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Beyond the Letters:

The Question of Language in the Teachings

of Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezritch

A dissertation presented by

Evan Drescher Mayse

to

The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the subject of

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Beyond the Letters: The Question of Language in the Teachings of

Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezritch

Abstract

This thesis examines the philosophy of language of Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezritch (d. 1772), one of the most influential and creative early Hasidic masters, and the teacher whose students effectively created the Hasidic movement. I argue that Dov Baer offers an innovative approach to the role of language in religious life and its relationship to the inner workings of the human psyche. In contrast to scholars who emphasize aspects of Dov Baer's thought that idealize silence, my research demonstrates that he embraced words as a divine gift, even describing the faculty of speech as an element of God imbued within humanity. Dov Baer does refer to a realm of creativity and inspiration that lies beyond words. It is into this region that the mystic journeys in his contemplative prayer, tracing spoken words back to their roots in the mind, and then the ineffable beyond. Yet this realm is restricted by its silence, for flashes of insight have no expression until they are brought into language. Indeed, says Dov Baer, all conscious thought occurs within the framework of words, even before it is spoken aloud. A similar transformation characterizes all acts of divine revelation, including Creation and the giving of the Torah,

which originate in a pre-verbal inner divine realm and then spread through the pathways of language.

My dissertation is a diachronic study illustrating the ways in which Dov Baer's sermons creatively interpreted and developed conceptions of language in rabbinic, philosophical and kabbalistic literature, but devotes careful attention to his social and historical context as well. This project models a novel approach to the study of mystical texts that interfaces with contemporary issues like the study of language and epistemology, as well as broader methodological questions of the relationship between orality, authorship, and textuality. Dov Baer did not transcribe any of his own sermons, and all homilies attributed to him were recorded in writing by his disciples. Instead of attempting to reconstruct the historical sermons that have been forever lost, my dissertation draws upon the full spectrum of his teachings as they appear in printed books, manuscripts, and quotations by students in the decades after his death. The task is not to determine the veracity of these traditions in order to reconstruct Dov Baer's "authentic" sermons, since no such *Urtext* ever existed in written form. I examine his theology of language as presented in early Hasidic literature, acknowledging their diversity while tracking their consistency, seeking to understand the ways in which they shaped emerging Hasidic thought.

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intellectual vision and challenged me to think in new—and positively uncomfortable—directions. A debt of gratitude is also due to my friends from the *beit midrash* programs, many of whom are my fellow-travelers in this long journey into the world of scholarship.

I turn now to my teachers, at which point my words truly begin to fail. David Biale, my first guide in the world of Jewish Studies, my undergraduate mentor, and eventually my friend, patiently nurtured my interest in these issues and gave me a base of textual and analytical skills that laid the groundwork for this project. Bernard Septimus has guided my education with a hand that is at once warm and rigorous, showing me the ways in which precise textual interpretation, scholarly creativity, and felicitous writing must come together. Luis M. Girón Negrón has shared with me his expansive vision of mystical literature, and I have benefited much from his graduate seminars, his incisive comments and the many delightful conversations we have shared over the years. It was the opportunity to work with Arthur Green that brought me to Boston, and from our very first conversations it was clear that we shared an intuitive language of the spirit in addition to our love of Hasidism. Over the past seven years he has raised me up by challenging, encouraging and stretching me, and reading and re-reading this work (and so many others) a countless number of times, until we were both satisfied with the result. The completion of this project marks the beginning of a new phase in our relationship, and I look forward to many, many years of working, writing and thinking together.

It seems as if no words at all can express my gratitude toward the family who has made this journey possible. Together with the memory of my father, my mother has been a constant font of inspiration, friendship, and occasionally solace. She has carefully given me so much that was necessary for success in my quest, but she have always done so in

her own quiet and sublime way. Her voice was joined by that of my stepfather Robert Bernstein, whose energy and attentiveness to my development have known no measure. My in-laws, Nehemia Polen and Lauri Wolff, have been truly indefatigable in their encouragement, and at every stage of this project they have showered me with their wisdom, and their interminable support. Their incredible warmth and generosity of spirit has carried me in moments of great frustration and darkness. This dissertation is dedicated to my two beloved grandmothers, who passed away just months before it was completed. They were dear friends with another and yet opposites in so many ways; together they embody for me the very best of the life of the mind and the world of the spirit.

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7 Adar 5775

February 26, 2015

Jerusalem

Abbreviations, Transliteration and Style Guide

Biblical citations are based on the New Jewish Publication Society 1999 translation, though in many cases I have adapted it to reflect the Maggid's understanding of the verse. I have capitalized technical terms in the Maggid's thought, such as World of Thought, Voice, Speech, and so forth, except when they are presented in transliteration (*'olam ha-mahshavah, qol, dibbur*). The spelling of place names accords with that of *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. G.D. Hundert, New Haven 2008, but the Polish spelling is also given when a location is mentioned for the first time. Names of Hasidic masters and other Jewish figures are given with their closest English equivalent.

Abbreviations of Collections of the Maggid's Teachings:

MDL – *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*
LY – *Liqqutim Yeqarim*
TSHR – *Tsava'at ha-RiBaSH*
KST – *Keter Shem Tov*
OT – *Or Torah*
KTVQ – *Kitvei Qodesh*
OHE – *Or ha-Emet*
ST – *Shemu'ah Tovah*
SLA – *Sefer Liqqutei Amarim*

Other common abbreviations:

m. – Mishnah
t. – Tosefta
y. – Jerusalem Talmud
b. – Babylonian Talmud

Transliteration guide:

l	ל		א
m	מ	b	בּ
n	נ	v	ב
s	ס	g	ג
'	ע	d	ד
p	פּ	h	ה
f	פ	v	ו
ts	צ	z	ז
q	ק	h	ח
r	ר	t	ט
sh	שׁ	y	י
s	שׂ	k	כּ
t	ת	kh	כ

Introduction

1. Literature Review

The importance of R. Dov Baer of Mezritch (Pol. Międzyrzecz; mod. Ukr. Mezhyrichi) as a mystical theologian and central figure in the social history of early Hasidism has long been noted.[1] This study is devoted to exploring aspects of the Maggid's thought and philosophy, but some notes regarding the scholarship about R. Dov Baer's life and times will be in order first. There is no comprehensive scholarly biography of R. Dov Baer. Studies of the Maggid require that the scholar excavate many layers of legend and hagiography that surround him. These are by now several centuries thick, and distinguishing the earlier from the later strata of tales and legends about the Maggid is quite difficult.[2] In fact, reconstructing the details of his life with any sort of accuracy is nearly impossible, since we lack the necessary primary sources and historical documentation. In addition to the brief references to the Maggid in early anti-Hasidic bans, the first external source that mentions R. Dov Baer is Solomon Maimon's (1754-1800) first-hand description of the brief period he spent in Mezritch. His valuable report, first published in German in 1792-1793, even included descriptions of a few short homilies he heard from R. Dov Baer himself.[3] While hardly an objective witness,

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[1] For a few of the foundational studies, see Joseph Weiss, 'The *Via Passiva* in Early Hasidism', *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism,* ed. D. Goldstein, London and Portland 1997, pp. 69-94; Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, *ha-Hasidut ke-Mistikah*, Jerusalem 1968 [Hebrew]; translated as *Hasidism as Mysticism*, trans. Jonathan Chipman, Princeton and Jerusalem 1993. All citations refer to the English edition unless otherwise noted; Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 76-140; Ron Margolin, *The Human Temple: Religious Interiorization and the Structuring of Inner Life in Early Hasidism*, Jerusalem 2005 [Hebrew]. We will examine each of these in turn.

[2] The complexities of writing Hasidic biographies will be discussed in the next chapter.

[3] Solomon Maimon, *Solomon Maimon: An Autobiography*, trans. J. Clark Murray, Urbana 2001, pp. 151-175. The authenticity of Maimon's testimony was demonstrated many years ago by Joseph Weiss, 'One of the Sayings of the Great Maggid', *Zion* 20 (1955), pp. 107-109 [Hebrew]; and more recently in David Assaf, 'The Teachings of Dov Ber the Maggid of Mezritch in Solomon Maimon's Autobiography', *Zion* 71

Maimon's account of the Maggid's school is unique and therefore represents an important source for our knowledge of R. Dov Baer's circle.[4] We will discuss Maimon's testimony in the next chapter.

Simon Dubnow (1860-1941), the first academic historian of Hasidism, outlined the general contours of R. Dov Baer's life in his landmark *Toledot ha-Hasidut*.[5] He drew heavily upon the internal hagiographical traditions, and his treatment of the legendary material was rather uncritical. But Dubnow's history also made use of valuable archival sources, many of which have since been lost. He focused more on the social history than the theology of early Hasidism, and he described the Maggid as having continued the social movement founded by his teacher the BeSHT. In other words, R. Dov Baer inherited the leadership of Hasidism after the death of his master, transferring the center of gravity of the Hasidic world from Mezhbizh to Mezritch.[6] However, Dubnow's

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(2006), pp. 99-101 [Hebrew]; and idem, '"A Girl! He Ought to be Whipped": The Hasid as Homo Ludens', *Let the Old Make Way for the New: Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Eastern European Jewry Presented to Immanuel Etkes, Vol. I: Hasidism and the Musar Movement*, ed. D. Assaf and A. Rapoport-Albert, Jerusalem 2009, pp. 121-150 [Hebrew].

[4] Abraham Socher, *The Radical Enlightenment of Solomon Maimon: Judaism, Heresy, and Philosophy*, Stanford 2006, pp. 76-78, argues convincingly that despite his many criticisms, Maimon had great respect for the Maggid's teachings and the high level of self-perfection they demanded. Most scholars of the Maggid make use of Maimon's account. See, for example, Immanuel Etkes, 'The Early Hasidic "Court"', *Text and Context: Essays in Modern Jewish History and Historiography in Honor of Ismar Schorsch*, ed. E. Lederhendler and J. Wertheimer, New York 2005, pp. 157-169; Haviva Pedaya, 'On the Development of the Social-Religious-Economic Model of Hasidism: The *Pidyon*, the *Havurah*, and the Pilgrimage', *Zaddik and Devotees: Historical and Sociological Aspects of Hasidism*, ed. D. Assaf, Jerusalem 2001, esp. p. 353 [Hebrew]; Arthur Green, 'The Hasidic Homily: Mystical Performance and Hermeneutical Process', *As a Perennial Spring: A Festschrift Honoring Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm*, ed. B. Cohen, New York 2013, pp. 237-265.

[5] Simon Dubnow, *Toledot ha-Hasidut*: *'al Yesod Meqorot Rishonim*, Tel Aviv 1959, esp. pp. 77-102 [Hebrew]; translated as 'The Maggid of Miedzyrzecz, His Associates, and the Center in Volhynia (1760-1772)', *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, ed. G.D. Hundert, New York 1991, pp. 58-85. All references in the present study refer to this translation. Heinrich Graetz mentioned the Maggid briefly in his history of early Hasidism some years before Dubnow, but his account is so highly polemical that it can be of little historiographical value; see his *History of the Jews,* Philadelphia 1895, vol. v, pp. 379-386. On Graetz's relationship to Kabbalah and Hasidism, see Jonathan M. Elukin, 'A New Essenism: Heinrich Graetz and Mysticism', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 59 (1998), pp. 135-148.

[6] See Dubnow, 'The Maggid of Miedzyrzecz', pp. 58-66.

landmark work is nearly a century old, and has been criticized by more recent scholars who disagree with his rather simplistic model of succession.

S.A. Horodetzky's biographical sketch and compendium of the Maggid's teachings represents another important early study of R. Dov Baer. Horodetzky was one of the first to collect the various teachings of the Maggid together from different books, including those of his disciples, and arrange them thematically. This type of compendium highlights the relatively wide variety of his sermons. However, Horodetzky offered very little interpretation and no overarching method regarding how these different teachings should be read in dialogue with one another. He accepted many hagiographical sources without criticism.[7] Netanel Lederberg's recent book *The Gateway to Infinity* presents the Maggid's biography in popular terms, and while he demonstrates sensitivity to the Maggid's religious personality and theological depth, this work combines tales early and late to form a cohesive narrative.[8]

Scholars continue to debate the origins of the Hasidic movement, and whether or not R. Israel ben Eliezer, known as the Ba'al Shem Tov (or BeSHT) of Mezhbizh (Pol. Międzyboż; mod. Ukr. Medzhibizh), may rightly be described as the "founder" of Hasidism.[9] These questions are beyond the scope of the present study, but the Maggid's particular role in the emergence of the social movement known as Hasidism is also matter of great contention. Basing himself on the internal Hasidic narrative, Dubnow assumed that the Maggid was the true architect of Hasidism. R. Dov Baer took over the nascent

[7] S.A. Horodetzky, *Torat ha-Maggid ve-Sihotav*, Berlin 1923.

[8] Netanel Lederberg, *The Gateway to Infinity: Rabbi Dov Baer, the Maggid Meisharim of Mezhirich*, Jerusalem 2011 [Hebrew].

[9] For two very different interpretations, see Moshe Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Baal Shem Tov*, Berkeley 1996; and Immanuel Etkes, *The Besht: Magician, Mystic, and Leader*, trans. Saadya Sternberg, Waltham 2005.

spiritual movement founded by the Ba'al Shem Tov upon the latter's death in 1760, and the Maggid trained a generation of close disciples whom he sent to spread the new spiritual ethos throughout Eastern Europe.[10]

Shmuel Ettinger, though he agrees that R. Dov Baer inherited his master's leadership of a fully-formed movement, argues that the Maggid actually decentralized Hasidism by establishing multiple centers headed by his different disciples.[11] Yet Ada Rapoport-Albert has argued convincingly that R. Dov Baer held even less centralized power.[12] She contends that the Maggid never served as the leader of a unified Hasidic movement, but rather the most prominent figure at the heart of a loose circle of gifted spiritual figures. Rapoport-Albert suggests that several of the Maggid's students, including major figures like R. Abraham of Kalisk, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, and R. Aaron of Karlin, were already operating as independent leaders of smaller communities during their master's lifetime.[13] A key group of ten to fifteen disciples built Hasidism in the decades after the Maggid's death, but this transition from an elite circle into a mass movement was not undertaken at the direct behest of their teacher. Arthur Green has even suggested that the Maggid was reluctant to see the spread of the new Hasidic ethos into a popular movement, and that his students forced this role of leadership upon him.[14]

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[10] See Dubnow, 'The Maggid of Miedzyrzecz', pp. 58-66.

