidism was certainly characterized first and foremost by kabbalistic thinking, still, no less a figure than the highly influential R. Simcha Bunim of Przysucha (1765-1827) embraced and promoted many aspects and texts of the Jewish rationalist tradition as a kind of corrective to what he perceived to be a slavish and overly technical Hasidic mysticism that he, it seems, felt was leading many to dangerously inauthentic forms of spirituality.²⁶⁴

It seems to me that, arguably, Hasidic attitudes towards rationalist philosophy, the sciences, and even the study of languages, were generally disapproving not primarily because of disagreement with its theoretical content (although they surely did have important disagreements), but rather because of what they saw these as largely leading to, sociologically, namely, assimilation.²⁶⁵ For R. Noson, to whom we will now turn, the conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit* was understood on a much grander scale than concerns about assimilation, (which of course he, too, shared.)

R. Noson's Novel Understanding of EC and CC

Emunah Chachamim and Its Core Component: Emunah Be-Atsmo (Faith in Oneself)

²⁶⁴ On the exceptional relationship between rationalism and mysticism in R. Simcha Bunim's outlook, see Michael Rosen, *The Quest for Authenticity: The Thought of Reb Simchah Bunim* (NY: Urim, 2008), 85-92, and Tsvi Meir Rabinowits, *Rabbi Simcha Bunim MiPrzysucha: Hayav V'Torato* (Tel Aviv: 1944), 44-50. See also Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 55-56 who mentions R. Simcha Bunim's focus on Talmudic studies, de-emphasizing mysticism, which may have been motivated by the desire to station his students in official rabbinic positions. See also Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*, 282, who opines, of the Hasidism of Prysucha, that: "since the Haskalah movement had no real social impact, the strong rationalist trends in Poland perforce attained some sort of expression within the most liberal wing of the devout."

²⁶⁵ See e.g. CM 424 in which R. Nachman criticizes certain kabalistic books for raising questions that don't have proper answers, expressing essentially the same criticism of them as of philosophic books (as expressed e.g. at SHR 5); in a nutshell: that unanswered questions provide people with the ability to rationalize the following of their (ever-growing, particularly in the modern period) desire to join gentile society and to distance themselves from a life of Torah and mitzvot.

For R. Noson, the word “*emunah*” in *emunat chachamim* refers to something much more basic and all-encompassing than even the reading of *Machzor Vitry*, presented above, which saw the term EC as denoting basic allegiance to the oral tradition of the Rabbis as opposed to the Sadducees et al.²⁶⁶ For R. Noson the *emunah* that *emunat chachamim* refers to is a crucial dimension of faith in God itself. One might state it thusly: faith in God includes the belief that God truly cares about, and desires the service of, human beings. Another way of stating this, (putting people at the center), is that it is faith in the capacity of human beings in general to actually relate to the Divine, to actually serve God. Faith in the sages is a way of expressing this inclusive sense of what faith in God entails: they are the examples of the human capacity to have and develop relationships with God.

Furthermore, there is a core component to *emunat chachamim* which unlocks this crucial “relational” aspect which, in turn, brings home the fullness of faith in God: one must believe in oneself, too, as capable of having and developing a relationship with God. The following is what I have found to be the clearest statement in LH on *emunat chachamim*, that highlights *emunah b’atmo* as its core component:²⁶⁷

For the entire exile in Egypt was due to Adam’s sin, as is known,²⁶⁸ that he caused a blemish in his faith. For the essence of the blemish [of Adam’s sin] was in the aspect²⁶⁹ of EC.²⁷⁰ For even though he was created alone and there were not yet

²⁶⁶ At the core of the conflict between the Sadducees and Pharisees, and later between the Karaites and Rabbis, and, arguably, later between the Reform and Orthodox, there was always more than sociological allegiance at stake. The theological positing of the ability of human beings to, in some way, mediate Divine law, to actually participate in the formulation and execution of Divine revelation and its consummation in behavioral observance of commandments has been a matter of dispute for centuries. What is new here in R. Nosson’s thought is his focusing beyond (though also including) the question of the “system” of the oral Torah, to the more fundamental question of the very ability of human beings to have living relationships with G-d; he makes this question more acute by positing that each individual must also strive to believe this about his or herself.

²⁶⁷ R. Nosson mentions a number of aspects of the definition of EB. I will put in bold the definition that is to my mind the central definition.

²⁶⁸ R. Nosson is drawing here from the writings of the Arizal, *Pri Ets Chayim, Chag Ha-Matsot*, chapter 3.

²⁶⁹ See CM 350 which reads: “I heard from his (R. Nachman’s) holy mouth that he said: ‘my Torah is all *bechinot*’” This is plural of Heb. *bechinah* which translates as ‘aspect.’ Perhaps the most common phrase in his Rebbe’s LM is “A is the aspect of B.” This generally means that there is a shared quality between A and B that R. Nachman wished to highlight. It allows for a certain kind of poetic “flow” between words and ideas. R. Nosson uses it frequently as well. Here the statement that the blemish of Adam’s sin was “in the aspect of EC,” as opposed to saying straight out that the blemish “was in EC,” is meant, I think to highlight that what R. Nosson is saying is that there was an inner quality

any sages in the world, outside of he himself, even so he was in great need of faith in the sages, that is to say, to believe in himself, as is explained in the aforementioned teaching²⁷¹ that when one does not believe in oneself, this is the aspect of a blemish in one's faith in the sages.

For if a person would **believe in themselves, that their soul is very, very high ...** surely they would never commit a single sin nor cause any blemish. And this is especially true of Adam who was alone, for whom the entire notion of faith in the sages was restricted only to this aspect [of faith in himself].

For we need faith in the sages in all of the aspects elucidated there: to believe in the true Tsadikim, and to believe in one's friend and speak to them of the awe of heaven ... and especially one must strengthen oneself and overcome [any and all obstacles] **to believe in oneself, that is, to believe that even one's small achievements in one's Divine service, and one's study of Torah are very precious to HS'Y.** [And] in particular, [the fact that] that one has merited to come close to Tsadikim and truly kosher people, and to have faith in them, that this in and of itself is very, very precious to HS'Y.

Because even if one has faith in HS'Y and in the Tsadikim and in one's friends ... but one does not believe in oneself, meaning that one does not believe that one's faith that one has in the Sages is very, very valuable, this too is a blemish in one's faith in the Sages, and in a certain way, it is the most severe blemish of all.

For this spiritual disease is found today among many who have begun somewhat along the path of Divine service, and begun to connect with true Sages and kosher people. Only- they say of their contemporaries that surely *they* are kosher and righteous, but of what avail of this to *me*, for I know my own personal faults and they are many. [my italics]

And through this they fall ... and become completely estranged [from religious observance.] They fall completely from faith in the Sages until many become outspoken opponents.

We find that their lack of faith in the sages [and estrangement from religious observance] comes about through not believing in themselves.

to the sin that is shared with the notion of a blemish in EC, and that inner quality is *the loss of profundity of relationship* which is similar to a blemish in a faith that can be described as a double-sided arrow, as above.

²⁷⁰ Note that R. Nosson here is understanding EC as an aspect of faith in G-d in general, as mentioned above, the source he is referring to does not mention EC in particular, only faith.

²⁷¹ R. Nosson is referring here to LMI: 61, upon which this piece in LH is based.

For one who wishes to care for oneself needs to implore HS'Y until he is able to strengthen his faith in the sages to the point where he will believe in himself as well. Meaning that he will believe in the great strength of the Tsadikim, that they can rectify even him, and lift him up higher and higher, if he will hold on and remain connected to them all the days of his life.

For his faith itself, that he has in the Tsadikim, through which he becomes close to them, is itself of very, very great value.

Since faith is only in something which one's mind cannot grasp, as is explained elsewhere.²⁷² Hence, one needs to have faith in oneself, that even though according to one's mind and intellect one is very distant from HS'Y, still one must have faith, one must believe that even the small amount of good points one has are very valuable to HS'Y, as I understood from his (Rebbe Nachman's) holy conversations.²⁷³

And Adam especially needed this faith in himself, for he was alone in the world, for whom the entire concept of faith in the sages was restricted to this aspect [of believing in himself] as mentioned above.

And especially since Adam's sin came about through his wife, whom the Snake approached with guile. For she should have had faith in Adam, that his words were true, that HS'Y had indeed commanded not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge. And the snake convinced her, to the point where she ceased to believe in Adam's words, thereby blemishing her faith in the sages. She was brought to eat from the Tree, and then she put heretical thoughts into Adam's heart such that he fell in his own estimation of himself²⁷⁴ and did not believe in himself, in his own great strength and very lofty and high station, to the point where he too ate from the Tree. All of the negativity and exiles to befall humanity in later generations, stemmed from this blemish in faith in the sages, which was at heart a lack of *emunah b'atsmo*.²⁷⁵

It is important to note that R. Nosson sees the struggle to believe in oneself as the core component of *emunat chachamim*, and that it lies at the very heart of the human struggle of life itself: he relates to *emunah b'atsmo* as having been the central struggle at

²⁷² At LMI: 62.

²⁷³ He refers here to SHR: 140, which will be discussed at length in the following chapter.

²⁷⁴ Heb. *Nafal be-da'ato*.

²⁷⁵ LH Pikadon 5:7. The translations here, and throughout the dissertation, are my own. R. Nosson's style is difficult to capture in English. The last sentence above is my own paraphrase of the last few sentences of R. Nosson's in the above piece.

the very dawn of human consciousness in the Garden of Eden, in at least seven places in his LH.²⁷⁶

What is “new” in R. Noson’s thought²⁷⁷ is the “doubling of the arrow” of faith, to point not only towards the Divine, but also back at the self, which, too, needs to be believed in. This inner and highly personal move of believing in oneself is not understood to be “separate” from belief in the sages. *Emunat chachamim*, at its core, is faith in the capacity of human beings in general actually to relate to the Divine, to have real living relationships with God, and *emunah b’atmo* is central because the most basic application of this, which actualizes a person’s own relationship with God, is to believe this about themselves.

The sages are crucial because they are those who are most highly developed in their relationships with God and hence are the most equipped to guide others towards their own unique relationships. The point of *emunat chachamim* is not the enthroning of a Rabbinic “caste system,” nor a sense of submission that recalls the more recent term “da’as Torah,” touched upon above from Kaplan’s chapter, but rather, the opposite, the point of *emunat chachamim* is to bring forth each person’s “treasure in their basement,” as the following story illustrates:

A story that he told of a treasure that is under the bridge. That one time a certain man from a certain town dreamt that in Vienna under the bridge there is a [buried] treasure. And so he traveled there and stood under the bridge, planning how to proceed, for during the day it is impossible to [to dig] because there are people around. Meanwhile a soldier passed by and asked him why he was standing there deep in thought. He figured that the best thing to do is to tell him, so that he will help him and then they can split [the treasure], so he told him the whole story. The soldier answered, saying, “Ah, Jew, you pay attention to dreams. And why do I say so? For I myself dreamt that in such and such a city (and he named this Jew’s city) in the house of so and so (and he named the Jews name) there is a

²⁷⁶ The notion of lack of faith in the sages (which meant lack of faith in themselves) as being at the root of Adam and Eve’s sin is mentioned and explained further at: LH Hoshanah Rabbah 2:1, LH Rosh Chodesh 7:24 and 35, LH Yevamot 3:10, LH Ta’anit 4:21, LH Succah 7:1, LH Shechita 5:14. If we add in the source LH Pikadon 5:7 quoted above, that is a total of seven places wherein I have found this notion discussed in R. Nosson’s writings; it is possible that there are more that I have not yet found. Faith in oneself is clearly central, not only to R. Nosson’s understanding of EC, but also of the human struggle of life itself.

²⁷⁷ See my discussion in the following chapter of SHR 140, which, it seems clear to me, was the seminal and foundational teaching from R. Nachman on EB as a crucial dimension of faith in G-d. This then became central in R. Nosson’s thought and writings.

treasure in his basement,²⁷⁸ so, should I travel to him? And the man returned to his home and dug in his basement and found the treasure. And he said afterward, “now I know that the treasure is with me. But in order to know of the treasure, one must travel to Vienna.”²⁷⁹

Bratslav lore explicitly notes in the work in which it was originally published that this story is a parable about the necessity of traveling to the Tsadik.²⁸⁰ This, to my

²⁷⁸ Original Yiddish is *makhsan* which might translate better as “storage room.”

²⁷⁹ See Tsvi Mark, *Kol Sippurei Rabbi Nachman Mi-Bratslav* (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 2014), 438, for full citation of manuscript and publication history of this story. The date and circumstances of R. Nachman’s telling of the story are unknown.

²⁸⁰ “So it is in the service of G-d, the treasure is with each person themselves, but to know of the treasure, they must travel to the Tsadik.” See *Ibid*, 46-47 for an important discussion of this story, both in terms of its probable status of being borrowed from a general folkloric trope (R. Nachman himself spoke of borrowing from folklore, see sources Mark refers to there) and also on the question of whether this particular story, which was also told by R. Simcha Bunim of Przysucha, had a particular and characteristic Bratslav “take,” namely, as speaking about the Hasid’s relationship with his Rebbe, as opposed to what might have been a more “general” Hasidic take that sees a simpler message, namely, that it is sometimes necessary to seek, and travel great distances, in order to find what was actually with the person all along. Mark found, in the more recently published work of Bratslav lore *Siach Sarfei Kodesh*, a statement that “there are those who say” that the story has the simple message I just outlined, as opposed to the earlier published text of R. Shmuel Horowitz which states that the story is a parable for the Hasid’s relationship with his Rebbe. Mark concludes that evidence for a characteristically “Bratslav” reading must therefore be understood to be “very shaky” (Heb. *merofef lemadai*). I offer here the following, not altogether conclusive but, to my mind, reasonably persuasive, analysis:

At LMI:188, a short but important teaching, it is related that the Tsadik finds the spiritual “lost objects” (here representing an ultimate sense of what one’s soul was sent to this world to “find”), not only of his own, but also of others, and even of the whole world. It is then upon others to seek him out in order to find their lost objects. This teaching would seem to be the polar opposite of the above story. However, R. Nossou, at LH Avedah u-Metsiah 3:2, wrote that the essence of what it means that the Tsadik gives them their “lost object” is actually that he provides them with teachings that are so profoundly related to the journey of their soul that they are like “spiritual candles,” through the use of which people can then *themselves* do the searching they need to do, on their own, in order to find their find their lost objects in an appropriately gradual manner. Also, later in that same piece, at subsection 7, he states that this is represented by the Chanukah candles, whereby the mitzvah upon each person to light candles *in their own home* represents the greatness of the teachings of the Tsadik. For the Tsadik, in vanquishing the Greeks whose aim was to cause the forgetting of Torah (which, for R. Nossou, parallels or represents the “loss” of the lost object), brings to the Jewish people, through his teachings, the wondrous mitzvah of lighting candles in their own home, which means that they become able to find their “lost objects” in close and personal context. [See also LH Birkot ha-

understanding, refers to much more than a one-time journey of discovery, rather, it is about the dynamic between Hasid and Rebbe, which consists of a certain constancy in the need to go to the Tsadik, (which, I might add, can clearly be seen in R. Noson's own behavior,)²⁸¹ which continuously points the Hasid back to his own "basement." This entails the encouragement of the Hasid's faith that there indeed *is* a treasure in his own basement. It is worth highlighting that the soldier's response makes the Jew's trust in his own dream into the guiding force to believe in the soldier's dream.

With his emphasis on the centrality of *emunah b'atmo*, it must be noted that R. Noson's definition of *emunat chachamim* is markedly different from Piekarz' *emunat Tsadikim*, which he called the Hasidic "incarnation" of *emunat chachamim*, as outlined above. R. Noson locates the notion of faith in Tsadikim within the very "ani" of "*ani ma'amin*," (within the "I" of "I believe"), it cuts to the very core of any and all statements of faith, by calling forth the "other direction" of the "arrow of faith," which points to belief in the self, before all else, as capable of having a true relationship with its Creator. The sages, who are like representatives of actualized selfhood in this regard, are believed in as examples and trusted guides. The help that the sages provide here is crucial, for faith in oneself is not a one-time act: it is more like a life-long drama that requires constant awakening and encouragement.

This format of leadership that is focussed on bringing out the uniqueness of each individual is reflected in R. Noson's descriptions of R. Nachman's way with his Hasidim. He hardly ever made specific pronouncements in telling people what to do.²⁸² Rather, he promoted forms of spiritual practices that lead to the flowering of the individual: the practice of *hitbodedut*²⁸³ is an excellent example. R. Noson, in a very important passage

Peirot (5:4) that the way that Tsadikim return lost objects to people is through strengthening them to never give up their search and never stop their longing.] R. Nosson does not mention the parable of the "treasure under the bridge," to the best of my research, anywhere in his writings. Hence my analysis cannot be considered conclusive regarding a particular Bratslav "take" on the story. However, R. Nosson's understanding of the relationship between Hasid and Rebbe is, I think, very much in line with Lipsker and Kushilevsky's reading of the story. Hence, for the purposes of this dissertation, which is focused on R. Nosson's views, I feel comfortable using the parable for its helpful illustration of this thematic message. [It should be noted that for the Tsadik to be represented by the soldier in the parable seems somewhat demeaning, this militates in Mark's direction.]

²⁸¹ R. Nachman is reported to have stated, upon meeting R. Nosson for the first time "we will see each other again and again and again." See Kramer, *Through Fire and Water*, chs.1-6, which detail the many journeys of R. Nosson, to and from his Rebbe.

²⁸² See SHR 185; CM:491; *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* vol.6, paragraphs 25 and 334.

²⁸³ In literal English translation: "the act of making oneself alone." It refers to prayer in the most colloquial sense, whereby one quite simply speaks to G-d in one's own language, see e.g. LMII:45. This is completely unscripted: it puts the individual into their

in LH,²⁸⁴ characterizes his Rebbe's teachings in LM in general as being like "spiritual roadmaps" (my simile) meaning that they explain how each mitzvah relates to the others, particularly to the more all-encompassing mitzvot such as faith or love and awe of God:

For just as a capable doctor, when he wishes to heal a given illness, cannot heal it unless he is expert in the anatomy of the human body, meaning that he understands all the details of all the interlocking aspects of the human body, so too the righteous of each generation who are involved in healing the ills of the souls of Israel ... do so through thorough knowledge of ... the aspect of the "image of God" which is the aspect of the interlocking and detailed anatomy of the Torah, which is called "Adam" as the verse states "this is the Torah, Adam."²⁸⁵

R. Noson goes on to explain that, through an increased understanding of the Torah's "spiritual anatomy," each individual, mainly through prayer but also through practice, "constructs" their very own spiritual "face," their own "take" or perspective, their own way, so to speak, of looking at God, since the way each person prays about and integrates each "anatomical" teaching into their life will be different.

While it is certainly undeniable that there were also many ways in which connectivity with R. Nachman did fit into Piekarz' descriptions of ET as outlined above,²⁸⁶ yet this notion of support for individual uniqueness, of which arguably, the focus on EB is its most crucial dimension, is a vital part of Bratslav Hasidism that must not be ignored. There is a tension here, that is reflected, for instance, between, on the one hand, Green's observation that the veneration of R. Nachman as an utterly unique Tsadik stands out sharply from any other Hasidic group, and on the other hand, Ron Margolin's grouping of Bratslav in, together with Przysucha Hasidism, as being on the non-Tsadik-centered, but individualistic and existentialist side of the Hasidic spectrum.²⁸⁷

own "conversation with G-d." See also LMI: 137, a short teaching which reads, based on the verse at Psalms 119:57, "that is to say that the G-dly part from on high that I have, tells me and teaches me to keep Your words." This is a radical statement of the ability of each individual to receive religious inspiration from within his or her self.

²⁸⁴ LH Rosh Chodesh 5:1-11.

²⁸⁵ Numbers 19:14.

²⁸⁶ Such as pidyonot, notion of R. Nachman making "tikunim" for people such as through their recital of 10 psalms at his gravesite, notion of soul connectivity in analogy of bird that lays eggs in others' nests and more.

²⁸⁷ See Ron Margolin, "On the Essence of Faith in Hasidism: An Historical-Theoretical Perspective," 364: "Unlike the Hasidism founded on the conception of the Tsadik, Hasidic faith with existentialist overtones retains its vitality in the eyes of many, as attested by the great interest in the lives and teachings of R. Nachman of Bratslav and R. Menahem Mendel of Kotsk."

Emunat Chachamim and Faith in God

It is important to stress that, for R. Noson, not only is faith in oneself not separate from *emunat chachamim*, but also, *emunat chachamim* itself is not understood to be separate from faith in God. As mentioned above, faith in God includes the belief that God truly cares about, and desires the service of, human beings. Hence, believing in the sages (and in oneself), is nothing more than an actualizing of this inclusive sense of what faith in God entails. The “double-arrow,” mentioned above, comprises, ultimately, a single and simple sense of faith. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from R. Noson’s diary. In April 1822, in Odessa while on his way to the Land of Israel, R. Noson met some emissaries from Vilna:

And I began to speak with them of *emunat chachomim*, being that I was convinced that surely they at least have some faith (*eizeh emunah*) in the Gaon of Vilna, for it is by his name that they are called and associated. But they immediately retorted, especially one of them who was the main speaker with whom they all agreed, saying such and such (sic), ‘I should have faith in a person?’ and they said so with a tone of incredulity. He spoke in this manner with me, and they all agreed with him. And I began to argue with him, saying, ‘If so, what is *emunat chachamim*?’ But they would not give their ears to hear me at all, and they answered words of foolishness and vanity, which were related somewhat to heresy. For truly one who lacks *emunat chachomim* – even their faith in God is incomplete,²⁸⁸ as is explained in our teachings at length, especially in the teaching *Tiku Tochachah* (LM II:8).²⁸⁹

It was then that I saw clearly the difference between the Hasidim and the Mitnagdim.²⁹⁰ For I saw that even in their own sage, whom they know was exceedingly learned and exceedingly pious, even in him they have no faith. And later on I said so to them explicitly: ‘I thought that [even] if you don’t have faith in the great Hasidic *Tsadikim*, but at least you do believe in your own sage. But now I see the level where you are actually at: you have no faith at all.’²⁹¹

How is it that R. Noson was prepared to say “I see that you have no faith at all”? It seems to me that one way to put it is that, for R. Noson, without *emunat chachamim*, all

²⁸⁸ See e.g. *Sichot Ha-Ran* (SHR) 192, LH Pesach 6:1, LH Niddah 2:11, LH Shabbat 6:11. I will expand on this notion, that faith in G-d depends on EC, below.

²⁸⁹ This will be discussed further below in the subsection entitled “The Fallible Objectivity of the Tsadik.”

²⁹⁰ Eng. “the opposers.” As discussed above in the introduction, this is a term that was applied to those who opposed the movement and teachings of Hasidism. See Nadler, *The Faith of the Mitnagdim*.

²⁹¹ YM II:77

a person can have is belief “that,” but not belief “in.” Halbertal’s observations on belief “in,” mentioned above, are helpful here. He has pointed out that although belief “in” can never be emptied of all content of belief “that,” yet belief “in” also cannot be reduced to a number of statements of belief “that.” The inner move that lies at the core of belief “in,” while related to words such as loyalty or commitment, can never be fully denoted in language.

R. Nossan, it seems to me, looked at what the mitnagdim were saying and saw that “the other end of the double arrow of faith,” which points back at humanity (and includes the self), was absent. For R. Nossan, people who lack *emunat chachamim* (with its crucial dimension of faith in oneself) cannot be actively involved in the inner move of belief “in,” which involves a profound *personal* sense of commitment. Without the “other end of the arrow,” one’s faith exists merely on the theoretical plane, which for R. Nossan makes it unworthy of being called faith at all.²⁹²

There are a number of places in LH in which R. Nossan either equates faith in God with *emunat chachamim*²⁹³ or states that faith in God is impossible without *emunat chachamim*.²⁹⁴ There is an important passage (included as “Appendix A” to this dissertation) that I have found to be possibly unique in LH, in its fascinating formulation of EC, whereby it both distinguishes it quite clearly from faith in God, while at the same time demonstrating that EC is necessary to “complete” one’s faith.

²⁹² It seems to me that it is not altogether impertinent to mention the possibility that R. Nossan’s disagreement with the mitnagdim may have been more etymological than it was theological. The mitnagdim’s perspective seems to me likely to have been based on a different understanding of the term EC, such as that of R. Rabinovitch or even that of *Machzor Vitry*, as outlined above. R. Nossan’s usage of the term as denoting belief in particular sages *as an active form of personal connectivity (through leadership by example and through guidance)* was outside the lexicon of the mitnagdim; instead, they understood his words, mistakenly, as *referring to a passive theological principle or tenet*, as opposed to referring to an active form of connectivity. It seems to me that it may even be possible that the kind of faith R. Nossan was talking about was something that they actually had *vis a vis* the Gaon of Vilna (who, it is not insignificant to note, was not among the living at the time): it is only that they were not accustomed to speaking about it as a form of “faith.” I would similarly say further, that the kind of “faith in a person” which so bothered the mitnagdim would equally have been distasteful to R. Nossan had he understood it the way they did. Just what R. Nossan *does* mean by “faith in a person” will be discussed in the section below entitled “The Fallible Objectivity of the Tsadik.”

²⁹³ As in the quote above from LH Pikadon 5:7

²⁹⁴ Such as at LH Rosh Chodesh 7:34, LH Pesach 6:1 and see LH Succah 7:1-4 which goes into this with some depth, emphasizing that EC is “the foundation of the entire Torah.”

In that passage, R. Noson lines up three parallel binaries: the natural world and technology, the Torah and its oral interpretation, and finally faith in God and faith in the sages. In each group of two, the first is Divine and the second, human. What is striking is the presentation of the Divine side as being lacking, incomplete, without human involvement: without the human, particularly creative, impetus. It seems a fair interpretation to state that for R. Noson a lack of *emunat chachamim* will mean that one's faith in God cannot be actualized, cannot be *utilized* in one's life, in a way that is similar to having the natural resources but lacking the knowhow to develop them and make them usable. Perhaps this is another way of expressing what R. Noson may have meant when he said to the emissaries from Vilna that they "have no faith at all": since, due to their lack of *emunat chachamim* (in R. Noson's estimation), their faith cannot be used and actualized in their lives, it is therefore unworthy of being called faith.

R. Noson's Novel Understanding of Chochmah Chitsonit

If the mitnagdim, in R. Noson's eyes, are lacking in any sense of real faith due to their lack of *emunat chachamim*, then what indeed, in his eyes, *are* they motored by, as religious Jews? The answer, fascinatingly enough, is that for R. Noson not only the Judaism of the mitnagdim, but even Hasidic Judaism, can become a form of *chochmah chitsonit*. This is because for R. Noson, the definition of *chochmah chitsonit* is weighted to the side of the second term, which means "external." The first term of *chochmah*, meaning wisdom, does not necessarily denote a particular set of subject matter, such as rationalist philosophy, but rather any wisdom, including religious wisdom, which is placed in the service of some type of external purpose. What makes a purpose or objective "external" is that it is related to some goal that is this worldly, quantifiable and comparable,²⁹⁵ as opposed to *emunat chachamim* which will lead to a life of relationship with the Divine, whereby nothing of this world can be the goal, rather, this world will always be the context, and the relationship itself is the goal.

In order to not consign R. Noson's conception of what a "good" sense of purpose is to my own formulations, I will pause here for a moment to provide a couple of quotes from LM and LH on the topic:

The ultimate goal is nothing other than to serve and go in God's ways for His sake, in order to merit recognizing God and knowing Him. This is the ultimate goal and it is God's will that we recognize Him.²⁹⁶ ... to receive the light and

²⁹⁵ It is important to point out, from the very beginning of my discussion here of CC, that R. Nosson, in his debates with Maskilim, became well aware that there were those whose professed goals were "truth" or "peace," which complicated the facile dichotomy of "religious=spiritual vs. secular=physical." This will be discussed further below in chapters three and four.

²⁹⁶ LMII: 37.

become connected and absorbed within HSY's oneness, in a state of *ratso vashov*,²⁹⁷ in such a way that one becomes truly absorbed within HS'Y in ultimate unity, and yet, not become nullified out of existence. Rather, one will merit to know HS'Y continually, which is the ultimate true purpose, happy are those who merit this.²⁹⁸

Chochmah chitsonit, in contrast to the above, entails different forms of making this world primary as opposed to the relationship with its Creator. R. Noson makes clear in the following important quote that *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit* must be seen as opposites, for it is only because of involvement with *chochmah chitsonit* that *emunat chachamim* becomes difficult to attain.²⁹⁹ As can be seen from the following quote, there are three basic 'levels' of *chochmah chitsonit* that R. Noson wrote about, that I will discuss. It is important to note that he does refer to what most probably entails rationalist philosophy and the sciences as "official *chochmah chitsonit*:"³⁰⁰

The fact that many are distant from *emunat chachamim* is only because of the wisdoms of this world, which are the vain wisdoms of each person, that each person considers themselves to be wise in their own eyes.³⁰¹ But the truth is that anyone with any small grain of true consciousness in their brain can easily intuit that all of the wisdoms of this world are foolishness, 'vanity of vanities,' and cannot truly be called wisdom at all, since through them one cannot attain the true and eternal purpose.

²⁹⁷ From Ezekiel 1:4, "running and returning," this refers to a constant flow of unification and separation.

²⁹⁸ LH Shluchim 3, 395 (in that particular discourse the sub-sections are not numbered hence the page number).

²⁹⁹ I will discuss R. Nosson's understanding of the conflict between EC and CC at greater length below in the section on R. Nosson's musical analogy.

³⁰⁰ This is my translation of his Hebrew formulation "*chochmah chitsonit mamash*." The inference that therefore all other "wisdoms of this world" are subsumed within the category of CC even if they are not "actual" (another possible translation of *mamash*) or "official" CC seems clear enough. R. Nosson routinely groups together the "vain wisdoms of each person" and the wisdom of those involved in rationalist philosophy, it seems clear that he learned to do this from his Rebbe, see the next footnote.

³⁰¹ R. Nosson is here almost certainly drawing from SHR:32 which reads (I am translating only those parts that are most relevant here): "A person must strengthen themselves in their faith, and not enter into rationalist philosophy whatsoever (*ve-livli lichnos bachakirot clal*) ... rather [they must] only believe in G-d with faith alone, that is not based at all on rationalist philosophy. And even if it seems to us that the masses are far from philosophizing and do not philosophize whatsoever, still, the truth is that they are all involved in philosophizing. For each person has their philosophic questions, and even children have such questions enter their minds and become confused by them."

Whether it be those who are wise in the wisdoms of ‘official *chochmah chitsonit*’³⁰² meaning the philosophers/intellectuals³⁰³ or any type of vain wisdom ... even the finer wisdoms³⁰⁴ ... they are all motivated by the physicality of the body or by negative character traits ... for instance, for the sake of honor and recognition, or money ... And so it is even among [Hasidic] Jews themselves³⁰⁵ ... to the point where there are those who travel to famous Tsadikim with the intention of attaining some important Rabbinic post³⁰⁶ or some type of financial gain.³⁰⁷

The three levels that are described here might be called ‘personal,’ ‘official,’ and ‘religious.’ All three cause a person’s life’s trajectory to become centered upon different kinds of externality. In contrast to these is *emunat chachamim*, whereby faith in the sages leads a person to what R. Noson calls *chochmah tachlitit* or “purposeful wisdom,”³⁰⁸ in the sense that the sages will guide a person to a life trajectory that is centered upon life’s ultimate purpose, outlined above. Contrastingly, anything that does not lead one further along into the depths of infinite relationship “cannot truly be called wisdom.”³⁰⁹

Within the category ‘religious,’ it is important to mention a secondary level that R. Noson learnt to become wary of from his Rebbe, which entails a different kind of externality of purpose. This is the concept of ‘*chochmot*’³¹⁰ (lit. “wisdoms”), which refers to an outlook that entails a sincere religious focus, yet which is overly concerned with reaching static formulations of understanding, which are called *chochmot*. For instance, R. Noson writes:

³⁰² Heb. *chochmot chitsoniot mamash*.

³⁰³ I use these two terms here to translate the single Hebrew term “*mechakrim*.” It is worth noting that this is R. Nosson’s favored term for Enlightenment thinkers. He also uses the term *minim* (heretics), but, to my knowledge, never the term *maskilim*.

³⁰⁴ Heb. *Chochmot ha-dakim yoter*. This may refer to the sciences and perhaps even to drama and literature.

³⁰⁵ See SHR: 81 and places in LH about issue of religious leitsim *Hasidim nefulim*. (maybe at LH Bechor Behema Tehora 4).

³⁰⁶ This is also discussed in LH Shabbat (7:21) and LH Kibud Rabo ve-Talmid Chacham (3:18).

³⁰⁷ LH Shabbat 6:3, 4.

³⁰⁸ He coins this term later in the same piece, at LH Shabbat 6:8 (towards the end of that rather long subsection).

³⁰⁹ It is important to note that R. Nosson almost certainly got this notion from LMI:35.

³¹⁰ See for instance SHR:51 and 101, and LMI:30, LMII:12 and especially 44 and 91. See also CM 544. It is important that I point out that neither R. Nachman nor R. Nosson use the term “CC” specifically here. This is another example wherein I am thematically “connecting the dots,” but it is clear to me that the composite picture of the sources quoted here is that *chochmot* can ultimately be called forms of CC.

And this is [one way of interpreting the verse:]³¹¹ ‘hence shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will become as one flesh.’ His father and mother- these are the aspect of intellectual wisdoms, for ‘father’ is [the kabbalistic term for] *chochmah* and mother is [the kabbalistic term for] *binah*.³¹² Meaning that one needs to abandon all static intellectual formulations, and cleave only to the ‘woman with awe of HS’Y,’³¹³ to the ‘woman of valor,’³¹⁴ who represents the aspect of holy faith. For the essence of the intellectual grasping of real truth,³¹⁵ is through the aspect of ‘they will become as one flesh,’ whereby truth and faith become as one, in the most complete way.³¹⁶

There is, for R. Noson, a kind of regression in exercising only one’s intellectual faculty. It is akin to returning to one’s ‘father’ and ‘mother,’ as opposed to the daring and less certain act of creating one’s own life with one’s ‘wife,’ who here represents faith. Making faith an integral part of one’s cognition of Torah ideas (which is what R. Noson is writing about in the above quote) will lend the crucial dimension of dynamism to one’s life of religious growth, relinquishing one’s ‘ownership’ of the idea, allowing it to be alive and change, as in a living relationship with a spouse.³¹⁷

One might phrase a description of R. Noson’s “composite picture” here of *chochmah chitsonit* thusly. All of the intellectual constructions, from the simple constructions of the unlearned, to the sophistry of those who are versed in “official” *chochmah chitsonit*, from constructions which are dressed up as religious but are motivated by some this-worldly concern, to those which are actually within the realm of sincere religiosity but are still overly fixed and theoretical, all of these are at the end of the day static formulations within which the real self can hide and avoid the challenge of the experiential growth and dynamism of a mysterious relationship with the Divine. This is directly related to *emunat chachamim* and *emunah b’atsmo* because the moment one hides is a moment of lack of faith in oneself. It is in that moment of hiding that the fancy constructions become more important than the journey of the self, because one has lost faith that one’s journey is significant, and is indeed, of terrible importance.

³¹¹ Genesis 2:24.

³¹² Eng. “understanding.”

³¹³ Proverbs 31:30.

³¹⁴ Proverbs 31:10.

³¹⁵ Heb. *Amitat ha-Emet*.

³¹⁶ LH Giluach 4:7. See also at length LH Rosh Chodesh 6:1-3, which is a profound discourse on the relationship between faith and intellect in this regard. See also the quote from LH Nedarim 4:16 below in the section “The Fallible Objectivity of the Tsadik.”

³¹⁷ This has to do with forming vessels of ‘not knowing’ in order to receive higher levels of knowing. The vessels are more important than the light they contain, they come from a higher source, for they propel one into a never-ending relationship rather than a static form of ‘figuring it all out.’ See e.g. LH Nefilat Apayim 4 at length.

In other words, the relationship between the self and the Divine, as mentioned above, must always be primary, as opposed to some goal related to achieving measurable worldly success. This holds true even if this success is religious, i.e. it is itself a manifestation of this very relationship, still, a particular manifestation can overshadow and minimize the importance of the relationship itself.³¹⁸ A key notion here, is the notion of will. For R. Noson, (based upon his Rebbe's clear teaching),³¹⁹ the will to connect is more important than the manifestation of any particular connection that is achieved. It is this will which makes the relationship continual ad infinitum, and without this will, the relationship will become thrust aside, or frozen, to some degree.³²⁰ The motor behind this will to connect is *emunah b'atmo*.³²¹

I must emphasize again what I touched upon at the beginning of this section. R. Noson's definition of *chochmah chitsonit* is weighted to the side of the second term, of externality. In the preceding paragraphs I highlighted different degrees or forms of stasis that a person might seek, as ways of avoiding the dynamism of a living relationship with God. These entail different types of quantifiable and comparable degrees of "success," and almost always will lead to some form of competition or measurement of self-worth that is based on some kind of outside standard.

Content or subject matter, on the other hand, such as philosophy and the sciences which R. Noson refers to, as mentioned above, as "official" *chochmah chitsonit* is related to differently in LH. As R. Noson himself notes, were society to go without a basic degree of the content of *chochmah chitsonit*, basic functioning would be impossible.³²² Furthermore, he writes, when one's sense of purpose is healthy and strong enough, all content is fair game. For the Tsadik, and others who are strong enough to learn different

³¹⁸ An analogy for this, heard from R. Gedaliah Fleer is an artist whose "breakthrough piece," produced at age 20, makes it to the Smithsonian, and then the artist proceeds to spend the next fifty years producing pieces that are basically facsimiles of the original successful one: the manifestation of her art has overshadowed her relationship with art.

³¹⁹ At SHR 51, see also SHR 14 and LMII:1. This notion has precedent in Rabbinic literature, see BT Sanhedrin 106B.

³²⁰ See LH Arev 3:15.