[11] Shmuel Ettinger, 'The Hasidic Movement—Reality and Ideals', *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, ed. G.D. Hundert, New York 1991, p. 238.

[12] See Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'Hasidism after 1772: Structural Continuity and Change', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 76-140.

[13] Ibid, pp. 95-98.

[14] Arthur Green, 'Around the Maggid's Table: *Tsaddik*, Leadership and Popularization in the Circle of Dov Baer of Miedzyrzec', *Zion* 78 (2013), pp. 73-106 [Hebrew]. An English version of this essay will be

The implications of reframing early Hasidic history in this way are profound. It suggests that there was never a single leader of the entire Hasidic community, even in the days of the BeSHT or the Maggid. Furthermore, the very stratification of early Hasidism into three "generations" of leadership, namely the Ba'al Shem Tov, the Maggid, and the Maggid's students, requires careful nuancing. The division in time between the Maggid's leadership and that of his students is not at all clear, since for some period they actually overlapped.[15] If neither the BeSHT nor the Maggid established a central office of leadership, Rapoport-Albert argues, perhaps we cannot truly speak about Hasidism as a defined movement until the decades after the Maggid's death. Thus Hasidism was born in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, as the ideology and new social structures began to crystalize through the efforts of the Maggid's students, and as conflict with the *mithnaggedim* became more pronounced.

However, surely it is possible to refer to a decentralized group of likeminded individuals as a religious movement. And even if we accept Rapoport-Albert's contention that applying the specific term "generations" to the emergent Hasidism is misleading, we can still refer to a series of overlapping stages of growth that originated in the BeSHT's new religious ethos and spiritual path.[16] Although we know very little about the contours of the BeSHT's circle, he seems to have attracted some talented spiritual figures.[17] In the second stage, the BeSHT's teachings were transformed and interpreted in different ways by his various students, foremost among them R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye, R. Pinhas of

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appearing in a new anthology of Green's articles entitled *The Heart of the Matter* (Jewish Publication Society, forthcoming). All references in the present study refer to the Hebrew edition.

[15] Ibid, p. 98.

[16] See Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 113-151, 249-258.

[17] See Etkes, *The Besht*, pp.152-202; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 166-168; Abraham J. Heschel, *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov: Studies in Hasidism*, ed. S.H. Dresner, Chicago 1985.

Koretz, and the Maggid. Each of these figures developed the BeSHT's message in his own way, both theologically and socially. The third phase in the development of Hasidism was that of the disciples of the Maggid, and the students of the BeSHT's other students. Most of these young leaders had never met the BeSHT themselves, and they only knew of his teachings as they had been preserved either orally or in writing and developed in the thought of his disciples. Thus even if the term "generation" includes too many connotations of heritability and continuity, we can still identify three stages in the early years of the Hasidic movement

Haviva Pedaya has examined the Maggid's role in the formation of early Hasidic society from a somewhat different perspective.[18] She has demonstrated that some important characteristics that would become fundaments of the *tsaddiq*'s court in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries may already be identified in some form in descriptions of the Maggid's *beit midrash* ("school"). These elements, most of which are found in Maimon's testimony, include a stationary leader to whom others traveled, a ritualized meal eaten together on Shabbat, a public sermon, and accepting *pidyonot* ("redemption sums").[19] Her conclusions have been supported by the work of Immanuel Etkes, who argues that the Maggid's court does in fact represent the beginnings of

[18] Pedaya, 'Social-Religious-Economic Model of Hasidism', pp. 343-397.

[19] The importance of the transition from itinerant Hasidic leaders to an established, stationary master was already underscored by Joseph Weiss, 'The Beginnings of Hasidism', *Zion* 16 (1951), pp. 46-105 [Hebrew]; reprinted in *Studies in Hasidism*, ed. A. Rubinstein, Jerusalem 1977, pp. 122-181. All citations refer to this reprint. See ibid, p. 129, and esp. 179-181 [Hebrew]. The BeSHT held an official post in Mezhbizh, but a great many stories describe his as having peregrinated between different communities and journeying from town to town with great frequency. See Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 117-119; Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 218-223.

Hasidism as a movement,[20] and Uriel Gellman, who traced the development of the *tsaddiq*'s court as an institution from the Maggid's time into the nineteenth century.[21] The work of these scholars demonstrates that the Maggid should be seen as a pivotal figure in the establishment of the social structures of Hasidism, even if he never became the central leader of a well-defined movement.

The Maggid undoubtedly played an important role in emerging social organization of Hasidism, but his influence as a theologian and mystic was even more profound. Elements of the Maggid's teachings have long fascinated scholars. Gershom Scholem refers to R. Dov Baer and his sermons a number of times in his chapter on Hasidism in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, where he describes the Maggid as the BeSHT's most important follower and one of the most creative and vital early Hasidic thinkers.[22] Scholem devoted particular attention to the Maggid's understanding of *devequt*, or mystical attachment to God and overwhelming sense of the immanent divine Presence.[23] He noted that, like his master the BeSHT, the Maggid understood *devequt* to be the primary goal of the mystical life. This connection to the Divine is accomplished through transcending the ego and focusing one's mind upon God alone. Although the Maggid does not refer *devequt* as something that may only be attained by certain elect

[20] Etkes, 'The Early Hasidic "Court"', pp. 157-186; idem, 'The Zaddik: The Interrelationship between Religious Doctrine and Social Organization', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London 1997, pp. 162-163.

[21] Uriel Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century: Typologies of Leadership and Devotees', Ph.D. Dissertation, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2001, pp. 47-50 [Hebrew].

[22] Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1995, pp. 334-335.

[23] Gershom Scholem, '*Devekut*, or Communion with God', *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York 1995, pp. 214, 216-217, 221-222.

tsaddiqim, it can be achieved only through a long and intensely contemplative inner journey. *Devequt* is therefore best attempted alone and away from the community.

Scholem dedicated a separate study to the Maggid's teachings on *qadmut ha-sekhel*, the primeval or precognizant mind identified as the infinite font of human creativity.[24] This important subject was given much greater treatment in an interesting paper by Siegmund Hurwitz, whose interpretation of the Maggid was highly influenced by Jungian psychoanalysis.[25] Hurwitz examined a great many of the Maggid's sermons that invoke *qadmut ha-sekhel* by comparing R. Dov Baer's teachings with descriptions of the unconscious found in modern psychology. He makes no argument of historical influence, since it was unlikely that German-speaking psychoanalysts of the nineteenth century had an exposure to the Maggid's thought. But Hurwitz's study is an important contribution to our understanding of the ways in which the Maggid transformed kabbalistic symbolism into a spiritual vocabulary for human psychology.[26]

Joseph Weiss authored a series of articles over several decades in which he investigated many different elements of the Maggid's theology. He was the first to identify what he described as the Maggid's embrace of the *via passiva* as the defining element of the spiritual life.[27] Weiss argued that the Maggid saw passive renunciation and total divestment from all connection to the physical world, including one's individual

[24] Gershom Scholem, 'The Unconscious and the Concept *Qadmut ha-Sekhel* in Hasidic Literature', *The Latest Phase: Essays on Hasidism*, ed. D. Assaf and E. Liebes, Jerusalem 2008, pp. 268-276 [Hebrew]. The importance of this concept was first suggested by Ahron Marcus, *Hartmanns inductive Philosophie im Chassidismus*, Vienna 1888.

[25] Siegmund Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects in Early Hasidic Literature', trans. Hildegard Nagel, *Timeless Documents of the Soul*, Evanston 1968, pp. 149-240.

[26] Martin Buber, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*, ed. and trans. Maurice Friedman, New York 1960, pp. 198-199; Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 342; Scholem, 'Devekut', pp. 216-217.

[27] Weiss, 'The *Via Passiva*', pp. 69-94.

identity, to be the ultimate goal of religious service. Weiss interpreted the Maggid's teachings as the paradigm of what he called "mystical Hasidism," a spiritual typology defined by belief in the immanent presence of God in the physical world.[28] He sees a subtle paradox undergirding the Maggid's relationship to God: on one hand, the Divine is utterly impersonal and indescribable, yet on the other hand, God may be reached and known by the mystic through contemplative ecstasy. There is no rift, be it experiential, existential or ontological, between the human and divine realms.[29] Weiss's typological depiction of the Maggid determined the ways in which scholars approached his sermons for many years.[30]

Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer's *Hasidism as Mysticism* was the first monograph-length analysis of R. Dov Baer's mystical thought.[31] Building upon the work of Scholem and Weiss, she argues that the creativity of early Hasidism is found in its theological teachings, not in its social innovation. Schatz-Uffenheimer describes the Maggid's approach to prayer, study, and the performance of the commandments in great detail. However, like Weiss, she suggested that the contemplative retreat away from the corporeal world into the depths of the human mind is the cornerstone of the Maggid's

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[28] Joseph G. Weiss, 'Hasidism of Mysticism and Hasidism of Faith', *Studies in Braslav Hasidism*, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 87-95 [Hebrew]; translated as 'Mystical Hasidism and the Hasidism of Faith: A Typological Analysis' *God's Voice from the Void: Old and New Studies in Bratslav Hasidism*, ed. S. Magid, Albany 2002, pp. 277-285. All citations refer to this translation.

[29] Weiss, 'Hasidism of Mysticism', pp. 278-282.

[30] Weiss' approach to R. Nahman was fiercely criticized by Isaiah Tishby and Joseph Dan, 'The Teachings of Hasidism and its Literature', *Hebrew Encyclopedia*, vol. 17 p. 771 [Hebrew]. See also Mendel Piekarz, 'A. Green, *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*, 1979', *Tarbiz* 51 (1981-1982), pp. 49-165 [Hebrew]; and more recently, Zvi Mark, *Mysticism and Madness in the Work of R. Nahman of Bratslav*, Tel Aviv 2003, pp. 14-16 [Hebrew]. Ron Margolin has also called for a reevaluation of Weiss' thesis, but we will refer to Margolin's work in much greater detail below.

[31] See above, n. 1. This book was complemented by Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'Contemplative Prayer in Hasidism', *Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem*, Jerusalem 1967, pp. 209-226.

theology. She also argued that although they did not abandon the mandate of physically performing the commandments, the Maggid's circle saw all worldly actions, including vocalized speech acts, as a distraction from silent meditative contemplation.[32] One must fulfill the commandments through the physical deeds, but these actions are not the primary vehicle for achieving *devequt*, and in some cases they even distract the mystic from his true goals.[33] She compared the Maggid's spiritual path to the Christian phenomenon of Quietism, and though she ultimately admits that there are some fundamental differences, she sees a great affinity between Maggid's teachings and certain Western Christian seventeenth-century spiritualists.[34]

Schatz-Uffenheimer is undoubtedly correct that some teachings from the Maggid and his school emphasize a spiritual posture that shares elements with Christian quietism. However, her thesis requires qualification. Mendel Piekarz argued that the Maggid's extreme formulations regarding the need for self-effacement and total resignation of all one's desires, ego, and even one's very consciousness before God, should be seen as hyperbolic.[35] He argued that any quietistic tendencies reflect this propensity for exaggeration. However, Piekarz also perceptively noted that the Maggid's teachings are not monolithic, and some of his sermons refer to actions in the corporeal world quite positively. Elements of the Maggid's thought display ambivalence toward the possibility of serving God by means of eating and drinking, but this reticence does not extend to all physical actions. Some deeds, especially performing the commandments, have a positive

[32] Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 184-188.

[33] Ibid, pp. 111-143.

[34] Ibid, pp. 65-69.

[35] Mendel Piekarz, *Between Ideology and Reality: Humility, Ayin, Self-Negation and Devekut in the Hasidic Thought*, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 55-81 [Hebrew].

spiritual value. Piekarz suggests that both of these positions are represented throughout corpus of the Maggid's teachings and exist together in an unresolved tension.

Moshe Idel has taken exception with Schatz-Uffenheimer's understanding of Hasidic spirituality. He claims that the primary emphasis of Hasidic mysticism is not found in the contemplative retreat away from the physical. More important is the *tsaddiq*'s empowered return to the world, bringing with him added blessing and an infusion of divine energy.[36] Seth Brody has also offered a similar perspective regarding the Maggid's relationship to the physical world. He argued that:

> ... non-dual experience is predicated upon egoless entrance into the foundational structures of consciousness and cosmos. These are discovered to originate in a common transcendental source, divine Wisdom. Such illumination serves for the benefit of the entire cosmos, for the devotee is transformed into a living conduit for the manifestation of creative energy into a world which is renewed rather than annihilated.[37]

It seems to me that Brody, like Idel before him, has hit the nail on the head. We shall see in the Maggid's teachings that the deepest realms of human consciousness share a common root in the *sefirah hokhmah*, or God's Wisdom, the divine energy that infuses the physical world. The mystic ventures into the ineffable realm, moving beyond his personal identify and transcending his sense of self. The true purpose of this journey, however, lies not in the experience of the *ayin*, but in the return to the world that brings about an increase in blessing *within* the physical. The trajectory of mystical self-

[36] Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, Albany 1995, pp. 1, and throughout.

[37] Seth Brody, '"Open to Me the Gates of Righteousness": The Pursuit of Holiness and Non-Duality in Early Hasidic Teaching', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 89 (1998), p. 25.

nullification leads one back to corporeal world, and does not end with the moment of rapture itself.[38]

The reevaluation of Schatz-Uffenheimer's position was greatly furthered by Ron Margolin, who has offered the most sustained critique of her analysis to date.[39] He demonstrates quite convincingly that the Maggid's sermons demand a much greater involvement with the physical world than claimed by Schatz-Uffenheimer. According to Margolin, R. Dov Baer's teachings do not advocate a life of silent or passive meditation. The Maggid, following the BeSHT, emphasized that the primary arena of religious service is the interior world; instead of theurgy directed toward the emanated powers of the Godhead, the *sefirot* that must be unified are those embodied within the human psyche.[40] But this leads the Maggid to demand that when performing acts such as prayer, study, and even eating or drinking, the mystic must cultivate a great degree of contemplative awareness that accompanies his engagement with the physical world.[41] The process of developing this type of awareness requires a great deal of active effort. Although entering into a state of pure self-annihilation by overcoming the ego and totally divesting oneself from any base or carnal desires leads him into union with God, this

[38] An instructive comparison may be found in the early *recogimiento* movement among the spiritual Franciscans in sixteenth-century Spain. See Luis M. Girón-Negrón, "Dionysian Thought in Sixteenth-Century Spanish Mystical Theology', *Modern Theology* 24 (2008), pp. 693-706.

[39] See above, n. 1. This work has more recently been complemented by a second book that expands his study to the entire Jewish canon; see Ron Margolin, *Inner Religion: The Phenomenology of Inner Religious Life and its Manifestation in Jewish Sources (from the Bible to Hasidic Texts)*, Ramat-Gan 2012.

[40] Margolin, *Inner Religion*, pp. 213-215, 280-283.

[41] Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 202-215. Margolin demonstrates that Buber's and Scholem's mutually-exclusive interpretations of Hasidism were influenced by their very different understandings of mysticism more broadly; Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 6-51.

radical state is only temporary. Eventually the contemplative returns to the physical world, transformed and empowered by his mystical experience.[42]

The positions voiced by Margolin, Idel and Brody have been affirmed by Jerome Gellman, who argues that expressions of the *via passiva* in some teachings from the Maggid's school only crop up occasionally and had little influence upon later Hasidism.[43] Most recently, Tsippi Kauffman has described the great variety of approaches to serving God through the physical world found in early Hasidic literature. Some of the Maggid's homilies are characterized by circumspection and caution on this point, but a great many other teachings embrace without reserve the possibility of divine service through physicality.[44]

This issue of the Maggid's attitude toward the corporeal realm is of great relevance to our analysis of his theology of language. Words, at least those that are spoken aloud, are often considered an element of the physical world. But in order to understand the implications of his thinking about the earthly realm for our study of language, we must first turn to a cornerstone of the Maggid's theology: his unique formulation of the complex relationship between *yesh* ("being") and *ayin* ("Nothing" or "Naught").[45] *Ayin* refers to the aspect of the Divine that is limitless and infinite potential;

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[42] Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 176-191.

[43] Jerome Gellman, 'Hasidic Mysticism as an Activism', *Religious Studies* 42 (2006), pp. 343-349.

[44] Tsippi Kauffman, *In all Your Ways Know Him: The Concept of God and* Avodah be-Gashmiyut *in the Early Stages of Hasidism*, Ramat-Gan 2009, pp. 426-466 [Hebrew].

[45] Daniel C. Matt, '*Ayin*: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism', *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. L. Fine, New York 1995, pp. 67-108; Rachel Elior, 'The Paradigms of *Yesh* and *Ayin* in Hasidic Thought', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 168-179; Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, pp. 236-281; Hillel Zeitlin, 'The Fundaments of Hasidism', *Be-Fardes ha-Hasidut ve'ha-Kabbalah*, Tel Aviv 1960, pp. 11-14 [Hebrew]; translated in Arthur Green, *Hasidic Spirituality for a New Era: The Religious Writings of Hillel Zeitlin*, New York 2012, pp. 73-77. On *yesh* and *ayin* in the teachings of some of the Maggid's disciples, see Rachel Elior, 'HaBaD: The Contemplative Ascent to God', *Jewish Spirituality II: From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present*, ed. A Green,

it is inexpressible and undefined, and has no concrete expression. *Yesh*, on the other hand, describes the physical world after the primeval *tsimtsum*, the act in which God withdrew a measure of unlimited divine light.[46] *Tsimtsum* provides an explanation for one of the fundamental paradoxes of the Maggid's panentheism: the physical world is suffused with the same unified divine energy (*ayin*), but it is manifest through the great multiplicity inherent in the physical realm (*yesh*). *Yesh* and *ayin* are mutually dependent, and neither modality is complete without the other.[47]

Joseph Weiss noted that a subtle but significant shift in terminology has taken place in the teachings of the Maggid.[48] *Ayin* is associated with the *sefirah keter* in classical Kabbalah, and the term *Ein Sof* refers to the unlimited Divine that lies beyond the matrix of the *sefirot*.[49] In the Maggid's sermons, however, *ayin* is associated with the *sefirah hokhmah*, and the importance of *keter* is marginalized.[50] He uses the terms *ayin* and *hokhmah* to describe the infinite divine energy that constantly flows through and

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New York 1987, pp. 157-205; idem, 'Between Yesh and Ayin: The Doctrine of the Zaddik in the Works of Jacob Isaac, The Seer of Lublin', *Jewish History: Essays in Honor of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert and S.J. Zipperstein, London 1988, pp. 393-455. See also Weiss, *Studies in Braslav Hasidism*, pp. 121-125.

[46] On the Kabbalistic background of the Maggid's understanding of *tsimtsum*, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 260-273; Moshe Idel, 'On the Concept of *Zimzum* in Kabbalah and its Research', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (1992), 59-112 [Hebrew]; Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship*, Stanford 2003, pp. 128-131; Haviva Pedaya, *Nahmanides: Cyclical Time and Holy Text*, Tel Aviv 2003, pp. 402-406 [Hebrew].

[47] On *tsimtsum* in the Maggid's sermons, see Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, pp. 179-185; and Menachem Lorberbaum, '"Attain the Attribute of *'Ayyin*": The Mystical Religiosity of *Maggid Devarav Le-Ya'aqov*', *Kabbalah* 31 (2014), esp. pp. 177-209 [Hebrew]. See also Christoph Schulte, *Zimzum: Gott und Weltursprung*, Berlin 2014, pp. 245-260.

[48] Joseph Weiss, 'The Great Maggid's Theory of Contemplative Magic', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 31 (1960), pp. 139-140.

[49] See Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. A. Arkush, Philadelphia 1987, pp. 130-131, 265-289, 431-444.

[50] This point is clear in the first sermon of MDL, in which Maggid interprets the verse "*hokhmah* comes forth from *ayin*" (Job 28:12), the locus classicus for kabbalistic discussions of the relationship between *hokhmah* and *keter*, as meaning that *hokhmah* and *ayin* are actually one and the same; see MDL #1, p. 9.

sustains all physical reality. This new hybrid symbol of *hokhmah*/*ayin* is one of the most important terms in the Maggid's lexicon.

Let us pause for a moment and return to the question of language. For the Maggid, the dynamic of *yesh* and *ayin* is of both cosmological and a psychological importance. Much like the earthly realm, spoken language is an expression of *yesh*, for words are vessels that embody and concretize the infinite expansiveness of *ayin*. Meditating on his words, and especially those that are articulated aloud, allows the mystic to trace them back to their origin in *ayin*. We will see that this contemplative journey, which is followed by a subsequent return to language, is one of the central elements of the Maggid's teachings. Furthermore, his near-total embrace of the positive qualities of language displays none of the Maggid's pronounced ambivalence toward serving God through the corporeal. This fine distinction between language and the earthly realm is crucial for understanding the Maggid's theology.

Of course, the mystic may also transform *yesh* back to the state of *ayin* through gazing upon the world around him. The awareness that its seeming multiplicity is actually a manifestation of the infinite *ayin* allows him to connect physical objects to this primeval state and recreate them according to his wish.[51] The transformation, though it takes place deep within mystic's mind, can affect the physical world as well. Furthermore, the mystic who undertakes this task embodies both *yesh* and *ayin*, since his ability to transform himself into *ayin* through humility and self-annihilation allows for the renewal of *yesh* and bring forth an influx of blessing and divine energy.

[51] Weiss, 'The Great Maggid's Theory of Contemplative Magic', pp. 137-147.

The return of *yesh* to *ayin*, and back once more, can only be accomplished by certain rarified individuals. The notion of the *tsaddiq* was one of the great innovations of the Hasidic movement, an idea that carried with it both theological and social implications.[52] Arthur Green has demonstrated that the early Hasidic masters forged a new type of communal and religious leader by combining a range of earlier typologies, including biblical models like the priest, prophet, and the king, as well as the official institution of the *rav* ("rabbi") and kabbalistic conceptions of the *tsaddiq*, or holy man.[53] As we shall see, the Maggid's conception of the ideal mystic draws upon many of these models, but nowhere does he explicitly portray the *tsaddiq* as the leader of a community. Joseph Weiss interpreted this as suggesting that the Maggid understood becoming a *tsaddiq* to be an attainable ideal to which *all* should strive.[54] Green, however, wonders if some of the Maggid's teachings may actually imply that there can only be one *tsaddiq* in each and every generation.[55] R. Dov Baer's sermons are not explicit enough for us to determine this with certainty, but the ambiguity diminishes the likelihood that he saw the *tsaddiq* as the universal potential of all Jews.

Ada Rapoport-Albert maintains that Weiss' claim requires even more nuance. She suggests instead that the Maggid was uninterested in any social role played by the *tsaddiq*.[56] The Maggid focused only upon the *tsaddiq*'s relationship with God, totally ignoring his relationship to the community. Notions such as the "descent of the *tsaddiq*"

[52] Etkes, 'The Zaddik', pp. 159-167.

[53] Arthur Green, 'Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq', *Jewish Spirituality II: From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present*, ed. A. Green, New York 1987, pp. 127-156; idem, 'The Zaddiq as Axis Mundi in Later Judaism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 45 (1977), pp. 327-347

[54] Weiss, *Studies in Braslav Hasidism*, p. 104.

[55] Green, 'Zaddiq as Axis Mundi', pp. 338-339.

[56] Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'God and the Zaddik as the Two Focal Points of Hasidic Worship', *History of Religions* 18 (1979), pp. 318-319.

into the ranks of the ordinary people in order to uplift them are not found in the Maggid's sermons. The fact that these ideas, which are clearly grounded in the teachings of the BeSHT, appear in his students' homilies means that they must have been adopted from the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye in the early 1780s.[57] Thus she identifies an elitist element present in the very earliest stages of Hasidism.

But Rapoport-Albert's formulation seems rather extreme, given that there are important social elements in the Maggid's teachings. While the Maggid does not describe the *tsaddiq* as the *rebbe*, or leader of a large community, his teachings often refer to a teacher who is surrounded by a flock of students. Indeed, Etkes has argued that although the Maggid's sermons never refer to the relationship between the *tsaddiq* and his community, R. Dov Baer fused the BeSHT's model of spiritual leadership with that of the popular preacher. Thus while early Hasidism may indeed have been a movement fueled by elites such as the Maggid and his students, they continued a more popular element inherited from the BeSHT. The combination of *tsaddiq* as communal leader and spiritual educator was to become a defining characteristic of all nearly Hasidic leaders after the Maggid.[58]

Haviva Pedaya has explored the phenomenology of the Maggid's religious experience in several recent articles.[59] She describes the Maggid as an introspective, contemplative mystic, as opposed to the more ecstatic, extroverted spiritual path of the BeSHT and the one eventually adopted by R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye. She suggests that

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[57] Weiss, *Studies in Braslav Hasidism*, p. 105-107; Rapoport-Albert, 'God and Zaddik', p. 320.

[58] Etkes, 'The Zaddik', p. 163.

[59] Haviva Pedaya, 'The Baal Shem Tov, R. Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, and the Maggid of Mezhirech: Outlines for a Religious Typology', *Daat* 45 (2000), pp. 25-73 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Two Types of Ecstatic Experience in Hasidism', *Daat* 55 (2005), pp. 73-108 [Hebrew].

the Maggid imbibed an approach to the mystical life from the BeSHT, including an emphasis on language, but filtered these ideas through his own very different spiritual personality. The Maggid's teachings reveal that his contemplative journey led inward, into the depths of the human mind, and he underscored the visual experience of the light within the letters. These elements stand in contrast to the wild, ecstatic and unpredictable visions like those of the BeSHT.[60] Pedaya's insights, based on a close comparison between teachings attributed to the Maggid and those of his teacher, are quite helpful in framing the Maggid's spiritual path.

In a challenging new study Menachem Lorberbaum has explored the philosophical complexity of the Maggid's theological vision.[61] Following Weiss, he argues that the Maggid changed the traditional schema of the *sefirot*. But Lorberbaum goes farther by suggesting that instead of referring to the element of the Divine beyond the matrix of the *sefirot* as *Ein Sof*, as is true in many medieval kabbalistic works, the Maggid describes this transcendent aspect of God as *ayin*. However, in making this point Lorberbaum downplays the association of *ayin* with *hokhmah*, which is a cornerstone of the Maggid's theology. He claims that the Maggid's teachings are actually quite conservative in describing the ecstatic movement of *devequt* with God, referring to it as entering "the gateway to *ayin*" (*sha'ar le-ayin*) or the "attribute of *ayin*" (*midat ha-ayin*) but not attaining *ayin* itself. In many cases this is true, but we must point out that the

[60] Pedaya, 'Outlines for a Religious Typology', pp. 66-69; idem, 'Two Types', pp. 86-87

[61] Lorberbaum, '"Attain the Attribute of *'Ayyin*"', pp. 169-235. This study, however, is limited to an investigation of the first collection of the Maggid's teachings and devotes much less time to examining the full array of traditions preserved in his name.

Maggid's teachings are not consistent on these points. Some of his sermons do refer to *devequt* as entering *ayin* itself, and others describe the transcendent Divine as *Ein Sof*.[62]

Invoking philosophical concepts from thinkers such as Parmenides and Heidegger, Lorberbaum interprets the Maggid's teachings as articulating what he describes as a flexible ontology. This means that all objects or beings in the physical world may be transformed into something else at any moment, since their essence is grounded in the dynamic and ever-fluctuating realm of *hokhmah*. Lorberbaum also demonstrates that the influence of R. Naftali Bakhrakh's work *'Emeq ha-Melekh* (1648) upon R. Dov Baer's theology has thus far been underestimated.[63]

The work of several young Israeli scholars has deepened our understanding of the Maggid's theology over the past few years. David Zori's doctoral dissertation analyzes R. Dov Baer's theology through his teachings on the subject of divine providence (*hashgahah peratit*). Zori also compares the Maggid's understanding of providence with that described in the writings of his contemporary R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye, as well as the homilies of his student R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil (Ukr. Chernobyl).[64] Omer Michaelis has written a phenomenological exploration of the place of awe (*yir'ah*) and love (*ahavah*) in the Maggid's spiritual path as presented in the most important printed compendia of his sermons.[65] More recently, Noam Hoffman has offered a preliminary

[62] For example, see OT #348, *pesuqim*, p. 385. See also MDL #199, p. 324, which refers to connecting one's mind and vitality to the absolute unity of *Ein Sof*.

[63] On this figure, see below, n. 92; and Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 258.

[64] David Zori, 'Divine Providence in the Thought of Three Disciples of Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov', Ph.D. Dissertation, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2013, pp. 39-144 [Hebrew].