³²¹ See LH Minchah 7:32-35. See also LH Minchah 7:41, that the importance of the tiny efforts of each person cannot be expressed in language, even through prophecy (this notion of the limitation of language is important and will be discussed below in this chapter.) This means that for each person to be convinced that their tiny efforts do in fact matter will require that they believe in themselves, which is EB, even though R. Nosson does not mention EB explicitly in LH Minchah 7.

³²² LH Piryah v'Rivyah 3:19, Netilat Yadayim 6:90.

kinds of *chochmah chitsonit* deeply and integrate them into their Divine service, there can actually be great positivity in the content of *chochmah chitsonit*.³²³

I will now turn to a discussion of R. Noson's understanding of the conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit*, using, first, a story from his Rebbe, and second, a powerful metaphor of R. Noson's. Both of these I use to try to illustrate the dynamism of the inner language-less dimension of the belief "in" that *emunat chachamim* and *emunah b'atsmo*, with their focus on infinite relationship, entail. This in contrast to the attraction of static, language based formulations, with their quantifiable and comparable goals, rooted in making the world primary as opposed to its Creator, which is the modality of *chochmah chitsonit*.

The Homeowner and the Guest

R. Noson's approach to the definitions of and conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit* is such a profound departure from the previous use of these terms, (outlined above in the first section of this chapter,) that it seems to me that it is both helpful, and also altogether in line with Bratslav "style," to begin by presenting excerpts from an illustrative and evocative story told by R. Nachman (the story can be found in full at Appendix B.) The following was recounted on the first day³²⁴ of Hanukah (December 21st) 1808:

A guest entered into the home of a homeowner. ... The homeowner began to pine and long very much, [asking] – how can a person reach and attain any matter of holiness? The guest said to him- I will teach you how. And the homeowner was shocked, and began to wonder: perhaps this is not a human being at all. But then he looked again and saw that he was speaking with him in the way of a human being. But then immediately his faith became strengthened within him, to believe in him. And he immediately began to call him "Rebbe," and he said to him- first of all, I ask to learn from thee how to act with proper honor towards thee, and certainly how to not act with, heaven forbid, any lack of honor towards thee. For, even so, it is difficult for a human being to be absolutely careful in the requisite manner, hence, I ask thee to teach me how to act in accordance with thy honor. And he answered him- at this moment I am unavailable, at another time I will come to you and teach you this, and now I must leave here. ... And then he grabbed him and began to fly with him, and it was cold for him, so he took a

³²³ This notion will be developed further in chapter four in the discussion of R. Nosson's analysis of the encounter between R. Yehoshua b. Hananyah and the sages of Athens, and in the Conclusion which follows. See also LH Shabbos 6:33, Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:20.

³²⁴ The Jewish calendar counts each day as beginning in the evening and ending after sunset, (as in Genesis chapter one), hence the first "day" of Hanukah follows the first night of candle lighting.

garment and gave it to him, and said- take this garment and it will be good for you, and you will have food and drink and everything good, and you shall return to your home. And he flew with him.

Meanwhile, he [the homeowner] looked, and behold he was in his home. And he did not believe his own eyes that he was home, but he looked and behold he was talking with people, and eating and drinking as is the way of the world. Meanwhile, he looked, and behold, he was flying as before. And he looked again and behold he was in his home, and he looked again and behold he was flying, and so it was for him for a long while.

... And it was a great wonder to him, that he was sometimes here and sometimes there. And he wished to speak of this with people, but how can one speak of such a wonder with people, something which is not fitting to believe. Meanwhile, he looked out the window and saw the guest, and he began to implore him to come in, and he said to him, 'I am unavailable, for I am travelling to you ...' ³²⁵

This story illustrates a fundamental issue at the core of R. Noson's definitions of CC and EC and his understanding of the conflict between the two, namely, the limitation of language. The homeowner here has a kind of a "double-experience," of both flying with the guest, while yet going about normal life. He is hampered by an inability to speak to anyone but the guest about this extraordinary predicament. This can be understood³²⁶ to relay the "double experience" of simultaneously having an inner spiritual journey with his³²⁷ Rebbe,³²⁸ whilst yet, on the outside, continuing his normal life. This inner experience lies not only beyond societal norms, but even beyond the limits of language

³²⁵ This story was recorded by R. Nosson at CM: 85. See Mark, *Kol Sippurei Rabbi Nachman Mi-Bratslav*, 272-273 for full citation of the manuscript and publication history of this story.

³²⁶ This is my own reading of the story, which I am using as an entry point into R. Nosson's thought on EC and CC.

³²⁷ I will be using the male pronoun when referring to an example of a Hasid because female Hasidim were nearly non-existent in the times of R. Nachman and R. Nosson. It is worth noting that, according to oral Bratslav lore, (recorded at *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* vol. 2 section 321) R. Nachman did once ask his Hasidim "why don't you make your wives into Hasidim?" and also stated that, contrary to an opposite prediction in the name of the Besht, women's sections of synagogues will not be done away with in Messianic times (recorded at *Ibid*, vol. 2 section 664.) Still, R. Nachman did not accept females for private consultation. *Ibid*, vol.2 section 313.

³²⁸ See *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* vol. 6 section 314 that relays that in Bratslav oral tradition this story was understood as being an allegory for the relationship between Hasid and Rebbe. See also LMI:209 that the Tsadik is called a "guest."

itself. And yet, this does not make it completely solitary. In some essential way, the Rebbe can “visit”³²⁹ the inner experience of the individual, even activate and enliven it.

The longing expressed by the homeowner at the beginning of the story to attain “any matter of holiness” can be understood as a profound, language-less sense of incompleteness which is in search of an equally profound sense of connectivity facilitated by a teacher or guide. It is a degree of connectivity that the homeowner cannot imagine to be within the range of human capability to facilitate, hence he is shocked when he encounters someone who offers to do so. The guest’s statement that he can teach the homeowner is a use of language to point beyond itself, to open up the possibility of a dynamic inner journey that is manifestly inexpressible in language: even if it can be spoken “of,” but it can never be spoken “out.” It remains, in an inherent way, “in.”

EC is illustrated here in the homeowner’s faith in the guest that he finds himself requiring, as his initial shock wears off and he encounters a sense of doubt. This faith opens him up to a new degree of showing honor, and emboldens him to take that crucial step outside of his homestead and initiate the guest’s activation of their inner journey. The limitation of language here is crucial – the guest does not “explain” what he will do – rather the homeowner must believe enough to act, and thereby embark upon a journey that, indeed, *cannot* be explained before it occurs.

In addition to the issue of the limitation of language, there is another key aspect of R. Noson’s definition of EC that can be interpreted to be present in the above story. The evidence suggests that it is not presumptuous to interpret that part and parcel of the homeowner’s shock in hearing the guest state that he can help him, is the shock of facing the possibility of his *own capability* of achieving “matters of holiness.” The belief that the homeowner then feels it necessary to muster, as his shock wears off, includes, accordingly, not only the dominant dimension of belief in the guest’s ability to teach him, but also the more hidden dimension of belief in his own capability to learn. This personal dimension of faith in oneself, *Emunah be-Atsmo* (EB), as discussed above, is of central importance to R. Noson’s definition of EC.

These two notions, namely the notion of the limitation of language and the notion of EB as the central aspect of EC, are interrelated: one can expound in language from today until tomorrow about the unique significance of each person, their inherent worth and their ability to truly serve and relate to God. But for a person to actually believe this about themselves, this will always be a move that is internal, it is beyond language, it is something profoundly different, as discussed above, from mere statements of belief “that.”

³²⁹ The visit of the guest can be understood as occurring on two planes: the physical visit to the home of the homeowner, and the spiritual visit to his inner world.

For R. Noson, one might say, using the metaphor of the story presented above, that EC entails facing questions such as: “do you believe the statement of this guest who has entered your house and told you that he can teach you how to fulfill your deepest longing; can you trust him enough to step outside of your homestead of static, comfortably describable in language, security, (which may even be a religious form of CC); can you believe in yourself enough to believe that an actual relationship with God is possible?”

The two aspects of this important dynamic between the inner, language-less dimension of the experience of life, and the outer, language-based dimension whereby things and experiences can be quantified and compared, are important in order to understand R. Noson’s ways of relating to EC and CC.

The clearest source in Bratslav thought for the notion of a languageless layer of human consciousness is at the first entry in *Sichot HaRan*. R. Nachman submits that the experience of “knowing God” cannot be communicated to anyone else; one cannot even communicate to one’s own self what it had been like the day before. He bases this notion upon the Zohar’s teaching on Proverbs 31:23 “her husband is known at the gates” – husband refers to God, and the word gates in Hebrew (*she’arim*) is similar to the word “construe” (*mesha’er*) such that the Zohar teaches that “each person [can know God] in accordance to what they can construe in their heart.”³³⁰ R. Noson made frequent reference to that Zoharic teaching and R. Nachman’s interpretation thereof in LH Pirya ve-Rivya 3, which is the main source that we will now turn to.

Hearing the Finite Echo of an Infinite Sound: R. Noson’s Musical Analogy

Another helpful and illustrative way of presenting R. Noson’s understanding of the definitions of and conflict between EC and CC is through relaying a fascinating musical analogy that he works with over multiple pages of an important source in LH on EC and CC. I will begin with a translation of his opening presentation of the three “sounds” which comprise the basic makeup of all music:

For it is taught in the books of the sages of music,³³¹ which is the wisdom of song,³³² that there are three sounds.³³³ For there is the simple sound, which is the sound a person can emit from his mouth when he is in a wide open space where there is no barrier before him. And there is the returning sound, which is called by

³³⁰ Zohar Bereishit 103A, and see also LMI:63 and 73.

³³¹ Heb. *chachmei ha-muzikah*.

³³² Heb. *neginah*- this I think is R. Nosson’s translation of the word *muzikah* which is the transliterated term used in *Sefer Ha-Brit* (this is the name of an important book that R. Nosson almost certainly got this formulation from, as will be discussed just below).

³³³ Heb. *Kolot*.

the sages (of the Talmud) *kol havarah* (echo), which is the sound that is heard in a forest or between tall mountains, when a person emit a sound and hears another sound just like it, as if someone else stood facing them and emitted an identical sound. And there is also a third sound, which is the sound that is jointly created by the two of these; this is the sound that emerges from a constricted vessel, whereby the simple sound immediately collides with the returning sound, such that the returning sound immediately joins with the simple sound, and the two sounds form one single sound. For this sound is distinct from the other two sounds mentioned above, which are the direct sound and the returning sound. For this sound is composed of both of them together, and this sound is called the strong sound ... We find that the essential secret of all of the sounds in the world are these three sounds, which are the direct sound, the returning sound, and the composite sound that is composed of the first two, and it is from these three types of sound that all of the sounds of the world are composed ... and there emerge from these many differences, for there are great differences between the different forms of joining and connecting of the direct sound and the returning sound. For in a place where the barrier is very distant, there the returning sound will be easily distinguishable from the direct sound, and in a tighter space they join together, as mentioned above. And there are great differences in this matter of their joining together, and this is the difference between the different shapes of musical instruments (aside from other reasons related to the composition of these vessels and their capacity to augment or muffle etc. And there are many other aspects to this, etc. For this wisdom of music is great and valuable, above all other wisdoms in the world, as I have understood from Rabeinu z'l)³³⁴

Before I move to the next step of presenting how R. Noson relates the three sounds to EC and CC, it is surely worth noting that, perhaps not unlike R. Infeld's understanding of Maharal's attitude to secular wisdom outlined above, R. Noson here has no trouble referencing and using the non Torah based science of the study of music³³⁵ as a legitimate form of wisdom. For R. Noson, it seems from this formulation, the use of such an analogy is not only permissible, but laudable – he himself does it – for it makes otherwise esoteric Torah notions more accessible and understandable.

³³⁴ Brackets are in the original. This intriguing statement about music from R. Nachman is one I have yet to locate.

³³⁵ Later in this same piece, at LH Piryah ve-Rivyah (3:19), R. Nosson lists the science of music as one of the secular sciences that is concerned only with matters of this world and is not based in Torah.

How did R. Noson know about the science of music? It is difficult to know which secular works R. Noson may or may not have read.³³⁶ One book, however, that he clearly did read is *Sefer Ha-Brit* by R. Pinchas Hurwits (1765-1821), which was first published in 1797. David Ruderman has noted the influence of this work on Bratslav³³⁷ in his recent work *A Best Selling Hebrew Book of the Modern Era: The Book of the Covenant of Pinchas Hurwits and Its Remarkable Legacy* which discusses, among other important matters, how that book served, for a wide audience of Hebrew language readers,³³⁸ as a crucial window into the philosophic, scientific and political changes taking place in the gentile cultures around them. The outlooks of many of the gentile thinkers, scientists and political leaders of 18th century Europe reached both R. Nachman and R. Noson through the lens of this book. In addition to Ruderman's findings,³³⁹ an excellent proof that R. Noson was familiar with this book is that his description of the three basic sounds I quoted above was lifted nearly verbatim from it.³⁴⁰

For R. Noson, the three sounds outlined above are to be understood as an analogy for no less than the three basic Divine "ingredients" of creation itself, whereby the direct sound is the original infinite Divine sound of "creating," the returning sound is the finite "echo" that this produces when that infinite sound encounters the limitation of the finite world that is being formed, and the strong sound is the harmony of the two. Here is one of R. Noson's formulations of what he saw the three sounds as signifying, in which he introduced the important notion of free choice, which, as I will explain below, relates very much to the issue of the limitation of language outlined above:

For the essence of free choice begins with the aspect of the returning sound, for it is there that the essence of free choice resides ... For if all would hear the direct sound itself, which is the very voice of HS'Y itself, through which He enlivens all of the worlds, and continues to enliven them ... if all would hear this sound of HS'Y ... surely there would be no free choice whatsoever, since all would see and hear that HS'Y Himself is enlivening the world through the breath of His

³³⁶ See Shmuel Feiner, "Sola Fide! The Polemic of R. Nosson of Nemirov against Atheism and Haskalah," in *Studies in Hasidism*, ed. David Assaf, Joseph Dan, Immanuel Etkes (Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1999).

³³⁷ David Ruderman, *A Best Selling Hebrew Book of the Modern Era: The Book of the Covenant of Pinchas Hurwits and Its Remarkable Legacy* (Seattle: U. of Washington Press, 2014), 104-107.

³³⁸ He shows how this included Hasidic masters, Karaites, Maskilim and more, see *Ibid*, Chapter 6, "The Readers of *Sefer Ha-Brit*."

³³⁹ See his discussion at *Ibid*, 104-106. Ruderman cites two others who have noted R. Nachman's and R. Nosson's familiarity with this work: Piekarcz, *Hasidut Bratslav*, 249-252 and Mark, *Mistika u-Shiga'on*, 87-88, notes 9 and 10.

³⁴⁰ R. Pinchas Hurwits, *Sefer Ha-Brit*, (Jerusalem, 1989-90), 276. I believe that this dissertation is the first academic work to call attention to this.

mouth ... Rather ... the sound ... that people hear is ... the returning sound ... and hence there is free choice. For someone who is wise will turn his mind, like the forefathers³⁴¹ who inclined their consciousnesses towards truth such that they merited to understand whence the returning sound emerges, such that they perceived and understood that the returning sound has no independent existence, rather its essence is [actually] the direct sound which emerged directly from HS'Y, it is only that he since He brought the [direct] sound into the aspect of the “wall of constriction”³⁴² that there therefore emerged the [returning] sound, so to speak rebounding, from the aspect of the wall of constriction ... hence the returning sound can be heard ... But in truth the essence [of the returning sound is actually only] the direct sound, for the returning sound has no [independent] existence, rather it is merely the echo of the direct sound itself.

Here we have, in a sense, the “double experience,” discussed above in the story of the homeowner and the guest, understood as being built in to the very fabric of creation itself: there is an inner “hearing” that a person can learn to do of the original, infinite sound of creation, from within its finite echo, but this hearing can never be forced upon a person, because it is “inner,” meaning, it is, as outlined above, beyond the limitation of language. The relationship here between creation, language, and free choice is important; I will discuss this tripartite dynamic below, after quoting and briefly discussing one of R. Noson’s teachings about the third sound, in order to provide a fuller sense of the picture R. Noson is painting:³⁴³

And this is the aspect of “in the beginning it arose in the Divine mind to create the world with the attribute of strict justice,³⁴⁴ but then God saw that the world could not exist [thusly] and so He added in the attribute of mercy together with the attribute of strict justice, as it is written:³⁴⁵ “on the day YHWH Elokim³⁴⁶ made the heaven and the earth.”³⁴⁷

For the attribute of strict justice, this is the aspect of the returning sound. For at first He wanted that the world should exist based solely upon the returning sound ... He saw that the world would not be able to exist thusly, for if there were only

³⁴¹ Heb. *Avot Ha-Olam*; this refers to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

³⁴² Heb. *Mechitsat Ha-Tsimtsum*.

³⁴³ The following is from LH Piryah ve-Rivvah 3:21

³⁴⁴ Heb. “*Din*”

³⁴⁵ Genesis (2:5)

³⁴⁶ These two Divine names connote mercy and justice respectively.

³⁴⁷ R. Nosson includes here an acronym for “as the sages taught.” This teaching about the mixing in of the attribute of mercy is found in Rashi’s commentary to the above verse, there is a somewhat similar *Midrash at Bereishit Rabbah* (12:15).

the returning sound, then the world would become filled with heresy,³⁴⁸ for it would be impossible for a person to grasp that all of existence indeed stems from HS'Y ... Hence He stood and added in the attribute of mercy together with the attribute of strict justice. And this is the aspect of the third sound, which is a composite of both of the first two sounds. For HS'Y brought together the direct sound and the returning sound, and thereby produced the aspect of the third sound which is composed of both of them.

And it is through this that the world has existence. For now, due to the existence of the world through the composite sound ... we have the ability to connect ourselves to the light of life, and to know and grasp the holy faith that all [of existence] is drawn from Him. And all of the wisdoms and crookedness that are drawn from the returning sound, from the aspect of strict justice, all of these are themselves stemming only from HS'Y Himself, for the sake of free choice.³⁴⁹

For the returning sound has no existence except through the direct sound, and this becomes possible for us to grasp through the composite sound, whereby HS'Y joined together and harmonized³⁵⁰ the two sounds, which is the aspect of joining together the attributes of strict justice together with mercy, as mentioned above. And were it not for this, it would not be humanly possible to use free choice positively ... as above, but now we do have the ability to turn our hearts towards the truth, towards the direct sound, from which emerged all [of existence], since [now] the existence of the world stands on the harmonizing of the two sounds together, as above. For the direct sound alone cannot be revealed, in order that all does not become nullified out of its [finite] existence, as above.

According to R. Noson's musical analogy, the world we live in is composed of a fascinating harmony of the limitedness of the returning sound, and the unlimitedness of

³⁴⁸ Heb. *apikorsut*

³⁴⁹ I will take the liberty here to add emphasis on one word that emerges from the composite picture that my eye perceives across many hundreds of pages of LH. That one word is: "dignity." In other words, the notion of strict judgment here would mean that a person ought not be "spoon-fed," but rather ought to earn their merit on their own, whereby even according to the strictest standards one would not be able to say that "G-d gave them a freebie." Free choice is an allowance for the dignity of the self to, so to speak, stand on its own two feet. The trouble is that such dignity entails such a degree of Divine concealment that it would make the task of earning merit, basically impossible. Hence the mixing in of mercy is in order to allow the person to realize that the concealment itself is for the sake of their own dignity, thereby providing the person with a "teaspoon of sugar" to help them persevere the concealment and achieve the heights that is within their powers to achieve. See more on this at LH Mincha 7:19 and 7:32-35.

³⁵⁰ R. Nosson repeatedly uses the same Hebrew term for joining together *hirkiv*; I am taking poetic license here and there to employ the term harmony in my translation.

the original direct sound. It is thanks to this third sound, which is a mixing of the two sounds, that it is indeed possible to “hear” that the finite echo in fact emerges from an original, infinite sound.

This musical analogy is important here, for it is, crucially, not the hearing of “language,” but rather the hearing of the original, direct “sound” that is the goal. It is only the returning sound, which is limited, that can be contained within language. The original direct sound, on the other hand, is inherently beyond language. R. Nosen writes, (in a different discourse), that even the language of the kabbalah falls short of being able to demonstrate the existence of God beyond all possible doubt; hence, he writes, it is forbidden to try to use the kabbalah to arrive at a language-based proof of the existence of the Divine.³⁵¹ It is only because God “harmonized” the original sound that is beyond language, together with the returning sound that is within language, that it is possible to use language to point beyond itself, to be able to perceive, in one’s heart, that there is an infinite source of this finite world. I will now discuss, briefly, the notions of creation, language, and free choice. This will be followed by an unpacking of R. Nosen’s musical analogy as it relates to the conflict between EC and CC.

Creation, Language, and Free Choice

The term “wall of constriction” that appeared in the next to the last quote is R. Nosen’s creative, music-based metaphor for an important kabbalistic notion. The notion of *tsimtsum* which in English translates literally as “constriction” refers to the Divine creation of the universe as having been, at root, a “negative” act, whereby before there could “be” anything, first, there needed to be “space” within the infinite Divine light, in order for a finite created world to be able to exist.³⁵² In Bratslav thought this is directly related to language and free choice.

To put it briefly, if language could be used to prove matters of faith in an absolutely conclusive manner, then free choice about whether to believe or not would become, in a sense, immaterial, in the same way that one cannot “choose” to believe that two plus two is five. In other words, there is a type of consciousness that is language-based and definable, which leads to a type of knowing that is inescapably provable to another person.³⁵³ Matters of faith, however, lie in a kind of “gap,” a space within human

³⁵¹ LH Bircot Ha-Shachar 3:35-36, see also the very important discourse at LH Kiddushin 3:18-20 on the language of Torah study and how the more its details become explained in language the more the inner sense, beyond language, of connectivity with G-d, grows. See also LH Bassar be-Chalav 5:27.

³⁵² See R. Chaim Vital, *Ets Chayim* cha 1.

³⁵³ For some “full throttle” rationalist philosophers, such as Mendelssohn, G-d’s existence can indeed be proven in this manner, as mentioned above. For R. Nachman, however, as will be shown in an important quote below, this is not true.

language-based consciousness that refuses or negates the possibility of language entirely. This corresponds to the *tsimtsum*; the cosmic phenomenon of Divine constriction is understood to be, in essence, the creation of human consciousness, which is hence manifest in each person's inner experience of life,³⁵⁴ as a limitation of language, which facilitates free choice on matters of faith.³⁵⁵ R. Nosson wrote:

In actuality the *tsimtsum* ... of the vacated space is only in the mind and the consciousness [of people] ... as can be understood from LMI:64, that the essence of the *tsimtsum* is that God constricted the mind and consciousness [of humanity] such that they are unable to perceive³⁵⁶ God's divinity, may He be blessed.³⁵⁷

³⁵⁴ I alluded above to R. Nosson's need to debate with those Maskilim whose goals were not dismissible as being merely "this-worldly." It is to this plane of the *inner, non-language based, experience* of truth and peace, and also, or even primarily, the inner sense of joy and rightness, that R. Nosson appealed to in his debates and discussions with them, as will be discussed below in chapter four. Faith, in the experiential sense of an inner and unique perception of being given life by G-d [see e.g. SHR 1] is, as will be discussed there, "proven" in this individualistic and experiential manner, through the "litmus test" of one's own inner sense of rightness.

³⁵⁵ In LH a good number of notions are presented as ungraspable through language-based intellectuality; they all have in common that the reason for this is due to preservation of free choice. See e.g. notions of not being able to perceive: creation *ex nihilo* LH Piryah v'Rivyah 3:19, 33; Divine desire for human service LH Nedarim 4:15; one's own level of spiritual standing LH Shevuot 2:17; one's teacher's consciousness (*da'at rabo*) Shevuot 2:21; a complete comprehension of '*sechel shebechol davar*' (Eng. the Divine intelligence inherent within every physical object, as in LMI:1) LH Pikadon 4:22; how it is exactly that Torah and mitzvot connect one to the Divine, LH Gittin 4:2; the reward for weathering the spiritual tests of life, LH Shabbat 7:75.

³⁵⁶ See also LH Eiruvei Techumin 6:20 "in that place [of the vacated space] it is impossible to find G-d through any form of intellectual grasping (*al yedei shum sechel*) but only through faith." See also LH Tola'im 4:8 "the secret of the vacated space from which G-d's light was constricted, such that through this [constriction] it seems (*nidmeh*) that there is no light of wisdom and intellect there [through which to be able to perceive G-d's existence.] Hence indeed it is impossible to find G-dliness there through any wisdom or intellect. But truly even in the vacated space itself there is Divine light which is wisdom and intellect, it is only that this wisdom and intellect has been hidden and concealed in the aspect of the constriction of the vacated space which cannot be grasped or understood presently, until the time to come, in which it will be revealed that the vacated space is like *hahu kamtsa delevushei minei ubei* (Eng. the snail whose clothing is made out of itself)." See also LH Niddah 2 at length. And see LMII:12 in which is stated that it's forbidden to *think* about how exactly G-d's life force is behind the negative, but on the other hand, it's imperative to *ask* "where is G-d's glory," and in fact, the very depth of the asking, which leads to a languageless sense of intimacy with the Divine, is itself the 'finding.' This will be discussed further in the next chapter.

³⁵⁷ LH Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:33.

There is a lesser known version of the sixty fourth teaching in *Likutei Moharan*, which was handwritten by R. Nachman, and found and published posthumously, by R. Noson; (this version appears at the back of most printed versions of LM, under the heading “from the manuscripts of our Rebbe.”) It deals differently with an important notion that appears in the “standard” LM I:64. In the standard version, mention is made of the notion that, due to the *tsimtsum*, there exist questions on matters of faith which cannot be answered using language. The manuscript version emphasizes a wider scope:³⁵⁸ there exist whole bodies of wisdom which, when one studies them, will lead one to the conclusion that there must not be a God. To be sure, this does not mean that the non-existence of God can be proven inescapably, for this would only mean a lack of free choice in the other direction. Rather, this means that there are respectable and justifiable forms of thinking, intellectual disciplines, or “takes” on life, which simply and non-problematically exclude any sense of God:

And so it is that in these wisdoms you will not be able to find that according to them God exists, for they teach precisely the opposite, just as the vacated space itself [is experienced as negating the existence of God.]

And of such wisdoms it is forbidden to discuss, for they lack the ‘power of speech,’ for the vacated space is anterior to creation, fundamentally before any letters of speech. Hence there is no power in the speaker to speak of it, and no ability of the intellect to understand it, for He constricted His wisdom such that it would remain as a vacated space, and it is of this [vacated space] that it is said:³⁵⁹ ‘be silent, so it arose in My thought.’

And certainly it is necessary to flee from these wisdoms. But, since many of our people have already fallen into them, it is permitted for the Tsadik of the generation³⁶⁰ who is in the aspect of Moses, and even more, he is commanded to study these wisdoms, in order to lift up those of our people who have fallen into

³⁵⁸ While it is true that in the printed version at LMI:64 the term *chochmot* (wisdoms) is also employed, still, the emphasis is squarely on the *kushiot* (questions) and *mevuchot* (conundrums) that these raise, and the impossibility of finding answers to them in language; the wisdoms are treated secondarily, as mere background for the questions they raise. The handwritten version, on the other hand, speaks chiefly and frankly of the bodies of wisdom themselves, as opposed to relating almost exclusively to the questions they raise, as in the printed version.

³⁵⁹ BT Menachot 29B.

³⁶⁰ Here the permission and mitsvah is granted only to the single “Tsadik of the generation.” In R. Nosson’s formulations there is more room for others as well to delve into the wisdoms of the “vacated space.” This may be based upon LMI:8 in which R. Nachman states that “the Tsadik and those who are connected to him (Heb. *hanilvim eilav*) may debate the wicked. This issue will be discussed further below in chapter four, see next footnote.

them. And do not think that through the Tsadik's study of these wisdoms that perhaps he will be able to understand through them the opposite, meaning, that he will be able to produce, for instance, conclusive proof of God's creation of the universe ex nihilo, nor [should you think] that he will be able to find Godliness in any of these wisdoms and show their proponents the error of their ways. Know that this is impossible to accomplish until the Days to Come.

It is thanks to the *tsimtsum*, and the resultant respectability of non-belief in God, that free choice on matters of faith became possible. What happens is that people, each in their unique fashion, receive an inner sense of inspiration and faith, that is utterly personal and inexpressible in language (hence inapplicable to anyone else), and it will then be up to them to choose to follow this inspiration, and live a deeply religious life, or not.³⁶¹ The preservation of free choice is understood, in Bratslav thought, to be a crucial aspect, not only of creation itself, but also of the Tsadik's own role.³⁶²

The "Sound" of EC, the "Language" of CC

R. Noson writes that, being that matters of faith can never be fully expressed in language, they therefore must be "heard." This explains, he writes, why the central statement of faith (which is recited twice, daily) employs the verb for hearing: *sh'mah Yisrael*, "**Hear** O Israel" that God is one. Hearing, writes R. Noson, (quoting from the *Tikunei Zohar*)³⁶³ happens in the heart. Hence the perception of the Divine that the prophets achieved was not by way of intellectual sophistry, but rather it was this inner hearing of the heart, which they were then able to, in successive stages, bring into

³⁶¹ See e.g. LH Techumin 5:4, that this is the inner meaning of Canticles (1:4) "draw me after You" which is an inspiration from heaven, and then I will choose: "let us run." See further below on this important notion of non-language based inspiration. See also Birkot ha-Reiach (4:32-33).

³⁶² See e.g. LH Bircot Hashachar (5:41, 74-78), LH Shevuot (2:4), LH Beit Haknesset (6:12). See also: CM:197, SHR: 105, YMI:82. CM: 330 reads (this is an excerpt of R. Nachman's words therein): "I could make you all perfect and awesome Tsadikim, but what would come of it, for if so it would only be G-d Himself worshiping Himself." There is a similar quote, related by R. Nosson's disciple R. Nachman Chazan of Tulchin (1814-1884), in his introduction to LH Choshen Mishpat (subsection 3), which reads: "He (R. Nosson) once spoke of the holy society of the Besht ... and said that with the degree of fire they had in their hearts, if they would have also had our conversations and teachings, they would have lost their free choice. But now, in these generations, the strengthening of the [evil] inclination is so powerful that even after all of our teachings the strength of free choice remains great and very vast. But even so, I have a certain teaching which even today would take away free choice. But what goodness would come from your service which does not spring from one who has free choice?"

³⁶³ Tikkun 58, p.92A. The references here to R. Nosson's writings are to LH Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:16.

language, which, when used correctly, will be capable of pointing beyond itself to languageless connectivity with the Divine.³⁶⁴

For exceptional people and in previous generations,³⁶⁵ writes R. Noson, the ability to “tune in” to the direct sound is/was achievable, to a certain extent, independently. For most people, however:

Especially the simple people such as us today, our entire life force and [sense of] holiness comes through the aspect of the sense of hearing, in that we listen to the sound of the voice of our ancestors, who have passed the holy Torah on to us.³⁶⁶

It is not their language, not their proofs or arguments, but the *sound* of their voices.³⁶⁷ The modality of EC, the hitting home of the truth that human beings are inherently significant and can indeed serve God, and that God actually desires them and their service, is made accessible through hearing the urgency, the experiential dimension, of the message of the ancestors and the Tsadikim: the hearing of their sound is, in a way, an experience of their experience of relationship with the Divine, which they extend to each individual, inviting them, as in the story above, to step out of their language-based homestead. This is their inspiration, and it is through the use of this modality of sound, as opposed to language, that the Tsadikim preserve, as mentioned above, the dignity of each person’s free choice to follow their lead, or not.

³⁶⁴ See LH Apotropus 3 at length on the “conversion” of *kol* (sound) to *dibbur* (speech). See further at LH Nesiat Kapa'im 5:8.

³⁶⁵ But see LH Pesach 7:8-11 which attests that this is not reserved exclusively for exceptional people or previous generations. R. Nosson writes there that when a person is unable to receive help or advice from anyone, it is necessary for G-d to send hints and inspiration, an inner sense of truth, directly to them. See eg. subsection 10 where R. Nosson writes that “HS'Y has mercy on us in each generation and every single day, and sends us the light of truth itself.” And at subsection 11: “But when HS'Y wants to have mercy on a person and redeem him and turn him towards life, and put into him an awakening to return ... then HS'Y lights up in [the person's] mind the essence of truth itself, before revealing to the person any holy advice. And it is through this essence of truth that a person comes to faith, and through this the person will draw close to the true Tsadik and his truly kosher people who will then show him the path that he can walk on ... of holy forms of advice.” See LH Birkot ha-Reiach 4:45-46 that just how G-d decides to dole out these crucial awakenings is mysterious; it is a matter of faith to believe that they are given out fairly; R. Nosson relates this there to the mystery of the election of the Jewish people.

³⁶⁶ LH Piryah ve-Rivayah 3:16.

³⁶⁷ R. Nosson continues, in that same subsection, to relate that no language can contain G-d's greatness. See also LH Succah 6:13 which similarly highlights the notion of hearing the sound of the voices of the ancestors and of Tsadikim; also LH Nedarim 4:25 is an exquisite exposition on an aspect of the relationship of the Tsadik to sound, (in the context of R. Nachman's story entitled “The Seven Beggars.”)

This notion of “sound” must not be understood to be limited to actual sound.³⁶⁸ It refers, rather, to all forms of extra-verbal communication, including, for instance, the language of the eyes,³⁶⁹ which R. Noson discusses at length, as well as other forms of body language that he observed from his Rebbe, which R. Noson took care to reference in his writings, mentioning the importance of relaying these;³⁷⁰ there are also his references to the way R. Nachman said things,³⁷¹ drew out certain words.³⁷² These last two are based in actual sound, but even just having his readers *reading* about them, R. Noson understood, would be beneficial.

Emunat chachamim, as outlined above, is rooted in the notion of faith in people as being capable of relating to, capable of actually serving, God. *Emunah b'atsmo* as its core component means bringing this faith “home” to believe this about oneself. Hearing the “sound” of the Tsadikim, who are able to make the third, composite and harmonious, sound, apparent, means to hear the reality of the Divine wish for human service,³⁷³ and hence that this very world, with all its limitations, is but a Divinely crafted finite echo of the original infinite sound of God, so to speak, reaching out. In fact, R. Noson writes, it is *because* of these very limitations that actual human service of God is an extraordinarily joyous matter.³⁷⁴

Chochmah chitsonit, on the other hand, instead of placing the relationship with the Source of creation at the center, always involves focusing on some aspect of creation itself, and placing some type of this worldly goal, quantifiable and comparable,³⁷⁵ at the

³⁶⁸ See e.g. LH Mincha 7 p.446, which states that “the melody of the Tsadik hints to [each person’s] heart in their own unique way,” see also CM 157, that the attractiveness of the very person of the Tsadik is perceived musically: “... then he (R. Nachman) said: ‘we are like one who plays a melody and the others dance, and for whomever does not understand and hear – this is a wonder their eyes – why are they running over and dancing? So it is a wonder to the world – why is it that you run after me?’”

³⁶⁹ Such as at LH Eruvei Techumin 5:30-41 and YMI: 160.

³⁷⁰ E.g. LH Netilat Yadayim 6:2 and Alim Li-Terufah 419.

³⁷¹ E.g. LH Tefillin 5:5.

³⁷² E.g. LH Geviat Chov Min ha-Yetomim 3:17: “Rabeinu z’l ... said ‘*Gevald*, don’t give up’ and he drew out the word “*Gevald*” very much.” (This also appears at SHR 153) The Yiddish word “gevald” is hard to translate.

³⁷³ See e.g. LH Shabbat 7:13 that the Tsadik’s consciousness is so primal that it “predates” the angelic argument against the creation of man, hence he is capable of giving unstoppable inspiration, being that he perceives the original, unfettered Divine wish for human service.

³⁷⁴ See LH Piryah ve-Rivya 3:1-13, LH Hoda’ah 6:31, and LH Nefilat Apayim 4.

³⁷⁵ I will once again mention here that I will, in chapter four, discuss R. Nosson’s awareness that not all who oppose religion are therefore exclusively proponents of competitive, this-worldly goals. There are also those who, (as described at LMII:4), follow non-religious forms of thinking for their own sake, with no goal of personal gain.

center. Hence CC is focused squarely upon the returning sound: it simply analyzes that which language can identify and, at least to some extent, prove, without attempting to hear that the set of finite manifestations that it focuses upon are nothing more than finite echoes of the infinite, direct sound of creation, (as above):

All of the wisdoms of the *mechakrim* are in the aspect of the returning sound, for they do not hear the essential sound of HS'Y at all, rather they look only 'after'³⁷⁶ creation, 'after' nature [has come into existence] and investigate only that which is observable 'after' nature. But they do not turn their faces, they do not direct their hearts and ears to listen, to hear, to understand – from Whom is it that this [returning] sound emerged, to begin with?³⁷⁷

Another way that R. Noson puts this is as follows:

Hence their wisdoms are called CC, for even when they sometimes come to some aspect of truth, yet it is all only external. Such as for instance when one comes to grasp, through one's intellect, that the world is round, or that it is the nature of air to expand and flee through the heat of fire, and such matters, one merely becomes aware of the truth of how air responds to heat, and through this one can concoct different kinds of inventions and devices. But the reason for this, meaning the "why," why the nature of air is so, this is quite beyond all of the sages of CC, and this is why their wisdom is called 'external,' for of the 'internal' [meaning the "why"] they are completely unaware.³⁷⁸

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to mention two more things. First, for R. Noson the conflict between the modalities of EC and CC began at the very dawn of human consciousness in the garden of Eden (as noted above) and *continued* through human history as a central, if not *the* central, very real societal struggle, whereby, to put it briefly, there were always true Tsadikim in each generation and, generally, most people chose not to believe in them. This notion of a cosmic, pan-historical conflict, is developed at length in a number of places in his LH, (and will be presented at greater length in chapter four.)³⁷⁹ The second is that belief in the sages is based upon a particular notion of

³⁷⁶ I believe that when R. Nosson writes "*hem mabitim achar ha-briah, achar ha-teva levad*" the word *achar* means "after," in the sequential sense, which highlights creation and nature as the returning sound, that comes 'after' the original sound. It is possible that the word should be translated more simply as 'upon' or 'at,' in a sense somewhat similar to the English "looking after" an object or person.

³⁷⁷ LH Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:20, see also subsection 27 which relates a formulation of religious CC: R. Nosson writes of the religious rebellion of Korach (at Numbers, chapter 16) that it was motivated by a focus upon the returning sound.

³⁷⁸ LH Chezkat ha-Metaltelin 5:2.

³⁷⁹ See e.g. LH Pesach 6, LH Bircot Ha-Shachar 5, LH Rosh Chodesh 7, LH Shechita 5.

(degrees of, as will be shown,) spiritual objectivity that the sages are understood to have reached. This is an important aspect of belief “that” that is a cornerstone of R. Noson’s definition of EC.

The Fallible Objectivity of the Tsadik

The basic notion here is that the vast majority of people are mired in their relatively delusional senses³⁸⁰ of what life is “about,” and hence require a more objective perspective that can help them tune in to “reality,” and it is this that the Tsadik provides. For instance, R. Noson reported the following teaching in Sichot ha-Ran:

One who does not listen to and follow the words of true sages is liable to lose their mind.³⁸¹ For the main reason for the insanity of those who lose their minds is that they do not listen to and follow the words of those who are of lucid minds ... for even though, according to the spirit of folly and the insanity of one who has lost their mind it seems completely clear to him or her that they must wear torn clothing and roll about in the garbage and other such delusions, even so, if one greater than they tells them that these behaviours are in fact not necessary, then if the person is willing to annul their perception and consciousness before someone greater than they, then surely all of their insanity would be canceled out. We find that the main reason for insanity is due to the insane person’s unwillingness to listen to and follow the words of the sages; understand this well.³⁸²

It is clear to me that this refers not only to the physical acts of wearing torn clothing and rolling about in garbage that are the habit of precious few, but also to the myriad degrees and forms of self-destructive behavior patterns that afflict nearly all people. Another important passage relates this to the conflict of *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit*:

The sage [of CC] imagines in his heart that just as he was able to invent a wondrous new technological vessels through his wit and wisdom, so too will he

³⁸⁰ At YMII: 78, (the journal quoted above on meeting the Mitnagdim), R. Nosson singled out LMII:8 as a major source in his Rebbe’s teachings on EC . The trouble is, the term EC itself does not appear in that teaching. It seems clear that what R. Nosson meant is that a major component, if not the major component, of what EC entails in terms of what it “does” for the person who chooses to believe in the sages, is that it provides the believer with the ability to “fix” their imagination and thereby be able to relate appropriately to reality and to G-d. I will be discussing this further below.

³⁸¹ Heb. *hu yachol lehishtage’ah*.

³⁸² SHR: 67. See also LMI:1 which contains a similar theme.

be able to ascend up to platforms in the clouds³⁸³ and he imagines in his mind that he has grasped notions about the Divine and the purpose of life.³⁸⁴

Success in technological invention requires no prior work on the physical context of the psyche of the inventor (i.e. their body) because it relates to that aspect of creation which corresponds to the returning sound, as above, and is containable within language. Hence all that is necessary is the ability to make the necessary logical calculations within the limited set of the properties of physical matter. The trouble begins when success on the technological front, bringing, as it does, a sense of wonder and power, becomes grounds for confidence that “mapping the human spirit” or “knowledge of God” might also be within the realm of achievement based on similar, language and logic based, methodology. Theological matters,³⁸⁵ however, for R. Noson, involve investigating beyond the limited dimension of the returning sound, to that dimension of creation that is manifestly beyond the limitations of language, and this necessitates a different methodology in order to reach understanding. This brings us to the crucial notion of the fixing of the *medameh* (imagination), for it is through the imagination that the mind can interface with that which is beyond language.

To use my own overly simplified analogy: one’s actual life experiences are like the bare outlines of a coloring book. Much of the significance of one’s experiences is filled in by the imagination, ‘coloring them in.’ By looking to the sages for contextualizing one’s experiences and providing them with meaning, one’s way of assigning value and of interpreting and translating one’s life story will change. The grand context here is of creation *ex nihilo*, which, as explained at LM II:8, one’s language-based intellect can never grasp. It is only through learning how to use one’s imagination positively, which is achieved through *emunat chachamim*, that one can truly put one’s life in the context of creation *ex nihilo*. The way that the sages themselves attain a fixing of their *medameh* (thereby becoming trustable guides for others) involves intensive refinement of the appetites of the body, because in order to “tune in” to the composite sound and thereby be able to “perceive” the direct sound and reach a life of profound faith, one needs the intuitive, non-logical, imaginative side of their consciousness to be freed of all biases:

³⁸³ Heb. *kein hu yachol la'a lot al bamatei av.*

³⁸⁴ LH Succah 7:2

³⁸⁵ See LH Shevuot (2:2) where R. Nosson wrote that: “I heard from Rabeinu z'l that the *mechakrim*, through rational speculation, were able to understand the greatness of G-d as it truly is, namely, that G-d cannot be grasped or understood in any way, through any form of intellect ... but this they will never understand: how any mitsvah or service of HS'Y could be possible. This they will never be able to grasp in their minds at all, and this is their essential heresy, and it is because of this that they are far from truth.”

For the refining of the body ... which is the aspect of the refining of the *medameh* ... through this [there are those rare Tsadikim who] reach whole consciousness and whole faith to the very highest degree ... and most people that do not reach such a degree of refinement, for even total Tsadikim, not all of them reach such a level of refinement ... their main fixing is through closeness to true Tsadikim who have merited, through the refinement of their body ... to great and true consciousness, and to a spirit of prophecy and holiness that is real. And they are able thereby to refine the *medameh* of the entire world too, in order for all to reach completely whole faith.³⁸⁶

The following is a passage on one way that the above plays out sociologically: simply observing the Tsadik affects the minds of people, thereby bringing about a refinement of their *medameh*. Note the interplay here of belief “in” and belief “that.” R. Noson wrote that Tsadikim:

who have broken the physicality of their bodies completely such that they merited to grasp the *razim*³⁸⁷ of creation, to the point where all of their actions and speech all contain wondrous *razim*, and are not simple at all. For they actually know what they are doing and what they are saying, unlike the vast majority of people who have no idea of the inner dimension of what they are saying and doing, and the great heights to which speech and action reach. Hence it is that through **believing in** them, as above, **that** all of their speech and actions are not simple but rather contain *razim* ... For it is upon EC that the entire possibility for keeping the Torah stands. For it is through EC that one comes to believe that *everything in the world*³⁸⁸ contains *razim*. It is only that we do not perceive them due to the physicality of our bodies, for behold, this Tsadik who broke the physicality of his body, actually knows what he is doing and saying.³⁸⁹

The intensive degree of refinement of the body described above is an important emphasis in many places in Bratslav teachings, particularly the total degree of victory achieved by R. Nachman in terms of its physical and emotional appetites. As mentioned in the introductory chapter above, stories of R. Nachman’s miraculous abilities have tended to be downplayed in Bratslav literature,³⁹⁰ yet there is one supernatural feature of this enigmatic Hasidic Rebbe which was not: R. Nachman’s victory over his body’s physical and emotional appetites is presented front and center as having been, after some

³⁸⁶ LH Tefilin 5:35.

³⁸⁷ “Mysteries.” This refers to physicality “pointing beyond itself” in different ways, towards a spiritual Divine source. See LMI: 42.

³⁸⁸ My italics, and my bolding above.

³⁸⁹ LH Chezkat ha-Metaltelin 5:2.

³⁹⁰ Arthur Green, *Tormented Master*, 9. See Shivhei ha-Ran 27, Sichot ha-Ran 186,187. See also Kramer, *Through Fire and Water*, ch. 33, note 18.

years of intensive spiritual work, absolute and total. This includes a number of crucial sources in *Shivhei ha-Ran*³⁹¹ and *Chayei Moharan*,³⁹² and its importance is highlighted in a number of teachings in ,³⁹³ and in LH, such as the two passages just quoted.

As mentioned above in the introductory chapter to this dissertation, complete victory over the physical and emotional appetites of the body is not understood in Bratslav thought as leading a person to a static state, on the contrary, the prior stage of victory over one's physicality is rather an initiation into infinite struggle,³⁹⁴ wherein one lives a great paradox: oneness with the Divine whilst simultaneously constantly struggling to get past the limitation of each level of awareness to one still higher.³⁹⁵ The sense of longing and incompleteness are themselves the greatest pleasure of all.³⁹⁶ R. Nosson wrote that "just as there are thousands upon myriads of levels of the [physical] evil inclination among average people, for even amongst the wicked there are thousands upon

³⁹¹ Paragraph 16-25, and in the section on R. Nachman's journey to the Land of Israel, paragraph 35.

³⁹² Paragraph 233, 234.

³⁹³ E.g. LMI:10 (subsection 4), LMI:72, LMI:144. It is worth noting that R. Nachman's self-understanding of having reached unique heights of refinement and, hence, perception, connectivity and "Tsadik-hood," is manifestly "non-aristocratic," neither in terms of physical pedigree (meaning here by merit of being a descendent of an illustrious family, e.g. his being a great grandson of the Besht) nor even spiritual predilection (such as possession of a "high level soul"). Both of these he explicitly negates as having had anything to do with his achievements. He also explicitly spoke out what follows from this, which is that anyone can reach the same heights as he. Some examples of this "democratizing" of the station of Tsadik can be found at *Shivhei ha-Ran* 27; *Sichot ha-Ran* 163, 165; *CM* 230; *LH Bircot ha-Shachar* (3:6). [See, on the other hand, the more "aristocratic" presentation of the notion of the Tsadik in chapter 14 of the *Tanya* of R. Shneur Zalman of Liady.]

³⁹⁴ See *LM I:72*, in which R. Nachman provides an in-depth understanding of what the Tsadik's struggle entails *after* the Tsadik has achieved total victory over his body. He teaches that it is only post-physical-victory that the Tsadik's most profound struggles *begin*; he connects this to the notion that even G-d "struggles" with the *midat hadin* (attribute of strict judgment). "Sweetening" the attribute of strict judgment is achieved through the Tsadik's spiritual nullification to G-d's very "being" which is completely good, but this is not a constant state: it must be achieved anew (this can happen at different "levels"), each time.

³⁹⁵ See e.g. *Shluchim* 3 395 for a description of the paradox of oneness with the Divine and constant growth; *LH Arev* (3:15) for a description of the role of longing in heaven; *Tefillin* 5:5 for a description of the greatness of what might be described as both the admission and the achievement of "not knowing."

³⁹⁶ See *LH Arev* (3:7) in which R. Nosson identifies the pleasure and delight of the Sabbath (*oneg Shabbos*) as essentially consisting of a heightened sense of longing. (See also *LH Arev* 3:40 where he relates longing with joy).

myriads of levels ... so too the [angelic] evil inclination of the great [Tsadikim] has thousands upon myriads of levels.”³⁹⁷

It is important to emphasize that the notion of *refining the medameh* does not mean “erasing” it. The objectivity of the Tsadik that we are talking about here might be described as “relational:” the *medameh*, in a state of refinement, is nothing less than a crucial dimension of the mind, which, tentacle-like, can reach out and probe that which is not yet understood, and, for a great Tsadik, do so in such a way that has no bias whatsoever based on any prior understanding or experience. Hence objectivity here means the ability to explore as “purely” as possible, meaning with as total as possible a focus on the relationship with the Divine without attachment to any particular manifestation, or any past experience.³⁹⁸ This is not unlike getting to know a person, whereby each new piece of information adds to the formation of a greater sense of the whole of the person, which in turns adds to the attractiveness of the enigma of who the person *really* is, which begs for ever more profound novel perceptions of them, that must be perceived without being colored by previous perceptions, *ad infinitum*:

For the great Tsadik ... each time he comes to a new conception and level, even when he merits a major elevation, he immediately makes himself as one who knows not, and returns each time to faith. For he knows and believes that in proportion to the greatness of HS’Y he still knows nothing whatsoever, for “His greatness cannot be fathomed.”³⁹⁹ Hence although he has reached a very great and exalted level, even so, he will not rely upon this to serve HS’Y with *chochmot* alone.⁴⁰⁰ Rather, he will return each time to serve HS’Y with simplicity.⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁷ LH Nedarim (4:16)

³⁹⁸ At this point we have reached the limit of this dissertation’s necessarily incomplete, but hopefully sufficiently enlightening, discussion of the notion of the *medameh*. The formulation presented in this paragraph is built mostly upon LH Birkot ha-Reiach 4, es subsection 14-17, where R. Nosson relates the notion of the *medameh* to the *tsimtsum* and free choice. See also LH Shluchim (5:1), LH Gittin (4:1-3).

³⁹⁹ Psalms (145:3)

⁴⁰⁰ Heb. *af al pi chen eino somech she-ya’avod et HS’Y be-chochmot bilvad*. The term “somech” here is important, its literal translation is “lean upon,” implying a kind of a crutch that one might relax into instead of pursuing the dynamism of relationshi This does not mean that a living relationship with the Divine with no intellectual “crutches” is an insomniac affair: the importance of the need for pauses, for what is described as a spiritual form of sleeping, appears in a number of teachings, (such as at LMI:35 and LH Nezikin 2.) Note here that the danger of *chochmot*, which, as presented above, fits within the rubric of the composite picture of CC, is understood to exist even for those exalted Tsadikim who have fully conquered their physicality.

⁴⁰¹ LH Nedarim (4:16)

Here we arrive at the important coexistence of fallibility and objectivity that is to be found in the Tsadik. Since the objectivity here is “relational” as described above, it follows that its coexistence with fallibility in the Tsadik is no contradiction. EC involves looking to the Tsadik to be tuned in to the depth of relationship with the Divine. Even after reaching dizzyingly exalted levels, the Tsadik forges on,⁴⁰² and it is this very dynamism which gives them the unique kind of relational objectivity that I am attempting to describe: they are capable of awakening people to, and encouraging them to grow within, their unique relationships with the Divine, because the Tsadik himself does not fall prey to the “relational subjectivity” of stopping to grow, and becoming satisfied with any particular level of achievement, but rather is constantly renewing his or her focus upon the relationship itself.

Relational objectivity, in this sense, is more like a vector than a static perspective. And now it is, hopefully, clear that this type of objectivity does not entail infallibility. If one would ask- does this mean that everything the Tsadik does, or tells someone, by way of advice⁴⁰³ or the like, is necessarily correct? The answer, it seems quite clear, is no:⁴⁰⁴

⁴⁰²The interconnectedness between the Tsadik and the Jewish people is important to emphasize in this regard. See e.g. LH Matanah (5:24): “And therefore even when the Tsadik achieves some great and very hidden grasping [of G-dliness], this means nothing to him, until he understands how, through this new understanding, he will be able to bring people to right actions, through which to bring them to return to HS’Y and strengthen them, as we understood from him, may his memory be a blessing.” See also, on the other hand, Minchah (7:63) that the Tsadik collects the tiny efforts of the Jewish people and forms from them Torah, “and this is the aspect of why it is that [many] holy books are called *likutim* (Eng. “collections”). And so Rabeinu z’l called all of his books by the name *likutim*. For all of the Torah that the true Tsadikim reveal is only through this aspect of collecting [the tiny efforts of the entire people] as mentioned above.” The first quote emphasizes the Tsadik’s own efforts to be able to turn his heights into helpful teachings for the people, and the second, that the very heights of perception he reaches are only through the tiny efforts of the people.

⁴⁰³ See LM I:143, which presents the idea that if a person goes with their own reasoning in making important decisions on matters of which they are unsure, they may bring upon themselves damage that was not originally decreed in Heaven. Whereas if the person seeks the advice of a Tsadik, then even if he gives advice which brings about some kind of damage, the person can rest assured that that this was decreed in Heaven. It is possible to understand that teaching as referring to the infallibility of the Tsadik. I would argue that, in line with the oral teaching quoted just below and other important sources, (see the following footnote), a more correct understanding of LMI:143 is the following. The focus of the teaching is on the person who needs advice. This person needs to get beyond his or her own limited perception and seek counsel with a Tsadik. If they do so, they can be assured that, in the merit of having done so, they will not bring upon themselves any damages not previously decreed. But the Tsadik’s advice may in fact turn out to have

Rabeinu said: the world says that a Tsadik cannot do wrong,⁴⁰⁵ and if he does do wrong, he is no longer a Tsadik. I say that a Tsadik can do wrong, and that if he does do wrong he remains a Tsadik.⁴⁰⁶

Because the Tsadik's objectivity, through which he can help others fix their *medameh*, is relational, as above, it follows that not only does this not logically necessitate infallibility, but also the focus of the Tsadik's guidance will not be characterized by the imparting of particular instructions, but rather general ways through which relationship with the Divine can be accessed.⁴⁰⁷ Everyone can benefit from a kind of experiential "apprenticeship" with the Tsadik, which can be activated through studying their teachings, heeding their advice, and all of the different ways whereby a person is pointed by the Tsadik beyond language to ever more profound ways to activate his or her unique relationship with the Divine.

As mentioned above, the Tsadik's teachings are not seen as "cookie-cutter" pronouncements from on high, to which everyone else must "submit." Rather, they are understood as "maps" of spiritual "anatomy," through the use of which each person can "carve their own trail;" kabbalistically speaking, as mentioned above, they can become empowered to "construct their own faces."

A Note on Universalism and the Spiritual Objectivity of the Tsadik

As mentioned in the introductory chapter above, Feiner maps R. Noson's thought onto the contemporary European landscape as being virtually identical to that of Johann Hamann. This dissertation submits that this is a mistake. To be sure, R. Noson's appeals to faith in his writings such as the pamphlets and the prayers he composed (both of which Feiner highlights) are indeed intensive and often "total:" he certainly believed that a person could have a great life through relying on faith alone, and held that for most people this is the safest and by far the most preferred way to go in modern times, given the powerful social dimension that accompanied rational/philosophic inquiry, which pulled people away from tradition. However, this does not mean that in R. Noson's

been problematic, due to the Tsadik's fallibility. The damage that ensues, however, will be in line with that which had been previously decreed, thanks to the merit of having consulted the Tsadik. [See a somewhat similar notion of fallibility at *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* vol.2 paragraph 100, which reports the story of R. Nachman's own amazement at the power of a mother's prayers, who had achieved the heavenly awarding of many years of life to her ill child, after he himself had been convinced that the decree against that child was impossible to avert].

⁴⁰⁴ See CM 487, 551, LH Gezeila (5:4-14), LH Nedarim (4:16).

⁴⁰⁵ Heb. *eino yachol la'asot avlah*.

⁴⁰⁶ *Siach Sarfei Kodesh*, vol. 2 paragraph 45. The last line in Yiddish reads: *vert ehr nisht ois Tsadik*.

⁴⁰⁷ See SHR 185; CM:491; *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* vol.6 paragraphs 25 and 334.

theological universe language-based rational inquiry is an utter dead end, a mere human construction. Indeed, in both R. Nachman and R. Nosen's teachings⁴⁰⁸ there are important instances of explicit agreement with certain findings of rationalistic inquiry.

As charted out in the thesis statement, and as shown in this chapter, for R. Nosen there are two layers of human perception, one language-based and the other ungraspable through language. Each has a corresponding kind of objectivity. Each has a real place, both in society and in the life of each individual.

There is another mistake that could emerge from identifying R. Nosen's thought with that of Hamann which I wish to highlight here. Isaiah Berlin, (and others who have followed in his path of understanding),⁴⁰⁹ has written of a direct line of influence, which began with Hamann's anti-rationalism, and ended with Fascism:

Hamann hated authorities, autocrats, self-appointed leaders – he was democratic and anti-liberal – and embodies one of the earliest combinations of populism and obscurantism, a genuine feeling for ordinary men and their values and the texture of their lives, joined with acute dislike for those who presume to tell them how to live. This kind of reactionary democracy, the union of anti-intellectualism and self-identification with the popular masses, is later to be found both in Cobbett and in the German nationalists of the Napoleonic wars, and is one of the strands that was most prominent in the Christian-Social Party in Austria, in the chauvinist clerical politics at the end of the nineteenth century in France and, in due course, in Fascism and National Socialism, into which these streams in part poured themselves.⁴¹⁰

The root of the great evils of the 20th century, according to Isaiah Berlin, was in Hamann's⁴¹¹ protest against the universalism of the goals of the Enlightenment. Berlin summarized this protest thus:

Rational religion, rational metaphysics, rational politics, rational law – these doctrines appeared to be moving forward with the irresistible power of liberated human reason. The spirit that inspired the most fearless and humane and

⁴⁰⁸ For R. Nachman's teachings see e.g. LMI: 25, LMI: 52, LMI: 63. For R. Nosen's see e.g. LH Shevuot 2:2, LH Metaltelin 5.

⁴⁰⁹ See e.g. Richard Wolin, *The Seduction of Unreason. The Intellectual Romance with Fascism from Nietzsche to Postmodernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004). But Berlin also has his detractors, particularly in this regard, see e.g. Robert Norton "The Myth of the Counter-Enlightenment."

⁴¹⁰ Isaiah Berlin, *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Hamann: Vico, Hamann, Herder* (Princeton U. Press: 2004) 424.

⁴¹¹ There were others such as Vico and Herder, although Berlin wrote that Hamann was the first of these, *Ibid*, 438.

enlightened writing on the need for reform in the often hideously oppressive and irrational legal systems or economic policies, or for the elimination of political and moral injustices which are today by and large forgotten, was the same as that which inspired progress in the physical and biological sciences; it occasionally led to such oddities as Wolff's belief, enunciated in the course of an argument against miracles, that Christ was able to change water into wine, and Joshua to stop the sun at Gibeon, because they were endowed with superior – superhuman, indeed – chemical or astrophysical knowledge. All principles of explanation everywhere must be the same. Indeed this is what rationality consisted in. Not many thinkers of this period who are remembered today openly dissented from this central principle. Hamann was one of these.⁴¹² His doctrines and his style reflect each other and his view of the world as an unorderable succession of episodes, each carrying its value in itself, intelligible only by direct experience, a 'living through' this experience, unintelligible – dead – when it is reported by others. A man must live on his own account, not as a pensioner of others, and to live on one's own account is to report – or, as often as not, fail to report – what one has lived through, and to use theories only as crutches to be thrown away when direct experience presents itself. No complete account of anything can be achieved by these means.⁴¹³

In light of the above, there is an important dimension of R. Noson's thought that is worth emphasizing in order to avoid Feiner's mistake of grouping him in with thinkers such as Johan Hamann. This is the universalism which follows from the two types of objectivities which he acknowledges. It is a mistake to think that R. Noson's critique of rationalism as being incapable of solving all of the issues of humanity means that his thought is at odds with a universalist, unified sense of reality. He did still hold that there is an intelligible, unified universe. It is just that objective observation of existence occurs on two distinct levels, which correspond to two layers of perception, one of which can be accurately understood and described through language, and the other cannot.⁴¹⁴

R. Noson did not promote an inherently splintered, atomized universe wherein human experiences can never be shared in any real way. He understood all of humanity to have a shared "spiritual landscape" which the Tsadik can perceive objectively as described above. There is a real sense here of a common, human pursuit of goodness, which is Divine service.⁴¹⁵ He saw that his Rebbe R. Nachman cared about this: R.

⁴¹² Ibid, 275

⁴¹³ Ibid, 430.

⁴¹⁴ There is an important discussion, at LH Kiddushin 3, on the ability of the Tsadik to "bring into language" that which began as a languageless experience.

⁴¹⁵ There are a number of places where R. Nosson wrote about the importance of the gentile Divine service, and how there is real commonality with Judaism, and the

Nachman lamented the spiritual difficulty for non-Jews who lack the engaging particularities and complexities of Jewish law.⁴¹⁶ He recommended that the practice, mentioned above, of *hitbodedut* be taught to non-Jews in order to help them to find their own paths through personal prayer. R. Nachman also spoke of his wish and his ability to “bring the whole world back to goodness,” a key aspect of which was guiding gentiles⁴¹⁷ on a path that is “close to the religion of Israel.”⁴¹⁸

The spiritual objectivity of the Tsadik is an asset not only for himself, and not only for his followers. Rather, it is an asset for all of humanity, for the Tsadik can serve as a source of inspiration, as a guide and mentor for all.

Summary: The Poles of R. Noson’s Polemic against the Enlightenment in the Context of the Conflict between Emunat Chachamim and Chochmah Chitsonit

This chapter began with a short presentation on the theoretical and sociological dimensions of the conflict between (the classical notions of) *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit*, emphasizing that the sociological dimension of the conflict became far more pronounced in the modern period. Next, the term *emunah* was discussed, focussing on its two usages, namely belief “in” and belief “that.” In a sense, these two usages parallel the sociological and theoretical dimensions, respectively.

Following this, the history of the terms EC and CC was presented, culminating in an analysis of R. Noson’s novel understanding of these two notions and the conflict between them. What was unearthed was that, for R. Noson, *emunat chachamim* means, on the theoretical front, belief “that” God actually desires the service of human beings, which then entails, on the sociological front, belief “in” actual particular people as having reached real levels of relationship with God. These people are the Jewish sages. The notion of *emunah b’atmo*, belief “in” oneself, was also emphasized, in that it is the core component of *emunat chachamim*. These two forms of belief “in” the sages and in oneself can be understood as being the other side of a two sided “arrow of faith,” which points both at God and at people, as needing to be believed in.

Chochmah chitsonit, for R. Noson, was presented as being not limited to particular subject matter, but rather as a composite picture which includes a number of different forms of static, language based formulations which provide people with a sense of comfort and safety. These are actually profound forms of escape from the dynamism of

importance of reaching out and teaching spirituality to gentiles, see e.g. LH Succah (7:2), Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:34, Gezeilah 3.

⁴¹⁶ See SHR 51 R. Nosson refers to this at LH Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:34, see also CM 250, CM 6.

⁴¹⁷ See CM 251, LMI:27.

⁴¹⁸ Heb. “*samuch le’das Yisrael.*”

never-ending relationship with the Divine. These different forms of static language-based formulations can range from personal worldviews, to the “official” CC of rational philosophy and the sciences, to the misuse, even of Hasidic Judaism, for some type of worldly gain. Even a sincere religious worldview, when it becomes too static, can eclipse one’s relationship with the Divine and can be understood to be included in R. Nosen’s composite picture of CC.

R. Nosen’s understanding of the conflict between the modalities of *chochmah chitsonit* and *emunat chachamim* were then illustrated through the story of the homeowner and the guest, and the musical analogy. These hopefully sharpened the reader’s understanding, both of EC and CC themselves, as well as their relationship to language, free choice, and creation. The special kind of relational objectivity of the sages was then presented. The Tsadik or sage is understood to be able to challenge the “homeowner,” (representing the average person), to get beyond the comfort and safety of their language-based homestead, which involves an excessive focus on the “returning sound,” through helping them to activate the depth of their free choice to believe in themselves, in the sages/Tsadik and in God. This opens them up to depths upon depths of unending relationship that occurs within the interplay between the finite echo and the infinite sound.

Now, it is to be hoped, the reader can clearly see how the two poles of R. Nosen’s polemic against the Enlightenment, namely: (1) the appeal to languageless experience and (2) R. Nosen’s particular formulation of the Tsadik’s objectivity, must be understood within the context of the conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit*. (In chapter four, the pan-historical aspect of this conflict, and R. Nosen’s understanding of the Enlightenment as an intensive manifestation of *chochmah chitsonit* will be presented.)

Belief “in” the sages and in oneself involves more than tenets of belief “that,” which can be expressed in language: it is an inner move that is a kind of personal commitment which cannot be contained in language. Without this inner commitment that completes the second side of the arrow of faith which points towards people, and crucially, the self, as being of inherent worth and capable of Divine service, one’s faith in God is so incomplete that it cannot be called faith at all. The Tsadik achieves spiritual, relational, and fallible objectivity, which equips him with the ability to communicate to the inner languageless level of experience. The most important inspiration that the Tsadik gives to others is to have faith in themselves. Hence the title of this dissertation and the presentation, in the next chapter, of a focused analysis of how R. Nosen received, developed, and presented this crucial notion of *emunah b’atmo*.

Emunah B’atmo and the Tsadik

The Tsadik's struggle to believe in himself is not something that ever "ends."⁴¹⁹ R. Noson recognized this struggle within his Rebbe, (and also recognized the crucial supporting role he could play as a disciple), and this itself, it seems to me, was one of the "signs" that R. Noson "read" in his journey towards understanding R. Nachman's teachings, and the centrality of EB therein. This brings us to the next chapter, which will discuss how the notion of EB emerges from R. Nachman's teachings, and how R. Noson's understanding of its centrality developed.

Chapter Three: Faith in Oneself: An Innovative Focus, A Private Practice

The notion of faith in oneself is vital to the two poles of R. Noson's polemic. This is because it is (1) in that utterly personal, inner languageless layer of experience that each person must choose to believe in themselves as being of inherent worth and capable of relating to God: this is the main "move" that one needs to make within the languageless realm. And, it is (2) the Tsadik, who achieves the spiritual objectivity presented in the previous chapter, who can thereby inspire, through his ability to communicate to the inner languageless level of experience, faith in oneself. Hence the title of this dissertation and the presentation in this chapter of a focused analysis of how R. Noson received, developed, and presented this crucial notion of *emunah b'atmo*.

One might say, overall, that R. Noson was more worried about what the Enlightenment might do to one's ability to believe in oneself than he was about what it might do to one's theology. For R. Noson, faith in oneself, meaning faith in one's inherent value to God and the value of one's efforts in Divine service, is a crucial component of faith in God. Hence, even if one's official theology remains intact, if one has lost faith in oneself then one's faith in God has become, for R. Noson, damaged so severely as to become unrecognizable

R. Noson's discernment of the centrality of the notion of *emunah b'atmo* came about in multiple ways and over a number of years. An important one of these, mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, was his awareness of R. Nachman's own need for EB; this will be analyzed further, below. As discussed in the previous chapter, R. Noson understood *emunah b'atmo* to be a crucial component of *emunat chachamim*; this notion was communicated to him by his Rebbe, R. Noson developed it greatly in his writings and it is of crucial importance in understanding his polemic against the Enlightenment.

Chapter Outline

⁴¹⁹ See e.g. LH ha-Osseh Shaliach Legabot Chovo 3:12-13. The Tsadik's struggle with EB is of course not "the same" as the average person's struggle. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

This chapter will begin with a quote from LH which serves the purpose of highlighting the centrality of *emunah b'atmo* (EB) within the greater conflict, as perceived by R. Noson, of EC versus CC, as manifest in his generation *vis a vis* Enlightenment influences; this quote is presented in order to keep the continuity of this chapter with the thesis of this dissertation clear.

I will then take a step back, to offer a brief discussion of the notion of EB in classical Jewish and Hasidic thought previous to its formulations in Bratslav. I will note the innovative focus upon EB in Bratslav thought. Following this, I will provide a sketch of how it was that the notion of EB was transmitted from Rebbe to Hasid. I will present the interesting finding that, to the best of my research, there was a particular year in which EB was introduced, named and emphasized.

The teachings of that pivotal year included both lessons on the nature of EB, as well as on the “how to” of EB through two particular practices that R. Nachman taught, practices which R. Noson later labeled as being his Rebbe’s most important advice regarding personal Divine service. I will discuss how R. Noson may have gleaned from the teachings and the conduct of his Rebbe that EB was of singular importance, and I will show how R. Noson took the notion of EB and emphasized it, illustrating its centrality in a way which exceeded its prominence in the teachings of his Rebbe. It seems to me that R. Nachman depended upon R. Noson to pick up on the unique importance of faith in oneself and, through his literary and creative genius, to bring it to life in his own writings.

Following this I will present and discuss some teachings from R. Noson on EB which highlight the profoundly personal nature of the practice of EB, in the sense that, as presented above in the previous chapter, it lies outside the realm of language. Having EB is so wholly incommunicable that one cannot even communicate it to one’s own self:⁴²⁰ it is always “new,” it can never be frozen as a static theological stance, for it is the very “stuff” of one’s relationship with the Divine.

The chapter will end with a discussion of the “mechanics” of EB, which consist of the two practices mentioned above: this will be an attempt to describe, as best as possible, just what the languageless move of having faith in oneself consists of.

Emunah B'atmo Versus Enlightenment Influences: An Opening Quote

⁴²⁰ On the faith experience as being incommunicable to one’s own self, see SHR 1, which includes the statement “... for the greatness of HS’Y is impossible to communicate to one’s fellow, and even to ones’ own self it is impossible to communicate, from one day to the next, for ... the person cannot relate to his or her own self the following day the sparkling [Heb. *hitnotsetsut*] of awareness of the greatness of HS’Y, which they had experienced the day before.”

Faith in the inherent and eternal significance of human beings and their efforts in Divine service, as discussed in the previous chapter, is, for R. Nosen, the heart of *emunat chachamim*, and its heart of hearts is *emunah b'atmo*. Faith in oneself might be understood as the “touchdown point” of all of creation: when an individual comes to begin to believe in the inherent and eternal significance of his or her own self, as well as his or her efforts in Divine service, it is at that critical point that the possibility for real relationship between Creator and creature begins.

This dissertation advances that R. Nosen’s perception of the danger of the influences of the Enlightenment needs to be understood within the greater context of his understanding of a pan-historical conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit*. As discussed above in the previous chapter, *emunat chachamim* places the infinite relationship with the Divine, as opposed to this-worldly achievements, squarely at the center, deemphasizing even the real manifestations of that relationship itself, due to their being static. On the other hand, *chochmah chitsonit* places quantifiable and comparable, this worldly, goals at the center. Perhaps the most noble of these, for R. Nosen, is the goal of achieving a society that is as peaceful and harmonious as possible, in that it does privilege a sense of relationship at least between humans. It is against this aspiration, which was one that he encountered, as can be seen in the following quote, that R. Nosen wrote the following words, through which, although without mentioning *emunah b'atmo* explicitly, the danger to *emunah b'atmo* posed by the influences of the Enlightenment is, I think, made clear:

For the heretics and non-believers⁴²¹ say that there is but one world, and they disbelieve all of the mitsvoth of the Torah, through which one can come to *hasagot Elokut*.⁴²² Rather, they say of Moses our teacher that he was a great sage, wise in all wisdoms, and he enacted the mitsvoth according to what his mind decreed.⁴²³ And they proclaim vain reasons for all of the holy mitsvoth.

⁴²¹ Heb. “*minim v'apikorsim*.”

⁴²² This important term, which translates roughly as “graspings of G-dliness,” refers to the paradox of particular perception within the infinite relationship with the Divine. There are infinite, yet particular personal and cumulative, stepping stones of perceptions or conceptions, which comprise further and further stages of the infinite process of “getting to know” G-d. Based upon the teaching from the Zohar on the motivation for creation as being “*begein de'ishtamoda'in lei*” or “in order that He (G-d) be made known,” the notion of *hasagot Elokut* is discussed perhaps most concretely at LMI: 30 and LH Giluach 4, Nezikin 4, and Kiddushin 3.

⁴²³ On the prevalence of this view in R. Nosen’s day, see: David Ruderman, *A Best Selling Hebrew Book of the Modern Era*, 58-61 (subsection to chapter 4 entitled “The Alleged Deceptions of Moses.”) See also CM 408 which mentions such a view as sourced in Maimonides *Guide for the Perplexed*.

And the general gist of the bitter and foul reasons that they proclaim to be behind all of the holy mitsvoth is that they are for the sake of civility,⁴²⁴ for the sake of promoting good will towards one's fellow such that one will not steal nor cheat them. And they meander about with their foolishness such that they say as if, heaven forbid,⁴²⁵ even the mitsvah of the tying of fringes⁴²⁶ and other ritualistic mitsvoth are also for this purpose.

For according to their evil opinion there is no eternal purpose whatsoever in observing the mitsvoth, rather, only in this world is there gain, in that they will bring about peace between a person and their fellow such that there can be a viable society in this world.

And may the wind of their breath be expended!⁴²⁷ For their argument falls flat from the very beginning, for why do I need all of this, with its difficulties? What is the value altogether of society in this world that it should be made viable? This world is full of suffering as can plainly be seen, this is impossible to deny. As Solomon wrote: 'and all his life is anger and pains and great sickness and fury.'⁴²⁸ And it is written 'man was born to toil, short of days and sated with anger.'⁴²⁹ And furthermore, each person goes to their grave, 'from dust they come and to dust they return.'⁴³⁰

So what is this that God has done to us to create humanity from the dust of the earth, and each person's life flies by, with troubles and pains, and then they return to dust from whence they came. Can this be considered a wise act? To create a wondrous vessel, with such tremendous wisdom, and then to smash it and grind it up and return it to its original state?

Surely there can be no greater stupidity than this! And to ascribe such behavior to God and to Moses, His faithful servant?! Rather, truly, the entire creation of the universe and all that is in it was for the sake of humanity, to make it possible for human beings to serve HS'Y according to the Torah and the mitsvoth He gave us. For each and every mitsvah, and each and every letter of the holy Torah are holy measurements and constrictions through which one can merit eternal *hasagot Elokut*, which comprise the essence of eternal life. And for this good purpose it

⁴²⁴ Heb. "nimusiyut."

⁴²⁵ Heb. "chas v'shalom."

⁴²⁶ Heb. "tsititsit."

⁴²⁷ Heb. "tipach rucham v'nishmatam."

⁴²⁸ Ecclesiastes 5:16.

⁴²⁹ Job 5:7.

⁴³⁰ Ibid, 34:15.

was surely worth it to create the world and all that is in it, and it is worth it to suffer through all of the toil of this world.

And it is only for this purpose that it is necessary that there be peace between people, such there can be viable societies. For surely it is necessary that there be viable societies so that through this it will be possible to merit to eternal life, which are *hasagot Elokut*, which cannot be attained except through the soul passing through this world.⁴³¹

R. Noson's raw, even furious, description of ephemeral life is, to my mind, related to the intensive awareness of death that R. Noson had, according to Bratslav oral lore, from a very early age.⁴³² The sense of futility, even nihilism, that R. Noson's inner world became flooded with in childhood, when, one day, he was made to understand just why it was that a regular worshipper in synagogue had failed to take his habitual seat is, I think, reflected here in his clawing away at the social/philosophic idealism of his times to unmask what was for him a dark core of meaninglessness.