[65] Omer Michaelis, 'The Path of Love and Awe', MA Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2012 [Hebrew].

study of some elements of the Maggid's teachings on language. Hoffman's thesis, though quite limited in scope, is a helpful introductory study of the subject.[66]

The various collections of the Maggid's teachings present many a philological and bibliographic difficulties. Zeev Gries has done much of the important work in sorting through the texts of early Hasidism, carefully parsing their different layers and demonstrating the importance of the editors.[67] Gries paid particular attention to the works of the Maggid, and especially the *hanhagot* ("conduct") literature attributed to his school. In a different way Daniel Abrams has forced us to reconsider the problematic textual fluidity of early Hasidic books, including the collections of the Maggid's sermons, and reminded us of the complicated relationship between written texts and spoken word.[68] Much more will be said about the work of these two scholars in our discussion of the corpus of teachings attributed to the Maggid.

The Maggid's understanding of language is of central importance to nearly every one of his sermons, but the subject has not yet been fully treated. Horodetzky understood quite well that language was at the heart of the Maggid's teachings, and he devoted several full sections of his compendium to this subject, but he collated teachings without

[66] Noam Hoffman, 'Where One Thinks, One Is: A Lexical-Conceptual Analysis of the Thought of Rabbi Dov Baer the Maggid of Mezeritch', MA Thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2014 [Hebrew]. I received a copy of this work quite late in the writing of my dissertation, but have endeavored to include Hoffman's findings when relevant.

[67] For three of his most important and relevant studies, see Zeev Gries, *The Conduct Literature (Regimen Vitae): Its History and Place in the Life of Beshtian Hasidism,* Jerusalem 1989 [Hebrew]; idem, *The Book in Early Hasidism: Genres, Authors, Scribes, Managing Editors and its Review by Their Contemporaries and Scholars*, Tel Aviv 1992 [Hebrew]; and idem, 'The Hasidic Managing Editor as an Agent of Culture', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London 1997, pp. 141-155.

[68] See his remarks in Daniel Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory: Methodologies of Textual Scholarship and Editorial Practice in the Study of Jewish Mysticism*, second revised edition, Jerusalem and Los Angeles 2013, pp. 625-630.

offering much interpretation.[69] Schatz-Uffenheimer's work significantly advanced our understanding of the Maggid's philosophy of language and his approach to contemplative prayer. She explored the ways in which he invoked and reinterpreted earlier Kabbalistic traditions,[70] noting correctly that the Maggid's identification of human and divine language was a cornerstone of his theology.[71] However, she interpreted his sermons as having described contemplative silence, a type of passive and quietistic spiritual resignation, as the ultimate goal of the religious journey.[72] This claim requires serious revision, and I will argue that a close examination of the Maggid's teachings reveals that he emphasized the profound capacity and sacred nature of language far more than the limitations of words.

R. Dov Baer does refer to a realm of creativity and inspiration that lies beyond words. It is into this region that the mystic journeys in his contemplative prayer, tracing spoken words back to their roots in the mind, and then the ineffable beyond. Yet this realm is restricted by its silence, for flashes of insight have no expression until they are brought into language. Indeed, says Dov Baer, all conscious thought occurs within the framework of words, even before it is spoken aloud. A similar transformation characterizes all acts of divine revelation, including Creation and the giving of the Torah, which originate in a pre-verbal inner divine realm and then spread through the pathways of language.

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[69] Horodetzky, *Torat ha-Maggid*, pp. 49-74

[70] Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 204-214.

[71] Ibid, pp. 190-192.

[72] Ibid, pp. 185-186.

Scholars have long noted the significance of language in Hasidic theology.[73] Moshe Idel has underscored the role of the letters in Hasidic thought, emphasizing what he refers to as a "talismanic" conception of language in which the letters are vessels for drawing down spiritual energy.[74] In a recent study article he has sought to prove that the word *otiyyot*, generally rendered as "letters," should be translated as "speech sounds" in the context of Hasidic literature. Idel suggests that in these texts the primary meaning of *otiyyot* refers to the aural quality of language and not the visual images or shapes of the letters.[75] However, Haviva Pedaya has taken exception to Idel's focus on the magical component of the letters, and she emphasizes the visionary elements that are not connected to drawing down divine energy.[76] Indeed, she describes the Maggid's approach to language as primarily visual and introspective, in contrast to the BeSHT's ecstatic focus on oral sounds.

Rachel Elior devoted a chapter in a recent book to the question of language in early Hasidism. She underscores that the sacred quality of words and the immanence of the divine Presence within language are among the primary elements that binds the upper and lower worlds. Or, to reframe the metaphor differently, words enable a connection between the divine element within mankind and the transcendent aspect of God that lies

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[73] Several exemplary studies have been written about language in the teachings of later Hasidic masters. See Alon Goshen-Gottstein, 'Speech, Silence, Song: Epistemology and Theodicy in a teaching of R. Nahman of Breslav', *Philosophia* 30.1-4 (2003), pp. 143-187; Eliezer Shore, 'Letters of Desire: Language, Mysticism, and Sexuality in the Writings of Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav', Ph.D. Dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, 2005. For a remarkably sophisticated study of a late nineteenth-century Hasidic sage, see Alan Brill, *Thinking God: The Mysticism of Rabbi Zadok of Lublin*, New York 2002.

[74] See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 57-58, 83-84, 92-93, 160-170; idem, *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation*, New Haven and London 2002, pp. 155-163.

[75] Moshe Idel, 'Modes of Cleaving to the Letters in the Teachings of Israel Baal Shem Tov: A Sample Analysis', *Jewish History* 27.2-4 (2013), pp. 299-317. He makes this point in reference to the BeSHT, but although Idel acknowledges that it does not hold true for all early Hasidic masters, he nevertheless suggests that *otiyyot* should be understood as an oral, not written phenomenon.

[76] See her remarks in Pedaya, 'Outlines for a Religious Typology', pp. 58-59.

beyond. Elior notes that for the Hasidic masters, the capacity for language is a divine gift that imbues humanity with creative powers.[77] Ron Wacks has shown that the notion of performing *yihudim*, or unifications of the *sefirot* and divine names, in speech acts both sacred and mundane is a uniquely Hasidic development.[78]

Finally, a relatively small number of the teachings attributed to the Maggid have appeared in translation.[79] Norman Lamm's *Religious Thought of Hasidism* features a number of selections from his homilies,[80] and Louis Jacobs translated a remarkable summary of the Maggid's thought by one of his students.[81] Together with several of his closest students, including the present author, Arthur Green recently translated a collection of teachings of early Hasidic texts from the Maggid's circle, including many excerpts of sermons from the Maggid himself.[82] But the majority of his teachings remain unavailable to the English reader. Undertaking a translation of his entire corpus, or even a single book, lies outside the scope of the present study. However, in the course of formulating my arguments I will present translations of a significant number of the Maggid's most important teachings, in many cases doing so for the first time.

2. Methodological Considerations

[77] Rachel Elior, *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism*, trans. Shalom Carmy, Oxford 2006, pp. 41-58. Tsippi Kauffman also notes the importance of divine immanence in language in early Hasidic thought; see Kauffman, *In All Your Ways Know Him*, pp. 77-82, 149-160.

[78] Ron Wacks, 'The *Yihud* in Speech in Hasidism', *Daat* 57-59 (2006), pp. 143-163 [Hebrew].

[79] For reflections on what makes rendering Hasidic teachings into English a particularly difficult task, see Arthur Green, 'On Translating Hasidic Homilies', *Prooftexts* 3 (1983), pp. 63-72.

[80] Norman Lamm, *The Religious Thought of Hasidism: Text and Commentary*, with Alan Brill and Shalom Carmy, New York 1999, see index, s.v. 'Dov Ber of Mezeritch.'

[81] Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Thought*, New York 1976, pp. 66-81.

[82] Arthur Green, *Speaking Torah: Spiritual Teachings from Around the Maggid's Table*, with Ebn Leader, Ariel Evan Mayse and Or Rose, Woodstock 2013, 2 vols.

THE MAGGID'S SOURCES OF INFLUENCE

Writing the intellectual history of Hasidic theology is made more difficult by the staggering array of sources upon which the Hasidic masters drew. The Maggid's teachings are grounded in traditional rabbinic texts, such as the Babylonian Talmud and the classical midrashim. Of course, his interpretations of these works goes immediately to the moral and theological dimensions, even when he is quoting from a passage dealing with the intricacies of *halakhah*. Gershom Scholem argued that Hasidism was a direct reaction to the Sabbatean movement, and that its primary theological inspiration came from Lurianic Kabbalah, and indeed almost exclusively the version presented by R. Hayyim Vital.[83] However, Moshe Idel and others have since demonstrated that despite their temporal proximity and shared mystical heritage, Hasidism represents far more than a backlash or sublimation of Sabbateanism.[84] Of course, the Maggid was undoubtedly influenced by Vital's vision of Kabbalah, and the mystical literature and popular culture of Eastern Europe were suffused with Sabbatean elements. But the spectrum of texts

[83] Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 320-325. However, through his study of Hasidic conceptions of *devequt* Scholem demonstrated how the Hasidic masters built upon and reinterpreted a great many earlier mystical texts beyond the Lurianic canon; see Scholem, 'Devekut', esp. 208-213. See also Louis Jacobs, 'Aspects of Scholem's Study of Hasidism', *Modern Judaism* 5 (1985), pp. 95-104.

[84] On the extent to which Sabbatean thought influenced early Hasidismm, see Benzion Dinur, 'The Origins of Hasidism and Its Social and Messianic Foundations', *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. G.D. Hundert, New York 1991, pp. 90-93; Isaiah Tishby, 'Between Sabbateanism and Hasidism: The Sabbateanism of the Kabbalist R. Ya'akov Koppel Lifshitz of Mezritch', *Netivei Emunah u-Minut*, Jerusalem 1982, pp. 204-226 [Hebrew]; and Avraham Rubinstein, 'Between Hasidism and Sabbateanism', *Studies in Hasidism*, ed. Avraham Rubinstein, Jerusalem 1977, pp. 182-197; Joseph Weiss, 'A Circle of Pneumatics in Pre-Hasidism', *Studies in East European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism*, ed. D. Goldstein, London and Portland 1997, pp. 26-42; Mendel Piekarz, *Beginning of Hasidism: Ideological Trends in Derush and Musar Literature*, Jerusalem 1978, pp. 299-302; Shaul Magid, 'The Metaphysics of *Malkhut*: *Malkhut* as *Eyn Sof* in the Writings of Ya'akov Koppel of Mezritch', *Kabbalah* 27 (2012), pp. 245-267; Green, 'Typologies of Leadership', p. 133.

drawn upon by the early Hasidic masters was far broader than the canon of Lurianic Kabbalah.[85]

The Maggid was also inspired by the other kabbalistic thinkers of Safed, such as R. Moses Cordovero (1522-1570),[86] R. Moses Alsheikh,[87] and the interpretation of Luria's teachings presented by R. Israel Sarug (fl. 1590-160).[88] The Maggid was also influenced by the later synthesizers and interpreters of Safed Kabbalah, whose works

[85] See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 12-29, 45-50; idem, 'Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem on Hasidism: A Critical Appraisal', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 393-397; Rachel Elior, 'Historical Continuity and Spiritual Change', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: 50 Years After*, ed. P. Schäfer and J. Dan, Tübingen 1993, pp. 303-323; idem, 'Joseph Karo and Israel Ba'al Shem Tov: Mystical Metamorphosis—Kabbalistic Inspiration, Spiritual Internalization', *Tarbiz* 65 (1996), pp. 671-710 [Hebrew], translated as idem, ibid, *Studies in Spirituality* 17 (2007), pp. 267-319.

[86] Idel and Sack have argued convincingly that Cordovero's influence on Hasidism has been underestimated. See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 11-13, 41-43; and Arthur Green's review in *The Journal of Religion*, 77 (1997), pp. 190-192; Bracha Sack, 'The Influence of Cordovero on 17th-century Jewish Thought', *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. I. Twersky and B. Septimus, Cambridge Mass. 1987, pp. 365-379. More recently, see Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 78-80, 298-302; and cf. Lorberbaum, 'Attain the Attribute of *'Ayyin*', esp. pp. 193-195, 209-217. However, we should note that in all likelihood Hasidic masters had access only to *Pardes Rimmonim* (1592) and *Tomer Devorah* (1589), but not *Or Yaqar* (1965), *Or Ne'erav* (1587), or *Sefer Ileimah* (1881). On Cordovero's life and teachings, see Bracha Sack, *The Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordevero*, Beer Sheva 1995 [Hebrew]; Zohar Raviv, *Decoding the Enigma: The Life, Works, Mystical Piety and Systematic Thought of Rabbi Moses Cordoeiro*, Saarbruecken 2008.

[87] See MDL #40, p. 61. R. Moses Alsheikh's teachings are cited with much greater frequency in writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye. For several prelminary analyses of this understudied yet highly influential figure, see Shimon Shalem, 'An Examination of the Exegetical and Homiletical Methods of Rabbi Moses Alshekh', *Sefunot* 5 (1961), pp. 151-200 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Life and Works of Rabbi Moses Alshekh', *Sefunot* 7 (1963), pp. 179-197 [Hebrew].

[88] R. Israel Sarug and R. Joseph ibn Tabul were also important students of R. Isaac Luria who wrote down their master's teachings. Israel Sarug was an Italian Kabbalist who wrote and taught in the 1590s. Though Scholem doubted that he was ever properly a disciple of Luria, recent scholarship has suggested that Sarug did have a personal relationship with Luria. See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, p. 361 n. 1; Gershom Scholem, 'Israel Sarug: Student of the Ari?', *Zion* 5 (1940), pp. 214 -243 [Hebrew]; Yosef Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, Jerusalem 2008, vol. 1, pp. 224-244; and for a different perspective Ronit Meroz, 'R. Israel Sarug, Student of the Ari: Reconsidered Anew', *Daat* 28 (1992), pp. 41-56 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Contrasting Opinions Among the Founders of R. Israel Saruq's School', in *Expérience et Écriture Mystiques*, ed. P. Fenton and R. Goetschel, Leiden 2000, pp. 191-202; Sharron Shatil, 'The Kabbalah of R. Israel Sarug: A Lurianic-Cordoverian Encounter', *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 14 (2011), pp. 158-187. Joseph ibn Tabul (d. early seventeenth century) was one of Luria's closest disciples, and it is clear that Vital saw him as a rival and sought to suppress his writings from becoming part of the Lurianic corpus. See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 126-28, 342-345, and 391 n. 2 for a list of ibn Tabul's works; and Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 1, pp. 146-193.

include *Reshit Hokhmah* (1579),[89] *'Asarah Ma'amarot* (1597);[90] *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit* (1648);[91] *'Emeq ha-Melekh* (1648);[92] *Hesed le-Avraham* (1685);[93] and *Mishnat Hasidim* (1727).[94]

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[89] See Bracha Sack, 'The Influence of *Reshit Hokhmah* on the Teachings of the Maggid of Mezhirech', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 251-257. She argues that *Reshit Hokhmah* was one of the most important channels by which ideas of Safed Kabbalah came to Hasidism, and underscores that its impact may be seen in themes such as the focus on devotional life, pietistic humility, and the intimate relationship between God and the human soul. See also the sources to which she refers in ibid, n. 3.