It is against this gnawing chasm of existential hollowness that *emunah b'atmo* stands: not just as an intellectual notion, nor even as a principle of faith, but as a foundational *practice*, as perhaps the most important way that the struggle of human life can be engaged. For EB is a profound inner move which is not merely theological: one can "officially espouse" it but still doubt, deep down, one's own inherent value and the value of one's meager efforts at Divine service.

⁴³¹ LH Nezikin 4:18.

⁴³² *Kokhvei Or, Avaneha Barzel* 1. See there for the fascinating account of R. Nosson's discovery of death, which is briefly recounted above. It seems to me that his acute awareness of death is an important part of any attempt to piece together a sense of his character, which includes both his difficulties as a "*ba'al machshava*" and his special sensitivity to the relevance of the stories and teachings of his Rebbe for future generations; see the discussion of these above in chapter two. Not to be forgotten in this hesitant picture of his character that I am painting, is the way he wore his great joy in having found what he considered to be an inestimably worthwhile role to play in his lifetime. See e.g. *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* vol.1 section 469, which relates that his detractors, who accused him of constant drunkenness, based themselves upon a phenomenon which was, it is reported, factual: his face was known to be, more often than not, visibly flushed with joy and excitement. When he heard of his detractors' accusations, reports the above work of Bratslav oral lore, R. Nosson exclaimed: "*Mit dem tam's mashkeh ken men baruch Hashem nisht shiker veren.*" ("Thank G-d, from the drink of the Simpleton one cannot become drunk" – this is a reference to the story of the Simpleton and the Sophisticate, in which the Simpleton, who was poor, was able to taste all types of food and drink in his bread and water, due to his great joy with his lot.) Perhaps R. Nosson's stark sensitivity to death and emptiness was an important part of his enduring and powerful joy in living a life of purpose and meaning.

The prevailing understanding of Judaism among Enlightened Jews that R. Noson encountered fit Judaism in as another form of instrumental human wisdom, alongside other, developing forms of knowledge and experience of his times: they were seen as instruments for the bettering of society.⁴³³ Such an understanding of Judaism threatened to squelch the possibility of EB, since for R. Noson the entire goal of the bettering society is nothing more than a ruse, in that it rallies people around a human-centered cry, yet the existence of society itself (and each of its members) is granted no inherent eternal significance whatsoever. For R. Noson, the allure of new forms of thinking, shining with political, philosophic, artistic and scientific achievements and promise, portending the centrality of humanity, was grotesquely sweeping Judaism along in assigning it, too, a *raison d'etre* that in fact relegated humanity to a position of, what he perceived to be, supreme insignificance.

It is important to emphasize the above qualification that the relegating of humanity to a position of insignificance was according to R. Noson's *perception*. R. Noson himself took great care to emphasize, in a number of places, that the argument he is making in favor of faith needs to appeal to people at a level that is beyond language. People can choose, and defend their choice with reasonable arguments, to place the bettering of society in this world at the center of their lives and find fulfillment in living their lives as best they can in this regard, and go to their graves without any requirement that their souls live on any more than in other people's memories and in the impact that their lives had on society and the world. As will be discussed in the following chapter, R. Noson can only appeal to people's inner sense of rightness, arguing that they can know in an inner, wholly personal, dimension that it makes sense to believe in the inherent and eternal value of each person and their efforts in Divine service, and for each person to believe this about themselves.

In R. Noson's perspective, the Goliath-like philosophic, socio-political and technological developments of his times that brought with them powerful degrees of tactile change, which by and large carried a sharp sense of contrast with older ways of thinking and being which were valued negatively, swept people along in centering their lives around the above described goal of the betterment of society. This powerful tide threatened to wash away the David-like faith that each person needs to have in him or herself that he or she, and his or her efforts in Divine service, are indeed inherently and eternally valuable.

Emunah B'atsmo in Classical Jewish Sources

⁴³³ This perspective is mentioned in a good number of places in LH. See e.g. LH Nesiat Kapayim (5:?), and more.

The Hebrew terms for *emunah b'atmo* are mentioned explicitly in a Mishnah,⁴³⁴ which is then quoted, later, in the Babylonian Talmud.⁴³⁵ That the Rabbinic usage is markedly unlike that of Bratslav Hasidic thought can plainly be seen in that the directive here is *not* to have *emunah* in oneself. The Mishnah reads: “*al ta'amin b'atsmecha ad yom mot'cha.*” This can be translated as: “do not be sure of yourself until the day of your death.” The Talmud reads the Mishnah along these lines, as can be seen from the fact that, in quoting the above Mishnah, it illustrates the Mishnah’s directive with the story of one Yochanan the High Priest, who was a properly observant Jew (to the Talmud’s Pharisaic standards) for the first eighty years of his life, and yet became a Sadducee in his old age. The word *emunah* is employed in these Rabbinic sources in the sense of trust: one must never consider oneself to have become incapable of faltering in one’s Divine service.

A medieval classical Jewish source, the central kabalistic work known as the Zohar,⁴³⁶ uses the terminology of EB in a similar manner. In that work, a perplexing question is raised regarding what seems to be a lack of faith on the part of the patriarch Jacob. On the one hand, in Jacob’s famous dream, in which he saw a ladder that stretched from the depths of the earth to the heights of the heavens, he was promised by God that he would receive Divine blessing and protection. On the other hand, when he awoke, he pronounced an oath, in which he stated that “if”⁴³⁷ God will provide for him, then he commits to add to his Divine service in certain important additional ways. Could it be that Jacob doubted God’s promise? Here is a small excerpt from the Zohar:

It is for the following reason that Jacob did not believe [in God’s promise of protection that he received in his dream of the ladder, and hence stated that ‘if’ God will be with me, which connotes doubt.] If you will say that he did not believe in God, this is not so. Rather, he did not believe in his own self,⁴³⁸ lest he might come to sin, and that sin will prevent him from returning to his home in peace, and he will lose his Divine protection, and it is for this reason that he did not believe in himself.

Here, as in the Mishnah quoted above, the usage of the term faith is basically synonymous with trust, in the sense that Jacob simply did not trust in his own ability to live up to the Divine promise of protection: he was concerned that he would somehow

⁴³⁴ mAvot 2:4.

⁴³⁵ BT Brachot 29a.

⁴³⁶ On the Zohar, its nature and centrality to the study of the kabbalah, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988). The term EB (albeit in Aramaic, and not in precisely the same usage as R. Nachman’s, as I discuss here) appears at Zohar to Genesis (*Parshat Vayeitsei*) 150B-151A.

⁴³⁷ Genesis 28:20.

⁴³⁸ In the Aramaic of the Zohar: *lo heimim bei begarmeim*.

“ruin it” due to inability to live up to a Divine standard of correct behavior. So, while the Aramaic term for EB does appear here, it is not employed in the same way as in Bratslav sources.

It is worth noting that earlier in the same passage, in an alternative formulation to answer the same question on Jacob’s faith, the Zohar entertains the related, fascinating notion that Jacob may have doubted the veracity of the dream itself: perhaps the whole thing had been a projection of his own imagination. This formulation may be seen as closer, (although, it seems clear to me, still not equivalent) to Bratslav usage of EB, in that it may be understood as, to a certain extent, pointing to a lack of faith in Jacob’s own inherent value and in the value of his Divine service. Although the Zohar does not, at that point, actually use the term EB, (it only appears later, as quoted,) still, here we have an example of Jacob “doubting himself,” or at least, his perceptual powers.

An important related notion that appears in Rabbinic sources, which R. Nosen himself, as will be discussed below, understood to be related to EB, is the difficulty involved in developing proper humility, or perhaps a better way of saying it is proper self-confidence.

Arguably the most well known Rabbinic source on this is the statement attributed to the Tannaitic sage Hillel:⁴³⁹ “If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? and [yet] if I am [only] for myself, what am I? And if not now, when?” The difficulty here in finding the balance between egotism and self-effacement is underscored by the phrasing of the issue in the form of questions. Additionally, the use of the first person singular seems to me to point to the highly individualistic nature of how this tension needs to be faced, and to some degree resolved, by each person on their own.

These three elements, namely tension between egotism and excessive self-effacement, the persisting difficulty in resolving this tension, and the highly personal nature of the work involved in attempting to resolve it, are present within the concept and the practice of EB. Still though, it would be a mistake to wholly identify EB itself with the struggle of the achievement of appropriate humility or self-confidence. EB as a crucial component of monotheistic faith is its own integral notion and practice, and it seems to have been basically both unnamed, and not conceptually discussed, in Rabbinic literature.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁹ Found at mAvot 1:14.

⁴⁴⁰ Below, in the section entitled “The Story of EB in Bratslav Hasidism,” I will include and discuss a piece from the Babylonian Talmud which R. Nachman himself identified as a Rabbinic source for EB. To the best of my research, he is the first to understand that piece in this way.

In the medieval period, aside from the Zoharic source quoted above, there is some related discussion that I have found in the writings of R. Meir Ibn Gabbai against Maimonides, which might be tentatively understood in a wider sense, as representative of differing views regarding the degree of the centrality of humanity in creation, which existed more broadly and over a lengthy period.⁴⁴¹ These views were related to the spectrum of conflict between the kabbalists and the rationalists, and can help in understanding a sense of what might be described as an intellectual background of EB.

As mentioned above, R. Meir Ibn Gabbai was staunchly on the side of the anti-rationalist, kabalistic camp. In his writings,⁴⁴² he argued sharply against the view presented in the writings of Maimonides⁴⁴³ that the loftiness of the position of human beings within creation is limited, relative only to those other creations that are based in *chomer*,⁴⁴⁴ as opposed to those creations based in *tsurah*⁴⁴⁵ such as stars, heavenly spheres, and certainly angels, which are at much higher levels in the hierarchy of creation than human beings. He writes that this view impugns the “image of God,” in the world, as humanity is called at Genesis 1:18. This mistaken view, he writes, is the view of the philosophers, for whom the greatest possible aspiration of a human being will perforce fall short of the level of even the smallest star. He argues forcefully that the truth is wholly with the kabalistic tradition, which holds that the notion that human beings were created in the image of God means that human beings are capable of heights that are far above even all heavenly creatures. Human beings, he writes, were created to be no less than chariots of the Divine, second only to God.

I wrote above that these differing views can help provide an understanding of what might be called an intellectual background of EB. What can be found here is, on the one hand, the philosophic view in which there is an important sense of the limitation of the human powers of perception which, unaided by faith and/or tradition, have trouble with the conceiving of an ultimate sense of the centrality of human beings in creation. On the other hand, in the kabalistic view, there is a profound sense of certainty of the ultimate centrality of human beings in creation, which rests not only upon faith and tradition, but also upon an inner, non-rational, sense of the rightness of this position.

⁴⁴¹ See e.g. R. Isaiah Horowitz *Shnei Luchot Ha-Brit Ha-Shalem*, ed. R. Meyer Katz, (Haifa: 2017) vol. 1, 162-170 in which is found a lengthy discussion citing a number of important medieval Jewish thinkers who were involved in the argument on the centrality of human beings in creation. R. Horowitz himself, as may have been expected, comes out clearly on the side of the kabbalists.

⁴⁴² R. Meir Ibn Gabbai, *Avodat ha-Kodesh*, section 3, ch. 1, and ch. 3.

⁴⁴³ Such as at Maimonides, *Guide for the Perplexed*, section 3, ch. 13.

⁴⁴⁴ Lit. “substance,” this refers to the widely used Aristotelian binary of substance and form; a full discussion of these is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁴⁴⁵ Lit. “form,” see previous note.

As will be discussed further below, the difficulty involved for each person in believing in themselves in a real sense parallels the above tension as expressed in earlier and later Rabbinic writings, in that each person needs, time and again, to overcome different forms of initial intellectual senses of relative insignificance, and instead believe in their inherent value and the value of their efforts in Divine service.

This is not a mere theological/philosophical adjustment: it is a lifelong tension even for those, as we shall see, such as R. Nachman himself, who are clearly theologically “on board” with the notion of the ultimate centrality of human beings in creation. It seems that a picture of healthy human self-awareness *vis a vis* the Divine involves a sense of faith in oneself and one’s efforts which, whilst ever growing, yet never becomes an utter certainty. It seems that, in Bratslav thought, the beauty of the human relationship with the Divine lies in a kind of asymptotic growth, which angles forever upward, yet never closes the all important gap which ensures that to human perceptive powers the reality of the Divine valuation of the self and one’s efforts in Divine service remains elusive, always, to some extent, a surprise.

In summary, while the term EB can be found in the Mishnah, the Babylonian Talmud, and the Zohar, still, its usage in these sources is quite far from its usage in Bratslav Hasidism. In early and later Rabbinic literature, to the best of my research, there are important related teachings issues and tensions which are raised, but none that name or clearly discuss EB. The notion of EB does begin to be discussed clearly, although not named per se as a stand-alone component of faith, in Hasidic thought prior to its formulations in Bratslav.

Emunah B’Atsmo in Early Hasidic Thought

There are early Hasidic teachings which relate the issue of healthy self esteem, as discussed above, to the notion of faith in oneself and one’s efforts in Divine service. In the following citation from R. Jacob Joseph of Polnoye (1710-1784) he relates a teaching from his master, which was none other than the Besht:⁴⁴⁶

I heard from my master that a person’s excessive humility leads to his distance from the service of HS’Y. For due to his lowliness he does not believe that a person causes a flow of blessing to all of the worlds through his prayer and Torah study, and even the angels are fed through his Torah and prayer. For if he would believe this, how indeed would he serve HS’Y, with joy and awe above all, and

⁴⁴⁶ As a primary disciple, his book is considered to be one of the most important sources of teachings from the Besht.

how careful would he be with each letter and cadence and word, to pronounce them all appropriately.⁴⁴⁷

A piece from R. Levi Yitschak of Berditchev (1740-1810) echoes this, quoting *his* master, R. Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritch (d. 1772):

If a person gives up on himself and says that HS'Y has no pleasure from the lower realms, this is not called humility and lowliness, on the contrary, [in holding such an opinion] he is turning somewhat to heresy. This notion that HS'Y has no pleasure from those who do His will, which arises in people's minds, this is not called humility and lowliness. Rather the [right] way is for people to enjoy their Torah study and observing of mitsvoth, and the essence of the enjoyment of the children of Israel is that, while engaging [in Divine service] they hold in their heart that the God and Master of all has, so to speak, enjoyment, and is happy with our good deeds. And so said our master teacher and rabbi, the holy candle R' Dov Berish,⁴⁴⁸ that HS'Y is happy with our deeds and mitsvoth and Torah study, as the verse states⁴⁴⁹ "a wise son gladdens his father," and we are called children of God.⁴⁵⁰ And our master teacher and rabbi said that this is what the oft-mentioned teaching "the people of Israel provide for their father in heaven" means, for 'provision' is a way of saying "delight."⁴⁵¹

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation I referred to the view of G. D. Hundert that the rise of Hasidism can be understood in the context of a *zeitgeist* in which was found an "emboldening of the individual to independence in matters of thought and spirit."⁴⁵² It seems to me that, as individual experience came into greater focus, so too did the tensions outlined above in the section on classical Jewish sources, between egotism and self-effacement, and between an intellectual sense of relative human insignificance and a spiritual sense of ultimate human centrality.

The need for guidance in navigating these tensions can be understood to have called for a formulation that would bring out a more foundational and theological element than the teachings on character development that were available in Rabbinic literature, and accordingly, discussions of the individual's faith in him or herself, and in his or her efforts, began to appear.

⁴⁴⁷ R. Jacob Joseph of Polnoye, *Toldot Ya'acov Yosef*, Ekev, section 4.

⁴⁴⁸ This refers to the Maggid of Mezritch.

⁴⁴⁹ Proverbs 15:20.

⁴⁵⁰ At BT Shabbat 31A.

⁴⁵¹ R. Levi Yitschak of Berditchev, *Kedushat Levi*, (in the third teaching on the holiday of Purim).

⁴⁵² *Ibid*, 177.

The coining of the term *emunah b'atsmo*, however, to the best of my research, began with⁴⁵³ Bratslav Hasidism. Its integration and assignment of focal value within a wider theological worldview, was unique to Bratslav Hasidism.

In the service of clarifying what I have called in the title of this chapter “an innovative focus” of Bratslav Hasidism upon EB, it is, I think, not inappropriate to invoke the words of Alfred North Whitehead, who, in a discussion on how scientific thought moves forward, stated that “it requires a very unusual mind to undertake the analysis of the obvious.”⁴⁵⁴ I would submit that, as Hasidic theological expression moved “forward” into the modern era as suggested above, the innovation in Bratslav was not in “inventing” the concept of faith in oneself, but rather in focussing upon it in a way that seems to have been unprecedented.

The Story of *Emunah B'atsmo* in Bratslav Hasidism

There is a multi-layered story of how the notion of *emunah b'atsmo* was communicated from Rebbe to Hasid. This story began, it seems to me⁴⁵⁵ well after midnight on a Saturday night in the fall of 1807, when R. Nachman uttered what may be understood to have been a life-changing line to R. Noson: “even if you have faith, but you have no faith in yourself [*host-di in dir kein emunah nit*].⁴⁵⁶

This section of the present chapter will focus upon the first year of “the story of EB,” namely, the Hebrew year of 1807-08, in which EB was introduced, named and emphasized. It was also in that year that, as will be discussed below, the main teachings on the “how to” of EB were expressed and recorded. That R. Noson then, over the next approximately three decades, took the notion of EB and emphasized it greatly, is attested to by the simple mathematical observation that the term EB is mentioned but once in R. Nachman’s teachings, at LM I:61, whereas in R. Noson’s LH it appears dozens of times.

⁴⁵³ For instance, the appearance of the term in the writings of R. Tsadok HaCohen of Lublin, such as at *Tsidkat HaTsadik* par. 167, (which is to date the only place I have actually found the term in Hasidic writings) can be traced to Bratslav influences. *Kedushat Levi at Parashat Noach* also employs the term; here it is less clear that this stems from Bratslav influences; I thank Dr. J. J. Lewis for alerting me to this important source.

⁴⁵⁴ Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World* (NY: Free Press, 2004), 4.

⁴⁵⁵ It is possible, I think, to argue that the notion of EB began to be communicated earlier, perhaps even from the very beginning of their relationship, through attempting to interpret inexplicit hints through various forms of teachings and conversations. In order to distance myself from conjecture, I begin with the above, which is the first explicit reference to EB.

⁴⁵⁶ *Sichot HaRan* 140; R. Nosson was careful to include the exact Yiddish wording, this is relatively rare in SHR, and perhaps testifies to its powerful impact which he wished to preserve.

It seems to me that R. Nachman depended upon R. Noson to pick up on the singular importance of faith in oneself and, using his literary and creative genius, to bring it to life in his own writings.

Beginning with that seminal year, it seems to me that there were four dimensions through which R. Noson gleaned the centrality of EB. The first is oral, through private communications of different kinds, such as the excerpt related just above (which will be quoted in full below). The second is theoretical, through his understanding of his Rebbe's formulations in his teachings. The third is experiential, through R. Noson's experiences of his Rebbe's behavior as itself demonstrating work on EB, and also through his experience of his own relationship with his Rebbe. The fourth is personal, through R. Noson's own inner life: EB was central for *him*, and he saw it as being central for others as well. The present and the next two sections of this chapter will treat and examine these dimensions.

The fateful Saturday night mentioned above, involved, at least to some extent, all four of these dimensions. It is referred to in three different sources, all from R. Noson's own pen. It appears in his *Yemei Moharnat*, which logs the encounter in the form of a brief journal entry, it appears in *Likutei Moharan*, which records the formal teaching he received that night, and finally it appears in *Sichot HaRan*, in which R. Noson describes the personal conversation surrounding the formal teaching, and includes some important commentary and narration. I will begin here with the formal teaching and then move outward to the conversation and narrative that framed it, and finally to the journal entry:

Due to shortness of breath and hard labor.”⁴⁵⁷ Know, that it is due to people of the world being of small faith that they need the practice of fasting, meaning to say, [not only fasting, but also] all kinds of “hard labor.”⁴⁵⁸ For surely it is known that it is possible to serve HS'Y through anything, for HS'Y does not make life overly difficult for his creatures.⁴⁵⁹ Rather, the fact that sometimes difficult practices become necessary, this is in the aspect of what the sages taught:⁴⁶⁰ “at the time that there is a decree aimed at destroying Jewish faith, even over a shoelace⁴⁶¹ one

⁴⁵⁷ This teaching is based on the end of the verse at Exodus 6:9. The full verse reads “And they [the people of Israel] did not listen to Moses, due to shortness of breath and hard labor.”

⁴⁵⁸ This is a reference to the verse upon which this teaching is based.

⁴⁵⁹ Heb. *ein ha-Kadosh Baruch Hu ba bitrunia im briotav* – this is a Talmudic dictum found in several places such as at BT Avodah Zarah 3A.

⁴⁶⁰ At BT Sanhedrin 74B.

⁴⁶¹ This Talmudic directive refers to a case wherein a Jew is forced, on pain of death, to part with a trifling Jewish custom related to shoelaces. Whereas, as the Talmud discusses there, usually one must only give up one's life in certain very limited cases, in the case of

must be prepared to give up one's life." We find, that even though in truth it is inappropriate to give up one's life over such a matter, yet, since it is at the time of a decree aimed at destroying Jewish faith, and the powers that be are attempting to destroy the person's faith altogether and bring the person to heresy, heaven forbid, therefore he becomes obligated to give up his life even for a light matter. And idol worship and heresy are in the aspect of "there is even no breath⁴⁶² within them,"⁴⁶³ for they have no breath at all. And those of small faith are in the [similar] aspect of "from shortness of breath"⁴⁶⁴ which is like an intermediary level, meaning that they do not have whole faith, which is the aspect of one who breathes deeply,⁴⁶⁵ as is explained elsewhere,⁴⁶⁶ yet they are not total heretics who lack any breath whatsoever. Rather, they are [at a level that is] like an intermediary, and their breath is short, in the aspect of "from shortness of breath." And this [the meaning of the verse] "due to shortness of breath and hard labor:" that it is due to being in the aspect of shortness of breath, because they are of small faith as mentioned above, due to this they require "hard labors" and fasting as mentioned above. Just as at the time of a decree, which is a time of the destruction of faith altogether, it is necessary to give up one's life literally even for the sake of a small matter, so to, when there is smallness and a blemish in one's faith, it becomes necessary to engage in "hard labors," as above. And there are a number of types⁴⁶⁷ of those who are of small faith. For there are even *Tsadikim*⁴⁶⁸ who are of small faith, as the sages taught⁴⁶⁹ on the verse⁴⁷⁰ "for who will belittle this day, considering it to be insignificant," who causes the *Tsadikim*, etc.

What is central here for our purposes is the notion of partial faith, what R. Nachman called "like an intermediary" between whole faith and no faith, and which, he taught, comprises a number of different "types," including even *Tsadikim* whose faith is

official governmental policy aimed at destroying the Jewish faith altogether, the extreme directive to give up one's life even over a trifling matter, applies.

⁴⁶² I am translating the Hebrew word *ru'ach* here as breath. It is important to note that the Hebrew term connotes more than just physical breath. One might say that it is a term which combines the terms "breath" and "spirit."

⁴⁶³ Psalms 135:17.

⁴⁶⁴ This is a reference to the verse upon which this teaching is based.

⁴⁶⁵ Lit. "one who lengthens his breath."

⁴⁶⁶ At LMI:155; see also LMI:60.

⁴⁶⁷ Here R. Nachman used the Hebrew term *bechinot*, which I attempted to define in the previous chapter, where I preferred to use the term "aspect." In this context it seems clear to me that the best translation is "types."

⁴⁶⁸ This is the plural form of the word *tsadik*.

⁴⁶⁹ At BT Sotah 48B.

⁴⁷⁰ Zechariah 4:10.

considered “small.” The Aramaic Rabbinic term *ktanei amanah* that R. Nachman employed as referring to this notion of intermediate levels of faith is found in a number of Rabbinic texts.⁴⁷¹ His reading of the term is, to the best of my understanding, not novel, in its plainest meaning the term does seem to refer to people with some kind of wavering or partial faith.⁴⁷²

At the end of the teaching R. Nachman singled out a Talmudic source which applies the term *ktanei amanah* to *Tsadikim*, using it as proof that there exists a type of “smallness of faith” which can pertain even to *Tsadikim*. Although he does not address it, there is certainly an implicit and unresolved question that is present here, which, it bears mentioning, emerges from the Talmudic source itself, namely: how can one be considered a *Tsadik* and yet still have a wavering or partial faith?

In the following conversation that R. Noson recorded, in which the above teaching was related to EB, we find R. Nachman sourcing the notion of EB in that very same Talmudic teaching, and in so doing he provides an answer to the question just presented:

When he taught me the teaching on the verse⁴⁷³ “due to shortness of breath and hard labor,” that it is due to smallness of faith that people need to perform hard labor, see there,⁴⁷⁴ I stood before him in astonishment, and my thoughts were in a state of shock regarding this teaching. For it seemed to me that I do have faith, at least to some degree.⁴⁷⁵ He answered and said, in a reproving tone: “and if you do have faith, yet you lack faith in yourself.”⁴⁷⁶ And he immediately related this to the Talmudic teaching:⁴⁷⁷ “for who will belittle this day, considering it to be insignificant,” *what is it that causes the reward of the righteous to be belittled in the World to Come? It is the smallness that they had in themselves, that they did*

⁴⁷¹ See e.g. Bereishit Rabbah 32:5, quoted at Rashi to Genesis 7:7.

⁴⁷² See previous footnote.

⁴⁷³ Exodus 6:9

⁴⁷⁴ This is a reference to LMII:86.

⁴⁷⁵ The dissonance here in R. Nosson’s mind seems to clearly allude to his feeling that he indeed had faith, and yet still felt that his labors in Divine service were heavy and difficult, which seemed to him to contradict the teaching of LMII:86 that he had just heard.

⁴⁷⁶ Here R. Nosson was careful to include the precise Yiddish wording he had heard from his Rebbe: “*hosti in dir kein emunah nit.*”

⁴⁷⁷ BT Sotah 48B, based on the verse at Zecharia 4:10, in quotations above. I have put the translation of the words of the Talmud in italics in order to highlight R. Nachman’s additional phrase, not in italics, which is interpretational.

not believe in themselves.⁴⁷⁸ And Rashi ob'm⁴⁷⁹ explained there according to the simple meaning of the text, that they were of small faith. But the precise wording of the text, which mentions the smallness that they had "in themselves," supports the words of Rabeinu ob'm, that the essential smallness of faith that they had was in their own selves. And one can interpret, based upon this, that they did not believe in God that He is good to all and that they are important and great in HS'Y's eyes. And it is due to this that there was smallness in them, for this was the essence of their smallness of faith, that they did not believe in themselves. And it is possible to read Rashi accordingly. And the general rule which emerges from his words is that a person needs to believe in himself, that he too is precious in the eyes of HS'Y, for in accordance with the great goodness of HS'Y, even he is great and important in His eyes. And this matter has already been elucidated a number of times, that it is not called humility to be in a state of small mindedness.⁴⁸⁰ And it is necessary to beseech HS'Y to merit the pathways of true humility.

Also, just after saying the above, Rosh Hashanah arrived, and he then taught the teaching "Rabbi Shimon rejoiced," which is number 61 in the first section [of Likutei Moharan], and he mentioned the issue of lack of faith in oneself therein, see there at paragraph five what is written there: "and there are those against whom there is opposition due to the fact that they do not have faith in themselves, etc."

R. Noson's distress upon hearing his Rebbe's teaching must have been apparent, for it elicited what R. Noson called a "response" to a question which, it seems, R. Noson never verbalized. In responding to R. Noson, he provided an answer, not only to R. Noson's unspoken question, but also to the theological question raised above: indeed, even a *Tsadik* can be of small faith and still be called a *Tsadik* - when he errs in not believing enough in himself.

That EB was first presented in the context of a Talmudic teaching about *Tsadikim* who lack it is important and will be discussed below. For now I wish to highlight that this first recorded naming of EB in Bratslav Hasidism occurred not as part of the formal teaching that was related to R. Noson, and was duly included within LM, but rather in the

⁴⁷⁸ These are R. Nachman's interpretational words which are a substitution for the Talmud's next words. The Talmud reads: "it is the smallness that they had in themselves, **that they did not believe in G-d.**" (I have put the Talmudic continuation in bold.)

⁴⁷⁹ This is an acronym for "of blessed memory."

⁴⁸⁰ Ar. *Mochin d'katnut*, a kabbalistic term for a state of consciousness that is constricted and hardly aware of the Divine. See LM II:22 and LM II:72 and a number of other places.

informal conversation that occurred just after, in response to R. Noson's personal sense of bewilderment, and recorded, accordingly, in *Sichot HaRan* (SHR). This observation is important because it highlights the active role of R. Noson the Hasid/disciple in eliciting three things: the naming of EB, the sourcing of EB in a classical Rabbinic text, and the revelation that EB was considered by R. Nachman to have been implicitly present within the formal teaching.

Of course, it is impossible to know if R. Nachman "planned in advance" for R. Noson to ask his question and for R. Nachman to then have his answer readily available. However, R. Noson did write that his Rebbe "immediately" related EB to the Talmudic piece, which implies, it would seem, that R. Nachman had put some forethought into the subject of EB and its sourcing in Rabbinic literature. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the theological question of how smallness of faith can apply to a Tsadik is implicit in the Talmudic teaching that R. Nachman used in his formal teaching, which suggests that R. Nachman's reading of that piece as speaking of EB, which is an answer to that theological question, was not a mere afterthought.

I would also advance that R. Nachman, who had an intimate understanding of R. Noson's sense of difficulty in his Divine service, in providing him with a teaching that if one has faith one will not feel that their Divine service requires "hard labor," must have realized that R. Noson would feel some sense of profound inner dissonance. Another factor to bear in mind here as well is that R. Nachman's "style" in his communications with R. Noson featured a highly attuned and holistic sense of the dynamic of give and take between the two of them, whereby the Rebbe's ideas reached the Hasid in ways that were not limited to a simple linear flow of information.⁴⁸¹

Although of course the matter cannot be proven, yet there seems to me to be enough room here to suggest that EB was a topic of importance which R. Nachman wished for R. Noson to learn not just passively as a received teaching, but rather through the sharp personal experience of dissonance, question, and answer. To my understanding,

⁴⁸¹ That R. Nachman made use of the personal dynamic of communication with R. Nosson, especially in matters of great importance, is attested to in a number of places, such as their give and take regarding R. Nosson's acceptance of a Rabbinic position, discussed above in chapter two, sourced at *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 2:175 and *Yemei Moharnat* 1: 8 and 1:67. See also SHR 145 which includes R. Nosson's own recounting of his Rebbe's ways of communicating: "for such was his way, to hint at lofty matters through small remarks, since it was difficult for him to express himself straightforwardly due to great heavenly opposition of different kinds and for a host of other reasons. Hence he would drop hints, in wondrous ways, in order that the person [he is hinting to] will understand on his own, if he wishes to. And there are in this vein many wondrous matters in his conduct with me regarding various matters, and it is impossible to make these clear."

this experience/teaching was seminal for R. Noson, and it seems likely to have been so by design.

R. Noson, after relating the Talmudic teaching and including his own assessment that his Rebbe's way of reading can be understood to be faithful to the text,⁴⁸² then connected the notion of EB to the issue of the difficulty involved in achieving humility. This issue, as mentioned above, is discussed in Rabbinic literature. R. Noson however preferred to refer the reader to his Rebbe's discussion of this related issue, at LM I:72, the end of which reads as follows:

We do not at all understand what true humility is. For surely it is of no value to be lowly and contemptible and lazy, as is called ... in Yiddish: *shlimazelnik*. For humility is the essence of the life of each and every limb [of the body], and it is the entire delight of the Next World, as was explained.⁴⁸³ And surely the purpose of the Next World is not to cause one to be lowly and lazy etc ... Hence one must ask HS'Y for Divine assistance to merit humility and lowliness that are true, which is the essence of life and the essence of the delight of the Coming World.

In referencing his Rebbe's teachings on humility, R. Noson is highlighting, in his account of the initial moment wherein EB entered his spiritual vocabulary, that it is of central importance. Indeed, "the essence of life and the essence of the delight of the Coming World" depend on it, for this crucial intersect where humility meets faith is what determines, even for *Tsadikim*, what the Talmud called,⁴⁸⁴ as quoted in his Rebbe's teaching of that very evening, a belittlement of the reward of the righteous in the World to Come.

R. Noson, in pointing to the notion of true humility and the difficulty of its achievement, is bringing the issue of humility to bear upon the notion of faith. It is due to a mistaken sense of humility that people end up not believing *enough* in God to believe, as R. Noson wrote, that "He is good to all and that they are important and great in HS'Y's eyes." In other words, the relationship here is causal: an overly lowly self-perception will lead to a lack of faith in terms of, to continue with my metaphor from the previous

⁴⁸² The way that R. Nosson reads his Rebbe's understanding back into the Talmudic text is interesting in that he argues that it is a valid reading, as opposed to a Hasidic "rehashing." See Ora Wiskind-Elper, *Hasidic Commentary on the Torah* (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization in association with Liverpool University Press, 2018). It is worth noting that the Talmud clearly relates the smallness of faith here to a lack of trust in being provided for physically, a point which both R. Nachman and R. Nosson omit. The relatedness between EB and Divine provision recalls the teaching from the Zohar presented above.

⁴⁸³ Earlier in this same teaching.

⁴⁸⁴ From BT Sotah 48B

chapter, *both* sides of the two-sided arrow of faith. This means that a person will have a lack of faith in him or herself and also a lack of faith in God's goodness as extending even to truly valuing him or her⁴⁸⁵ and his or her efforts in Divine service; the two are really two sides of a single coin, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Thus far in the piece above from SHR, R. Noson has explained how EB is a crucial dimension of faith in God. Following this, he points to his Rebbe's next teaching, which occurred within the week, on Rosh Hashanah. In doing so, R. Noson directs the reader to a much longer and more complex teaching than the one related to him that night. LM I: 61 is the only source in LM wherein the term EB appears. EB is mentioned there within the more particular rubric of EC, which is the primary topic of that teaching. A full discussion of the way EC and EB are presented in that teaching is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, there is a key dimension of that teaching that is worth noting for our purposes here.

The key dimension of EC and EB as discussed at LM I:61 that I refer to here is that EC and EB emerge quite specifically through conflict. This notion of conflict and its generative quality *vis a vis* EC and EB, as understood by R. Nachman, can be detected in the entries from R. Noson's journal/diary which complete the picture of R. Noson's presentations of that fateful Saturday night:

After the Sabbath I immediately traveled to Bratslav, and I arrived there before the *selichot* service,⁴⁸⁶ and I merited to see his (R. Nachman's) holy face as he entered the synagogue to say the *selichot* service with the congregation. After the service I entered [his room] and he spoke with me at length, by the grace of HS'Y. I stayed there in Bratslav for the entire week, until Rosh Hashanah arrived, of the year 5668, which, that year, was on the Sabbath. On Rosh Hashanah I heard the holy teaching "Rabbi Shimon rejoiced" from his holy mouth. And there, in that teaching, he revealed the notion of "the book that is created through opposition," which is the aspect of "and a book was written by mine enemy."⁴⁸⁷ And we did not understand, at the time, what he was hinting at.

⁴⁸⁵ At LH Shiluach Haken 5:8 R. Nosson illustrates this notion using the laws of candle lighting on Hanukah. Although one's obligation can be filled by one candelabra per household, yet the ideal is for each person to light their own lights, which, he explains, is necessary, because "even though one sees the light and believes that HSY provides us, even now, with the light of Torah ... even so he does not believe in himself, that the light reaches also to him, specifically (Heb. *af al pi chen eino ma'amin b'atmo sheha'or magia gam elav bifratiut*)."

⁴⁸⁶ This is the first of a series of special prayers and supplications said by Ashkenazic Jews prior to Rosh Hashanah.

⁴⁸⁷ Job 31:35.

In his journal entry, although he does state that they spoke “at length,” R. Noson does not mention the content of his Saturday night encounter with his Rebbe. It seems to me that this is because he wished to emphasize, instead, the story of how his Rebbe’s teachings were first commissioned to be printed and how this was then executed. It seems clear enough that the “hint” that R. Noson felt his Rebbe had included in his teaching on Rosh Hashanah in referencing a “book that is created through opposition,” which R. Noson was only able to decipher later on in retrospect, was about R. Nachman’s upcoming directive to publish LM. In the next entry, R. Noson makes clear, it seems to me, what he perceived his Rebbe to have been hinting: “After this, we merited, that in that very year his holy book, the *Likutei Moharan* was printed, and here is the story of how this occurred.”

As will be discussed below, the notion of the creation of a book (either an actual book or a “book” that is a kind of spiritual imprint, as is discussed at LM I:61:5) of personal *responso*⁴⁸⁸ is a key component of R. Nachman’s teachings on both EC and EB. The concept of question and response is the key component of the notion, mentioned above, of the generative quality of conflict and opposition, hence the usage of the verse, referred to in the journal entry: “a book was written by mine enemy.”

It is in this sense that R. Noson’s focus in YM upon the story of the printing of LM can be understood to be quite related to the topic of EB, even though he does not mention EB there by name. This can be seen from the intriguing fact that the one place where R. Nachman named EB in the teaching given on Rosh Hashanah, referred to in YM, was in reference to belief in the value of one’s own novel insights and teachings of Torah, which then become books:

There are likewise those who are subject to dispute because they lack faith in themselves and they do not believe in the Torah insights they originate or that HS’Y takes great delight in their insights. And because they have no faith in their own insights, they are remiss in [originating and recording] their insights, and so are subject to dispute. This causes them to repent, and their insights return to being important to them. Thus they return to originating insights, and a book is made.⁴⁸⁹

It seems likely that R. Noson, in relaying to the reader his perception that R. Nachman had hinted, in delivering this teaching, about the impending commissioning of the printing of his collected teachings, was implying that R. Nachman himself, through the very act of valuing his own teachings enough to publish them, was doing so as part of

⁴⁸⁸ This is the term for an important genre of works of Jewish law which, distinct from different compendia of laws, are books of responses to contemporary Jewish legal issues raised through correspondence usually through letters to leading legal authorities.

⁴⁸⁹ LMI: 61:5.

his own efforts at EB. It seems reasonable to suggest that R. Noson may have also understood the above discussed teaching of LM II:86 and the conversation on EB that followed it, too, as related to R. Nachman's own inner processing of EB. R. Noson's perception of R. Nachman's efforts at EB, which, as can be seen from here, may have begun from the very start of his awareness of EB in general, is to my mind an important element of his coming to understand the centrality of EB; this will be discussed further below.

The story of how the printing of LM was commissioned and executed is lengthy and beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, it is worth bringing in a few additional lines from R. Noson's journal entry which relate to the story of EB. Here R. Noson writes of R. Nachman's illness, which was to lead to his demise a few short years later. He had contracted tuberculosis before Rosh Hashanah, at which point he made a number of important statements:

In the summer of 1807, after the passing of his (first)⁴⁹⁰ wife ob'm, and after we left him, (after having been with him for the holiday of *Shavuot*), when he arrived back to his home after his travels, he had become sick during the journey, with tuberculosis, heaven help us. And immediately when he contracted tuberculosis for the first time, he said that he was going to die, and he immediately began speaking of his death. And then he entered his home, and his illness, heaven help us, was worsening. And he spoke a lot about his illness, that he was in great danger, and he ordered us to pray for him ... and he spoke.... about the topic of his grave, and it was his desire to travel to the land of Israel, but did not know if he had the strength to be able to get there. And furthermore, [he said] that [if he was buried in Israel] no people would come to his grave, and people would not involve themselves with his grave. And some of this has been written down.⁴⁹¹

As mentioned at the start of this chapter, an interesting finding in my research has been the centrality of the Hebrew year of 1807/08 regarding the topic of EB. It seems to me that there might be room here to posit that R. Nachman's contracting of the illness which he was later to succumb to in the summer just prior to that year was a factor in his choice to present the notion of EB and to publish his teachings. Perhaps an added sense of urgency was involved here, which led to a need for one of the most foundational of teachings to emerge. Perhaps, in a sense, death itself was a large part of the "enemy" which "wrote" R. Nachman's book.

⁴⁹⁰ Brackets here contain my own additions.

⁴⁹¹ At CM 162 and 197.

It was also in that same year that R. Nachman delivered the two teachings which R. Noson later identified as containing his most important forms of advice for the “strengthening and gladdening of the soul:”

For in the teachings of our holy and awesome teacher and master ob'm there are many pieces of advice and paths for strengthening and gladdening one's soul always, such that it will be able to stand its ground and not fall, heaven forbid, which is the essence of all, as is known. But the very most essential strengthening is according to what is taught in the two holy lessons of *Azamrah* (LMI:282) and *Ayeh* (LM II:12). Study them deeply.

These teachings can be understood as providing the most essential forms of advice regarding the *practice* of EB. This is because the senses of negative self-image (related to in the teaching of *Azamrah*)⁴⁹² and abandonment (related to in the teaching of *V'ayeh haseh l'olah*) are the two most detrimental forces to EB. These negative forces can be understood in light of the discussion above on EB in classical Jewish sources: the first relates to the issue of the difficulty of achieving proper humility/self-esteem, and the second relates to the issue of the difficulty in perceiving the centrality of human beings in creation. Further discussion on how these two teachings form the heart of the “how to” of EB will be provided below.

In summary, four important points have been presented here. Firstly, that the notion of EB as a crucial dimension of faith began with the communication on the Saturday night before Rosh Hashanah of 1807 between Rebbe and Hasid. Secondly, that both the form and content of that communication, which comprised both formal teaching and informal conversation, were designed to be perceived as the beginning of a directive to recognize the centrality of EB and emphasize it. Thirdly, that R. Noson, it seems clear enough, understood his Rebbe's commissioning of the printing of LM in that year to have been a manifestation of R. Nachman's own work upon EB, whereby appreciation of his own novel Torah insights was generated through a sense of opposition; this sense of opposition may be understood to have been related to R. Nachman's conflict with his own mortality. Fourthly, that in the year of 1807-08, in addition to the introduction of the notion of EB, there was also the presentation of the “how to” of EB, in the two crucial teachings named above.

At the start of this section I suggested four dimensions through which R. Noson can be understood to have gleaned the centrality of *emunah b'atmo*. I now turn the

⁴⁹² A concise presentation of the content and centrality of this teaching can be found in Mendel Piekarz' critical review of Arthur Green's book: an important part of his critique was of Green's lack of appropriate emphasis on this central teaching, see Piekarz, “Tsadik l'venei ha'olam hachadash?!”.

abstract dimension – namely, R. Noson’s understanding of his Rebbe’s theoretical formulations in his formal teachings.

Emunah B’atsmo (EB) in Likutei Moharan (LM)

There are two teachings in LM which provide advice for one who lacks *emunat chachamim*. Although it is only in one of them that EB is mentioned, in both teachings the advice invokes the dimension of personal experience which needs to be activated in response to conflict. In the first, LM I:61, mentioned and partially quoted above, the conflict is societal, and in the second, LM I:57, the conflict is with regard to the individual’s health. The focus on the activation of the dimension of personal experience, as adduced through different forms of conflict, seems likely to have been an important indication for R. Noson of the centrality of EB, in that the personal dimension itself must first be believed in: EB in this sense is like a prerequisite.

One of the ways⁴⁹³ in which EC is discussed in LM I:61 is with regard to the degree of a person’s sense of respect for the plethora of books, authored by rabbis or groups of rabbis, from the Rabbinic era to the present. When one’s respect for these is wanting, it is through one’s response to different forms of opposition from people in one’s life, by being forced to come up with new answers/responses to fresh and particular problems, that one comes to appreciate and have faith in the sages and their writings, which have also emerged as responses to different forms of conflict:

For every dispute produces a book, in the aspect of questions and responses [as in Responsa]. For each dispute/opposition that a person faces is a question or difficulty that others pose to him, and he then repents, and through this he responds/repents⁴⁹⁴ and thereby answers the question, and thereby the aspect of a book of responsa is made. For as a result of the repentance, a number of books gain renewed meaning for him ... [for] initially when he was lacking in EC, all of the books [of the sages] were to him as naught, for he would ridicule them ... but when he returns ... all the books that he initially saw as meaningless, now gain profound significance. And the [production of these responses] parallels the opposition, for the person looks at and ponders the opposition he faces, [asking], why is it that they oppose me in this way, using these words, and not in some other way. And through this he ponders just how to return in repentance.⁴⁹⁵

The building of a person’s EC *vis a vis* the books of the rabbis is described here as emerging through the process of the person’s own production of a “book” which is

⁴⁹³ The analysis provided here is perforce incomplete; the reader is highly encouraged to see the entire teaching at LMI:61.

⁴⁹⁴ The Hebrew term, “*shav*,” for “responds” also means “repents.”

⁴⁹⁵ LMI:61:5.

understood to be of the same ilk as the books of the rabbis. The person's navigation of their own felt societal opposition and the "answers" that this elicits opens their mind to appreciate, trust, and believe in the similar efforts of the sages/rabbis and the resulting books that they produced. There is a profound "understanding"⁴⁹⁶ here which lies shrouded in the depths of each person's personal experience, which engenders a sense of shared experience with the rabbis/sages.

It is important to emphasize here that this understanding comes not from an outside source which demands some kind of blind allegiance. R. Nachman's advice consists of an appeal to face and respond to opposition in one's life and thereby come to EC "first-hand." I will take a moment here to suggest what seems to me to be a noteworthy parallel between R. Nachman's advice on how to gain EC and a prevailing attitude or outlook that was central to notions of enlightenment in his times.

Immanuel Kant, in his famed short essay "Was ist Aufklärung" proclaimed the rallying cry: "*sapere aude*" ("dare to know.") He defined enlightenment as "man's release from his self-incurred tutelage", tutelage being "man's inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another." Abraham Socher has written that:

Despite its extraordinary theoretical abstraction and forbidding technicality, Kant's philosophical project should be understood, at a certain level of historical abstraction, as an attempt to justify and systematize the ideals of the Enlightenment ... in the programmatic "Preface to the First Edition" [of his *Critique of Pure Reason*] Kant described his project as one of bringing not merely "books and systems" but the faculty of reason itself before the "tribunal of pure reason," and he explicitly tied this to the ideals of the Enlightenment. "Our age," Kant wrote, "is, in especial degree, the age of criticism [*Kritik*] and to criticism everything must submit."⁴⁹⁷

R. Nachman's advice on how to gain EC, in light of Kant's formulations above which highlight the importance of getting past "self-incurred tutelage," is fascinating in that it does not consist of an appeal to submit to the "*ancien regime*" of Rabbinic authority based upon notions of blind surrender to the sacrosanct nature of tradition. Instead, the person is empowered to find EC "firsthand." A similar prescription for gaining or healing one's EC is found at LM I:57.

⁴⁹⁶ I put the word in quotation marks because the understanding involved here is not of the kind that can be demonstrated logically, but rather lies exclusively in the, what I have called shrouded, realm of personal experience.

⁴⁹⁷ Abraham Socher, *The Radical Enlightenment of Solomon Maimon* (Stanford: Stanford U. Press, 2006), 12-13.

R. Nachman, in that teaching, taught about how a person can gain EC, focussing particularly on the issue of faith in the authority of Rabbinic tradition regarding legal interpretations of Biblical verses. R. Nachman's prescription for gaining EC consists of the highly personal act of making a vow, which allows one to access the heights of one's soul:

By means of the vow he ascends to the source in which the sages are rooted –i.e., the aspect of “wondrous wisdom” – and so he knows and recognizes the virtues of the sages. Through this he returns/repents and has faith in them.

How does the individual come to gain EC? They do this by ascending to the very ‘source in which the sages are rooted.’ It is through the depths of their own personal experience of a lofty level of their soul, which is called “wondrous wisdom,”⁴⁹⁸ that they are able to ‘know and recognize the virtues of the sages.’ One might say experiencing is believing. A person can experience a profound inner compulsion towards some kind of new, innovative⁴⁹⁹ form of serving God in his or her life. This experience will lead him or her to “understand,” trust, and believe in the sages, particularly with regard to their interpretations and innovations, as having emerged from similar profound experiences.

I think it is reasonable to suggest that R. Nachman's appeal to the personal spiritual experience is in sync with the insistence in his day for truths to be made demonstrable, as opposed to being blindly accepted.⁵⁰⁰ This fascinating anchoring of Rabbinic authority in personal spiritual experience, although it appeals to a realm of “experimentation” that is spiritual/experiential, outside the physical/scientific and the intuitive/philosophic, yet can be understood to be attuned to the “enlightened” sensibilities of the times.

As opposed to an authoritarian discounting of the individual experience, there is a certain confidence demonstrated here:⁵⁰¹ in directing people towards their own inner

⁴⁹⁸ Heb. *Pliot Chochmah*, the term, it seems, comes from *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:1.

⁴⁹⁹ See e.g. LH Bircot Hashachar (5:94) Where R. Nossou explains that the very root of receiving the Torah is/was in the accepting of it as a personal vow. He explains further, based on LMI: 190, that the depth of what it means to make a vow is that “one needs to know on one's own what G-d wants before one is commanded.” See there further, and see also LH Shabbat (7:50).

⁵⁰⁰ As outlined above and discussed further below, R. Nachman's formulation of EC is backed by a notion of the spiritual objectivity of the Tsadik. What is being added here is that the Tsadik's objectivity is not dependent on blindly “taking their word for it.” Each person can, and to a certain extent, must, experience spiritual objectivity themselves.

⁵⁰¹ R. Nossou adds a key point, which is that the person has to *want* to heal their EC in order for the entire exercise of taking the vow and accessing the inner experience to “work.” This is also true of the production of personal responsa described in LMII:61. See e.g. LH Bircot HaShachar 5:78 and LH Behema 4 at length. This might be seen as

experience, R. Nachman trusts that they will find a profound consonance between the depths of their personal experience and the authority of the sages/rabbis. Through the formation of vows and of profound responses to opposition in life, a person can come to recognize that the interpretations and edicts of the sages are manifestations of the same ‘stuff’ as his or her own innermost personal experiences of major decision-making and ‘responsa’ to difficulty. The ineffable sense that he or she has of the validity of his or her own vows and ‘responsa’ can translate into faith in the interpretations, edicts and Responsa of the sages/rabbis. Again, experiencing is believing: once one is aware that one is on a path which is experienced as being valid, one can have faith in those who are further along on that path.⁵⁰²

It seems to me that an important component of how R. Noson came to understand EB to be central to EC was R. Nachman’s emphasis in these teachings upon the personal experience as a crucial, perhaps even exclusive, portal for gaining EC. I would suggest that R. Noson understood that in order for the personal experience itself to be able to bring a person to EC in the ways described above, a measure of EB is a prerequisite. This suggestion is, I must admit, based to a large extent upon my own reasoning and analysis. It is also based upon the following evidence from R. Noson’s LH, particularly with regard to his ways of emphasizing EB therein to an extent unprecedented in LM.

As mentioned above, EB appears just once in LM, at LM I:61. It is important to note that, in that singular instance, the notion of EB is related exclusively to valuing one’s Torah novella, and its place in the teaching comes across as distinctly ancillary. After providing a lengthy discussion on responsa and EC as quoted and discussed above, R. Nachman mentioned the issue of EB, as, what seems to be, an aside:

There are likewise those who are subject to dispute because they lack faith in themselves: they do not believe in the Torah insights they originate or that God takes great delight in their insights. And because they have no faith in their own insights, they are remiss in their insights, and so are subject to dispute. This causes them to repent, and their insights return to being important to them. Thus, they return to originating insights, and a book is made.

discounting the confidence described above. I would argue otherwise: R. Nachman’s objective, as stated in his teachings, is to provide advice for those who have lost their faith in the sages. The sense of a loss of faith that he is addressing, it seems to me, was quite real. People were not merely looking for ways to “tell themselves” that they had faith, they wanted to build an authentic inner sense of faith, and his advice does still demonstrate an important level of confidence in the personal experience as being capable of leading people there.

⁵⁰² The analogy here, as is the case with many analogies, is imprecise. See LH Geneva (5:8) on the notion of each person having their unique path in Divine service.

Despite its peripheral placing in this teaching, R. Noson, it seems to me, understood EB to be necessarily anterior to EC. The valuing of one's own 'responsa' as being in and of themselves important must come first. For, a person might ask, "who says that I am worth it, deserving or able to even to begin to *try* to find my own responses to opposition, and who says that there are any potential responses worth looking for?" The personal experience of producing responsa requires, first of all, belief in oneself.

In LH, interpreting the above teaching of LM I: 61,⁵⁰³ R. Noson wrote that EB consists of far more than the valuing of one's Torah novella: it is the belief that "a person's own soul is very very valuable,"⁵⁰⁴ and that "even one's small achievements in one's Divine service, and one's study of Torah are very precious to HS'Y." EB, he wrote, is the most important component of EC, stating this in the negative: a lack of EB "is the most severe blemish of all [blemishes in EC]." This is because, as he explains there, faith in the sages will never lead one to spiritual health/growth so long as one lacks faith in oneself. It seems clear from his formulations there that, as I wrote above, he understood EB to be necessarily anterior to the general sense of EC as faith in the sages, for it is only once one gains EB that one's EC can truly "start." This notion of the anteriority of EB also comes across, it seems me, from R. Noson's writings there on the sin of Adam,⁵⁰⁵ in that in his time the entire notion of EC was limited to the dimension of EB, since he was alone. Hence EB historically preceded EC.

It is important to note that, in that same teaching in LH, R. Noson wove the teaching at LM II:86, quoting it by name, along with the conversation he had afterwards with R. Nachman, into his interpretation of LM I:61. This illustrates how, to R. Noson's mind, these three communications which all occurred, as discussed above, in the same week, were understood to form a kind of a whole, especially with respect to EB.

R. Nachman's conveying, in his conversation with R. Noson after teaching LM I:86, of the notion of EB as a component of faith in general, was itself a strong indication for R. Noson of the centrality of EB. It also seems likely to me that even from within the narrower picture of LM I:61 alone, the focus there upon individual spiritual experience was also an indication for R. Noson as to the centrality of EB. The same, I would say, holds true for the teaching at LM I:57.

⁵⁰³ I refer here to LH Pikadon (5:7), see chapter 3 in section on EB where the paragraph I draw from here is quoted at length.

⁵⁰⁴ Heb. *gavoha me'od me'od*. Although the term *gavoha* usually means "lofty," I have translated it here as "valuable" since it seems clear that this is the central quality that R. Nosson is highlighting in that piece from LH.

⁵⁰⁵ After highlighting Adam's aloneness, R. Nosson also wrote there about Eve's relationship with Adam, see there.

In his expounding upon LM I:57 in LH, R. Noson wrote that the notion of a vow is not only a way to gain EC, as it is presented in LM, rather he called it the very “root and essence of EC itself.”⁵⁰⁶ Furthermore, in that same teaching in LH⁵⁰⁷ he wrote that the sin of Adam and Eve was due to their not having EC, in the sense that they were lacking in faith in their own ability to understand and interpret God’s command properly, and were instead seduced by the outside perspective of the serpent.⁵⁰⁸ Here too it seems likely to me that R. Noson may have taken the focus upon the individual spiritual experience in R. Nachman’s teaching as an indication of the centrality of EB.

In summary it seems to me that an important dimension of R. Noson’s gleaning of the centrality of EB was his understanding of EB as being a kind of anterior element of EC. Since to a large extent EC depends upon the accessing of the individual spiritual experience, it follows that the individual him or herself needs to first be believed in as being capable of such an experience; in this sense it functions as a prerequisite. Another important indication for R. Noson of the centrality of EB was the content of his communications with R. Nachman on the Saturday night discussed above, which highlighted EB in a general sense.

In addition to R. Noson’s writings on the centrality of EB such as the above which, it seems to me, were generated, at least in part, through the abstract dimension of his intellectual understanding of his Rebbe’s teachings, R. Noson also wrote about the fascinating notion of the Tsadik’s own struggle with EB. It seems likely to me that his writings on this are reflective of the experiential dimension of his own observations of his Rebbe’s struggles. This experiential dimension includes, as shall be discussed, R. Noson’s gleaning of his own role as Hasid/disciple of the Tsadik, and how both Rebbe and Hasid relate to EB, each in their own way.

Emunah B’atmo and the Tsadik

⁵⁰⁶ See LH Yibum 3:3.

⁵⁰⁷ Notice that in this particular teaching R. Nosson does not use the term EB, although he does use the term EC as applied to Adam and Eve’s need to believe in their own ability to properly interpret the Divine command regarding the Tree of Knowledge. It may be that R. Nosson was reticent in his use of the term in elucidating LMI: 57 since the term EB does not appear in that teaching. However, see LH Shabbat (6:16) in which he weaves LMI: 57 together with LMI: 61, and uses the term EB. See also Rosh Chodesh (7:35) where R. Nosson relates the notion of vows to EB explicitly. In the latter source this is related also to the sin of Adam and Eve. As mentioned in the previous chapter, my understanding of EB is built on my own sense of a “composite picture” of R. Nosson’s thought. This means that, at times, I understand R. Nosson to be speaking of EB even though he does not employ the term.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid 3:5.

It is to be recalled that, as quoted and discussed above, R. Nachman, in the first recorded naming of EB,⁵⁰⁹ related this to a piece in the Talmud, and thereby provided an understanding of how it could be that someone who qualifies as a Tsadik can still be properly described as lacking in faith: the lack of faith that they suffer from is a lack of EB. In the following quote from LH we find R. Noson describing the struggle with EB that even the greatest of Tsadikim, those who are but one per generation, face:

There are Tsadikim in the aspect of Moses who have already sanctified themselves totally from the grasp of evil, and they are completely holy, to the point where do not have free choice at all regarding physical lusts. Rather, their entire power of free choice is only in the aspect of “Moses added a day on his own volition.”⁵¹⁰ Meaning, that they are unable to find clear advice in their souls regarding how to act, for they don’t know what it is that HS’Y truly wants, for this is the essential level of free choice of Moses and the Tsadikim who are in his aspect ... and this is why Haman wanted to “hang” (Heb. *litloto*) Mordecai ... for doubt is called “hanging,” as in the “doubtful guilt-offering” (Heb. *asham talui*)⁵¹¹ for these doubts are the essence of the free choice of the great Tsadikim, who are in the aspect of Moses, which is [also] the aspect of Mordecai ... for the *Sitra Achra*,⁵¹² ... became so strong that it wished to inject doubts even into the heart of the Tsadik himself, that the Tsadik himself becomes filled with doubt as to whether or not he has the ability to continue to lead Israel and bring them back to goodness. This is achieved through the great spreading out of the *Sitra Achra* and the increase of arguments against the Tsadik from every side. And through this it wishes to topple the Tsadik, heaven forefend. For if the Tsadik chooses not to lead Israel, he will lose his greatness, as the sages have taught that HS’Y said: “I have only granted you greatness for the sake of [leading] Israel.” And this is the aspect of the “hanging” that Haman wished to hang Mordecai, who was the true Tsadik that can be found in every generation, who is completely refined and holy. [Haman] wished to cause him to enter into doubts, such that he will not lead Israel, heaven forefend. And in truth this was a time of terrible, unprecedented danger, such that the entire world was faltering, almost, almost to the point of annihilation, if heaven forefend this ... would have been successful in causing the Tsadik to hide his face, to turn his eyes away, from Israel, heaven forefend ... But HS’Y had mercy upon his people, in the merit of our ancestors ... and put into the

⁵⁰⁹ At SHR 140.

⁵¹⁰ From BT Shabbat 85a, as employed at LMI:190 in R. Nachman’s discussion of the free choice of great Tsadikim; see more on this at LH Shabbat 7:50. See my discussion at the end of the previous chapter on struggle, post physical victory.

⁵¹¹ The Hebrew grammatical root is the same, similar to the notion in English of “hanging in the balance.”

⁵¹² Aramaic for “Other Side,” this is a kabbalistic term for the force of evil.

heart of Mordecai, who was the aspect of the true Tsadik, to strengthen himself against this. For “Mordecai knew all that was done” - meaning- he understood the tremendous extent of the danger, and saw that there was no advice or plan to follow other than multiple prayers, supplications, screams, cries and shrieks. And immediately “Mordecai went out into the city and cried out a great and bitter scream,” and so it was [heard of in] “each and every city,” [thereby influencing all of the Jews to pray.]⁵¹³

A crucial component of EB, as described above, is faith in the significance of one’s Divine service. In the above quote R. Noson describes the dizzyingly lofty challenge that the one-in-a-generation-Tsadik faces: he needs to believe that his own capabilities in Divine service include the capacity to lead and inspire the entire Jewish people.

The fact that the practice and struggle of EB applies to every Jew, from the simplest to the very greatest, shows that it must not be understood exclusively as, what I have termed above, a “prerequisite,” in the sense that one “graduates” from it as one grows in one’s Divine service. Rather, it seems, the struggle for EB is never meant to become resolved in a total way.

The centrality of EB is expressed here in its being the very “glue” which holds the Jewish people together under the aegis of true leadership; its fundamentality is such that it can even be the deciding factor between life and death, and the immense difficulty of the Tsadik in achieving EB is made clear by R. Noson’s relating that it is only through God’s own intervention that the Tsadik achieves it.

It seems clear enough that R. Noson’s understanding of the Tsadik’s struggle with EB did not only come from his intellectual grasp of his Rebbe’s teachings – it was generated, too, by his observation of R. Nachman’s behavior, and his forms of expression of his own struggles.⁵¹⁴ The following quote, also from LH, discusses the Biblical figure of Betsalel’s observation of his teacher Moses and the special kind of inspiration and ability that Betsalel gained from his observation of, and connectivity with, his teacher. It seems likely to me that this description can be taken as a window of sorts, not only into R. Noson’s understanding of his Rebbe, but also into his understanding of his own role:

For it can surely be understood that Moses had such tremendous trouble, time and again, with the construction of the Menorah, [for his difficulty was] with the aspect of the construction of a vessel that is so awesome and so holy that, through

⁵¹³ From LH Ha-Osseh Shaliach Legabot Chovo 3:13. See LH Shluchin (5:19) where R. Nosson wrote that Moses too suffered from the inability to believe in himself as capable of bringing about a fixing for all of Israel; see also LH Taanit (4:22).

⁵¹⁴ On these expressions of struggle, see e.g. Green, *Tormented Master*, 162-169.

it, the depth of holy willpower will be able to shine to all of Israel. That in all types of darkness, and all types of descents, and all types of fallings that pass over each Jew, he or she will be able to get through them all, through the great willpower that will shine out to each Jew, empowering them to ascend from them all.... Hence it was that Betsalel, the disciple, was able to immediately grasp [the menorah's] construction, for he said, "I am confident in the abilities of the elder one, who is Moses our teacher, such that surely I will be able to construct it and complete it as necessary. For I believe in the power of my teacher, that surely he will finish and complete [his mission] of bringing the shine of willpower to into this world, such that it will shine to [all of Israel] in all types of darkness." For the true Tsadik cannot perceive his own greatness, because of his great humility, to the same extent that his disciple can perceive it, from afar. For [Betsalel] understood that it was because of this [issue of humility] itself that Moses had such trouble with its construction ... and hence it was specifically Betsalel who properly made it, and all was thanks to the ability of Moses his teacher, as above.⁵¹⁵

The remarkable formulation here expresses how the Tsadik models a positive kind of *un*-assuredness of his own abilities, since total assuredness would actually be inappropriate, for the Tsadik's lofty level itself precludes awareness of the implications of being on that level. On the other hand, *total* un-assuredness is also preclusive of real relationship: the nuance lies in arriving at, what I would call, a kind of "healthy hesitancy." The above quote provides a picture of how the struggle for EB is never meant to end – as mentioned earlier in the present chapter, it seems that, in Bratslav thought, the beauty of the human relationship with the Divine lies in a kind of asymptotic growth, which angles forever upward, yet never closes the all important gap which ensures that to the human perceptive powers the reality of the Divine valuation of the self and of human efforts in Divine service retains a certain elusive element, always remaining, to some extent, a surprise.

It is important to note that the completion of the Tsadik's great task of bringing about inspiration for the entire Jewish people for all time, expressed here in the spiritual mission of the construction of the *menorah*, actually becomes dependent upon the disciple's *appropriate* total assuredness of his teacher's greatness. In this, shared,⁵¹⁶ way, the disciple is able to complete an ultimate kind of task without taking credit for it, since it is all only "thanks to the ability of Moses," and the Tsadik can empower the disciple to do so without having to become totally self-assured in his abilities. The disciple's

⁵¹⁵ LH Bircot Ha-Shachar (5:46)

⁵¹⁶ See similar formulations on the need for the disciple to be involved in the vanquishing of *Amalek*, as in Joshua with Moses, Saul with Samuel, Esther with Mordecai, as discussed in LH at Shabbat 7:37-39, Yibum 3:16, and Dayanim 3:19.

assuredness in his teacher is actually built upon the awareness that his Rebbe, quite necessarily, does not have this assuredness himself!

In summary, it does not seem to me to be an inappropriate stretch of the imagination to advance that, in the quotes brought above from LH (and in other places in LH)⁵¹⁷ it is possible to find echoes, both of R. Noson's perception of his Rebbe and of his own relationship with him. There is a lot to unpack here, but for the purposes of this dissertation, I wish to highlight that it seems clear that R. Noson perceived, experientially, beyond R. Nachman's "official" teachings, his Rebbe's lived struggle with EB, and understood this struggle as being both necessary and unending. Furthermore, the strength provided by the above model of a "spiritual tag-team" enterprise, it seems to me, may well have been a crucial factor in R. Noson's life, especially after the demise of his Rebbe. It may well be⁵¹⁸ that each time R. Noson picked up his pen, he drew not only from a physical inkwell, but also from the "inkwell" of his own faith in himself.

This concludes the presentation in this chapter on how the centrality of EB seems to have emerged for R. Noson. This emerged for him, it seems to me, mainly through the four dimensions mentioned above, that I have dubbed: the oral, through both direct and indirect private communications of different kinds; the intellectual, through abstract teachings; the experiential, through experiencing his Rebbe's conduct, and his own lived relationship with him; and the personal, through R. Noson's own life experience. At this point I turn to present some important teachings from LH on EB, which show how utterly personal the practise of EB is, in that it is hermetically sealed off, so to speak, from the world of language.

The Private Practice of Emunah B'atmo

It is necessary to take a moment to return to the inter-related notions, discussed in the previous chapter, of *tsimtsum*, language and free choice. An important teaching of R. Noson's was there presented,⁵¹⁹ which was that the *tsimtsum* needs to be understood in essence as the creation of limited human consciousness, which is limited particularly with regard to the reach of language. This limitation facilitates free choice on matters of faith: it is thanks to the fact that no language, not even kabbalistic language, can conclusively prove matters of faith, that faith is a choice.

⁵¹⁷ See e.g. (in addition to sources in previous footnote): LH Shabbat 7:4, Shechitah 5:8, Rosh Chodesh 7:54, Tefillin 6:29, Netilat Yadayim 3:6 and 6:84, Harsha'ah 5:19, Arev 5:37, Chezkat Metaltelin 5:15, Shluchin 5:10-11, Ishut 4:19, Bircat Hapeirot 4:7, Hoda'ah 5:14, Tefilin 5:35, Giluach 3:5.

⁵¹⁸ Particularly in light of the fact that EB, in the single place it is mentioned in LM is, as discussed above, presented exclusively with regard to the notion of faith in the validity of one's Torah novella. See also *Sefer Hamidot*, last entry on *Chidushei Torah*.

⁵¹⁹ From LH Piryah ve-Rivayah 3:33.

Over the next few pages I will bring in some quotations from LH to illustrate the utterly personal nature of EB: it occurs in that inner, language-less place of free choice. I will then present an understanding of the very “mechanics” of making the choice to believe in oneself: what I have referred to above as the “how to” of EB. These “mechanics,” it seems to me, involve two different kinds of what might be called “activation” of the self. These two forms of self-activation, which R. Noson called the “awakening” and the “strengthening” of the soul, are what build the crucial inner wherewithal to initiate Divine service; (I use “wherewithal” here as another word for the mysterious move of believing “in” oneself.)

In what is to my mind a key teaching, R. Noson emphasizes how the “cosmic” dimensions of *tsimtsum* are all secondary, almost irrelevant. It is only the *tsimtsum* involved in the creation of limited human consciousness, which includes the crucial capacity for free choice, which can legitimately be called a “real” *tsimtsum*:

...but so long as all created things comported themselves exclusively in consonance with the Divine will, this means that all is still as if before creation took place. Hence nothing yet has the ability to receive the Divine light in a complete fashion. For since nothing can yet be called “vessels,” because all are absorbed and in unity with HS’Y’s will, as before creation took place, because they do not have free choice to stray from HS’Y’s will. Therefore the essential finishing of the fixing of the vessels and of all creation was through [the creation of] Adam, who had free choice, for whom all was created ... For [it is only] when there is a being with free choice, meaning that this being has the permission to choose to follow HS’Y’s will, and if he so chooses, can go against the will of HS’Y ... It is only specifically at that point [of the creation of a being with free will] that all of creation becomes severed from HS’Y, because of free choice ... For it is then that the *tsimtsum* can rightly be called *tsimtsum*.⁵²⁰

The creation of human life, which is characterized by the power of free choice, necessitates a severe “severing” from the Divine, and this means that, as expressed in the following teaching,⁵²¹ life will be experienced as difficult. The difficulty here is that human life will perforce involve a profound sense of abandonment, since each person is, to an extent unparalleled in all of creation, left to their own devices. R. Noson describes how this difficulty is profoundly personal, isolating and even potentially devastating:

Each person needs to pass through epochs upon epochs many times over, and many oceans and rivers and subterranean waters ... and through many deserts filled with large and terrible snakes and scorpions, until they are able to actually reach the gates of holiness for real. And this matter, which is the degree to which

⁵²⁰ From LH Tefilat Arvit 4:13.

⁵²¹ From LH Geviat Chov Min Ha-Yetomim 3:17.

a person needs to keep strengthening themselves, is impossible for the mouth to speak of, to explain and to relate, from one person to another... for each person will imagine that this does not apply to them. Each person will think that their own trials and travails ... cause them to be so stuck, so trapped, that there really is no way out, to the point that they will not believe in their ability ever to return from the darkness.⁵²² So it seems to each individual. But Rabeinu z'l ... said⁵²³ “*gevald*, do not give up on yourself” and he drew out the word “*gevald*” very much.

R. Noson here stresses how far EB is from the world of communication through words and concepts, being “impossible for mouth to speak of.” Hence it will follow that for a person to believe that they are valuable and capable of achieving actual Divine service they will need to find an inner wherewithal that they must come to build through an understanding that cannot be relayed to them using language.

As discussed at the end of the previous chapter, there is, concerning matters of faith, a crucial emphasis on non-verbal communication, especially in terms of encouragement and inspiration from the Tsadik. In this sense R. Noson’s description⁵²⁴ of *how* R. Nachman said not to give up is critical. Although such inspiration is possible, still, EB will always remain a choice, for, as described in the previous chapter, it cannot be demonstrated conclusively along the lines of two plus two equals four. In the following piece R. Noson emphasizes how a person must choose to “hear,” and act, in a deeply personal manner, for the redemption of all reality depends on people learning to “understand it on their own.”⁵²⁵

All of the [secrets of] the sacrifices were revealed to Abraham ... except for the tenth of an *eifah*,⁵²⁶ for this secret of this sacrifice...which is the offering of the

⁵²² Heb. *shelo yaaminu shuv mini choshech*. This might also be translated more simply than my translation above, as “they will not believe that they will ever return from the darkness.” To my mind R. Nosson here is referring to EB specifically. R. Nosson here is expanding upon the teaching of “Ayeh,” at LM II:12, which, as will be discussed below, is in my opinion an essential teaching on EB.

⁵²³ The circumstances and fuller recounting of this famous statement of R. Nachman’s are recorded at SHR 153.

⁵²⁴ See the longer description in R. Nosson’s parenthetical remarks to LM II:78. R. Nosson included there that the special emphasis with which these words were spoken was “in order to teach and hint to every single person for all coming generations not to despair under any circumstances, no matter what they go through.”

⁵²⁵ This phrase, which R. Nosson uses in the teaching quoted below, is borrowed from mHagigah (2:1) which prescribes that one can only teach of Ezekiel’s Chariot (a fundamental aspect of the esoteric dimension of the Oral Torah) to a single student who is “wise and able to understand on his own.”

⁵²⁶ This is a term for a small measure of volume.

impoverished individual⁵²⁷ ...this cannot be grasped, since the final redemption depends upon it. For the essence of the [ultimate] fixing and repentance depends upon this [offering of the impoverished individual], to never give up on oneself, even in a state of tremendous poverty ... to be able to still find strength within oneself in whatever way possible, which is the aspect of the tenth of an *eifah* which is the offering of one who is impoverished, meaning that their repentance is of exceedingly tiny stature ... as the sages learned from this [offering] that even the tiny Divine service and prayers of the small and lowly ... are valuable in Divine estimation. Hence this secret was not revealed even to Abraham ... for this secret is impossible to reveal, rather, each person needs to understand it on their own. ... For the essence of this matter, to reveal the and make known this massive [Divine] kindness, that one can achieve real Divine service even through the aspect of the tenth of an *eifah*, this is only revealed in each generation by the great Tsadikim who bring about a ray of the Messiah ... For in truth there is an opinion in the Midrash that even to Abraham this secret was indeed revealed, only, it was in the form of a hint, as the commentators explain. For in truth it is impossible to reveal this secret, except in the form of a hint, such that a person can understand for himself to what degree they need to strengthen themselves. For it is utterly impossible to reveal this explicitly, for if it would [be revealed explicitly] then free choice would be nullified.

...HS'Y only revealed [to Abraham] the love and compassion that is drawn down by the fancier, more expensive offerings, the calf, the pigeon and the turtledove [which the Jewish people would one day bring.] But the secret of the tremendous forgiveness that is the aspect of the tenth of an *eifah* (a small measure) of flour, this HS'Y did not reveal to Abraham. And even according to the opinion [in the Midrash] that it was revealed, still, it was only by way of a hint. For [as the Midrash relates,] HS'Y "kept one pardon for Himself,"⁵²⁸ which is the aspect of "the L-rd our God for He forgives tremendously."⁵²⁹ And this matter is impossible to express in language.⁵³⁰ the extent and degree to which HS'Y's mercy and tremendous forgiveness reach. Rather, each individual must understand this on their own, that they must continue to believe in themselves always, and never despair of Divine compassion.⁵³¹

⁵²⁷ See Leviticus 1:1 through 2:13, and 4:27 through 5:14 on the flour offering as that of those most impoverished. R. Nosson here draws from Genesis Rabbah 44:14 and Leviticus Rabbah 3:3.

⁵²⁸ This is the language of the Midrash.

⁵²⁹ Isaiah 58:7.

⁵³⁰ Heb. *ee efshar legalot b'ferush*.

⁵³¹ From LH Minchah 7:41-42.

The above teaching expresses how the *tsimtsum* limits each person's perception in that it precludes the ability to communicate the importance of each person's Divine service. (And it is indeed each person, as R. Noson explains there, in later generations all Jews are considered "impoverished.") Even the "language" of Abraham's experience of prophecy fell short of being capable of expressing the value of the Divine service of the impoverished individual, required (if it was even revealed at all, which was a subject of dispute in the *Midrash*) at best a 'hint' but could not be made explicit.

That the practise of EB involves activating a wholly personal dimension that is beyond language has, I hope, been sufficiently demonstrated. How this activation actually occurs is, to the best of my research, through the two crucial teachings mentioned earlier, of LM I:282 (Azamrah) and LM II:12 (Ayeh), which I have described as being the two most important teachings on the "how to" of EB.

Belief "in," Belief "that," and the "Mechanics" of EB

The understanding, which is arrived at using language, of why there must be a limit to language, can itself be redemptive, in that this understanding helps one to enter the personal languageless realm. R. Noson wrote⁵³² that this understanding can be seen as constituting the spiritual import of the miracle of the finding of a single sealed and uncontaminated vial of oil, in the story of Hanukah.