[90] See OT #287, *pesuqim*, p. 344. The author Rabbi Menahem 'Azariah da Fano was devoted to the Kabbalah of Cordovero, but over time he became acquainted with Luria's teachings through the instruction of R. Israel Sarug, as well as by studying the new kabbalistic manuscripts flowing into Italy. He never lost his respect for Cordovero's teachings, but Da Fano came to prefer the mystical theology of Luria. This transition makes it difficult to analyze his writings with precision, since Da Fano continuously edited them throughout his life. But occasionally manuscripts of works in different stages have been preserved, thus illustrating the evolution of his kabbalistic thought. See Alexander Altmann, 'Notes on the Development of the Kabbalah of Rabbi Menachem Azariah of Fano', *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical literature: Festschrift for Isaiah Tishby*, ed. J. Dan and J. Hacker, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 241-267 [Hebrew]; Robert Bonfil, 'Halakhah, Kabbalah and Society: Some Insights into Rabbi Menahem Azariah da Fano's Inner World', *Cultural Change Among the Jews of Early Modern Italy*, Farnham 2010, pp. 49-61; Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 1, pp. 292-325;

[91] On this important work, written by Isaiah Horowitz, and the tension between and synthesis of different mystical systems within it, see Sack, 'Influence of Cordovero', esp. 365-372; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'The Influence of the *Ari* on the *SheLaH*', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (1992), pp. 423-448 [Hebrew]. Soon after it was published R. Yehiel Mikhel Epstein wrote a shorter version, referred to as the *Kitsur Shelah* (1683). This work, which circulated in a number of different versions, was accused of containing heretical Sabbatean ideas. See Bezalel Naor, *Post-Sabbatian Sabbatianism: Study of an Underground Messianic Movement,* Spring Valley, NY 1999, pp. 46-48; Jean Baumgarten, 'The Printing of Yiddish Books in Frankfurt-on-the-Main (17th and 18th Centuries)', *Bulletin du Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem* 20 (2009), unpaginated. For a biography of Isaiah Horowitz, see Eugene Newman, *Life and Teachings of Isaiah Horowitz*, London 1972; and for a translation of the significant introduction of *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit,* see Miles Krassen, *Isaiah Horowitz: The Generations of Adam*, New York 1996.

[92] See Lorberbaum, 'Attain the Attribute of *'Ayyin*', pp. 187-189. On *'Emeq ha-Melekeh* and R. Naftali Bakhrakh, see Yehuda Liebes, 'The Character, Writings and Kabbalah of the Author of *Emeq HaMelech*', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 11 (1993), pp. 101-137 [Hebrew]; Sharron Shatil, 'The Doctrine of Secrets of *Emeq Ha-Melech*', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 17 (2010), pp. 358-395; Eliezer Baumgarten, 'Notes on Naftali Bakhrakh's Use of Pre-Lurianic Sources', *AJS Review* 37.2 (2013), pp. 1-23 [Hebrew]; Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 2, pp. 557-566, 816-842, 861-865. This work continued to have an influence on early Hasidic thought even after the Maggid, especially in Habad school. For example, see *Liqqutei Torah*, *hosefot*, fol. 51b, which cites a passage in which *'Emeq ha-Melekh* quotes the Sarugian idea that the Hebrew letters were projected into the empty space left after *tsimtsum*. The importance of this idea for our topic is obvious, as it draws a direct line from Sarug's conception of language to one of the Maggid's students. My thanks to Amiel Vick for drawing my attention to this source. See also *Liqqutei Torah*, *be-har*, fol. 43b.

[93] *Hesed le-Avraham* is primarily a digest of R. Moses Cordovero's kabbalistic system. This popular work was beloved by the early Hasidic masters and was an important conduit through which they absorbed the teachings of Cordovero; see *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *haqdamah*, p. 16; and Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 65-66, 179, 192, 200-201; idem, 'Buber and Scholem', p. 396; Pedaya, 'Outlines for a Religious Typology', p. 63.

The Maggid's theological world was deeply influenced by the structures and terminology of both Lurianic and Cordoveran thought, but his sermons draw upon Jewish mystical literature beyond the immediate corpus of Safed Kabbalah. Terms and quotations from the Zohar and *Tiqqunei Zohar* appear in nearly every one of his homilies. The Maggid occasionally quotes short phrases from *Sefer Yetsirah*, and may have been influenced by its many medieval commentaries.[95] There are many ideas in the Maggid's teachings that echo the theology of the earliest Spanish Kabbalists, though direct influence would be rather difficult to prove.[96] There are also elements found in the Maggid's sermons that may have originated in the works of the *Hasidei Ashkenaz*, or German Pietists.[97] The Maggid also quotes *Berit Menuhah*,[98] and there is at least one

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See also Bracha Sack, 'Toward the Sources of the Book *Hesed Le-Avraham* by R. Abraham Azulai', *Kirjat Sepher* 56 (1981) pp. 164-175 [Hebrew].

[94] See OT #484, *aggadot*, pp. 484-485.

[95] See Lorberbaum, 'Attain the Attribute of *'Ayyin*', p. 201, argues that the popular commentary of R. Joseph Ashkenazi, long misattributed to R. Abraham ben David, was particularly influential upon the Maggid's thought. See Gershom Scholem, 'The True Author of the Commentary to Sefer Yetsirah Attributed to Rabad', *Peraqim le-Toledot Sifrut ha-Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1931, pp. 2-17 [Hebrew]; Georges Vajda, 'Un chapitre de l'histoire du conflit entre la Kabbale et la philosophie: La polémique antiintellectualiste de Joseph b. Shalom Ashkenazi', *Archives d'histoire doctrinale et littéraire du moyen âge* XXIII (1956), pp. 45-144; Tzahi Weiss, 'The Reception of *Sefer Yetsirah* and Jewish Mysticism in the Early Middle Ages', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 103 (2013), pp. 26-46.

[96] Idel claims that early Hasidism was influenced by the works of R. Abraham Abulafia, which may have circulated in Eastern Europe in manuscript form. The phenomenological affinity between early Hasidic thought and Abulafia's linguistic Kabbalah is certainly quite striking, particularly in the realm of language, but his writings are never cited. See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 53-65; idem, 'Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem', pp. 395-396.

[97] One of the Maggid's teachings explores the difference between "emanated glory" (*kavod ne'etsal*) and "created glory" (*kavod nivra*), an idea Jewish mysticism inherited from the German Pietists; see OT #378, *pesuqim*, p. 407. However, these concepts also appear in the opening pages of the *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol. 5a, a very likely place from which the Maggid may have taken them. On *kavod ne'etsal* and *kavod nivra*, see Ronald C. Kiener, 'The Hebrew Paraphrase of Saadiah Gaon's "Kitāb al-Amānāt wa'l-I'tiqādāt"', *AJS Review* 11.1 (1986), p. 17.

[98] MDL #60, p. 92. On the importance of this work to the BeSHT, see Pedaya, 'Outlines for a Religious Typology', pp. 37-39. Of course, the Maggid may have read more obscure works like this as they are quoted in later Kabbalistic books. For example, *Berit Menuhah* is cited many times in *'Emeq ha-Melekh*; see, inter alia, ibid, *sha'ar tiqqunei ha-teshuvah,* ch. 10 p. 96; ch. 1:4 p. 123. See also Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, p. 106.

reference to either *Sefer Hasidim* or *Sefer Haredim*.[99] He was likely influenced by the writings of R. Judah Leib of Prague (MaHaRaL), though the Maggid does not mention him by name.[100]

The Hasidic masters, including the Maggid, were greatly influenced by the kabbalistic ethical (*mussar*) literature popular in Eastern Europe.[101] The popular mystical traditions of Polish Kabbalists and the shamanistic *ba'alei shem* so common in Eastern Europe are an important part of the Maggid's cultural backdrop.[102] Scholars have noted the similarity between the Ba'al Shem Tov's emphasis on religious ecstasy and the devotional attitudes of some Christian mystics living in this same region, and postulated that the Ba'al Shem Tov may have been influenced by their religious ethos. This claim, vehemently rejected by Scholem, has recently been reconsidered.[103]

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[99] MDL #46, p. 68. The acronym S.H. could refer to either of these works, and a passage like the one to which the Maggid refers appears in both. It is interesting that this reference does not appear in in Kahn's printing of this book, though it is found in the first edition; see MDL, Koretz, fol. 9a; and MDL, ed. Kahn, #85, p. 19b.

[100] See Idel, 'Buber and Scholem', p. 396; Byron Sherwin, *Mystical Theology and Social Dissent: The Life and Works of Judah Loewe of Prague*. London 1982, pp. 130-140; Bezalel Safran, 'Maharal and Early Hasidism', *Hasidism: Continuity or Innovation*, Cambridge, Mass. 1988, pp. 47-144. Safran has demonstrated the influence of MaHaRaL's thought upon the mystical thought of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, one of the Maggid's foremost disciples, and in particular on R. Meneham Mendel's usage of the terms *ayin* and *yirah*. Given the importance of these concepts in the Maggid's spiritual vocabulary, it seems logical to assume that his theology was also influenced by MaHaRaL. I hope to return to this question in a later study. For a different perspective, see Isaac Hershkowitz, 'Geulat Yisrael by the Koznitzer Maggid: A Hasidic Ambivalent Attitude to Rabbi Loew of Prague', *Daat* 68-69 (2010), pp. 15-31 [Hebrew]. For a comparative study of MaHaRaL's influence on a later Hasidic master, see Benjamin Brown, '"The Two Types of Unity": Maharal, *Sfat Emet* and the Dualistic Turn in Late Hasidic Thought', *The Maharal*, ed. E. Reiner, Jerusalem (forthcoming) [Hebrew].

[101] Mendel Piekarz has frequently argued for the great influence of this literature on early Hasidism. See his *Beginning of Hasidism*, esp. pp. 361-376; idem, 'Hasidism as a Socio-religious Movement on the Evidence of *Devekut*', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 225-248.

[102] Idel, 'Buber and Scholem', pp. 396-7. More will said about this context in the next chapter.

[103] See Torsten Ysander, *Studien zum Bceštschen Hasidismus in seiner Religionsgeschichtlichen Sonderart,* Uppsala 1933; Yaffa Eliach, 'The Russian Dissenting Sects and Their Influence on Israel Baal Shem Tov, Founder of Hasidism', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 36 (1968), pp. 57-83. For Scholem's rejection of her thesis, see Gershom Scholem, 'The Neutralization of the Messianic Element in Early Hasidism', *The Messianic Idea in Judaism,* New York 1995, p. 362 n. 37. See Igor Tourov, 'Hasidism and Christianity of the Eastern Territory of the Polish- Lithuanian Commonwealth: Possible of

The search for the Maggid's sources of inspiration is further complicated by the ambiguities in his relationship with his teacher the BeSHT. We will examine the hagiographical traditions about the BeSHT and the Maggid at great length in the following chapter, but some words regarding the connection between their ideas are relevant at present. It is striking to any reader of the Maggid's sermons that he rarely quotes the BeSHT by name. However, it is equally clear that a great many of the Maggid's ideas, and even some specific teachings, were inherited from the BeSHT.[104]

There are several possible explanations for the fact that the Maggid's sermons refer to the BeSHT so infrequently.[105] One reason may be that the Maggid simply did not possess a large body of teachings directly from the BeSHT. This seems to me the most likely, but we cannot rule out the possibility that the transcriber of R. Dov Baer's teachings chose not to write down the BeSHT's name because the Maggid invoked it so often, assuming that this attribution could be inferred by anyone who knew the Maggid. There is no indication that R. Dov Baer saw this lack of reference to his master as a problem, for he did not need to ground his own ideas in the BeSHT's teachings in order to prove their authenticity or authority.[106]

[sic] Contacts and Mutual Influences', *Kabbalah* 10 (2004), pp. 73-105; Moshe Idel, 'R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov "in the State of Walachia": Widening the Besht's Cultural Panorama', *Holy Dissent: Jewish and Christian Mystics in Eastern Europe*, ed. G. Dynner, Detroit 2011, pp. 69-103.

[104] For example, see MDL #95, p. 164, in which the Maggid refers to the famous tale about Enoch the shoemaker uniting the blessed Holy One and *shekhinah* with every stitch. The Maggid does not cite this teaching in the BeSHT's name, although from R. Solomon of Lutsk's introduction to MDL it is clear that the image of Enoch was frequently invoked by the BeSHT; see MDL, p. 2.

[105] Moshe Idel has noted this fact and reflected upon its significance. See Moshe Idel, '"Your Word Stands Firm in Heaven"—An Inquiry into the Early Traditions of R. Israel Baal Shem Tov and Their Reverberations in Hasidism', *Kabbalah* 20 (2009), pp. 235-236 and n. 69 [Hebrew], where he offers a series of examples of teachings that appear in the works of the Maggid without being attributed to the BeSHT, but are attributed to the latter in other early Hasidic books. Cf. idem, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism,* London and New York 2007, p. 536.

[106] Here a brief contrast to a phenomenon from the Islamic world will be instructive. Since the eighth century Muslim scholars have sought to establish an authentic *isnad*, a chain of tradition, for each *hadith*

In this way, the works of the Maggid and R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye, one of the BeSHT's other prominent disciples, are quite different from one another. R. Jacob Joseph sought to *preserve* the teachings of the BeSHT, and on occasion he includes relevant traditions from the BeSHT even when they run counter to the overall thrust of his own sermon.[107] Of course, there are clearly instances in which R. Jacob Joseph interpreted and developed the BeSHT's ideas, but only further research will reveal the extent to which this may be considered a defining feature of his writings.

The Maggid's teachings, on the other hand, represent a new stage in the theological development and sophistication of the BeSHT's approach to religious life. It is even possible that the first book of the Maggid's teachings was published as a complement to R. Jacob Joseph's *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef* and *Ben Porat Yosef*, demonstrating that there is another aspect of the BeSHT's legacy. These three books were published in the city of Koretz within a period of two years, and R. Solomon of Lutsk was involved in the printing of each of them.[108] Together they represent two different sides of the BeSHT's spiritual and literary legacy. The writings of R. Jacob Joseph preserve the ideas and teachings of his master, at least as he understood them, whereas

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that supports and verifies its authority. See Josef Horovitz, *Alter und Ursprung des Isnād*, Strassburg 1917; Gautier H.A. Juynboll, *Studies on the Origins and Uses of Islamic Hadith*, Aldershot 2008, pp. 155-175, 343-383; Chase F. Robinson, 'The Study of Islamic Historiography: A Progress Report', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 7.02 (1997), pp. 201, 205-208, 211. Unlike many medieval Kabbalists, who often underscored that they were simply reiterating received traditions, in most cases the early Hasidic masters seem to have been unconcerned with proving that their teachings originated with one of the movements founding figures.