The contamination of all of the oil in the Temple by the Greeks,⁵³³ wrote R. Noson, meant on the spiritual plane that the consciousness of the Jewish people had been contaminated by the Greeks' questions and paradoxes which weakened their faith. But then, "miraculously," the Jewish people came to realize that such questions cannot be answered because there is a necessity for mystery in order to preserve free choice. Not only this, but in fact they can even find strengthening from the very mysteriousness of the questions themselves. This is because such questions are rooted in a high level of holiness⁵³⁴ which will only be revealed in a clear way in Messianic times, but can be connected to even now through the languageless dimension of faith; this realization itself constituted the essence of the miracle. In this sense the finding of the physical vial of oil was a reflection in the physical world of the resolution of a great spiritual struggle.⁵³⁵

⁵³² At LH Hanukah (5:1)

⁵³³ As described at BT Shabbat 21B.

⁵³⁴ Note that here R. Nosson relates LM II:12 to LM I:21, in which it is explicitly taught that the inability to answer such questions is in order to preserve free choice.

⁵³⁵ This notion that physical miracles need to occur first spiritually, through a struggle, and only then can be manifest, is found in a few places in LH, see e.g. LH Pesach 7:21 and LH Talmud Torah 3:4.

That the vial is described in the Talmud⁵³⁶ as having had only enough oil to light for one day, and yet miraculously was able to be lit for eight, R. Noson wrote, is paralleled on the spiritual plane. The parallel is that the consciousness that the uncontaminated oil represented is reserved for the messianic “one day that is known to God ... which is neither day nor night,”⁵³⁷ and yet it was miraculously able to shine into the consciousness of this world, which is represented by the seven days of variegated time. The one shone into the seven, hence eight. The languageless level shone into language.

The notion of resolving an unanswerable question, not by answering it, but by explaining *why* it cannot be answered, is most plainly articulated at LM I:21,⁵³⁸ which is the teaching that R. Noson based himself upon in his interpretation, presented just above, of the story of the miracle of Hanukah. On the one hand, this understanding that unanswerable questions are necessary for the sake of free choice has elements of being a purely intellectual understanding, conveyable in language and helpful in quieting the mind and directing it towards faith.⁵³⁹

⁵³⁶ At BT Shabbat 21B.

⁵³⁷ Zachariah 14:7.

⁵³⁸ At paragraph 4 therein, which includes the following: “and know that this is the essence of the power of free choice: so long as the intellect is unable to understand how it can be that there is both Divine omniscience and free choice, thereby the power of free choice can exist, for each person has the power to choose life or its opposite. But ... when human consciousness will expand, such that the paradox of Divine omniscience and free choice could be resolved and understood, at that point free choice will become obsolete.”

⁵³⁹ In the previous chapter the formulations on faith from Spero were presented, which included the notion of an intellectual decision to arrive at faith “that,” which is followed by a personal commitment of faith “in.” Benjamin Brown has noted a sense of dissonance in Bratslav thought on faith, see Brown, “The Comeback of Simple Faith,” 130-197, in which he wrote that: “it is an interesting fact that Breslav Hasidism also developed an ethos of delving into the teachings of R. Nahman, including their theological layers. This created the paradoxical phenomenon of a Hasidic group with a strong rhetoric of simple faith exhibiting a tendency toward intellectual faith.” Although Bratslav thought certainly values simple, “unexamined” faith, still, it seems clear that this is not the ideal: there is, to my mind, also a clear valuing of intellectual understanding which makes faith stronger. See e.g. LM I:255, a short teaching, which reads: “When a person believes in the Tsadik without intellect (Heb. *b’li shum da’at*), it is possible for him to fall from this faith, because from faith alone it is possible to fall; but if he also has intellect, meaning that he understands with his mind [why he believes], then it is impossible for him to fall.” See also LM I:62 which emphasizes the importance of sharpening the mind in order to support faith through understanding, and includes the sorely overlooked phrase: “it is a great mitzvah to sharpen the mind (Heb. *mitsvah gedolah lechaded et ha-sechel*.)” See also LH Bircot Ha- Shachar 3 at length, on the dangers of faith with no supporting intellect. Also LH Bircot Ha-Reiach 4:37,40 on the necessity of intellectually rigorous

On the other hand, though, this understanding is crucially also built through the experiential dimension, through the very act of grappling with the questions themselves, not in terms of seeking answers using one's mind, but rather in terms of seeking a sense of Divine presence within that spiritual "place" of the questions, which can be achieved through crying out a profound personal plea. This experiential dimension is charted out at LM II:12, which R. Noson weaves together with LM I:21 in his interpretation above. It is perhaps most crisply expressed in the following few lines:

When a person falls ... to doubts and wonderings and great confusions, and then he begins to look at himself and he sees that he is very far from HS'Y's honor, and he asks and inquires: "where is the place of His glory" ... this itself is the essence of his fixing and his arising ... So we find, that when he asks and beseeches "*ayeh*," through this itself he returns and is elevated to the supreme Divine honor, which is the aspect of "*ayeh*," through which, using great concealment and hiding, He enlivens [even] these places [of doubt].⁵⁴⁰

The intellectual dimension of the understanding of the necessity for unanswerable questions, presented just before, relates to the notion of belief "that:" it provides a static conceptual framework that the intellect can follow, even if it is insufficiently proven. The act of asking and beseeching, which is also described as crying out,⁵⁴¹ "*ayeh*," is different, it is dynamic, new, it cannot become frozen as a "set of postulates." Rather, like the result of exercising a muscle,⁵⁴² through this practice a person becomes more and more capable of a profound kind of searching, which becomes woven in to his or her very way of being.⁵⁴³ The very urgency, the depth of the present moment that opens up when one cries out, itself testifies to the Divine Presence. The question itself becomes the

Torah study in order to be able to discern who indeed qualifies as a Tsadik worth believing in, through holding the Tsadik up to the litmus test of proper Torah observance. See also an exquisite piece on the relationship between intellectuality and faith at LH Rosh Chodesh 6:1-3.

⁵⁴⁰ From LM II: 12.

⁵⁴¹ Heb. "*mevakesh ve-tso'ek ayeh mekom kevodo.*"

⁵⁴² This is my own analogy.

⁵⁴³ R. Nosson writes that in a certain sense, this integration of a sense of searching for the Divine can hold one in good stead in the next world even if one has not managed to realize their potential in terms of mitsvah observance in their lifetime: "And hence it is that truly even if a person never merited to fix their deeds in wholeness in their lifetime, but they merited at least to continually search and ask and seek HS'Y, this too is an awesome and wonderful advantage for their soul. For through this the person will merit, even after death, to search and ask for HS'Y, and they will not be able to fool the person ... for even there the person will search for HS'Y, and thereby he will easily be able to come to his own resting place [in Heaven], and all of this is thanks to the inspiration of true Tsadikim [who inspire this searching.]" From LH Eruvei Techumin (6:22).

answer. The profound searching that is the asking of *ayeh* is, to the best of my research, one of the two primary “mechanics” of believing “in”⁵⁴⁴ oneself, which, as discussed above, is a crucial dimension of faith in God.

That the practice of asking *ayeh* is related to EB is perhaps most clearly expressed in R. Noson’s prayer that he composed for that teaching. In his *Likutei Tefillot* (LT), R. Noson wrote that the cry of asking “*ayeh*” includes the question “where is my own holiness.” This is not a departure from the simple meaning of his Rebbe’s teaching, because the search that is articulated there is not for an abstract sense of truth; it is a search for a sense of one’s *own connectedness* to the Divine even within one’s state of confusion and doubt and/or other experiences of distance.

As quoted above and in the previous chapter, in LH,⁵⁴⁵ R. Noson defined EB as faith in one’s own inherent value and the value of one’s efforts in Divine service. The search for one’s own holiness relates to both of these. In this sense, the advice of asking “*ayeh*” is quite related to the advice from the teaching of “*azamrah*,” of judging oneself positively based on the points of goodness that one can find in oneself. The active move of deciding (judging) that the positivity within oneself is primary and essential, and that any negativity is peripheral and inessential, actually effects a change in oneself. One’s positivity, recognized and “judged” to be of inestimable worth, in its being connected to the Divine, comes to outweigh the negative even though mathematically one’s negative traits/deeds are far more numerous. A person can thereby be inspired to change his or her way of living from then on:

For so it is that through finding a little bit of good that is yet present within the person, some point of goodness, and then through judging that person positively, through this the person is in fact removed from the side of culpability, onto the side of merit.⁵⁴⁶

⁵⁴⁴ See a similar phenomenon of an intellectual presentation which then requires experiential practice, related to EB, at LH Nahalot 4. There the notion of EB with regard to faith that one’s prayers are truly heard is presented, and, to put it simply (and incompletely), the way to gain this faith is through both the intellectual realization that prayers have been heard in the past, and the experiential dimension of actively praising G-d for having answered prayers in the past.

⁵⁴⁵ At LH Pikadon 5:7.

⁵⁴⁶ From LM I: 282. Later in that teaching this process is applied to the self. Although this teaching begins with judging others positively and only later applies this to the self, it seems clear enough from the fact that the length of discussion on judging oneself positively is about double the length of the discussion on judging others positively, that the primary focus is upon the self. See also R. Nosson’s bracketed comments, printed in LM at the end of that teaching. This notion might be seen to have precedence in Rabbinic literature, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah* Laws of Repentance 3:2, wherein it is stated

Both *ayeh* and *azamrah* must be understood, it seems to me, not as theological abstractions, but rather as techniques of self-activation, through which one can achieve an experience of inherent self worth and the worth of one's efforts in divine service. Both, too, are about arriving at a sense of the possibility for connectivity between the divine and the human: it is only that, using the advice of *azamrah* one finds definable points of connectivity and goodness that one can integrate intellectually and thereby "judge" oneself favorably, whereas, using the advice of *ayeh* one finds levels of connectivity that defy definition altogether.

R. Noson penned a fundamental teaching in LH⁵⁴⁷ which integrates a number of teachings of his Rebbe, in a form that is quite involved and lengthy, that I will paraphrase here. He relates R. Nachman's teaching on the *tsimtsum* at LM I:64 to the two teachings just mentioned. R. Noson explains that the two types of philosophical/heretical questions (one type which can be answered, and the other which cannot), which are mentioned in that teaching, are the roots of the negativity of the evil inclination, and they correspond to the two practices of *Azamrah* and *ve-Ayeh*, which are the healings for these two types of heresy.

In calling the practices of *Azamrah* and *Ayeh* healings for heresy, R. Noson is identifying them with faith. Which dimension of faith? The answer seems to me, inescapably, to be that crucial dimension of faith that is *emunah b'atmo*. It seems clear to me that these two practices are the closest I can come to defining the "mechanics" of that mysterious move of believing "in" oneself.

On the one hand, *Azamrah* is about, as R. Noson expands upon in the above source, the notion of 'awakening,' which means finding the "light of day" of the goodness within oneself and others. This involves finding "answers"- which do involve language - to the "heresy" of total self-deprecation.⁵⁴⁸ On the other hand *Ayeh* is about the notion of 'strengthening,' through crying out the question *Ayeh*- where is God's glory – in times of difficulty, compared to the "darkness of night," where there are no "answers" that can be put into language, whereby the very depths of the cry itself becomes a silent, languageless answer, and the soul's very yearning for God itself brings with it a profound sense of relatedness to God, that one is not abandoned. This is a "non-answer" to the "heresy" of the sense of abandonment.

that the judgment of a person is not based on the mathematical amount of good deeds versus the opposite, but rather on the Divine knowledge of the relative weight of each. If a person comes to value the good in themselves, this can be understood thereby to have the power to "swing the scales" in a positive direction: since they themselves value the good to a higher degree, this will make the good more endearing to Divine estimation as well.

⁵⁴⁷ At LH Eruvei Techumin 6, see especially paragraph 20.

⁵⁴⁸ See e.g. LH Hashkamat Ha-Boker 1.

R. Noson goes on to teach that these two forms of Divine service need to be “mixed,” in the sense that, on the one hand, the language one can find about one’s good points needs to point beyond itself to the silence of faith, since ultimately the goodness one finds will be quantitatively small hence requiring of faith in its legitimacy. On the other hand, the silence of the yearning for God, in order to be of use, needs to be able to be translated into words and actions in the world. The composite picture here might be described as being three dimensional, as opposed to “flat:” the interplay between language and silence, awakening and strengthening, produce a sense of depth that is created through the activation of the self.

Summary

This chapter began with a discussion of the term *emunah b’atsmo* prior to its employment within Bratslav thought. Next the story of how *emunah b’atsmo* was taught was presented, with an analysis of how R. Noson may have discerned its centrality over the years. Following this, the notion, highlighted in the title of this chapter, of the “private practice” of *emunah b’atsmo* was presented, by demonstrating how the act of having *emunah b’atsmo* is wholly separate from the “public” world of language. Finally, a presentation of my understanding of the “mechanics” or “how to” of *emunah b’atsmo*, was provided.

R. Noson wrote that “the fact that many are distant from *emunat chachamim* is only because of the wisdoms of this world (*chochmah chitzonit*).”⁵⁴⁹ Certainly, having faith in the sages and in oneself was always a challenge. With the burgeoning of “this-worldly wisdoms” with the rise of the Enlightenment, this challenge became more acute, particularly due to its focus upon language. R. Noson’s challenge thereby became, as will be discussed in the following chapter, to appeal to the inner experience that has no language, and the inner, personal “moves” of having faith in oneself.

⁵⁴⁹ LH Shabbat (6:3), see previous chapter for a fuller quotation from there.

Chapter Four: Onto the Rabbi's Boat

Chapter Outline

This chapter will begin with a relatively brief presentation of R. Noson's understanding of a "history" of the conflict between *chochmah chitsonit* and *emunat chachamim*, within the context in which the phenomenon of the Enlightenment is understood. Following this, the main focus of the chapter will be presented, which is an analysis of sections⁵⁵⁰ of LH Shabbat 6, which, to the best of my research, is perhaps R. Noson's starkest and most unvaryingly focussed composition on his response to influences of the Enlightenment.

In that teaching R. Noson offered his understanding of an important, if esoteric, Talmudic story which recounts a debate between the Tannaitic sage Rabbi Yehoshua b. Hananya (henceforth RYBH) and the "sages of Athens," which he related to the encounter in his day with Enlightenment influences, flipping back and forth throughout the piece between the Greeks of Tannaitic times and the modernizing Jews of his own day. R. Noson clearly frames the encounter within the context of the conflict between *chochmah chitsonit* and *emunat chachamim*; *emunah b'atmo*, although not mentioned explicitly, is a crucial component of his interpretation. The questions he places in the mouths of the sages of Athens, as well as the responses of RYBH, indicate plainly enough that R. Noson's most pronounced approach in battling Enlightenment influences was through his appeal to (1) the inner languageless experience. It is in that place of languageless experience that the "moves" of having faith in oneself, as discussed in the previous chapter, can occur. And this is chiefly achieved through the inspiration of the Tsadik who has reached levels of (2) spiritual objectivity as presented in chapter two.

The Ancient Conflict of Chochmah Chitsonit vs. Emunat Chachamim, and the Enlightenment

In addition to ascribing to the serpent of the Garden of Eden the role of being a primary source of *chochmah chitsonit*,⁵⁵¹ which is an important illustration of the centrality of the challenge of CC to the very human condition itself, R. Noson writes⁵⁵² of a kind of a "history" of *chochmah chitsonit* whose roots began even before creation, and whose marked manifestation in the form of the Enlightenment he was facing and decrying in his own day. In the Midrashic story⁵⁵³ of Divine consultation with the angels

⁵⁵⁰ The reader is strongly urged to see LH Shabbat 6 in its entirety. A full analysis of the 30 double columned pages is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

⁵⁵¹ R. Nosson, in many places, referred to it as a source of CC, as mentioned and discussed above in chapter 3.

⁵⁵² LH Bircot Ha-Shachar 5:72-92.

⁵⁵³ At Bereishit Rabbah (8:5,6).

to deliberate the desirability of the creation of humanity there were those angels who were opposed: they held that human beings are too imperfect and insignificant to warrant being created. As a result of their recalcitrance, some of these negating angels were banished from heaven, sent down to earth.⁵⁵⁴ These angels then became sources of knowledge for the ancient “wise men of the East.”⁵⁵⁵ This ancient knowledge base became the foundation for worldwide idol worship and sorcery; its center eventually moved to Egypt, and later, it was this very knowledge base,⁵⁵⁶ albeit in a new form, which was the foundation for the “wisdom of nature”⁵⁵⁷ of the sages of Greece. This story of the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation is not his own innovation: R. Noston wrote that it can be found in “many books;” it seems that perhaps the most prominent of these is the account found in the Zohar.⁵⁵⁸

That the Enlightenment was perceived by R. Noston as a marked manifestation of CC can plainly be seen in many places in his LH.⁵⁵⁹ Most of the time, when he mentions this, it is with a strong sense of bitterness, such as the following:

Now, at the end of the exile ... is when there are thousands and myriads of degrees of concealment within concealment; all of our prophets since the time of Moses, and all of the forefathers looked ahead and prophesied of these generations and the intensity of the hardships that would befall us at the end of days. And the essence of all of the hardships is the hardship of the soul, that we have become extremely distanced from HS'Y, to an unprecedented degree [This has come about] particularly through the great hardship which is greater than all hardships, which is that the study of philosophy and other external wisdom (CC) has become a powerful force, and [its proponents] have begun to teach the youths of Israel wisdoms and languages. If only they would simply bury them alive, this would surely be much better for them, for they are killing [the children] and their

⁵⁵⁴ See Zohar Pinchas 208A; Bereishit 37A.

⁵⁵⁵ Heb. *chachmei b'nei kedem*.

⁵⁵⁶ See e.g. LH Shabbat 6:8 “the danger that the Tsadik R. Yehoshua b. Hananya undertook to descend to the place of ... the sages of Athens which is the source of CC ... is the same aspect as the descent of Joseph to Egypt, which was filled with idolatry and CC, for Egypt was the main place of CC at that time, as is known from books that the main place of CC was in Egypt, and later the sages of Greece, who are the sages of Athens, received from them.”

⁵⁵⁷ Heb. *chochmat ha-teva*. This includes philosophy.

⁵⁵⁸ See e.g. Zohar to *Parashat Balak*, 208A, *Chayey Sarah* 125A, *Vayeichi* 249A.

⁵⁵⁹ See e.g. LH Shabbat 5:13, LH Shutafim Be-Karka 4:1-2, LH Pikadon 4:4, LH Hashkamat Ha-Boker 4:10, LH Pesach 7:6.

own selves; they uproot the youths and themselves from both this world and the next...⁵⁶⁰

It must also be noted that there exist, here and there,⁵⁶¹ statements of R. Noson's that are on a more positive note, such as this:

This is the aspect of all of the wisdoms of vanity that awaken anew in each generation. Whether they be external wisdoms (CC), which are the wisdom of philosophy, which become very strengthened anew in every generation, or whether they be other wisdoms of this world, which are all foolishness and vanity, yet these new wisdoms make it seem to each person as though now the world has become more intelligent, as if in earlier generations they had no intelligence at all, not knowing how to create these [new] kinds of vessels and ornaments and so on, as is found today such a foolish perspective among young people. [But] the truth is that at the root level of the souls' holiness, each generation draws forth an expression of newness that is *for the good* [my italics].⁵⁶² For the main honor of HS'Y comes about specifically when the tremendously manifold differences of perspective are able to join together and express God's simple oneness [and this is achieved through HS'Y's] true Tsadikim in each generation who reveal wondrous new Torah insights, such that in each successive generation there is an even greater revelation of the simple oneness from within the manifold differences of perspective that are expressed."⁵⁶³

Thanks to the new societal intellectual and technological complexity of the Enlightenment, the simple oneness of the Divine can be revealed more profoundly.

The inspiration of the "new Torah insights" of the Tsadikim, R. Noson wrote, is primarily not through the information they provide, but rather through what he called their "smell,"⁵⁶⁴ which reaches each person at a layer of consciousness that is beyond language, and encourages them to find the good in themselves, and thereby to persist and be strong in their Divine service. In this way, each person's particular persistence and

⁵⁶⁰ LH Geviat Chov Min Ha-Yetomim 3:5.

⁵⁶¹ See e.g. LH Ribit 5:31, LH Geviat Chov Min Ha-Yetomim 3:6,19.

⁵⁶² It seems likely that this optimistic historical perspective was influenced by the statement attributed to R. Nachman that "*G-t firt di velt shener un shener*," (G-d runs the world more and more beautifully) which he recorded at SHR 307, (see there in full.) See also SHR 239.

⁵⁶³ LH Perikah u-Te'inah 4:39.

⁵⁶⁴ Ibid, 4:38. As mentioned above in chapter three it is the non-verbal dimension of the teachings of the Tsadik that is paramount; mentioned there as well is that R. Nosson wrote of different ways this dimension is activated, such as the sound of the voice, body language, and the look of the eyes. "Smell" here is another, metaphoric, way to speak of this dimension.

steadfastness in the face of an ever more confusing world, which is born of their faith in themselves, is itself the expression of Divine oneness within the increasing complexity.

R. Noson believed that any person, when exposed to the “smell” of the inspiration of true Tsadikim, will be convinced and will wish to enter into Divine service. However, this will always remain a choice since it can never be demonstrated conclusively. He wrote, as discussed in previous chapters, that the possibilities for modalities of being, and for different forms of power over creation, based upon different formulations of CC, are allowed for by God because this allowance facilitates free choice. This means that there will be real ability among false prophets to perform miracles,⁵⁶⁵ sorcerers to perform magic,⁵⁶⁶ as well as room for impressive feats of technology,⁵⁶⁷ the formulation of convincing philosophic or political or sociological arguments⁵⁶⁸ and more, through the influences of the Enlightenment in his day.

At the source of these wisdoms, and this must not be forgotten, is the negative argument of those angels who opposed the creation of human beings. This means that the efforts involved in a life of CC will have, for R. Noson, in a way which cannot be put into language, a kind of hollowness to them. There will be a sense of futility, akin to that expressed at Ecclesiastes (1:2): “all is vanity.”

In contradistinction to this, there will be a sense of aliveness, purpose and joy,⁵⁶⁹ equally impossible to put into language, that will characterize a life of *emunat*

⁵⁶⁵ As mentioned at Deuteronomy 13:2-6.

⁵⁶⁶ As mentioned at Exodus 7:11-12.

⁵⁶⁷ See e.g. LH Succah 7:2, LH Shabbat 6:8.

⁵⁶⁸ See e.g. LH Nedarim (4:14) that even Enlightenment influenced philosophic arguments about the purposes of the mitzvot and the meaning of verses in the Bible can be convincing.

⁵⁶⁹ See e.g. LH Klei Yayin Nesech (1:2) wherein R. Nosson explained the prohibition of drinking non-Jewish wine as being that, despite the fact that there isn't real idol worship today, still, gentiles are tainted by CC such that this causes the experience of wine to bring one to a profound sense of emptiness, as opposed to EC which allows for the experience of wine to bring one to great joy. See also LH Inyan Bircat Shehecheyanu 3: “And so it is for every matter of joy that comes one's way, such as a seasonally new fruit, or new clothes or other important items upon which one pronounces the blessing ‘*shehecheyanu*.’ For we believe that all comes about only through His blessed will. And being that all comes about only through His blessed will, there is hence joy and life energy ... For if one does not believe this, then there is no joy and life energy at all, even from the positive thing that just entered one's life. Since it is ephemeral, it has no real existence at all. It is only when one believes that this good thing is coming about through His blessed will, now there is joy, due to HS”Y magnifying His goodness and loving-kindness with us. And now ‘life is life.’ (Heb. *azay hachayim - chayim*) ... And therefore the wording of the blessing highlights this very notion: ‘*shehecheyanu*’ - who filled us

chachamim,⁵⁷⁰ since EC, and particularly its core component, *emunah b'atsmo*, completes the “two-sided arrow” of faith in bringing it “home” to the individual’s own lived life, as discussed in previous chapters.

Emunah b'atsmo, as discussed in the previous chapter, is an inner form of, what I have called, wherewithal, which can never be expressed in language. One way of explaining why EB must be outside of the reach of language is that the divine desire for human beings and their service is just that: divine, and as such, cannot be understood,⁵⁷¹ just as God cannot be understood. Even the angels, R. Noson wrote,⁵⁷² were actually limited by their angelic understanding of things, however lofty their understanding was, and this is what led to their mistake. They thought they could understand God’s greatness and accordingly, to them, it was unimaginable that God should care for human beings and their service.

Hence, the ability to believe in the inherent value of human beings and their efforts depends on “the faith that the Tsadikim inspire us to have, [for] they have reached the purpose of all knowing, which is not knowing.”⁵⁷³ And in another place⁵⁷⁴ R. Noson wrote that true Tsadikim have reached a level of perception that precedes the negative argument of angels: they never “heard” the angelic argument ‘what is man that he should be given prominence.’⁵⁷⁵ In other words, through their gargantuan efforts at refinement of their physical and emotional appetites, the Tsadikim master the art of “knowing and not knowing”⁵⁷⁶ the inscrutability of the Divine valuing of human beings and their efforts, which is part and parcel of Divine inscrutability itself.

This sourcing of *chochmah chitsonit* is important, because it shows how the conflict of *emunat chachamim* vs. *chochmah chitsonit* began with the Divine deliberation

with life, in reaching this special time. For the essence of life energy depends on us believing that all comes from His will.” See also SHR:32, 53,102.

⁵⁷⁰ See e.g. LH Piryah ve-Rivayah (3:19-35).

⁵⁷¹ Even the wisdom of the Torah itself cannot encapsulate, or explain, how repentance is possible for imperfect human beings, as R. Nosson brings, at LH Nedarim (4:7) from JT Macot 4:6.

⁵⁷² LH Nedarim (4:15). He also includes the fascinating notion that even tsTsadikim who have not reached the most ultimate level of “not knowing,” will make the mistake of denigrating Jews that they consider, according to their understanding, to be on too low a level to deserve their consideration and efforts to draw them close. See also his similar interpretation of the sin of the spies, at Ibid, 4:12.

⁵⁷³ LH Nedarim (4:13).

⁵⁷⁴ LH Shabbat (7:13).

⁵⁷⁵ Psalms (8:5), see Bereishit Rabba (8:5, 6, 7).

⁵⁷⁶ See the important teachings on this at LH Piryah ve-Rivayah 5.

of creation,⁵⁷⁷ which, having occurred before time itself began, stands outside of time, and hence is a dynamic of conflict which ever-present throughout history: as R. Noson wrote, it is the angelic argument against the creation of humanity which is the root of the evil inclination.⁵⁷⁸

R. Noson spelled out the sociological manifestation of the conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit* throughout history in another place in LH.⁵⁷⁹ He wrote there that the essential test of every generation is whether they follow some form of *chochmah chitsonit*, or have *emunat chachamim* and connect themselves to the Tsadikim; this includes even those generations that preceded the giving of the Torah: he cites Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem and Ever as examples, stating that had their generations followed them they could have averted calamities such as the Flood and the tower of Babel.

The innovation that R. Noson introduced in his formulation of how to strengthen traditional Judaism in facing Enlightenment influences lies in his clear appeal to the non-language-based realm of the human experience. It is in that languageless place that people can be offered the “smell” of the inspiration of the Tsadikim, at which point it will be their choice to follow it, believe in themselves, and live a life that is committed to Divine service, or not.

The following analysis is my attempt to bring to light R. Noson’s two main “poles” of his polemic against the Enlightenment. In his presentation, it is (2) the spiritual objectivity of the Tsadik which comes first, followed by (1) the appeal to the languageless dimension of the human experience.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania and the Sages of Athens

The Talmud records⁵⁸⁰ a fascinating story, centered around cryptic, brief exchanges, which can be described as metaphoric riddle-like questions and responses, between the Tannaitic sage R. Yehoshua ben Hanania⁵⁸¹ (RYBH) and the “sages of Athens.” R. Nachman delivered eight discourses,⁵⁸² each based upon one of the ten exchanges between R. Yehoshua ben Hanania and the sages of Athens. Reb Noson fills in

⁵⁷⁷ In discussing the fundamental, pre-creation place of the tsTsadikim, R. Nosson bases himself upon a number of classical Rabbinic sources, such as Pesachim 54A and Bereishit Rabbah (8:7).

⁵⁷⁸ LH Nedarim (4:15), Netilat Yadayim (6:84).

⁵⁷⁹ LH Pesach (6:1-3).

⁵⁸⁰ At BT Bechorot 8B.

⁵⁸¹ RYBH can be found engaging in argument with Gentile authorities and Jewish heretics in a number of places in the Babylonian Talmud, such as at BT Shabbat 152B, BT Sanhedrin 90B and BT Hagigah 5B.

⁵⁸² Recorded at LMI:23-31.

four parts of the Talmudic passage that had been left un-interpreted by his Rebbe. The first part is the story of how the encounter between the Rabbi and the sages came about. The second and third parts are two of the riddle-like questions and their answers, and the fourth part is the story of what occurred after RYBH successfully answered all their queries. In completing the interpretation of the story R. Noson was, in his way, “finishing” what his Rebbe had started.

In introducing his interpretation, R. Noson wrote that:

We did not merit to for him to reveal to us that which is hinted at in [these parts of the story]. And I have heard from his holy mouth that he wished to reveal these as well, but it never happened, due to our many sins. For even that which we did merit to hear from his holy mouth [about the story of the encounter] we were not worthy of, is only due to the great love and mercy of HS'Y ... Now HS'Y has awakened my heart and opened my eyes to find in [these parts of the story] matters of good sense (Heb. *d'varim shel ta'am*).⁵⁸³

It seems clear enough that, although he is indeed filling in a gap, yet R. Noson does not mean to imply that he had somehow discovered precisely what his Rebbe would have interpreted. R. Noson invoked the language of the Talmud,⁵⁸⁴ that R. Nachman had “left me a gap” to fill in, the implication being, to have his own chance to achieve. There are some similar instances in which R. Noson picks up where his Rebbe had left off, in LH, although none to the best of my research are as extensive as here.⁵⁸⁵

The encounter, as recounted in the Talmud, was occasioned by a strange debate that RYBH had had with the Caesar of Rome, in which he assailed the opinion of the sages of Athens, charging that they had egregiously miscalculated the gestation period of snakes: it is not true that this lasts three years, it is, in fact, seven. The Caesar promptly sent RYBH off to Athens to attempt to best them in a battle of wits.

This opening narrative, in R. Noson's interpretation, is focussed around the issue of spiritual objectivity, discussed above in chapter two.⁵⁸⁶ The sages of Athens were arguing that their wisdom is an objective, purely intellectual wisdom, unsullied by any subjective motivations or considerations. The production of such wisdom is termed “the gestation period of snakes,” since this evokes the figure of the snake in the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden, who was the first character in the Bible to present “external wisdom,” and as such it represents CC *par excellence*. Hence the sages of Athens held that the gestation period lasts three years, since these represent the three kabbalistic

⁵⁸³ LH Shabbat (6:7)

⁵⁸⁴ At BT Avoda Zara 5B.

⁵⁸⁵ See LH Techumin (6:8) and LH Nedarim (4:27).

⁵⁸⁶ See the section titled “The Fallible Objectivity of the TsTsadik.”

sefirot corresponding to intellectual processes;⁵⁸⁷ they saw CC as being an expression of pure, unbiased intellect. On the other hand, “seven years” represents the seven kabbalistic *sefirot* corresponding to emotive character traits. RYBH was charging that CC must be understood as stemming from negative, lower, character traits connected to desires for matters of this physical world.

The picture R. Noson painted in this interpretation locates the three intellectual *sefirot* as embedded within a larger system, which includes the seven character traits ‘below,’ and also the *sefirah* called ‘crown’ which sits on top, and represents will.⁵⁸⁸ One can be drawn down by the seven lower character traits which, when unrefined, are connected to desires for this world, such as the desire for honor, in which case one’s intellectuality and will are created and colored through them, or one can be drawn up by a higher sense of will which is the soul’s inherent desire to connect to its root in God, which ‘shines brighter,’ so to speak, the more one’s character traits are refined.

One’s intellectuality will always be aligned with, and subservient to, one’s will. To the degree that the soul’s higher will is accessed, which is achieved through the refinement of one’s character traits, one’s intellectuality will be closer to the kind of spiritual objectivity described above in chapter three, otherwise it will be subservient to the lower will as formed by the seven lower *sefirot* in their unrefined state.

His contention was that proponents of CC, and, in his day, the Enlightenment, were mistaken in their presumption that intellectuality can float un-tethered and unconnected to a larger order of the human personality. Instead, he argued, the three *sefirot* of intellectuality must be seen as *embedded*, meaning, connected to and influenced by the seven *sefirot* below that represent emotive character traits, and connected to and influenced by the *sefirah* above which represents will.⁵⁸⁹ In order to achieve objective intellectual perception, one must first refine the seven character traits, which will lead to an uncovering of the higher will, which will then shine into the intellectual *sefirot*, “parting the clouds” so to speak, and bringing the person ever closer to spiritual objectivity. Otherwise, one’s higher will will remain covered up by lower motivations

⁵⁸⁷ *Sefirot* are representations of Divine emanations, in that G-d, relative to creation, “takes on” a human kind of “personality.” They also refer to the dimensions of the human personality itself. For an introduction to the notion of the *sefirot*, see Arthur Green, *A Guide to the Zohar* (Stanford CA: Stanford U. Press, 2004), 28-59.

⁵⁸⁸ For the purposes of this dissertation, the English word “will,” although it provides an incomplete picture, can suffice.

⁵⁸⁹ This he drew from a number of teachings of his Rebbe, one particularly clear one that R. Nosson singled out is: “the thoughts and intellectuality of a person are according to the level of refinement of his character traits.” LMI: 29.

due to lack of character refinement, and hence one's intellectuality will be darkened, unable to perceive objectively.⁵⁹⁰

It is critical to emphasize that R. Noson's polemic here was with regard to the sense of *purpose*⁵⁹¹ underlying CC, as opposed to the correctness of its findings.⁵⁹² There surely is a "layer" of creation which can be investigated, and correctly understood, independent of character refinement. Society, wrote R. Noson elsewhere,⁵⁹³ even depends upon certain basic degrees of CC, in the form of language, science, logical and social convention and technological convenience. What R. Noson wrote about here is the sense of what one is living "for." The ability to arrive at a sense of purpose in life that is true and real depends upon a tremendous level of character refinement. Alternatively, one can believe in those who have achieved this refinement and who direct others towards a true sense of purpose: this is EC, as discussed at length above in chapter three.⁵⁹⁴

Without faith in the (Jewish) sages, one's life may be filled with wondrous intellectual sophistry and achievements of different kinds, but these will be inextricably linked to some sense of this worldly success, and this becomes what one is living for, as opposed to the activation, more and more deeply, of relationship to the Divine.⁵⁹⁵ This, to

⁵⁹⁰ See a similar discussion at LH Shluchin (5:19), on the plague of turning water to blood.

⁵⁹¹ See LH Shabbat 6: 8 where R. Nosson dubs Jewish wisdom "*chochmah tachlitit*" or "purposeful wisdom," since it can be defined as that wisdom which defines and explores "how to achieve eternal purpose." See the quotations above in chapter three on the definition of the sense of purpose that R. Nosson refers to.

⁵⁹² See LH Metaltelin 5:2, quoted above in chapter three, that CC can come to findings that are true, such as the nature of air to "expand and flee through the heat of fire." R. Nosson includes there (not included in the quotation in chapter 3) that "they themselves know and are forced to admit they know nothing with any real certainty except for the wisdoms of geometry and mathematics." This is a reference to what seems to have been a conversation with Maskilim.

⁵⁹³ See e.g. LH Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:19, Netilat Yadayim 6:90.

⁵⁹⁴ And see here at LH Shabbat 6:3.

⁵⁹⁵ R. Nosson included in this piece that "even when they arrive, through their philosophizing at an admission that the soul lives on [after death], even this is due to their desires for this world. For they want to be able to be successful, in their evil way, even after they die ... and so they say that through their intellectual sophistry itself they will be able to succeed in an eternal fashion. For if not it is terrible for them that today or tomorrow they shall die and nothing will be left of them, hence they admit to the notion that the soul lives on, and they say that the soul's eternal success depends upon its intellectual achievements. And this entire perspective is based upon their physical desires and their lack of character refinement in their desire to fill their bellies with their desires and that they should have fame and honor among royalty and that through this they will succeed even after death. But the truth is that the essence of the success of the soul after death is in accordance with how much a person was able to distance himself from the

my understanding, is what R. Noson meant in his interpretation of RYBH's position that the gestation period of snakes lasts seven years.

This leading story of disagreement highlights an abstract, schematic level of understanding of how the development of a sense of purpose in life “maps in” to the human experience. The debate with the sages of Athens that follows, however, hinges upon a much more practical dimension.

As emphasized in previous chapters, a transition from a life of *chochmah chitsonit* to a life of *emunat chachamim* cannot entail a mere substitution of one intellectual doctrine for another. To truly embrace a life of purpose of the kind that R. Noson was promoting requires that inscrutably personal move of having *emunah b'atsmo*. One must believe in one's inherent value to God, and that actual Divine service is within one's reach. The cultivation of this belief is a practice which calls for the development of an inner wherewithal that never comes to a static resolution. It is the dimension of *emunah b'atsmo* that, it seems clear to me, R. Noson alludes to in his interpretation of the exchanges between the sages of Athens and RYBH. Before delving into these, though, a few words on RYBH's journey to “meet” them are in order, which will complete R. Noson's presentation on (2) the spiritual objectivity of the Tsadik.

I put the word “meet” in quotation marks because R. Noson explicitly wrote that the meeting never occurred in the physical realm, rather it occurred “by way of thought.”⁵⁹⁶ RYBH journeyed within his own psyche to meet, one might say, (and this is my own turn of phrase) the “Greek within.”⁵⁹⁷ In explaining RYBH's journey thusly, R. Noson based himself upon LM I:8 wherein R. Nachman had taught that the Tsadik, (and those connected to him), can “lower” himself into the “pipeline” of different kinds of negativity. Here, R. Noson wrote that the journey to meet the sages of Athens was a journey to the very tunnel and “opening of total impurity, wherein sit the essential

desires of this world and busy himself with Torah study, prayer, mitzvot and good deeds, as is explained at LMII:19 and in other places.” –LH Shabbat (6:7). See LM II:19, an important source in LM regarding philosophy, which attacks the (Aristotelian) philosophic outlook whilst freely using philosophic terminology. In that teaching R. Nachman attacked the philosophic outlook outlined here by R. Nossou, particularly in that it creates a clear hierarchy wherein those who are more intellectually gifted than others will have more success in the next world, whereas according to Judaism it is the sincerity of one's Divine service that is the measure of one's ultimate success.