[107] For example, see *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *bo*, p. 308. My thanks to Nehemia Polen for drawing my attention to this interesting phenomenon.

[108] See R. Solomon's words in the introduction to MDL, and Gries, 'Hasidic Managing Editor', pp. 147-152. Cf. the remarkable passages on the verso of the title page to *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*. Though this latter text is unattributed, there is good reason to suspect that the author is none other than R. Solomon himself. The introduction *Tsofnat Pane'ah* (1782), the third book of R. Jacob Joseph's teachings, is simply a reprint from the earlier books and does not refer to the publication of MDL.

the printed versions of the Maggid's homilies develop, expand, and deepen the theology of the BeSHT.

We cannot always easily identify which elements of the Maggid's sermons represent his original thought, and which are ideas that he absorbed from the BeSHT. In a few sermons R. Dov Baer does refer to the BeSHT, and the Maggid's disciples occasionally recall instances in which the Maggid related a teaching in the name of the BeSHT.[109] One of the Maggid's students refers to a teaching of the BeSHT that he saw in *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, and then claims that his teacher the Maggid offered an expansion of that idea.[110] However, in some cases a tradition is quoted in the BeSHT's name in one collection of the Maggid's teachings, whereas in another such collection it appears without being attributed to him.[111] Occasionally the opposite phenomenon is also true; a few early Hasidic books attribute teachings from the Maggid to the BeSHT.[112] We must proceed carefully in our study of the Maggid's theology, noting that the boundaries between his teachings and those of his master are unclear.

Given his wide variety of sources, the Maggid's sermons, once properly annotated, may appear to melt away into a multitude of footnotes leading to earlier sources.[113] However, three important points regarding our search for textual precedents

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[109] See *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *peqqudei*, p. 210; ibid, *shemini*, p. 262.

[110] *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *be-shalah*, p. 150. This famous teaching about the five *alephs*, found at the beginning of the first five words in Exodus 15:9, appears in the very first pages of *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*. Of course, this does not prove that the Maggid first quoted the BeSHT and then offered his own explanation of his teacher's words. The juxtaposition may have been the choice of R. Solomon of Lutsk, the book's author.

[111] See MDL #176, p. 276, with a parallel in OT #170, *'eqev*, p. 219, which appears with significant differences in the BeSHT's name in OHE, fol. 86b; and MDL #41, p. 61-62, which appears in the BeSHT's name in OT #175, *ki tetse*, pp. 224-225 and OHE, fol. 16b.

[112] The works *Keter Shem Tov*, *Tsavat ha-Ribash*, and *Or ha-Ganuz la-Tsaddiqim* present teachings from the Maggid as if they were actually those of the BeSHT. For more on these works, see below, pp. 61-64.

[113] On the dangers of the search for earlier parallels, see Arthur Green, 'Early Hasidism: Some Old/New Questions', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, p. 444, where he

should be made. First, demonstrating similarity between the Maggid's teachings and earlier Jewish mystical literature, whether conceptual or philological, does not prove influence. Second, the sheer number of citations or parallels does not show us which books had the greatest impact on his thought. Finally, the spiritual world of Hasidism is often found precisely in the creative synthesis of these traditional sources, and in the way Hasidic texts offer them in a new and generally more accessible reformulation.

In our case, the Maggid used the symbolic language and terminology of Kabbalah in order to describe a range of psychological processes and contemplative mystical experiences. In Scholem's words:

> The sayings and sermons of the Maggid of Mezritch are the outstanding example of an almost complete transformation of all the spheres comprising the world of Judaism into spheres of the soul, of a revalution of each and every one of its conceptions in terms of the personal life of the individual.[114]

In other words, the Maggid's creative power as a compelling exegete and inspiring preacher is found precisely through the ways in which he reinterpreted the rich symbolic language of Jewish mysticism in order to articulate a new approach to spiritual life.

This study will focus upon describing and analyzing the Maggid's philosophy of language as it is presented in the sermons attributed to him. In order to accomplish this task, we must identify precedents for his teachings in earlier Jewish texts and demonstrate how they have changed over time. However, my primary goal is not to show precisely which elements of the Maggid's thought are novel and unique through comparing them to early Jewish mystical literature. Instead, I hope to explore the nuanced complexities of

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argues that in some cases this hunt displaces any meaningful phenomenological analysis of the texts themselves.

[114] Scholem, 'The Neturalization of the Messianic Element', p. 200.

his teachings on language, perhaps the single most important theme that stands at the heart of his theological legacy

PHENOMENOLOGY, HISTORIOGRAPHY AND THE STUDY OF MYSTICISM

Gershom Scholem's remarkable contributions to the study of Kabbalah lay primarily in his mapping the intellectual development of Jewish mysticism and precise philological study of texts.[115] He outlined a historical schema in which mysticism appeared as a later stage of religious development, a return to vital mythos after an initial stage of creative naiveté that was followed by institutionalization and philosophical abstraction.[116] This is not to say, however, that mysticism was not an integral part of the Jewish tradition. Scholem's project was a rebellion against the rational objectivism of *Wissenschaft* scholars, who felt that mysticism was a peculiar parasite that had crept onto the trunk of a philosophically sound Judaism. Scholem was writing an alternative historical narrative, and he argued that Jewish mysticism had been a living and creative force at the heart of Judaism for thousands of years.[117] His dialectical version of history

[115] The framework of his magnum opus *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, which chronologically traces the development of Jewish mysticism from one state to the next, is one of the best examples of Scholem's methodology; see also Gershom Scholem, 'The Historical Development of Jewish Mysticism', *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time & Other Essays*, ed. A. Shapira, Philadelphia 1997, pp. 121-154. Of course, Scholem had a broad sense of intellectual history, a comparative perspective, and was quite aware of some elements of the phenomenology of religion, elements of his thought that were particularly visible in the Eranos project; see Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos*. Princeton 1999. On the implications of Scholem's understanding of history and the way it informed his scholarship, see David Biale's intellectual biography *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*, Cambridge, Mass. 1982.

[116] Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 7-10.

[117] For an example of Scholem's indictment of the Wissenschaft scholars, see his 'Reflections on Modern Jewish Studies', *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time & Other Essays*, ed. A. Shapira and trans. Jonathan Chipman, Philadelphia 1997, pp. 51-71. See Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History*; and the collection of essays in *Gershom Scholem: The Man and His Work*, ed. P. Mendes-Flohr, Albany 1994. For a somewhat different reading of Scholem's role in the academic study of Jewish mysticism, see Daniel Abrams, 'Defining Modern Academic Scholarship: Gershom Scholem and the

described these mystical trends and movements as unfolding from one another and reacting to other developments in Jewish thought in a series of direct causations.[118]

Recent scholarship has broadened the horizons of the study of Jewish mysticism. Historians of ideas have gone further than Scholem in their use of phenomenology, or the study of subjective religious experience.[119] This reflects a growing belief amongst some academics that many important works of Jewish mysticism reflect actual experiences, whether or not they are explicitly described in the literature itself. They maintain that this is true of both complicated theosophical tracts and the relatively accessible texts from the Hasidic masters. These scholars use phenomenology to describe aspects of Kabbalistic texts largely neglected by Scholem, as well as exploring the various techniques of attaining mystical states.[120] Of course, they do not believe that it is up to the scholar to judge the veracity of such experiences, but they argue that being mindful of the

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Establishment of a New (?) Discipline', *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 9 (2000), pp. 267-302.

[118] See Moshe Idel, 'Rabbinism versus Kabbalism: On G. Scholem's Phenomenology of Judaism', *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991), pp. 281-296; idem, 'On the Theologization of Kabbalah in Modern Scholarship', *Religious Apologetics—Philosophical Argumentation*, ed. Y. Schwartz and V. Krech, Tübingen 2004, pp. 154-156; Joseph Dan, 'Gershom Scholem—Between History and Historiosophy', *Binah* 2 (1989), pp. 219-249; Boaz Huss, 'Ask No Questions: Gershom Scholem and The Study of Contemporary Jewish Mysticism', *Modern Judaism* 25 (2005), pp. 141-158; Pawel Maciejko, 'Gershom Scholem's Dialectic of Jewish History: The Case of Sabbatianism', *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 3 (2004), pp. 207-220.

[119] See Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, New Haven 1988, esp. pp. 1-34; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, Princeton 1994; idem, *Language, Eros, Being: Kabbalistic Hermeneutics and Poetic Imagination,* New York 2005; Arthur Green, 'Hillel Zeitlin and Neo-Hasidic Readings of the Zohar', *Kabbalah* 22 (2010), pp. 59-78; Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden: The Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar*, trans. Nathan Wolski, Stanford 2009, esp. pp. 253-364; Jonatan Garb, *Shamanic Trance in Modern Kabbalah*, Chicago 2011, pp. 2-7, 17; Daniel Reiser, *Vision as a Mirror: Imagery Techniques in Twentieth Century Jewish Mysticism*, Los Angeles 2014, pp. 67-73 [Hebrew]; Elior, 'Paradigms of *Yesh* and *Ayin*', p. 168. On the impact of phenomenology on the study of Kabbalah, see Daniel Abrams, 'Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism: Moshe Idel's Methodology in Perspective', *Kabbalah* 20 (2009), pp. 7-146; idem, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, pp. 10-11; Ron Margolin, 'Moshe Idel's Phenomenology and its Sources', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 18 (2007), pp. 41-51; Eitan P. Fishbane, 'Jewish Mystical Hermeneutics: On the Work of Moshe Idel', review of *Absorbing Perfections: Kabbalah and Interpretation* by Moshe Idel, *The Journal of Religion* 85.1 (2005), pp. 94-103.

[120] Idel, *Kabbalah*, pp. 74-111.

experiential element can remind us that Jewish mysticism is not abstract sophistry; it is a theology embodied by real people in devotional practices.[121]

However, this turn toward phenomenology and away from historicization has engendered significant criticism.[122] Some, such as Boaz Huss, have claimed that the phenomenology of Jewish mysticism is just a smokescreen for scholars' own theological or cultural agenda.[123] Other scholars of religion more broadly have pointed out that the notion of phenomenology and its place in the study of religion are extremely difficult to define, and it is therefore subject to imprecision and misuse.[124]

Approaching the question of historical context from a slightly different perspective, Steven T. Katz has argued vigorously that each and every mystical text must be understood solely within its historical, intellectual and social context.[125] The experiences of all mystics are indelibly shaped, or constructed, by their environment, and

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[121] Of course, the embrace of phenomenology in the study of Jewish mysticism is indicative of broader trends in Jewish Studies, modern Jewish thought and philosophy, and religious studies. For a few specific examples in Jewish thought, see Milan Lyčka, 'Abraham Heschel's Philosophy of Judaism as a Phenomenology of Religion', *Abraham Joshua Heschel: Philosophy, Theology and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. S. Krajewski and A, Lipszyc, Wiesbaden 2009, pp. 47-51; Howard Caygill, 'Phenomenologists of the One God: Levinas and Corbin', *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology* 37.1 (2006), pp. 53-61; Raffaele Pettazzoni, *Essays on the History of Religions*, Leiden 1954, p. 218; James L. Cox, *A Guide to the Phenomenology of Religion: Key Figures, Formative Influences and Subsequent Debates*, London and New York; Jeppe Sinding Jensen, 'Is a Phenomenology of Religion Possible? On the Ideas of a Human and Social Science of Religion', *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* (1993), pp. 109-133. For a few foundational texts on phenomenology, see Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. and intro. Albert Hofstadter, Bloomington 1982; Georg W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, with analysis of the text and foreword by J.N. Findlay, Oxford 1977.

[122] See Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 44-46, for a fierce criticism of Idel's methodology.

[123] Boaz Huss, 'The Theologies of Kabbalah Research', *Modern Judaism* 34 (2014), pp. 3-26.

[124] Thomas Ryba, *The Essence of Phenomenology and its Meaning for the Scientific Study of Religion*, New York 1991; Gavin Flood, *Beyond Phenomenology: Rethinking the Study of Religion*, New York 1999.

[125] Steven T. Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism', *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis*, ed. S.T. Katz, New York 1978, pp. 22-74; idem, 'The "Conservative" Character of Mystical Experience', *Mysticism and Religious Traditions*, ed. S.T. Katz, New York 1983, pp. 3-60. For a survey of different positions on the relationship between mysticism and religion, see the studies collected in those two volumes. See also Steven T. Katz, 'Models, Modeling and Mystical Training', *Religion* 12 (1982), pp. 247-275.

it is only within this context that they may be properly understood. Katz's argument, which is more against essentialism than it is against phenomenology, means that there can be no comparative studies of mystics from different religious traditions. More fundamentally, Katz denies that the category of "mysticism" is a helpful designation for Kabbalah. Huss agrees with this point, claiming that the notion of mysticism is itself a theological category, not an objective heuristic lens, and must therefore be used in the study of Kabbalah with extreme caution.[126]

Thus our question regarding the merits of phenomenology in examining kabbalistic texts actually reflects a twofold debate in the study of religion. The first is whether mysticism should be approached as an independent religious phenomenon, or if all mysticisms are so deeply constructed by their traditions that their differences overshadow what little they share in common.[127] There is, of course, a more nuanced middle position that emphasizes the value of comparing mystical texts from different religious traditions without occluding their distinctions.[128] The second question, subsumed under the first, is whether the experiences referred to as "mystical" are

[126] Boaz Huss, 'Jewish Mysticism in the University: Academic Study or Theological Practice?', *Zeek* (December, 2007), and the rejoinder by Shaul Magid, 'Is Kabbala Mysticism? Another View', *Zeek* (March, 2008).

[127] On the origins of the term mysticism and the history of its academic study, see Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable: Volume One, the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, trans. Michael B. Smith, Chicago 1992, pp. 1-26; Louis Dupré, 'Spiritual Life in a Secular Age', *Daedalus* 111 (1982), pp. 21-31; Leigh Eric Schmidt, 'The Making of Modern Mysticism', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 71 (2003), pp. 273-302. For an extensive and insightful summary of the scholarly literature, see Bernard McGinn, 'Theoretical Foundations: The Modern Study of Mysticism', *The Foundations of Mysticism*, New York 1992, pp. 265-343.

[128] Here I have in mind the works of Francis X. Clooney, such as his *Beyond Compare: St Francis de Sales and Śrī Vedanta Desika on Loving Surrender to God*, Washington D.C. 2008. A version of this position is adopted by Katz himself in his edited volume *Comparative Mysticism: An Anthology of Original Sources*, ed. S.T. Katz, Oxford and New York 2013.

determined by language, or if there is a "universal core" shared by all such experiences that is interpreted through a particular cultural and linguistic lens after the fact.[129]

As noted above, in both cases Steven Katz has argued for what is generally referred to as the "constructivist" position: there are no unmediated religious experiences, and all mystical phenomenon must be examined exclusively within their own religious traditions.[130] However, Robert Forman has challenged his approach and suggests that there are indeed mystical experiences utterly beyond the realm of and untouched by language.[131] Others, such as Wayne Proudfoot, have argued that reading across religious traditions will indeed reveal that these texts describe a common cluster of intense spiritual experiences, and that the term "mysticism" is still a valid—and useful—heuristic category for organizing, studying, and comparing the conceptual affinities of these works.[132] More recently, Jess Byron Hollenback has offered some finely nuanced remarks about the shared contours of mystical experiences across religious traditions.[133]

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[129] This question is related to claims regarding the ineffability of religious experiences often made by mystics themselves; see William P. Alston, 'Literal and Nonliteral in reports of Mystical Experience', *Mysticism and Language*, ed. S.T. Katz, New York and Oxford 1992, pp. 80-102; Bimal Krishna Matilal, 'Mysticism and Ineffability: Some Issues of Logic and Language', *Mysticism and Language*, ed. S.T. Katz, New York and Oxford 1992, pp. 143-157; Carl W. Ernst, 'Mystical Language and the Teaching Context in the Early Lexicons of Sufism', *Mysticism and Language*, ed. S.T. Katz, New York and Oxford 1992, pp. 181-201; Frederick J. Streng, 'Language and Mystical Awareness', *Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis* , ed. S.T. Katz, Oxford 1978, pp. 141-169; Leon Schlamm, 'Numinous Experience in Religious Language', *Religious Studies* 28 (1992), pp. 533-551; Peter C. Appleby, 'Mysticism and Ineffability', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 11 (1980), pp. 143-166; C.J. Arthur, 'Ineffability and Intelligibility: Towards an Understanding of the Radical Unlikeness of Religious Experience', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 20 (1986), pp. 199-129; John Hick, 'Ineffability', *Religious Studies* 36 (2000), pp. 35-46.

[130] In addition to the studies cited above, see Steven T. Katz, 'Mystical Speech and Mystical Meaning', *Mysticism and Language*, ed. S.T. Katz, pp. Oxford 1992, pp. 3-41.

[131] Robert K.C. Forman, 'Introduction: Mysticism, Constructivism, and Forgetting', *The Problem of Pure Consciousness: Mysticism and Philosophy*, ed. Robert K.C. Forman, New York and Oxford 1990, pp. 3-49; idem, '"Of Capsules and Carts": Mysticism, Language and the *Via Negativa*,' *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 1 (1994) pp. 38-49.

[132] Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1985, esp. pp. 119-154. See also Kimberley C. Patton, 'Juggling Torches: Why We Still Need Comparative Religion', *A Magic Still Dwells:*

Scholars of Kabbalah sensitive to phenomenology, such as Idel, Arthur Green and Ron Margolin, are aware of the problems with the term "mysticism." They do not endorse the naïve universalistic tendencies and reduction of *all* mystical traditions to a single typology of experience, an understanding voiced in the writings of the perennial philosophers like William James or Evelyn Underhill.[134] However, Green and Margolin are sympathetic to some elements of their understanding of interior religion, suggesting that what we often describe as "mysticism" begins with the overwhelming experience of something wondrous, profound, and even ineffable, which the mystic then seeks to articulate by the ultimately inadequate means of words.[135]

Understanding philology and historical context are indispensible, but being exclusively committed to these approaches restricts the scholar from examining a different side of Jewish mystical texts. The questions of experience that guide the phenomenological study are different than those that drive the historical method, which is primarily concerned with identifying the conceptual influences upon a particular Jewish mystic, parsing the nuances of his terminology, and establishing a stable and authentic critical edition of the relevant texts.

Although there are relatively few autobiographical testimonies written by Jewish mystics, descriptions of intense religious experiences abound in the literature of Kabbalah

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Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age, ed. K.C. Patton and B.C. Ray, Berkeley and Los Angeles 2000, pp. 153-171.

[133] Jess Byron Hollenback, *Mysticism: Experience, Response, and* Empowerment, University Park, Penn. 1996, pp. 33-132.

[134] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*, New York 1904, esp. pp. 370-420; Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, New York 1912, esp. pp. 83-113, 427-452. See also Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey, London 1936, pp. 5-51, 62-73; and Huston Smith, 'Is There a Perennial Philosophy?', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 60 (1989), pp. 553-566.

[135] See his remarks in Green, 'Zeitlin and Neo-Hasidic Readings of the Zohar', pp. 59-63

and especially Hasidism.[136] Sometimes these take the form of visionary or auditory encounters with the Divine,[137] but in a great many other texts the primary locus of the mystical experience lies within the self.[138] The BeSHT left behind at least one remarkably rich description of a personal mystical experience, and although the Maggid's sermons do not explicitly refer to his own spiritual life or offer first-person descriptions of his own mystical journeys, his works are primarily devotional. The Maggid's sermons, like those of most early Hasidic masters, are far less concerned with theosophy and cosmology than the writings of the mystics of sixteenth-century Safed, and focus instead upon the inner religious life of the individual.[139] I hope that something of the character of the religious life described in the Maggid's teaching will emerge from our discussion.[140] The present dissertation thus joins the philological study of the history of ideas with a broader, phenomenological reading of the entire corpus of the Maggid's teachings.[141]

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[136] See the exceptional sources collected in Louis Jacobs, *The Schocken Book of Jewish Mystical Testimonies,* New York 1977; and Morris M. Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*, New York 1999. See also J. H. Chajes, 'Accounting for the Self: Preliminary Generic-Historical Reflections on Early Modern Jewish Egodocuments', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 95 (2005), pp. 1-15.

[137] Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines*, esp. 3-11; idem, 'Forms of Visionary Ascent as Ecstatic Experience in the Zoharic Literature', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: 50 Years After*, ed. P. Schäfer and J. Dan, Tübingen 1993, pp. 209-235; Haviva Pedaya, *Vision and Speech: Models of Revelatory Experience in Jewish Mysticism*, Los Angeles 2002 [Hebrew].

[138] See Margolin, *Inner Religion*, pp. 13-50.

[139] On the devotional elements of Lurianic Kabbalah, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 1-18.

[140] To some degree this was Schatz-Uffenheimer's goal as well, who sought to "describe the "phenomenology of Hasidism from a philological-historical point of view"; Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 9.

[141] I have thus elected to write primarily about the ideas attributed to the Maggid, and not his place in the social history of early Hasidism. This does not mean, however, that I ignore what we know of the Maggid's social context. For a recent polemic lamenting the lack of dialogue between social and intellectual historians of Hasidism, see Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, '"*Hasidei de'ar'a and Hasidei dekokhvaya*": Two Trends in Modern Jewish Historiography', *AJS Review* 32 (2008), pp. 141-167; and Arthur Green's response 'Hasidism and its Response to Change', *Jewish History* 2-4 (2013), pp. 324-326 n. 21.

Orality, Textuality and the Maggid's Sermons

R. Dov Baer is remembered as one of the most influential and creative thinkers of the formative period of Hasidism. However, despite the impact and importance of his teachings, a lack of primary sources makes analyzing the Maggid's homilies a thorny issue. We have almost nothing written by R. Dov Baer, only a few brief letters and a short approbation for a legal work from the 1760s. His teachings, sermons originally delivered in Yiddish, were preserved in Hebrew translations that were written down and edited by his students. Little is known about the formation of these texts. Were they direct transcriptions, summaries, shorthand notes, or paraphrases? Might their authors have had access to written notes by the Maggid himself, which were then absorbed into the texts? Were all of them addressed to similar audiences, or were some delivered to the public, while others were given only to a cloistered inner circle? And for whom were these written records intended? For his learned students, laypersons, or even scholars outside of his group of disciples? Were they tools to be used for the spread of the nascent Hasidic movement, representative of the new religious ethos as it was to be shown to others, or were they intended only for personal reflection?

We lack an Archimedean point, a stable textual example of the Maggid's thought unfiltered through the interpretive lens of his students. Any structural analysis of his teachings (whether published or in manuscript form), or close examination of the intricacies of his word choices, must recognize this fact. Therefore, instead of searching for the original sermons of R. Dov Baer of Mezritch that are lost to us, I suggest that we expand our study to include *all* traditions attributed to the Maggid in the decades after his

death. In doing so our primary task is not to determine their historical veracity, but rather to engage with the full spectrum of ideas that appear in his name.

Sources for this study include printed books, manuscripts, and the many hundreds of traditions cited by students who knew the Maggid and were therefore in a position to cite him firsthand. The goal is not to sift through these materials in order to reconstruct the Maggid's sermons as they might have been delivered, since no such *Urtext* remains or can be established. Indeed, in all likelihood it never existed in written form. Nor must we seek to harmonize the various traditions with one another, for differences must be assumed in such a wide variety of sources. However, the earliest layers of Hasidic literature have preserved a remarkably rich array of the Maggid's teachings from the initial stages of the movement's development. Not assuming that there is a single authoritative text allows us to apply the tools of philology, phenomenology, and intellectual history to his teachings as they have been preserved for us. In doing so we will both acknowledge their diversity and track their consistency. The texts we will be exploring do not come to us from R. Dov Baer himself, but instead represent an understanding of the Maggid's teachings as they were received by his immediate audience.

These problems of transmission and translation are not unique to the Maggid's sermons.[142] The vast majority of early Hasidic leaders elected not to transcribe their own

[142] There are a few notable exceptions in which early Hasidic masters wrote their own books, including R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev's *Qedushat Levi al Hannukah u-Furim* (Slavita 1798; Zolkiev 1806), and *Qedushat Levi al ha-Torah* (Barditshev 1811), published just after his death; R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady's *Liqqutei Amarim-Tanya* (Slavita 1796); the many works of R. Israel of Kozhenits; and *Divrei Emet* (Zolkiev 1830), *Zot Zikhron* (Lemberg 1851), and *Zikhron Zot* (Warsaw 1869) by R. Joseph Isaac, the "Seer" of Lublin. On the works of the Seer, see Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland', pp. 144-149. R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady's introduction to *Sefer ha-Tanya* makes it clear that, unlike many other early Hasidic masters, he explicitly embraced the written word as an effective vehicle for conveying his mystical teachings and maintaining a relationship with his disciples; see Naftali Loewenthal, *Communicating the*

teachings, and it was common throughout the early years of the movement for a *rebbe*'s homilies to be recorded and published by his disciples.[143] These may have been written down shortly after the fact, or they may have been pieced together from memory long afterward. The written versions may have been edited, shortened, expanded and perhaps even censored before publication. In most cases we simply cannot know.[144] This is further compounded by the fact that, with very few exceptions, these written accounts were published in Hebrew and thus translated from their original Yiddish, the vernacular in which the addresses were given.[145] The rift between the language of the sermons'

Infinite: The Emergence of the Habad School, Chicago 1990, pp. 45-63; Nehemia Polen, 'Charisma, Miracles and Leadership in Habad Lubavitch Hasidism', delivered at the conference *Reaching for the Infinite: The Lubavitcher Rebbe—Life, Teachings and Impact*, New York University, November 7, 2005 (unpublished). Finally, we should note that the fact that a teacher's sermons were written down by his disciple does not necessarily preclude the accuracy of these transcriptions. R. Nahman of Bratslav's homilies were recorded by his scribe R. Nathan Sternhartz of Nemirov, and scholars generally accept Sternhartz's claim to have faithfully preserved his teacher's words in *Liqqutei Moharan* (Mogilev 1808) especially given that the first part was published in R. Nahman's lifetime, and the second within a year of his death. Regarding R. Nahman's attitude toward the writen word, see David B. Siff, 'Shifting Ideologies of Orality and Literacy in Their Historical Context: Rebbe Nahman of Bratslav's Embrace of the Book as a Means for Redemption', *Prooftexts* 30 (2010), pp. 238-262. Similarly, the teachings of R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil (*Me'or 'Einayim*, Slavita 1798), R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir (*Or ha-Me'ir*, Koretz 1798), and R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk (Pol. Leżajsk; *No'am Elimelekh*, Lemberg 1788) were printed so shortly after the masters' deaths that it is quite likely they saw the manuscripts before publication. Gedalyah Nigal, ed., *No'am Elimelekh*, p. 12, suggests that R. Elimelekh may have written down his own teachings or edited them before they were printed.

[143] The next several pages build upon the groundwork laid by a series of articles published together with my colleague Daniel Reiser; see Daniel Reiser and Ariel Evan Mayse, 'The Final Sermon of the Rebbe of Ger: The *Sefat Emet* and the Implications of Yiddish for the Study of Hasidic Homilies', *Kabbalah* 30 (2013), pp. 127-160 [Hebrew]; idem, '*Sefer Sefat Emet*, Yiddish Manuscripts, and the Oral Homilies of R. Yehudah Aryeh Leib of Ger', *Kabbalah* 33 (forthcoming); and idem, '"For Many Years He Said This:" A Forgotten Manuscript of the *Sefat Emet*', *Kabbalah* 34 (forthcoming) [Hebrew].

[144] On the instability of Hasidic texts and their complications, see, inter alia, Gries, 'Hasidic Managing Editor', pp. 141-155; idem, *The Book in Early Hasidism*, pp. 47-67; Daniel Abrams, '"The Becoming of the Hasidic Book"—An Unpublished Article by Joseph Weiss: Study, Edition and English Translation', *Kabbalah* 28 (2012), pp. 7-34. For a survey of the literature regarding the composition and publication of Hasidic books, see Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland', pp. 139-174. This process continues in some Hasidic circles to this very day. R. David Shapiro, a disciple of R. Yitshak Asher Twersky (d. 1997), the Talner Rebbe of Boston, faithfully transcribed his teacher's classes and sermons for over two decades. His summaries preserved key phrases and ideas, but were often written in an abbreviated form, and he is now immersed in the project of turning them into a book that will reflect both the thought and the oratorial style of his teacher.