⁵⁹⁶ Heb. *be-orach machshavah*. LH Shabbat (6:8).

⁵⁹⁷ There is an important focus upon dialogue with parts of the self in Bratslav thought-see e.g. the section entitled “*Hitbodedut*” in Chayei Moharan, see also R. Nachman's acrostic poem, printed at the beginning of LM, see also LM I:52, LM II:125 and more. I do not think R. Nossou meant to imply that the journey here was wholly personal, rather, that *through* the personal one can encounter the general.

strength of the power of evil, which are the sages of Greece who are the sages of Athens.”⁵⁹⁸

In the story in the Talmud of his journey to meet the sages of Athens,⁵⁹⁹ RYBH first encounters a butcher. RYBH asks him if he can buy a head, and the butcher responds in the affirmative. RYBH then asks how much this costs, and is told that it costs half of a *zuz*.⁶⁰⁰ RYBH then pays for the head, but when the butcher gives him the head, RYBH states that he did not mean the head of an animal, rather he meant the butcher’s own head. RYBH then offers that he is willing to accept, in lieu of the butcher’s head, that the butcher show him how to reach the secret opening to the place of the sages of Athens.

In R. Noson’s interpretation the butcher represents the evil inclination, and RYBH’s question as to the “price of a head” meant that RYBH was asking the evil inclination as to which thought it is through which the evil inclination is most successful in overpowering people. The answer that the head costs “half a *zuz*” meant that it is the desire for money that is most efficacious for the evil inclination: people can always be made to feel that they have only part, or “half,” of the amount of money that they need. Based upon this “foothold” of (perceived) financial necessity, the evil inclination can then bring the person to all kinds of folly.

The sense of financial necessity is exceedingly powerful because it speaks to a basic level of human insecurity. Hence, a person can always feel justified in focussing their attention and energies upon financial gain.⁶⁰¹ Although the desire for money is the most effective *tool* of the evil inclination in pulling people away from Divine service, still, it is not as elemental as the “place” of the sages of Athens.

RYBH’s surprising statement that he wished to take the butcher’s own head represents his victory over that manifestation of the evil inclination represented by the butcher. He then presents his willingness to “cut a deal,” whereby the butcher⁶⁰² will show him how to get to the opening of the sages of Athens which is, as mentioned above, the place of “total impurity.”

⁵⁹⁸ LH Shabbat (6:8).

⁵⁹⁹ There are many details of this story that are not included here; the reader is highly encouraged to see it, and indeed all of LH Shabbat 6, in their entirety.

⁶⁰⁰ This is the name for a unit of currency.

⁶⁰¹ See e.g. LH Techumin (6:24)

⁶⁰² Fascinatingly, the butcher, who R. Nosson refers to as actually being a “thought,” then expresses fear that if he shows the way to the place of the sages of Athens he will be killed, and RYBH has to “teach the thought” how to be able to withstand their greater degree of negativity. There are many more thought provoking details of R. Nosson’s interpretation of the story which lie outside the scope of this dissertation.

Just what is it about the notion of the “place of the sages of Athens” that is so very sinister, that makes it such an ultimate, quintessential root of negativity? It seems to me that it is the relaxation of all interpretive filters to experience reality in all of its unresolved mystery, particularly with regard to the fact that reality cannot be “traced,” in an absolute way, to a source in a Divine Creator.⁶⁰³ RYBH “descended” to that place of unfettered human experience without the reassurance of tradition and faith-based authority, and it is from that place of profound social disconnectedness, of unfiltered human experience, that the following fascinating exchanges emerged. [The translation of the words of the Talmud will be in italics, the rest is translation of R. Noson’s teachings.]

“I Am a Jewish Sage”

*They*⁶⁰⁴ asked: “*what is your profession.*” He answered: “*chakimah d’yehudai ana,*” that he is a Jewish sage, meaning that all of his wisdom comes exclusively from the wisdom of Judaism, which is a ‘purposeful wisdom.’ That he has absolutely no wisdom of vanity, neither the *chochmah chitsonit* of philosophy itself, nor the wisdoms of the world at large, rather, his wisdom is Jewish wisdom whose exclusive concern is how to achieve the ultimate and eternal purpose [of eternal life,] which is what the Jewish people are busy with, and for which reason they are called ‘only a wise and understanding nation is this great people.’ Whereas for most people it is possible that some outer wisdom will mix into their consciousness, but I, I am a Jewish sage, and my entire mindset is exclusively built from the wisdom of Judaism. “*I have come to learn from you*” For I am confident in my convictions,⁶⁰⁵ such that I can receive wisdom even from you. For the truth is that a true sage is able to receive wisdom and hints on how to come close to HS’Y even from the essence of the Other Side and the wise men of the nations of the world ... it is only that others are forbidden to endanger themselves by entering, lest they become entrapped there, heaven forbid. But the Tsadik can receive even from them, in the aspect of “who is wise? He who learns from all people”⁶⁰⁶ ... This is what is meant by the statement “I have come to learn from you,” meaning that I am capable of receiving wisdom even from you.

And hence *they [the sages of Athens] replied if so then let us ask of you.*⁶⁰⁷ And the commentators [on this passage of Talmud] have asked – what does this mean “if so”? How does it follow that they should want to ask of him, this seems to be

⁶⁰³ In the language of the musical metaphor used above in chapter three, this is the experience of the “returning sound” without the harmony of the “strong sound.”

⁶⁰⁴ “They” here refers to the sages of Athens. This exchange occurs after RYBH enters their abode; I did not include the full story here of how he finally entered.

⁶⁰⁵ Heb. *ki ani chazak beda’ati.*

⁶⁰⁶ mAvot 4:1.

⁶⁰⁷ The bolding here is my own addition for the sake of emphasis.

the opposite of what RYBH had just said, that he had come to learn from them. But according to the above explanation this is well clarified. For they [the sages of Athens] understood that the fact that he [RYBH] said “I have come to learn from you” was not due to a sense of inadequacy but rather the opposite: with this statement he was expressing a sense of tremendous confidence in his own true wisdom, to such an extent that he is unafraid of becoming entrapped in their foolishnesses.⁶⁰⁸

R. Noson understood the Tsadik’s attitude in confronting this ultimate place of challenge to be one of pristine confidence. RYBH’s proclamation, upon entering the abode of the sages of Athens, that “I am a Jewish sage,” wrote R. Noson, meant that the Tsadik was stating that his core consciousness, his way of relating to reality, is completely “Jewish,” meaning oriented towards a sense of ultimate purpose. This “totally Jewish, totally purposeful” consciousness, which is the result of immense refinement, is another way of describing (2) the Tsadik’s spiritual objectivity. Not only does this depth of perception entail awesome clarity, it also entails an ability to perceive wisdom and hints regarding Divine service from anywhere, including the very depths of the unfettered human experience.

As opposed to a rejectionist retreat, the person who reaches the highest degrees of saintliness becomes able to be open to the world and all of its wisdoms – even more, such a person becomes *obligated* to look deeply into the most heretical branches of human wisdom.⁶⁰⁹

The exchanges that follow consist of the questions that the sages of Athens posed to RYBH, and his answers. It is here that the notion of *emunah b’atsmo* and (1) the appeal to the languageless dimension of the human experience, come to the fore.

Personal Questions

This is a translation of the Talmud’s account of the first exchange, followed by a selection of R. Noson’s interpretation:

The Wise Men of Athens asked, “What of the person who lent money to his neighbor and had a very hard time collecting it? Why did he then lend money to others? Shouldn’t he have learned his lesson the first time?”

“Don’t let this surprise you,” Rabbi Yehoshua answered them. “This person is like someone who goes into a marsh and cuts down reeds till he has piled a bundle. He wants to lift it up but can’t. What does he do? He

⁶⁰⁸ LH Shabbat 6:8.

⁶⁰⁹ LM I: 64:3.

continues cutting, all the while piling new bundles upon the first one, until someone comes along to help him. Then, they will lift the entire load, including the first bundle.”

... The person who lent alludes to someone who prays. This is explained by Rebbe Nachman (LM II 1:9) that each star borrows from its neighbor ... the moon borrows from the sun ... and so on, until the great lender: the person who engages in prayer. This is also true of all the devotions which a person performs in his service of God, they all place him into the position of lender... The upshot of this is that a person who serves God is, so to speak, lending to Him until he receives his just desserts...

This then was the question of the Wise Men of Athens: “What of the person who prays and serves God (becomes a lender), only to find that what he does is confused and incoherent (the word *taraf*, which indicates having a hard time collecting the loan, also connotes confusion)?” ... This is something which happens to most people: even when they force themselves to pray, they can only manage a little bit before becoming distracted and incapable of going on...

“If that’s the case that his prayers and devotions are always confused,” the Wise Men asked, “why did he then pray again?” After seeing that he is incapable of praying properly so that his prayers ascend, why does he keep trying? These latter prayers will also prove inadequate and leave him confused!” The Wise Men of Athens were wicked men, greatly opposed to holiness. Their intention, therefore, was to discourage anyone who might attempt repenting and coming closer to God. “Seeing that his prayers will not reach their mark, why bother?” they asked Rabbi Yehoshua.⁶¹⁰

That R. Noson has the sages of Athens⁶¹¹ asking, or challenging, RYBH on the issue of the perceived futility of prayer is highly instructive. The issue here is not one of abstract theology, but rather of lived personal experience. The challenge that the raw human experience poses is that Divine service⁶¹² does not seem to yield results in a timely enough fashion. To put it starkly, the raw human experience of attempts at a life of faith and Divine service is characterized by a heavy sense of futility.

⁶¹⁰ LH Shabbat 6:8.

⁶¹¹ See also LH Rosh Chodesh 7:52; Shluchim 5:17 on “Hasidim *nefulim*” - “fallen Hasidim,” who also discourage from service of Hashem; as mentioned in chapter three above, CC also has religious manifestations that block EC.

⁶¹² R. Nosson highlights prayer, but includes all forms of Divine service in their question.

RYBH's answer is not to deny this, for spirituality does indeed require immense patience,⁶¹³ along with inspiration and encouragement from a Tsadik. His answer is that a person who cuts down many bushels of produce, although he cannot carry them alone, does not stop cutting them because of this, but rather waits for help from another. When someone arrives to help him, they will together be able to shoulder the burden and thereby come to reap the rewards of the original labor. In R. Noson's interpretation, the notion of help from another refers to the immense importance of *emunat chachamim*, in that one believes in the Tsadik, who encourages continued stockpiling of one's tiny efforts,⁶¹⁴ even though they remain "on the ground," meaning they do not ascend properly as Divine service ought to. This inspiration is itself the way that the Tsadik helps them to eventually be lifted up by God.

R. Noson illustrates this using the Biblical narrative of Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream.⁶¹⁵ In the dream Pharaoh saw seven fat healthy cows which were then swallowed by seven thin unhealthy cows, followed by seven healthy stalks of wheat which were swallowed by seven sickly stalks. Both times, after swallowing the fat seven, the sickly seven looked just as sickly and thin as before. Joseph's interpretation was that this was a heavenly indication that there would be seven years of plenty, followed by seven years of famine, which would be so intensive that they will cause the years of plenty to be completely forgotten, as if they had never occurred. His advice for Pharaoh was to stockpile the produce of the years of plenty, such that the country would be able to live off of the reserves during the years of famine.

Pharaoh's dream and Joseph's attendant explanation and directive, in R. Noson's interpretation, form a kind of a picture of how the Tsadik's inspiration helps the individual. At first, the individual is stymied by the very question of the sages of Athens: why is it that after having put in such efforts (represented by the seven years of plenty) that one then encounters such a sense of emptiness and lack of achievement that erases the earlier positivity so utterly (represented by the seven years of famine)? The Tsadik provides the individual with encouragement and inspiration to continue with their efforts in Divine service in times of "plenty," even if they keep encountering "famine." Eventually, little by little, the efforts begin to mitigate the sense of emptiness, until such time as God will "look down from heaven and have mercy on him, and will deliver him from Egypt entirely, and he will merit to the complete good which is the aspect of the receiving of the Torah, and will be capable of continuing and everlasting devotion."⁶¹⁶

⁶¹³ There are many important teachings on patience in Bratslav thought. E.g. LM I:6, LM II:48,78. See also LH Pesach (7:9-10).

⁶¹⁴ See e.g. on the difficulty of prayer, SHR 75.

⁶¹⁵ At Genesis 41:1-7.

⁶¹⁶ LH Shabbat (6:10).

It is worth pointing out that R. Noson provided an important interpretation here of what it means for the Tsadik to “lift up” the Divine service of an individual, which is a notion that appears in a number of places in LM.⁶¹⁷ At first glance this would seem to be an “act” of the Tsadik, whereby in some spiritual way the Tsadik “takes” the person’s Divine service and “lifts” it. But in R. Noson’s interpretation, the Tsadik’s “lifting” is *the inspiration along the way* to continue to stockpile one’s Divine service, to not give up on oneself,⁶¹⁸ whereas the “act” of lifting up one’s service is performed by none other than God.⁶¹⁹

Although R. Noson does not mention *emunah b’atmo* here explicitly it is clear enough⁶²⁰ that this is what lies at the core of this exchange: one must believe that one’s efforts in Divine service, even when they do not yield “results,” are indeed of great value. With perseverance, these efforts will eventually⁶²¹ snowball to the point where one’s Divine service reaches a level of permanence: the wherewithal one has built up over time becomes like a motor for relating and serving forever. The Tsadik inspires, but does not “substitute” for the person: it is their own EB which gets built, little by ever so little, over time.

In a different place in LH,⁶²² R. Noson writes about how crucial EB is to prayer specifically, and speaks of this in a similar way to the above, in that through perseverance eventually a person builds a spiritual “vessel” through which they become able to pray with a deeper kind of permanence, and here he does mention EB explicitly:⁶²³

Just as one must have complete faith in HS’Y as creator of all, as director, ruler and overseer, and that it is in His hand to change nature according to His will and bring goodness to each person, so too a person must believe in themselves, to believe with complete faith that HS’Y hears, listens and pays close attention to

⁶¹⁷ E.g. LMI:2, LMI:60, and more.

⁶¹⁸ The importance of the individual’s strengthening coming from inspiration from the Tsadik is found in many places in LH, such as at LH Rosh Chodesh 7:22 “it is upon us ... to believe in the true sages and their holy books which strengthen us throughout the bitterness of each individual’s personal exile, saying: there is always hope.”

⁶¹⁹ See a similar expression of this model at LH Matanah 5:13, as applied to the notion of *tikun hanefesh* (healing of the soul); this is effected by the Tsadik through encouragement, until one’s speech becomes rectified and G-d shines mercy and light from above.

⁶²⁰ This is my own “connecting of the dots.”

⁶²¹ This notion is found in a number of places in LH, see e.g. LH Minchah 7:32, Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:13, Shabbat 7:46-50.

⁶²² LH Nahalot 4.

⁶²³ The following is excerpts from LH Nahalot (4:3-5).

each and every expression of prayer of every Jew, even the worst of the worst⁶²⁴ for HS'Y hears the prayers of all mouths ...

So long as a person lacks faith in himself that he too has the ability to bring about influence through his prayers, this means that he does not yet have a vessel through which to receive ... for he does not yet have the space and receptacle within his heart to receive ... for according to his mindset he is far from receiving ... since he does not believe in himself that his prayers make an impression ... And it is for this reason that it is necessary to begin prayer with praises, for through the act of praising, faith is strengthened ... for just as HS'Y has done such great things for our ancestors, and always heard their prayer [as mentioned in the praises] ... we become strengthened to believe that He will hear our prayers as well ... But this still requires great effort ... for there are all kinds of breakings of a person's spirit⁶²⁵ in this matter, as each person knows in their own experience, and to most people it will seem that they just don't have the ability to [pray and be heard], and hence they do not strengthen themselves to pray. And the essential effort is at the beginning, meaning when one begins to pray with real intention, in the aspect of "all beginnings are difficult,"⁶²⁶ for at that point the person has yet to see any results from their prayer. But when the person merits to strengthen themselves with all their reserves to pray with intention, to the point where he merits to bring something about through their prayer, for instance when he prays for something and is answered ... then there is created within him a vessel through which he can receive ... And through this his faith [in himself] is strengthened such that prayer becomes a permanent part of this life.⁶²⁷

The fact that R. Noson does not interpret the debate as being centered on abstract philosophy/theology, nor even practical sociology/politics, but rather the personal/experiential dimension of the struggle of prayer, is, to my mind, highly instructive of his core "tactic" in his own encounter with Enlightenment influences. Namely, being that it is impossible to "win" in any absolute way in the dimensions just mentioned, his focus is therefore upon the inner, languageless dimension of the personal/experiential, and in that dimension, *emunah b'atmo* figures most prominently. *Emunah b'atmo* can be inspired, and there is a fair chance of "winning," if the other chooses, freely, to believe.

The next exchange, to my understanding, also centers on the personal dimension of EB, although there too it is not mentioned explicitly:

⁶²⁴ Heb. *garuah she-ba-grui'im*.

⁶²⁵ Heb. *halishut ha-da'at*.

⁶²⁶ Mechilta, Parashat "be-chodesh" (2).

⁶²⁷ Heb. *al yedei zeh nitchazka emunato lehitpalel tamid*.

“We have a broken millstone,” said the sages of Athens, “sew it together for us.” RYBH took a broken sliver of the millstone and threw to them, saying, “separate out some strings from this piece.” They answered, “Is it possible to twine strings from a millstone?” And RYBH replied, “Is there anyone who can sew a millstone together?”

A millstone that is broken is the aspect of broken EC. For a millstone is the aspect of EC ... for it is the aspect of the true sages who are involved in distilling all of the laws through the process of “grinding” the teachings of the Oral Torah ... whereby, they separate out the “bran” and the “chaff” to arrive at the “edible” dimension of fine flour, which are the applicable laws on how to actualize the mitsoth under different circumstances. ... The possibility for broken faith to be fixed is very hard for the mind to understand. For how can faith be fixed through some piece of advice, since the person won’t believe in the advice either? ... If the person has completely fallen from EC then they will not believe in the advice nor will they follow the advice. And if so how can broken faith be healed?

... It is surely true that for a person who has no faith whatsoever, then no advice in the world can help them ... But, for a person who feels pain for having lost their faith, this pain itself is faith.⁶²⁸ For in the depth of this person’s heart they understand from afar the holiness of Jewish faith, that there is a unique pre-existing Director, Ruler and Overseer, and there are great and awesome Tsadikim who recognize HS’Y, and our entire hope for eternity is through them. It is only that the person does not sense the truth of this faith in a revealed and complete way, and therefore good advice can work for him, to fix his faith.⁶²⁹

R. Noson goes on to interpret that when RYBH presented the sages of Athens with a broken shard, this meant that he was indicating to them that broken faith itself is still faith, that through the very pain of loss of faith, which is itself truncated faith, a person can be motivated to keep some small piece of advice of the sages, and thereby come to heal their EC, “which is the essence of the entirety of holy faith, for without faith in the sages a person’s faith in God is not whole.”⁶³⁰

It seems to me that there is a continuity between R. Noson’s interpretations of these two exchanges. RYBH’s answer to their first question was that through the encouragement of the Tsadik one can persevere in prayer and Divine service until they

⁶²⁸ SHR 146

⁶²⁹ LH Shabbat (6:10)

⁶³⁰ Ibid. This sense of a dynamism whereby through broken faith itself one comes to build one’s faith back again was physically represented, R. Nosson wrote, in that both the second tablets as well as the first, broken, set of tablets, were present in the Ark of the Covenant.

reach a new stage of permanence. Their second question can be understood as following from RYBH's first answer: how can one be strengthened by the encouragement of the Tsadik if one doesn't believe in the Tsadik to begin with?

The sages of Athens then responded that to their estimation it is impossible to twine strings from a millstone, and RYBH said that it is equally impossible to "sew" a broken millstone. R. Noson interpreted this to mean that they were unable to find within themselves even the smallest modicum of faith: they had reached a point of having zero distress regarding their lack of faith, and hence, RYBH responded, that it is indeed impossible for them to fix their faith. It is worth pointing out that R. Noson, illustrating what such a degree of broken faith looks like, wrote of people, both gentiles and Jews, who "have fallen into *chochmah chitzonit* to the point where they have no faith at all, they even mock those who are strong in their *emunat chachamim*."⁶³¹ This can most likely be understood as contemporary social commentary.

That R. Noson was perfectly willing to have RYBH agree with the sages of Athens that they are indeed incapable of fixing their faith has a number of precedents in his Rebbe's teachings.⁶³² On the one hand, this refers to a realistic assessment that it is simply true that not everyone can be convinced. On the other hand, this itself can be understood to be a kind of a motivating tactic.

There is a story that R. Noson recounted⁶³³ of a downtrodden Hasid who came to R. Nachman with the contention that there was absolutely no redeeming qualities that he could find in himself. The Rebbe responded that if so, then there really is nothing to talk about, and turned away. At that point the Hasid began to backtrack, saying that surely it can't be that he is actually utterly wicked. R. Noson does not invoke this story nor its lesson here. However, immediately following the above exchange, when he moves to the next part of story wherein the sages of Athens boarded RYBH's boat, R. Noson wrote that this occurred "after he had bested them in *all* of their exchanges [my italics]," which may imply that RYBH had been able, in this exchange, to evoke an inner desire for faith in the sages of Athens, through the kind of "reverse psychology" just described.

Whether or not it was R. Noson's intention to imply that the sages of Athens had been bested in this exchange in the way I have suggested, the dimension that he had RYBH appealing to is certainly the personal/experiential. RYBH was challenging the sages of Athens to find value in the very brokenness of their faith, to find within themselves an inner desire for faith, and he did so with a recognition that it is possible

⁶³¹ Ibid.

⁶³² See e.g. LMI: 55, LMI: 59, LMI: 60.

⁶³³ At LH Reishit Ha-Gez (4:6)

that they will not be capable of this: he was speaking to the unfettered, and unresolved, human experience.

Onto the Boat - Arguing Beyond Language

R. Noson's focus on the personal/experiential dimension, and on *emunah b'atmo* as the central component of this, is illustrated in the imagery of the next part of the story, in which RYBH loads the sages of Athens onto his ship,⁶³⁴ and isolates each one within his own room. The walls which make each room both isolating and impenetrable represent the limitedness of language to capture and convey matters of faith. This, in a way, is a picture of the human predicament itself, when it comes to matters of faith: while it may seem that there is a whole world of communication and language that connects, yet there is also an utterly private dimension which language cannot penetrate from the outside, nor can it "take" experiences from there and make them public, communicable to another. The following is an excerpt from R. Noson's interpretation of this part of the story:

After having bested them in all of their debates, he brought them onto his ship, which is the aspect of the holy Torah, as mentioned above.

[R. Noson had written earlier⁶³⁵ that: the Torah is called a boat ... for this world is like a stormy, raging ocean ... as each person can understand in their own personal experience⁶³⁶ of all that they live through in this world ... And it is necessary to have a very strong ship, which is the aspect of the holy Torah, which one can only merit to enter through the holy sages, who know how to interpret and explain the Torah ... for they are called 'those who go out to sea in ships ... those who accomplish great works in the many waters.'⁶³⁷ For only they can see the acts of HS'Y and His wonders in the depths of the sea that is this world, to understand that which is happening with each person, how the waves of the sea and its forces pass over each person, all the days of their lives. And only they know how to rescue the souls of those who are close to them, by bringing them aboard their holy and powerful ships, which are the wondrous teachings that they reveal to us. And this is the aspect of (RYBH's ship) which had sixty rooms, which is the aspect of the sixty tractates of the Talmud, which is the general notion of the Oral Torah, which is the aspect of EC. And in each room were sixty

⁶³⁴ The Talmudic story, and R. Nosson's interpretation of it, are complex and detailed; I did not include each detail here. RYBH and the sages of Athens had made a 'deal' upon his entry to their place, which was that if they bested him, he would be put to death, and if he bested them, they would eat with him on his shi

⁶³⁵ At LH Shabbat 6:8.

⁶³⁶ Heb. *ka'asher yachol ko ladam lehavin be-nafsho*.

⁶³⁷ Psalms 107:23.

... chairs, this is the aspect of prayer, they are the aspect of the ... throne of King David ... who spent his whole life composing many prayers, to the point where he composed the book of Psalms ... and it is specifically through (both Torah and prayer) that the sages of CC can be subdued.]

And he brought each one into an isolated room, one of the sixty on the ship. This means that he gave to each one of them teachings which applied to them personally, according to the way he understood the mind and consciousness of each one ... in order to test them, to see if they would return to true faith. And each of them saw in their room sixty chairs, which are the aspect of prayer meaning that they saw a wondrous thing ... that with each teaching there were many wondrous and awesome prayers through which they could achieve all that they needed to achieve, if they would involve themselves [in study and prayer] sincerely all of their lives. And each one was very astonished. And they each said “all of the others will surely join me here.”⁶³⁸ This means that they said that surely all the others will come and will also recognize the real truth. And even though this that they said is theoretically correct, still, these words as well are from the advice of the evil inclination which wishes to distance them from the truth in all kinds of crafty ways ... [for] this is a known phenomenon in our circles, that sometimes a person’s eyes are opened and they see the wonders of the real truth of the true Tsadikim, but they wait until the rest of the world will see it as well and all will draw close [to the true Tsadikim, such that] then, in the future, the person will not have to undergo any lessening of their personal honor when they wish to draw close along with everyone else. But the truth is that this is a mistaken attitude.⁶³⁹ Au contraire, this itself is the main test of the person, to draw close specifically at a time when the truth has been sent earthward,⁶⁴⁰ and ‘those who fear sin are viewed with disgust,’⁶⁴¹ as it is now, due to our many sins... But these Sages of CC were not able to stand up to this test, hence they each said ‘all the others will soon be here,’ ... and each one decided to wait until all of the world would return, and only then [when it will be socially acceptable] will they themselves return.

⁶³⁸ The simple meaning of the Talmud narrative here is that since each one saw sixty chairs in the room they were brought to on the ship, they each thought that the other fifty nine would soon join them in their room.

⁶³⁹ Heb. *lo kach he hamidah*.

⁶⁴⁰ See a similar notion with regard to the acceptance of proselytes at BT Yevamot 24B. See also SHR 240. See LH Pesach (7:9-10) which is one of many examples in LH of the notion that each individual must overcome personal and societal hardship in order to draw close to the Divine.

⁶⁴¹ mSotah (9:15).

In each room they have the inner experience of Torah study and prayer, which is a taste of an inner personal connectivity with the Divine, as inspired by the Tsadik. This, wrote R. Noson, is indeed convincing, but it does not, *cannot* ensure that they will in fact *choose* to follow this inspiration and enter into a life of divine service. For R. Noson, the major reason why the sages of Athens did not choose to follow RYBH's inspiration is social.

That social pressure was understood by R. Noson to be perhaps the most formidable force to reckon with in his day in battling Enlightenment influences is attested to in a number of places in LH.⁶⁴² On the one hand, his appeal was to the inner experience, which is incommunicable. On the other hand, there stands the vast world of social connectivity, which is based upon communication, and featured, to a growing extent in his day, as mentioned above, ridicule of those who hold fast to traditional faith, particularly EC.

As the notion of God ascended to the abstract heights of an Aristotelian “unmoved mover,” or receded into the immutable laws of nature of a Spinozist pantheism, the individual was left bereft of a sense of ultimate and inherent self worth that is rooted in a living relationship with God. The personal religious experience, the religious sense of quest, came to be seen as outdated, laughable, and simply false. A major part of the wherewithal necessary to make the inner move of having *emunah b'atzmo* and *emunat chachamim* is to do so at the risk of one's social standing. Inside each individual room on the Tsadik's ship, in private, it might work fine, but in public, not so much.

The rise, and the increasing centrality, of what has come to be known as “the public sphere” was a major defining point of the Enlightenment and even “modernity” in general, as Jurgen Habermas has called attention to in his seminal work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Weaving together sociologic, economic and linguistic data, Habermas shows how a sphere of interaction arose which was not controlled by the state nor by the church, bringing with it a whole new notion of “publicness.” Although the public sphere includes other dimensions such as the economic and political, Habermas saw its greatest defining point as being related to the free expression

⁶⁴² See e.g. LH Pesach (7:6), Shabbat (5:15). The notion of social concerns creating rationale for heretical behavior appears in halachic literature: See e.g. Code of Jewish Law, YD (119:11), wherein the law follows Rabeinu Yonah in the name of the sages of France, that regarding a person who converts in one place but admits being Jewish in another, it is assumed that he only converted due to social pressures, not because he was actually convinced. And at OC (128:41) in the commentary of *Magen Avraham* it is mentioned that the daughter of a Cohen who converts only disqualifies her father because of suspected licentiousness, as opposed to heresy. There is also the Talmudic statement that “the Jews only worshipped idols in order to permit promiscuity.” See also Maimonides *Mishneh Torah* Laws of Gittin (2:20).

of thought; he wrote that the public sphere is: “the sphere of private people come together as a public ... [in which is found] people’s public use of their reason.”⁶⁴³ The forms of expression of “people’s public use of their reason” included both the printed word, such as widely distributed pamphlets (Kant’s *Was ist Aufklärung* is an excellent example), and the oral exchange of ideas, such as took place in the famed salons in France and elsewhere.

Thus a major aspect of the Enlightenment was the vehicle of language, the public expression of which comprised the heart of the new public sphere, and which, though oral and printed media, communicated and promulgated the “spirit” of the Enlightenment. Jonathan Israel has discussed how, in terms of debates concerning faith, there was an important shift from the 1650s and onward, from confessional debate with certain basic shared assumptions (such as the existence of the Divine and of Revelation) to the “escalating contest between faith and incredulity.”⁶⁴⁴ Thus it can be said that R. Nachman and R. Noson faced a growing public sphere, as the influence of the Enlightenment spread eastwards, wherein the most basic issues of faith needed to be able to be presented through the use of language.

In his teaching at LM I:64, as discussed above in chapter three, R. Nachman makes crystal clear that while some questions about faith can indeed be answered using language, there are other questions which cannot. Ultimately, he points to what I will dub here the “private sphere,” or that layer of human consciousness which is fundamentally anterior to language; he points to a place of silence, wherein no language can explain and prove matters of faith decisively. Using language,⁶⁴⁵ R. Nachman points out the limitations of language.

I think it is reasonable to say that in this teaching R. Nachman is speaking to the contemporary need for arguments in favor of faith to be brought out into the vessel of language. What is fascinating is that here he takes the step of what one might call ‘radical intellectual honesty’⁶⁴⁶ in admitting that language will not, in the end of the day, be able to provide decisive proof on matters of faith. Rather, language can be used to point beyond itself to the “private sphere” of one’s experience, which the Tsadik can call one’s

⁶⁴³ Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1991), 27.

⁶⁴⁴ Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 4.

⁶⁴⁵ On using language to enclothe truths that are beyond language, see LH Behemah Teme’ah (4:32).

⁶⁴⁶ Thanks are due to Prof. G. D. Hundert for, after our discussing the above notions, coining this helpful term.

attention to, through the non-verbal language of a *niggun* or melody which the Tsadik sings.⁶⁴⁷

The cubicles within the RYBH's ship within which the sages of Athens are each isolated, in R. Noson's interpretation above, picture this. Each person, while in their cubicle, is provided a taste of connectivity to God by R. Yehoshua b. Hananya, the Tsadik. This is a picture of what can happen at the inner layer of the human experience of life, which is anterior to any language. A person can indeed be convinced, *there*. But a person's free choice will still remain, because at the outer, language based layer of the human experience, represented by societal life outside of the cubicle, one can still make all kinds of plausible language based arguments that negate a life of faith.

Summary

This chapter began with a presentation of R. Noson's understanding of a history of the conflict between *chochmah chitsonit* and *emunat chachamim*. It is rooted in the angelic argument against the creation of humanity versus the inscrutable divine desire for humanity. Hence, standing outside of time, this conflict manifests as a central, if not the central, conflict in each generation. In this sense, *chochmah chitsonit*, in *all* of its manifestations (including the religious) as discussed above in chapter two, is unmasked as being ultimately anti-human. Faith in the sages, on the other hand, means faith in the inherent value of human beings and their efforts.

Through gargantuan efforts at refinement of the physical and emotional appetites of the body and mind, the Tsadik is capable of victory, can reach (2) the spiritual objectivity I have discussed above and in previous chapters. This means that the Tsadik can master the art of "knowing and not knowing" the inscrutability of the Divine valuing of human beings and their efforts, which is part and parcel of Divine inscrutability itself. The Tsadik is thereby capable of inspiring *emunah b'atzmo*.

The Enlightenment was understood by R. Noson to be a ballooning of *chochmah chitsonit* in his day. Although he generally saw it as negative and dangerous, he also saw it as being ultimately for the good, for new levels of profundity of faith in oneself and appreciation of Divine oneness become possible *thanks* to the increasing complexities and confusions.

The main focus of this chapter was an analysis of sections of LH Shabbat 6, through which I attempted to bring to light R. Noson's two foundational "poles" in his polemic in facing the Enlightenment, namely, (1) the appeal to the personal/experiential dimension, which lies outside of the realm of language, and (2) the spiritual objectivity of

⁶⁴⁷ R. Nosson, as mentioned above and in chapter three, understands this to include other forms of non-verbal communication.

the Tsadik. The Tsadik who has achieved spiritual objectivity is capable of “speaking” to the unfettered personal human experience, in order to inspire *emunah b’atsmo*.

In R. Noson’s analysis presented above, it is (2) the objectivity of the Tsadik that is mentioned first. This was presented in the opening narrative of the Talmudic story on the gestation period of snakes, and in the Tsadik’s opening words upon arriving at the place of the sages of Athens, which were characterized by a pristine confidence and a fascinating and important openness to being able to learn from anyone. The rest of R. Noson’s analysis concerned (1) the inner languageless experience. The “smell” of the Tsadik’s inspiration can reach that languageless layer, at which point the individual can be inspired to activate *emunah b’atsmo*, if they so choose.

The source I have focussed upon in this chapter is certainly not the only place where R. Noson “spoke” to the Enlightened Jews of his day. There are a number of important places in LH where R. Noson explicitly referenced discussions with Maskilim (although he never called them by that term, as mentioned in chapter three) in which can be found a similar focus on the inner personal/experiential dimension. He wrote that he was able to elicit general admission in these discussions that in religious life there is a qualitatively greater sense of aliveness,⁶⁴⁸ and of joy.⁶⁴⁹ This reflects R. Noson’s ultimate sourcing of *chochmah chitsonit* in the angelic argument against the creation of human beings. A life of *chochmah chitsonit* will perforce be plagued by an undeniable, if ineffable, sense of bleakness.

It is crucial to emphasize⁶⁵⁰ that for R. Noson even the very greatest Tsadik will not erase people’s free choice.⁶⁵¹ This means that, until Messianic times, there will

⁶⁴⁸ LH Bircot Ha-Shachar 3:11, and 5:41, 74-79, 92, LH Shevuot 2:4, LH Beit Hakneset 6:12. See also LH Behemah Tehorah 4:15, which focuses on the negative side, that the very spread of possibilities of falsehoods becomes so dizzyingly multi-faceted that the simplicity of truth can be derived from an inner experience of the “inelegance” of the multiple falsehoods; this is clearly described as an inner recognition, not a demonstrably absolute truth. See also Alim Li-Trufah 441, SHR 308.

⁶⁴⁹ LH Nezikin 4:20; LH Piryah ve-Rivyah 3:20, 34 on joy, and at 3:26 on the notion that Tsadikim have special ability to inspire joy in people. [Note that at 3:34 he is realistic about Jewish joy in that the religious life does not mean a constant state of bliss.] See also SHR: 308, which may have been a starting point from R. Nachman for R. Nosson on relating to the sense, or lack thereof, of joy in life.

⁶⁵⁰ See CM:262, in which R. Nosson recorded that R. Nachman had said “a number of times, concerning himself and the [pejorative] things that the world says of him, that there is no middle ground. Rather, either it is ... as those who oppose him fabricate about him ... or it is the opposite, that he is a true Tsadik, in which case he is a wondrous awesome and exalted novelty that the human mind cannot fathom...” R. Nosson added at the end there that “from this conversation itself it is possible to understand a little of his greatness, for through the tremendous opposition and argument that he faced it is possible

always be an unresolved note to the human experience, as exemplified in RYBH's ultimately unsuccessful experience in his encounter with the "Greek within."

to understand the truth to be the polar opposite!" In other words, it is a sign of his greatness that this greatness itself is concealed and remains consigned to free choice.

⁶⁵¹ See CM:197, SHR: 105, YM II:82. CM: 330 reads (this is an excerpt of R. Nachman's words therein): "I could make you all perfect and awesome Tsadikim, but what would come of it, for if so it would only be G-d Himself worshiping Himself." There is a similar quote, related by R. Nosson's disciple R. Nachman Chazan of Tulchin (1814-1884), in his introduction to LH Choshen Mishpat (subsection 3), which reads: "He (R. Nosson) once spoke of the holy society of the Besht ... and said that with the degree of fire they had in their hearts, if they would have also had our conversations and teachings, they would have lost their free choice. But now, in these generations, the strengthening of the [evil] inclination is so powerful that even after all of our teachings the strength of free choice remains great and very vast. But even so, I have a certain teaching which even today would take away free choice. But what goodness would come from your service which does not spring from one who has free choice?"

Conclusion

This dissertation has sought to map out a broad and complex picture of the theological universe of R. Noson Sternharts of Nemirov, focusing upon his polemic against the Enlightenment. In particular, it has sought to show that there are two foundational “poles” to this polemic; each can be understood as responses, in turn, to two central challenges:

1. The burgeoning “public sphere,” a key characteristic of Enlightenment times, challenged believers to defend their faith through use of the written word. R. Noson responded to this challenge by developing the notion that there are two “layers” of human consciousness. There is an outer layer that can be expressed in language, and an inner layer which is that realm of the human experience which lies utterly beyond the reach of language. Faith can and must be buttressed through the use of language and logic. But language cannot bring certainty: what ultimately carries the day for the believer are those experiences and understandings which lie within the inner layer: the languageless depths of the human experience. A person can be fully convinced of the validity of faith, yet quite legitimately be unable to “export” this certainty to someone else through the use of language.
2. The steady advances of science and technology challenged believers to find some kind of an objective “grounding” of their faith. R. Noson’s response was to highlight a wholly different *kind* of objectivity: an objectivity which relates mostly to that inner languageless layer of human experience briefly presented above; it is the Tsadik (saint) who achieves this and shares it with society. The assumption here is that there exists a spiritual “landscape,” common to the human experience that can be perceived through immense work with respect to nullifying one’s physical and emotional appetites, which leads to an ever-growing ability to perceive spiritual truths without being colored by any past experience.⁶⁵² The truths that are unearthed are not static observations, but rather dynamic insights into how relationship with the Divine can be accessed and deepened.

In the first chapter, the nature of R. Noson’s role as disciple and scribe was discussed, along with the nature of his Likutei Halachot. An important aspect of both of these was the development and preservation of his Rebbe’s teachings for posterity. A key function that these teachings were to serve was to bolster faith in modern times, as R. Noson himself stated on his deathbed. R. Nachman told R. Noson to “let his pen fly” on

⁶⁵² See e.g. LH Hoda’ah (6:49)

the two topics of faith and of the Tsadik. Perhaps these can be understood as paralleling the two poles of R. Noson's polemic against the Enlightenment.

Chapters two and three were focused on painting the broader picture within the context of which the above two poles need to be understood. While the appeal to languageless experience and R. Noson's particular formulation of the Tsadik's objectivity can justifiably be called "responses" to modern challenges because they were employed as such in R. Noson's writings, it is crucial to understand that these were not formulated as stand-alone notions for the sake of debate. R. Noson understood the Enlightenment and its clash with Jewish tradition as a particularly marked manifestation of an ancient conflict, namely that of *emunat chachamim* versus *chochmah chitsonit*.

In the second chapter, R. Noson's usage of the terms *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit* was presented, in contrast to their previous usage. *Emunat chachamim* is much more than faith in the veracity of the oral Rabbinic tradition: it is a crucial dimension of faith in God itself. One might state it thusly: faith in God includes the belief that God truly cares about, and desires the service of, human beings. Another way of stating this, (putting people at the center), is that it is faith in the capacity of human beings in general to actually relate to the Divine, to actually serve God. Hence, faith in the sages is an aspect of this inclusive sense of what faith in God entails: they are the examples of the human capacity to have and develop relationships with God.

The crucial dimension of *emunah b'atmo* was also presented, in that it brings home the fullness of faith in God: one must believe in oneself, too, as being inherently valuable to God and capable of having and developing a relationship with God. In this sense, the metaphor of a two sided arrow of faith was offered, in that faith in God entails, includes, faith in one's own inherent worth and ability to serve.

The term *chochmah chitsonit*, on the other hand, means much more to R. Noson than the disciplines of science and philosophy. One might phrase a description of R. Noson's "composite picture" of *chochmah chitsonit* thusly. All of the intellectual constructions, from the simple constructions of the unlearned, to the sophistry of those who are versed in "official" *chochmah chitsonit*, from constructions which are dressed up as religious but are motivated by some this-worldly concern, to those which are actually within the realm of sincere religiosity but are still overly fixed and theoretical, all of these are at the end of the day static formulations within which the real self can hide and avoid the challenge of the experiential growth and dynamism of a mysterious relationship with the divine.

This is directly related to *emunat chachamim* and *emunah b'atmo* because the moment one hides is a moment of lack of faith in oneself. It is in that moment of hiding that the fancy constructions become more important than the journey of the self, because

one has lost faith that one's journey is significant, and is indeed, of awesome importance. In other words, the relationship between the self and the Divine must always be primary, as opposed to some goal related to achieving measurable this-worldly success. This holds true even if this success is religious, i.e. it is itself a manifestation of this very relationship. Still, a particular manifestation can overshadow and minimize the importance of the relationship itself.

On the one hand *chochmah chitsonit* relates, first and foremost, to that "layer" of human consciousness, which is fully describable in language. On the other hand, *emunat chachamim* relates first and foremost to (1) that inner layer of creation and of human consciousness that is languageless: a "gap" in human language-based consciousness, which is the essence of the Divine *tsimtsum*, and which is the "place" of free choice. Having faith in oneself is perhaps the most inner and personal choice of all.

The second chapter ended with a presentation of (2) the fallible, spiritual objectivity that the Tsadik achieves through immense effort in the refinement of his physical and emotional appetites. One way of describing this objectivity is that it allows for the ability to explore as "purely" as possible, meaning with as total as possible a focus on the relationship with the divine without attachment to any particular manifestation, or any past experience. This is not unlike getting to know a person, whereby each new piece of information adds to the formation of a greater sense of the whole of the person, which in turns adds to the attractiveness of the enigma of who the person *really* is, which begs for ever more profound perceptions of, and experiences with the person that must be perceived without being colored by previous perceptions, *ad infinitum*.

Another way to describe this spiritual objectivity is that there is a shared human spiritual "landscape" that the Tsadik becomes able to perceive. This implies an important sense of universalism, a commonality of experience and a commonality of purpose, for all of humanity.

In the third chapter the notion of *emunah b'atsmo* was presented as an innovative focus of Bratslav thought. My sense of the story how *emunah b'atsmo* came to be understood by R. Noson to be of primary importance was presented. *Emunah b'atsmo* was shown to be an utterly personal "private practice" in that it is an inner move that each person must decide to make, in the face of both an overwhelming intellectual sense of his or her relative worthlessness, as well as an intensive sense of existential abandonment that is unique to human beings.

Both the Tsadik and each individual always need *emunah b'atsmo*, for it is not something which "ends," rather, it is a kind of an inner wherewithal which is experiential, it is a "doing," not an intellectual stance: the perception of Divine valuation of human beings and their efforts comes always as a kind of a surprise. I suggested that perhaps,

according to R. Nosen, the “doing” of *emunah b’atsmo* might be to some extent described as a combination of the two crucial pieces of advice at LM I:282 and LM II:12, of judging oneself positively and crying out “*ayeh.*”

This component of faith in oneself is vital to R. Nosen’s polemic, for it is in that utterly personal, inner, languageless layer of experience that each person must choose to believe in themselves as being of inherent worth and capable of relating to God. Perhaps the most important thing that the Tsadik can inspire, through his ability to communicate to the inner languageless level of experience, is faith in oneself. Hence the title of this dissertation and the presentation herein of a focused analysis of how R. Nosen received, developed, and presented this crucial notion of *emunah b’atsmo*.

The fourth and final chapter began with a presentation of R. Nosen’s understanding of a history of the conflict between *chochmah chitso nit* and *emunat chachamim*. It is rooted in the angelic argument against the creation of humanity versus the inscrutable divine desire for humanity. Hence, standing outside of time, this conflict manifests throughout history as a central, if not the central, conflict in each generation. In this sense, *chochmah chitsonit*, in *all* of its manifestations (including the religious), is unmasked as being ultimately anti-human. Faith in the sages, on the other hand, means faith in the inherent value of human beings and their efforts.

This was followed by an analysis of what I have found to be the most focussed and sustained piece in *Likutei Halachot* on confrontation with the Enlightenment. Here it is (2) the objectivity of the Tsadik that is mentioned first; this was presented in the opening narrative of the Talmudic story on the gestation period of snakes, and in the Tsadik’s opening words upon arriving at the place of the sages of Athens, which were characterized by a pristine confidence and a fascinating and important openness to being able to learn from anyone. The rest of R. Nosen’s analysis is about (1) the inner languageless experience of the individual.

I advanced that perhaps the increasing centrality of the language-based “public sphere” in Enlightenment times led to a focus in Bratslav thought upon the languageless “private sphere,” in an act of a kind of radical intellectual honesty in admitting that language-based argumentation cannot provide conclusive victory for the side of traditional Judaism. It is the non-language-based communication, such as the *niggun* of the Tsadik, the “smell” of their teachings, the experience of following their advice, the sound of their voice, their body language, their eyes, or the way their words point beyond language, that is essential.

It is crucial to emphasize that R. Nosen’s appeal to the languageless realm of the human experience carries with it more than just an admission that language alone cannot provide any sure victory for him in his polemic. His appeal to the languageless realm of the human experience also carries with it an understanding that even if a person becomes

convinced, at that inner layer, of the truth of traditional Judaism, still, due to the fact that that very person can still make use of all kinds of language-based arguments to defend a rejection of faith, they may well still choose not to believe. The real value of polemic in matters of faith lies not in “cornering” someone into believing, but rather, in inspiring them to choose to believe.

Indeed, until Messianic times, there will always be an unresolved note to the human experience, as exemplified in R. Yehoshua b. Hananya’s ultimately unsuccessful experience in his encounter with the “Greek within.”

R. Noson’s Response: Profoundly Distrustful Yet Ultimately Inclusive

R. Noson’s response to the challenges of modernity is deeply distrustful of newfound emphases upon language and objectivity: these emphases can lead (and did lead) to mass abandonment of traditional faith. R. Noson’s approach, however, must be recognized, not as a mere retreat, but rather as positing an innovative model that includes a place for both kinds of objectivity: that of the outer, language-based layer of the human experience, and that of the inner languageless layer.

R. Noson’s argument is that there is a mistaken degree of emphasis placed upon the objectivity of the outer layer (it cannot solve everything), and a total ignorance of the objectivity of the inner layer. R. Noson’s stance as a believer was not to feel ignorant or outstripped in his awareness of the nature of reality, but rather quite the opposite, it is the new scientific thinking which is ignorant of the reality of the human experience: it overemphasizes one layer and completely misses the other.

Although emphatically decrying what he took to be a deeply mistaken degree of emphasis upon it, yet R. Noson wrote that there must needs be a place for the objectivity of the outer layer, for without a basic degree of, for instance, the conventions of language and the conveniences of technology, society would not function.

Additionally, there is a kind of a subtle “undertow” that can be found beneath the far more obvious waves of attack against Enlightenment influences in R. Noson’s writings: there is also an affirmation that, at the end of the day, these influences themselves have a divine source. Indeed it is *thanks* to the struggle with ever expanding social, psycho-spiritual, economic (and more) obstacles and confusions of modern times, that the perception of simple divine unity from within complexity can now be greater than ever before. This occurs, perhaps most importantly, through the personal process of learning to develop faith in oneself in the context of a deeply confusing world.

As R. Nachman taught at LM I:61, the very waters of strife elicit/reveal/become the waters of renewed *emunat chachamim* and *emunah b’atsmo*, as each person learns to compose their own “books” of *Responsa* to all the troubles they face.

Furthermore, R. Noson wrote that a Tsadik who achieves the objectivity of the inner layer becomes capable thereby of studying all language-based human wisdoms, because the Tsadik will be able to incorporate all that he or she learns into a deeply ingrained awareness of, and commitment to divine service. To illustrate this, R. Noson invoked the words of the Mishnah: “Who is wise? One who learns from all people.”⁶⁵³ As opposed to a rejectionist retreat, the person who reaches the highest degrees of saintliness becomes able to be open to the world and all of its wisdoms – even more, such a person becomes *obligated* to look deeply into the most heretical branches of human wisdom.⁶⁵⁴

While there certainly is profound fear and distrust of modern influences, yet R. Noson’s approach to the Enlightenment must also be understood as being ultimately inclusive as opposed to one-dimensionally rejectionist.

On the Ninety Nine Percent

An important question arises here that I feel deserves to be touched upon. What about everyone else? What about the “ninety nine percent,” who are quite far from the exalted level of refinement of the Tsadik? According to R. Noson, how open can the average Jew be to learning “from all people”? I have found two avenues that might be taken to answer this question:

Firstly, unrelated to the individual’s own personal spiritual refinement, but rather solely by virtue of connection to a Tsadik, one becomes capable of relating to and confronting heretical ideas and people. The Tsadik’s achievement of spiritual objectivity makes it possible for him or her to provide others with the outlook and strength of character that is necessary.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵³ mAvot 4:1.

⁶⁵⁴ LMI: 64:3.

⁶⁵⁵ This is based upon R. Nachman’s teaching at LMI:8:5, which R. Nosson references at Shabbat (6:3) as being the source for the notion of the Tsadik “traveling” to the source of the “pipeline” (Heb. *tsinor*) of negativity. In LM (Ibid) it is written that “the Tsadik and those associated with him” (Heb. *ha-Tsadik ve-hanilvim eilav*) are capable of this profound encounter. On the notion of the added capabilities of those who are connected to the Tsadik, see e.g. LH Ha-Osseh Shaliach Legabot Chovo (3:7) on Esther’s ability to confront Achashverosh due to her connection to the Tsadik Mordecai, see also Chezkat Ha-Metaltelin (5:4) on the ability of the Tsadik *ve-hanilvim eilav* to perceive the inner dimension of the garments of reality, Trumot u-Ma’aserot (4:4) on the notion that charity given with pure intention to the Tsadik *ve-hanilvim eilav* is considered as if one has fulfilled the entire Torah; Pikadon (5:38) on the Tsadik *ve-hanilvim eilav* being capable of fixing Adam’s sin during their lifetimes. See also Bassar Be-Chalav (5:5), Shabbat (7:13), Eruvei Techumin (6:20).

Secondly, it is possible to interpret R. Noson's teachings on each individual's ability and the obligation to "upgrade" his or her powers of perception,⁶⁵⁶ through physical and emotional refinement, faith, prayer, and longing,⁶⁵⁷ in a new way. According to R. Noson, as one grows in this fashion, one's upgraded powers of perception allow one to explore previously forbidden realms of inquiry. A new interpretation would be to suggest that these previously forbidden realms refer not only to kabalistic inquiry (which is the most probable simple meaning of his and his Rebbe's teachings) but also to encountering and studying realms of human wisdom⁶⁵⁸ that are heretical and/or lie outside of Jewish faith tradition. This would imply a fascinating correspondence: the more saintly one becomes, the more open one becomes to being able to learn "from all people."

These avenues are logically implied in R. Noson's teachings.⁶⁵⁹ Hence, notwithstanding the fact that his explicit writings⁶⁶⁰ on the subject restrict such inquiry and openness to only the greatest of Tsadikim, it can be argued that these avenues can still be seen as authentic aspects of his thought and world view.

What Has Been Said Here, and Where This Might Lead

This dissertation has advanced that R. Noson's perception of the danger of the the Enlightenment needs to be understood within the greater context of his understanding of a pan-historical conflict between *emunat chachamim* and *chochmah chitsonit*. *Emunat chachamim* places the infinite relationship with the Divine, as opposed to this-worldly achievements, squarely at the center, deemphasizing even the real manifestations of that relationship itself, due to their being static. On the other hand, *chochmah chitsonit* places quantifiable and comparable, this worldly goals at the center.

Perhaps the most noble of the this worldly goals, for R. Noson, was the goal of achieving a society that is as peaceful and harmonious as possible, in that it does privilege a sense of relationship at least between humans. It is against this aspiration, which was one that he encountered, as can be seen in the following quote (see beginning of chapter three for a longer citation), that R. Noson wrote the following words

⁶⁵⁶ See LH Eruvei Techumin 2:2.

⁶⁵⁷ See LH Rosh Chodesh 6:3.

⁶⁵⁸ See LH Pikadon (3:21) where R. Nosson relates LM I:64, which contains the teaching about the Tsadik's obligation to look deeply into heretical wisdoms, to the notion that as each individual grows they will experience the Divine *tsimtsum* in a new way.

⁶⁵⁹ They thus fall under the category of Blau's notion of "extended meaning;" see my Note on Methodology in the introductory chapter above.

⁶⁶⁰ Such as at LH Shabbat 6:8.

For according to their evil opinion there is no eternal purpose whatsoever in observing the mitsvoth, rather, only in this world is there gain, in that they will bring about peace between a person and their fellow such that there can be a viable society in this world.

And may the wind of their breath be expended!⁶⁶¹ For their argument falls flat from the very beginning, for why do I need all of this, with its difficulties? What is the value altogether of society in this world that it should be made viable? This world is full of suffering as can plainly be seen, this is impossible to deny. As Solomon wrote: ‘and all his life is anger and pains and great sickness and fury.’⁶⁶² And it is written ‘man was born to toil, short of days and sated with anger.’⁶⁶³ And furthermore, each person goes to their grave, ‘from dust they come and to dust they return.’⁶⁶⁴

So what is this that God has done to us to create humanity from the dust of the earth, and each person’s life flies by, with troubles and pains, and then they return to dust from whence they came. Can this be considered a wise act? To create a wondrous vessel, with such tremendous wisdom, and then to smash it and grind it up and return it to its original state?⁶⁶⁵

It is against this gnawing chasm of existential hollowness that *emunah b’atzmo* stands: not just as an intellectual notion, nor even as a principle of faith, but as a foundational *practice*, as perhaps the most important way that the struggle of human life can be engaged. For *emunah b’atzmo* entails a profound inner move which is not merely theological: one can “officially espouse” it but still doubt, deep down, one’s own inherent value and the value of one’s meager efforts at Divine service.

R. Noson could only appeal to people’s inner sense of rightness, arguing that they can know in an inner, wholly personal, dimension that it makes sense to believe in the inherent and eternal value of each person and their efforts in Divine service, and for each person to believe this about themselves. The Tsadik can give them a direct inner taste of relationship with God; then it will be up to them to choose to believe in themselves, in the Tsadik, in God, or not.

A possibly fruitful, if somewhat surprising, avenue for further research could be a comparison of R. Noson’s formulation of the conflict between *chochmah chitzonit* and *emunat chachamim* with its core component of *emunah b’atzmo*, with modern dystopias

⁶⁶¹ Heb. “*tipach rucham v’nishmatam.*”

⁶⁶² Ecclesiastes 5:16.

⁶⁶³ Job 5:7.

⁶⁶⁴ Ibid, 34:15.

⁶⁶⁵ LH Nezikin 4:18

such as George Orwell's *1984* or Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*. It may be that, at least in terms of the *protest*, there is profound common ground in the refusal to allow the human spirit to be quantified and systematized, even (or perhaps especially) when this is done for the sake of the betterment of society. I believe that it is possible to find further points of comparison and of contrast, both with R. Nosen as well as with other Hasidic thinkers, which might shed important light upon notions of non-conformism, religion, and modernity in Hasidic and/or Western society.

On Discipleship

A universal avenue of inquiry that this study contributes to is the understanding of discipleship. This study highlights disciples as being indispensable to their masters or teachers, and that the degree of their indispensability is in direct ratio to the disciples' development of faith in themselves. The actualizing of the great purpose(s) that teachers or masters espouse and inspire depends upon their disciples believing that they are inherently valuable and can truly play a role.

One way which R. Nosen speaks about this is using the metaphor of the sun and the moon. While it is the sun which is the source of the light (representing the Tsadik), it is only together with the moon (representing the disciple), and even primarily through the "efforts" of the moon, despite its having ups and downs (phases), that the Tsadik's great purpose can be achieved.

On the one hand, the teacher or master's "light" contains a kind of originality and truth that is beyond that of the disciples. On the other hand, the disciples are the ones who take this theoretical or potential truth and apply it into the darkness of night. This process of actualizing in fact involves tremendous personal industry and creativity which are, indeed must be, truly their own and could not have come from the Tsadik.⁶⁶⁶ This industry and creativity is motored by faith in oneself.

A Parable

In keeping with Bratslav "style," I offer the following parable of R. Nachman's which perhaps encapsulates much of what I have argued regarding R. Nosen's polemic against the Enlightenment:⁶⁶⁷

He said a parable concerning those known figures⁶⁶⁸ who were visiting him, who are wise in their own eyes. They recounted before him a number of foolish

⁶⁶⁶ See LH Dayanim 3:19

⁶⁶⁷ Recorded at CM:198. See LH Behema Ve-Chayah Tehorah (4:34), where R. Nosen interprets this story in a different, but related, manner. See also LH Gittin (4:9) where his interpretation is closer to the way I have read it.

⁶⁶⁸ This refers to the Maskilim living in Uman.

stories/exploits⁶⁶⁹ that are found in their books. He said: soon all they have will be emptied, for in next to no time they will no longer have what to recount. And he said a nice parable, that there is a story of one who was seized by a robber who wished to plunder him. And the robber asked: do you have any money? And he answered, I do, and I will surely give you all that I have, to save my life. And the robber took all he had. Afterwards, the one who was robbed said to the robber: how can I return to my home empty handed? Please, I ask of you, shoot my hat with your gun, so that it will be clear that I was robbed at gunpoint. And the robber consented and did so. And then he beseeched him further, to shoot the sleeve of his clothing, and so he did. And then he asked him further to shoot through a few more places. Until finally, the robber said: I have no more gunpowder. The one who was robbed then said, now, that you have no more gunpowder, come here, and he grabbed him by the neck, and called to his friends, overpowered the robber and was victorious over him. And the message of this parable was clear to all who stood with him when he told it.

After all of the “sound and fury” of intellectual sophistry has been exhausted using language, the human languageless experience of life continues, and it is there in that utterly personal “space” of free choice that the possibility to believe in God, in people, in the Tsadik, and most importantly, in oneself and one’s efforts, remains.

A Final Thought

In closing, I will invoke one more aspect of faith in oneself which R. Noson discussed,⁶⁷⁰ that I have not yet mentioned here. Faith in oneself also entails the wherewithal to continue with one’s efforts at Divine service, in the face of *a total impossibility of knowing where one is “holding:”* one simply cannot know, for instance, if one’s latest efforts actually moved one up a notch, or not. For, R. Noson explained, if one could know with certainty, if one had a spiritual “meter” of one’s progress, this itself would take away one’s free choice. Ultimately, it is not the static sense of achievement that matters, but rather the building up of that “inner muscle,” the inner wherewithal of faith in oneself to keep on trying no matter what.

It is my prayer that the efforts expended in composing this dissertation will indeed move me, and, in some small way, the whole world, “forward.”

⁶⁶⁹ Heb. *ma’asiot*.

⁶⁷⁰ At LH Shevuot (2:17).

Appendix A: A Translation of LH Pikadon 5:16-18⁶⁷¹

And this is the aspect of ‘all artisans are considered paid watchmen.’⁶⁷² For it is necessary to believe that each type of craftsmanship of all of the artisans in the world is drawn, at its source, from the wisdom of the Torah. For the Torah was the “artisan’s tool” of the Creator of the universe, as is written “and I was *amon* (faithful) to Him”⁶⁷³ as the sages taught ... “Don’t read *amon*, rather read *aman* (artisan’s tool).”⁶⁷⁴

But HS’Y created the world in such a way that it would be purposefully lacking, such that human beings could complete all, as is written:⁶⁷⁵ “All that God created, to do,” meaning that HS’Y created the entire world and all that is in it in such a way that human beings could ‘do’ all types of work and craftsmanship, such that through this there will come about the entire fixing [Heb. *tikun*] of creation. The sages taught⁶⁷⁶ “the wheat needs to be ground, the vegetable needs to be cooked,” and so on. And as our eyes can see clearly, there is nothing that HS’Y created that can be immediately put to use without human beings doing some type of work and craftsmanship and fixing, like the wheat which cannot be eaten as is, rather it requires grinding, sifting, and baking. And for each type of item and each step of its preparation, many kinds of expertise and craftsmanship are necessary.

And so it is with clothing, that it is impossible to wear flax or wool without them first going through many stages of development through craftsmanship of different kinds. And so it is in each generation, that new wisdoms of craftsmanship are invented, both in terms of the craftsmanship itself and in terms of the tools for each craft, which are able to produce their products more quickly, such as those new inventions that are able to perform many tasks which are called ‘machines.’⁶⁷⁷

And all of these types of craftsmanship, forms and vessels which have in them great wisdom, these are all drawn from the wisdom of Torah, and all of their vitality and existence is through EC. For the true sages in every generation toil and work each time to complete the Torah, to innovate true new Torah ideas, and to increase new books, with no

⁶⁷¹ LH Pikadon 5 contains no less than 45 sections, here I have translated but three.

⁶⁷² Quote is from Code of Jewish Law (*Choshen Mishpat* 306:1). It means that artisans who take an object to work on into their care have the legal status of paid watchmen in terms of their level of responsibility in cases of damage to the object, which R. Nosson will detail below.

⁶⁷³ Proverbs 8:30.

⁶⁷⁴ *Bereishit Rabbah* 1:1.

⁶⁷⁵ Genesis 2:2.

⁶⁷⁶ *Bereishit Rabbah* 11:6.

⁶⁷⁷ On R. Nosson’s perspective on the development of technology, see Chapter Four.

limit, for through this [process of innovation and creation of new books] is the essence of the completion of the Torah.

This is the aspect of the teaching of the *Midrash*:⁶⁷⁸ “Who heard and researched and created many parables:”⁶⁷⁹ that King Solomon tied rope to rope and string to string, [and created a system with which to bring up the water from a deep well that no one else could reach.]” And the *Midrash* continues further with many examples of parables without which one cannot come to understand the Torah, which come to us only through the true sages who bring out the meaning and innovate true new insights, and add holy books to the Torah. And the essence is those true righteous sages who know the ways of the Torah at its root, to the point where they can bring forth and reveal deep advice and direct paths, truly just behavior, and so on, in such a way that each person, in every possible place they may be, can enliven their tired soul that has become distanced, to turn it towards life, to awaken it and strengthen it and help it and find for it an opening of hope, that they too [are able to] return and come close to HS’Y, which is the essence, for the essence lies not in the expounding, but rather in the actualizing.

We find that the true sages are involved in many kinds of awesome craftsmanship and creative labors in Torah. And from this artisanal activity is drawn the strength and vitality to all of the physical artisans and craftsmen of all kinds, for all of their wisdoms are drawn from the craftsmanship of the true sages who innovate in Torah, as they are described, for example, in the *Tikkunei Zohar*,⁶⁸⁰ regarding those who adjudicate laws⁶⁸¹, that they ‘break off [from the fabric, by asking questions, and then repair it in new ways, through their answers, thereby create new ‘clothes’ for the Divine Presence], and thereby come to new [formulations and understandings of] the laws.

For the Torah, which was given to us from Heaven, lacks completion, which comes only through the true sages who complete it through their holy books. And hence the entire creation that HS’Y created through the Torah which was given from Heaven is also lacking completion, as above. And the holy sages, whose true innovations in Torah, which complete the Torah as above, are the source from which is drawn the ability for all of the craftsmen of the world to fix the physical creation in all kinds of fashions.

For this is known, that all of the vitality of creation, generally and particularly, comes only from the Torah, as it is written⁶⁸² “*Bereishit bara Elokim*”⁶⁸³ and the sages

⁶⁷⁸ *Shir Ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:8.

⁶⁷⁹ Ecclesiastes 12:9.

⁶⁸⁰ Tikkun 26, page 46A.

⁶⁸¹ The legal decisors (*poskei halachot*) are also called craftsmen (*ba’alei umniot*) on that page in the *Tikkunei Zohar*.

⁶⁸² Genesis 1:1.

taught⁶⁸⁴ *bereishit*- this means [through] the Torah.” And creation, as is, was drawn from the Torah, as it was, [when it was first given] from Heaven. And the fixing of creation, that is achieved through all kinds of craftsmanship and creative labors, is drawn from the true sages, to whom the Torah was given to expound and innovate and so on, which is the essence of the completion of the Torah, for without the sages we would not be able to understand anything at all from the Torah. And from there, from the true wisdom of the sages who use this wisdom in an artisanal fashion, in all kinds of craftsmanship and creative labors, from there the physical artisans receive their creative capacities, to fix [and complete] the physical things they are working with.

And this is the aspect of the craftsmanship of the making of the Mishkan⁶⁸⁵, for all of the types of craftsmanship in the world are included within the thirty nine types of creative labors involved in the making of the Mishkan ... for the Mishkan is the corrective and the maintenance and the vitality of all of the types of creative labors and craftsmanship in the world. For the essence of the entire enterprise of the making of the Mishkan was to fix the blemish in faith that [the people of] Israel had caused. And the main blemish they caused was in the area of EC, in that they did not believe in Moses, rather they said:⁶⁸⁶ “This man Moses, we do not know what has happened to him,” and as a result of this they came to deny HS’Y as well, and created an idol.⁶⁸⁷

And the fixing for this [blemish in faith] was through the [making of the] Mishkan, for as a result of each person donating what their heart prompted them to give, [such as] gold silver copper and so on ... through this they repaired their general faith [in God.] For through giving of their own private property towards the construction of the Mishkan for the sake of HS’Y, they demonstrated that they believed that HS’Y created all, and in fact commanded the construction of the Mishkan. And through all of the artisans and craftsmen who involved themselves in the various creative labors involved in the building of the Mishkan, through this they repaired the aspect of EC, for they returned to believing that all of the types of craftsmanship and creative labors in the world are all rooted in the Torah, for they are drawn from the wisdom of the true sages who innovate in Torah, as above. For in the Mishkan stood the ark with the stone tablets, and the essence of the building of the Mishkan and its holiness all came from the holy ark with the stone tablets, which is the aspect of the Holy of Holies, the aspect of the all-inclusive

⁶⁸³ Eng. “In the beginning, G-d created,” here taken to mean “Using the tool of ‘beginning’ (Heb. *Reishit* understood midrashically as a word for Torah) the world was created.”

⁶⁸⁴ *Tikkunei Zohar*, Tikun 25 and 70.

⁶⁸⁵ This is the Tabernacle, constructed by the Jewish people in the wilderness as described in the book of Exodus.

⁶⁸⁶ Exodus 32:1.

⁶⁸⁷ The golden calf.

intellect, which they received there, since it was there [in the Holy of Holies] that the entire receiving of the Torah, Written and Oral, took place, which one can merit only through the fixing of EC, as explained,⁶⁸⁸ [which was the purpose of the construction of the Mishkan itself, as above.]

This [fixing of EC through the construction of the Mishkan] is the aspect of what the sages taught,⁶⁸⁹ “Betsalel knew how to combine the letters through which Heaven and Earth were created. For it is all one: for Betsalel was the head of all of the artisans, with wondrous and awesome wisdom, as is described in the Torah, and all of this wisdom in craftsmanship was through his knowledge of how to combine the letters of creation, in the right ways. And this represents the aspect of the greatness of the holy sages who know the roots of the letters of the Torah, through which all was created, and they know how to combine them in new ways, and innovate through this awesome new insights, and through this innovation is drawn the fixing of all of the artisans and craftsmen whose types of creative labors are all included within the construction of the Mishkan, whose head artisan was Betsalel who knew how to combine the letters of creation.

It has already been explained⁶⁹⁰ that the essence of the safeguarding of all things is faith, which is the aspect of *shamor*.⁶⁹¹ For it is through faith, and most essentially through EC, upon which all faith depends, that the Torah becomes completed and all of the judgments in the world become sweetened, and through this all of the damages that come about from the destructive forces in the world are nullified and everything becomes safeguarded from any harm.

Hence, craftsmen and artisans are legally categorized as paid watchmen, who are therefore responsible for theft and loss, and are not responsible for inescapable damages. For whenever ... any damage or monetary loss occurs, this stems from a lack of faith, as above. Hence the responsibility for cases of theft and loss are upon the craftsman, [for these are] due to a blemish in his faith, whereas the costs of inescapable damages such as those of a wild animal or an armed robbery are associated to the owner of the object [that was entrusted to craftsman.] For theft and loss come from a blemish in the awareness of the watchman, for theft is due to a break in the watchman’s awareness, in that he did not safeguard the object properly and did not have proper awareness of the susceptibility of the object to being stolen. And loss, this is surely due to the watchman’s lack of awareness. Hence these types of damages are seen as being the fault of the craftsman whose EC is blemished, and does not believe that the entire wisdom of his craft stems

⁶⁸⁸ At LMI: 61.

⁶⁸⁹ BT Brachot 55A.

⁶⁹⁰ See *Zohar, Bechukotai* 115B.

⁶⁹¹ This is the Hebrew term for the command form of “guard.” It is understood here to represent the idea that “guarding” one’s faith is the spiritual root of “guarding” the belongings under one’s care.

from the power of the true sages who innovate in the Torah. The craftsman's awareness became blemished because of this blemish in the craftsman's EC, and hence the damages due to theft and loss became possible. As for damages that arise due to wild animals and armed robbers who come not with stealth but rather with open violence and undisguised harmful intention, these are associated to the owner of the object. For the object itself, as is, before it is repaired or improved by the craftsman, corresponds to the aspect of the creation of the object [by God] as is, not yet perfected, before it is made usable through human skill. Hence [the object's] vitality is drawn from the Torah as it was given from Heaven. And the Torah itself is based in faith, as it is written:⁶⁹² "all of your commandments are faith." And it is from [the Torah as it was given, before it became perfected and made usable by the true sages] that all of the objects in the world which are in their primal state, as yet unperfected by human skill, draw their vitality.

And this faith is the aspect of faith in HS'Y Himself, and in the Torah itself. For HS'Y created all things, in their primal state, through the Torah. But when the object becomes perfected through human craftsmen, this is the aspect of the fixing that is brought about through the true sages, who innovate in Torah, and complete the Torah, as above. Hence the damages which arise from inescapable circumstances, through wild animals or armed robbers who come with violence, these are due to a blemish in the faith in HS'Y and in the Torah itself as it was given from Heaven. This is the aspect of heresy in the most basic principle⁶⁹³ ... and it is due to this [type of] blemish faith that the armed robbers or wild animals came to cause damage to the object [itself], because its owner's most basic faith in HS'Y Himself [and the Torah itself as given from Heaven] was blemished. Hence, the damages that arise from inescapable circumstances such as wild animals and armed robbers are associated to the blemish in the faith of the owner of the object, since the object itself draws its vitality from this basic level of faith. But damages which arise from theft or loss, which are due to a lack of *awareness* of the object, these are associated to the craftsman who blemished his EC, by not believing that all of the wisdom of his craft is sourced in the wisdom of the true sages, as above.

⁶⁹² Psalms 119:86.

⁶⁹³ Heb. *kofer ba'ikar*.

Appendix B: The Story of the Homeowner and the Guest

(Recounted on the first day⁶⁹⁴ of Hanukah (December 21st) 1808)⁶⁹⁵

[Rabeinu z'l told us what he saw the night before, after the lighting of the candle of Hanukah:] A guest entered into the home of a homeowner. He asked the homeowner "What is your livelihood?" And the homeowner answered, "I have no set livelihood in my home, rather I live from the world." And [the guest] asked him, "What are you studying?" And he answered him. And they spoke together until they entered into a discussion of matters which came from the heart. And the homeowner began to pine and long very much, [asking], "How can a person reach and attain any matter of holiness?" The guest said to him, "I will teach you how." And the homeowner was shocked, and began to wonder: perhaps this is not a human being at all? But then he looked again and saw that he was speaking with him in the way of a human being. But then immediately his faith became strengthened within him, to believe in him. And he immediately began to call him "Rebbe," and he said to him "First of all, I ask to learn from thee how to act with proper honor towards thee, and certainly how to not act with, heaven forbid, any lack of honor towards thee. For, even so, it is difficult for a human being to be absolutely careful in the requisite manner, hence, I ask thee to teach me how to act in accordance with thy honor." And he answered him, "At this moment I am unavailable, at another time I will come to you and teach you this, and now I must leave here."

He [the homeowner] said, "Also of this I need to learn from thee, how far should I accompany him, how can I leave with him, for now I am with him among others, and if I leave with him alone, who knows who he is?" And he asked him, saying, "I am afraid to leave with you." And he answered him, "If I can teach you such, then even now, if I wished to do something to you who would stop me?" And he exited the doorway with him.

And then he grabbed him and began to fly with him, and it was cold for him, so he took a garment and gave it to him, and said, Take this garment and it will be good for you, and you will have food and drink and everything good, and you shall return to your home." And he flew with him. Meanwhile, he [the homeowner] looked, and behold he was in his home. And he did not believe his own eyes that he was home, but he looked and behold he was talking with people, and eating and drinking as is the way of the

⁶⁹⁴ The Jewish calendar counts each day as beginning in the evening and ending after sunset, (as in Genesis chapter one), hence the first "day" of Hanukah follows the first night of candle lighting.

⁶⁹⁵ This story was recorded by R. Nosson at CM: 85. See Mark, *Kol Sippurei Rabbi Nachman Mi-Bratslav*, 272-273 for full citation of the manuscript and publication history of this story. I have put R. Nosson's narrative comments in brackets.

world. Meanwhile, he looked, and behold, he was flying as before. And he looked again and behold he was in his home, and he looked again and behold he was flying, and so it was for him for a long while.

After this, [the guest] set him down between two mountains, in a valley. And he found there a book, and there were combinations of Hebrew letters in the book ... and there were also diagrams of vessels, and within the vessels, there were letters. And there were also letters within the vessels, letters of the vessels, through which one could construct the vessels. And he wanted very much to study this book.

Meanwhile he looked and behold he was in his house, and he looked again and behold he was there, and he decided to climb the mountain, perhaps he will find there some kind of community. When he came to the mountain, he saw a golden tree with branches of gold, and on the branches hung vessels, like the vessels he had seen in the book. Inside the vessels were vessels with which one can construct these [hanging] vessels. And he wanted very much to take one of the vessels but he was unable to, for they were entangled there upon the branches, which grew crookedly. Meanwhile, he looked, and he behold he was in his home. And it was a great wonder to him, that he was sometimes here and sometimes there. And he wished to speak of this with people, but how can one speak of such a wonder with people, something which is not fitting to believe. Meanwhile, he looked out the window and saw the guest, and he began to implore him to come in, and he said to him, "I am unavailable, for I am travelling to you."

He answered him, "This in itself is wondrous to me, for behold I am here, and what is this that you are travelling towards me?" He answered him, "At the time that you agreed to go with me, to accompany me past the doorway, I took your *neshamah* and gave it a garment from the Lower Garden of Eden, and your *nefesh* and *ru'ach* remained with you. Therefore, when you connect your thoughts there, you are there, and you bring a ray from me to you, and when you return to here, you are here.

[And I don't know from which world he was, surely from a good world, and it is neither yet finished nor ended.]

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Note: I have not included standard works that would be found in a rabbinic library such as Talmud, Midrash, basic works on halakhah and kabbalah, and well-known Hasidic compositions.

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