[145] There are traditions that certain Hasidic *rebbes* held speaking only in Hebrew on Shabbat and holidays to be an ideal, perhaps in imitation of a similar custom attributed to R. Isaac Luria and other Safed

delivery and that in which they were recorded makes the study of Hasidic texts even more difficult.[146] The contemporary scholar, relying only on the written texts, has no way to access the original oral homily upon which Hasidic books are based.[147]

Scholars across various disciplines have explored the complicated relationship between spoken and written language, and the significant differences between these two modes of communication.[148] Oral speech may be distinguished from its written

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Kabbalists, but there is no clear evidence to suggest that they would have addressed their Hasidim in anything other than the vernacular. See Shlomo Haramati, 'In Favor of Speaking Hebrew in the Hasidic Movement', *Leshon ve-Ivrit* 3 (1990), pp. 43-50 [Hebrew]; Moshe Hallamish, *Kabbalistic Customs of Shabbat*, Jerusalem 2006, p. 430 [Hebrew]. On the difficulties presented by this gap between the original Yiddish and the written Hebrew, see Green, 'On Translating Hasidic Homilies', pp. 63-72; Gries, 'Hasidic Managing Editor', pp. 141-155; idem, *Book in Early Hasidism*, pp. 27-28, 49-50; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 138-140; Jan Doktór, 'Yiddish and Early Hassidic Literature', *Jewish History Quarterly* 3 (2013), pp. 494-510; Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, pp. 452-453, 625-630. For a review of a debate regarding whether or not early Hasidic teachings were uttered in Hebrew, see ibid, p. 625 n. 373. However, Gries, *Book in Early Hasidism*, p. 50, points out a fascinating passage in which the editor of an early Hasidic book apologizes for any errors that may have crept into the teachings because of the great difficulty involved in translating from one language to another (i.e. Yiddish to Hebrew); see R. Judah Leib of Linitz's introduction to *Teshu'ot Hen*, *haqdamat nekhed ha-mehaber*, p. 39. R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady notes that the recorded versions of the BeSHT's teachings could not have been his own words, since they were delivered in Yiddish but recorded in Hebrew; see *Tanya*, *iggeret ha-qodesh*, ch. 25. See also Meir Balaban, *Le-Toledat ha-Tenua'h ha-Frankit*, Tel Aviv 1935, p. 304, where the author cites a text in which R. Jacob Emden describes having transcribed R. Abraham of Sharogrod's testimony about the Frankist heretics in Hebrew, even though it was given in Yiddish, noting that all such translations are imperfect.

[146] We should note that the percentage of Hebrew phrases (*loshn qoydesh*) in the Yiddish of Hasidic sermons seems to have been quite high. This fact represents a mitigating factor in the complexities of their translation, since many of the crucial elements of the Homily would already have been in Hebrew.

A few Hasidic books do preserve teachings totally in Yiddish, presumably out of a sense of fidelity to the *rebbe*'s words; see *'Irin Qaddishin*, pp. 343-344, 353-354, 367-369; *Imrei Pinhas*, passim; and *Beit Aharon*, fol. 141a, 145b-146a, 157a. The Jerusalem 2007 printing of *Beit Aharon* includes a significant amount of new material in Yiddish, printed for the first time from a manuscript held by the Karlin Hasidic community. These additions, which have thus far escaped scholarly attention, represent important Yiddish parallels to the Hebrew homilies printed in the original edition. See also the Yiddish sermon recorded in the manuscript NLI JER KARLIN 123. For a purely theoretical attempt to "back-translate" selections from the published Hebrew version of R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil's *Me'or 'Einayim* into Yiddish, see Ariel Evan Mayse, '"Who Amongst You is Transcribing my Teachings?": Orality and Vitality in Written Hasidic Homilies', *Yerusholaymer Almanakh* 29 (2012), pp. 364-381 [Yiddish].

[147] For a recent article on orality, the Hasidic sermon, and the printing of Hasidic books, see Green, 'The Hasidic Homily', pp. 237-265.

[148] Jack Goody, *The Interface Between the Written and the Oral*, Cambridge and New York 1987; Wallace Chafe and Deborah Tannen, 'The Relation Between Written and Spoken Language', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16 (1987), pp. 383-407; David R. Olson, 'From Utterance to Text: The Bias of Language in Speech and Writing', *Harvard Educational Review* 47 (1977), pp. 257-281; Walter J. Ong, *Orality and*

counterpart by its rhetorical style, linguistic register and semantic structure.[149] But all oral speech acts, be they public sermons, political orations, or hushed whispers, include another dimension: the *experience* of uttering and hearing the words.[150] This element is part and parcel of a homily's greater semiotic meaning. For the Hasidim, listening to the words of the *rebbe* was a momentous event likened to the revelation at Mt. Sinai.[151] Reading a text, even one written by the *rebbe*, was necessarily quite different from the experience of hearing the sermon delivered by the master himself.[152] Contemporary scholars must remember that the Hasidic sermon was originally an oral event,[153] and that

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Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word, London and New York 1982; Deborah Tannen, 'The Commingling of Orality and Literacy in Giving a Paper at a Scholarly Conference' *American Speech* 63 (1998), pp. 34-43. See also James Paul Gee, 'Orality and Literacy: From the Savage Mind to Ways with Words', *TESOL Quarterly* 20 (1986), pp. 719-746; M. Jimmie Killingsworth, 'Product and Process, Literacy and Orality: An Essay on Composition and Culture', *College Composition and Communication* 44 (1993), pp. 26-39. For a diachronic study of the history of orality, see Eric A. Havelock, *The Muse Learns to Write: Reflections on Orality and Literacy from Antiquity to the Present*, New Haven 1988. For two very different interpretations of the tension between oral and written cultures and the formation of medieval Europe, see Brian Stock, *The Implications of Literacy*, Princeton 1983; and Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*, Cambridge 1990.

[149] Chafe and Tannen, 'Written and Spoken Language', pp. 383-399; Albert B. Lord, 'Characteristics of Orality', *Oral Tradition* 2.1 (1987), pp. 54-72. Green compares the event of the Hasidic sermon to the stunning oral performances of great Adriatic ballads in the early 20th century, as described in the studies of Albert B. Lord and Milman Parry; see Green, 'Hasidic Homily', p. 260 n. 21.

[150] The act of reading is an experience as well, especially when sacred texts are studied together as a community. But reading is often performed silently and alone, and it is often a far more private and internal affair than hearing a sermon delivered in some type of communal setting. See Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts*, Bloomington 1984, esp. pp. 3-43; Alberto Manguel, *A History of Reading*, New York 2012, esp. pp. 41-54, 149-162. See also the studies collected in *The Ethnography of Reading*, ed. Jonathan Boyarin, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1992.

[151] Green, 'Hasidic Homily', pp. 240-244; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 473-478. See also Immanuel Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya: Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady and the Origins of Habad Hasidism*, Jerusalem 2011, pp. 80-89 [Hebrew].

[152] For two early Hasidic texts which explicitly take up the question of why a *hasid* cannot simply absorb his master's ideas from a book, see *Me'or 'Einayim*, *liqqutim*, pp. 432-433; *Liqqutei Moharan* 1:19.

[153] Green, 'Hasidic Homily', p. 242; idem, 'Translating Hasidic Homilies', p. 63; Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 239-244; Gadi Sagiv, *Dynasty: The Chernobyl Hasidic Dynasty and Its Place in the History of Hasidism*, Jerusalem 2014, pp. 182-191 [Hebrew]. On the relationship between written homilies and their oral counterparts, see Marc Saperstein, 'The Sermon as Oral Performance', *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion*, ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven 2000, pp. 248-277. He argues that, 'we must conceive of the sermon not as the text (that frequently is the only record we have of it) but as an oral communication between preacher and listeners that is scripted or recorded in writing. The text therefore bears a relationship to the actual sermon analogous to the relationship of a script to a

early Hasidism was driven by an oral culture. Yet this claim requires some nuance as well. To describe Hasidic culture as highly oral does not mean that it was exclusively so, and the relationship between written texts and oral teachings in Hasidism is complicated indeed.[154]

The Hasidic master's ambivalence about writing down their sermons may be seen as an expression of a broader characteristic of Ashkenazi Jewish culture. Jewish thinkers living in the medieval Christian kingdoms of France and Germany seem to have had

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drama, or a musical score to a piano sonata, chorale, or symphony… the performance itself is an artistic entity vastly different from its encoded denotations'; ibid, pp. 249-250. See also idem, *Jewish Preaching, 1200-1880: An Anthology*, New Haven 1992; Chava Turniansky, 'Oral and Written Sermons as Mediating between Canonical Culture and the Public', *Studies in the History of Popular Culture*, ed. B.Z. Kedar, Jerusalem 1996, pp. 183-195 [Hebrew].

[154] Abraham Joshua Heschel argued quite strongly for the primacy of oral traditions in the study of Hasidism; see his *Kotsk*: *A Struggle for Integrity*, Tel Aviv 1973, pp. 7-10 [Yiddish]. But, taking issue with Gries' strong formulation in his 'Hasidic Managing Editor', esp. pp. 149-150, Moshe Rosman has suggested a nuanced perspective of early Hasidism as a blend of both oral and written culture; see Moshe Rosman, 'The Early Hasidic Book 1780–1815: Anatomy of a Movement Maker', delivered at *Association of Jewish Studies Conference*, December 21, 2010, (unpublished). Scholars have made a similar point about the nuanced relationship between oral and written culture in the rabbinic context; see Yaakov Zussman, '*Torah she-be'al Peh: Peshutah ke-Mashma'ah*', *Studies in Talmud Dedicated to the Memory of Professor E. E. Urbach* 3.1, ed. Y. Zussman and D. Rozental, Jerusalem 2005, pp. 209-384 [Hebrew]; Martin Jaffee 'A Rabbinic Ontology of the Written and Spoken Word: On Discipleship, Transformative Knowledge, and the Living Texts of Oral Torah', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 65 (1997), pp. 525-549. On the relationship between Hasidism and orality more broadly, see Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland', pp. 156-172; Green, 'Hasidic Homily'; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 470-481; Justin Jaron Lewis, *Imagining Holiness: Classic Hasidic Texts in Modern Times*, Montreal and Kingston, London, Ithaca 2009, pp. 93-95; Glenn Dynner, *Men of Silk: The Hasidic Conquest of Polish Jewish Society*, Oxford 2006, pp. 199-211. Orality also played an important role in the dissemination (and concealment) of earlier Jewish mystical traditions as well. See Daniel Abrams, 'Orality in the Kabbalistic School of Nahmanides: Preserving and Interpreting Esoteric Traditions and Texts', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 3 (1996), pp. 85-102; Idel, *Kabbalah*, pp. 20-22; Haviva Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary in the Teaching of R. Isaac the Blind: A Comparative Study in the Writings of the Earliest Kabbalists,* Jerusalem 2001, esp. pp. 1-21 [Hebrew]; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Beyond the Spoken Word: Oral Tradition and Written Transmission in Medieval Jewish Mysticism', *Transmitting Jewish Traditions: Orality, Textuality, and Cultural Diffusion,* ed. Y. Elman and I. Gershoni, New Haven and London 2000, pp. 166-224; Talya Fishman, 'The Rhineland Pietists' Sacralization of Oral Torah', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 96.1 (2006), pp. 9-16. Preference for oral study and transmission of ideas remained strong in medieval philosophical culture as well; see Judah Halevi, *Kuzari* II:72; R. Hasdai Kreskas, *Or Hashem*, introduction; Menahem Meiri, *Beit ha-Behirah*, *avot*, introduction; and Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides (Mishneh Torah)*, New Haven 1980, p. 72-73.

some trepidation about transcribing their teachings in written form.[155] For example, the lectures of the Tosafists were written down by their students, not by the scholars themselves.[156] This same educational dynamic, in which a master delivers a lesson orally while his students are responsible for transcribing their words, may be found in traditional Ashkenazi institutions of learning to the present day.[157] Ashkenazi intellectuals were deeply committed to studying the traditional canon of texts, but many of them proved far more reticent to commit their interpretations and commentary to writing than their Sephardic counterparts.[158]

If there was a general preference for oral traditions in Hasidic culture, why did the students transcribe their masters' teachings? It is reasonable to assume that some disciples took notes because they wished to remember a sermon, wanted to establish a written aid in order to review the homily at a later date.[159] And, in addition to allowing for the possibility of reexamining a homily after the fact, the focused activity of

[155] For an interesting exception, see the comments of MaHaRSHA to b. Bava Batra 10b. He explains the Talmudic statement, "happy is the one who arrives with his knowledge in hand (*talmudo be-yado*)," as follows: "the essence of one's studies that leaves an impression upon him is the knowledge that comes from the process of writing (*mi-ketivat yad*). This is why the sages are called "scribes" (*soferim*).

[156] See Gérard Nahon, 'Orality and Literacy: The French Tosaphists', *Studies in Medieval Jewish Intellectual and Social History: Festschrift in Honor of Robert Chazan*, ed. D. Engel, L.H. Schiffman, E.R. Wolfson, Leiden 2012, pp. 145-168.

[157] The published editions of the lessons of twentieth-century luminaries like Shmu'el Rozovsky and Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, which were reconstructed and prepared for print based on their students' notes. See, for example, Joseph Dov Soloveitchik, *Sefer Reshimot Shi'urim 'al Massekhet Berakhot*, ed. H. Reichman, New York 2012. Several dozen volumes of Rozovsky's teachings have been published since the 1970s, much of it only after his death in 1979.

[158] See Talya Fishman's exploration of this phenomenon in her *Becoming the People of the Talmud: Oral Torah as Written Tradition in Medieval Jewish Cultures*, Philadelphia 2011, pp. 121-217. She argues, however, that this preference for orality in early medieval Ashkenaz shifted toward a preference for written texts, suggesting that this transition was a profound cultural and religious transformation.

[159] See Ann Blair, 'Note Taking as an Art of Transmission', *Critical Inquiry* 31 (2004), pp. 85-107.

transcribing notes can improve one's recall of an oral event.[160] But some Hasidic students may have done so in order to spread a master's teachings, sharing them with disciples who could not attend the homily in person and perhaps even giving them to curious outsiders.[161]

Before examining the various collections of the Maggid's teachings as they have been preserved, we should take some time to reflect on the question of why he most likely did not write them down himself. As we shall see shortly, we know of only a few short documents that were written by the Maggid. Gries suggests that the R. Dov Baer refrained from writing down his sermons because he knew that his faithful disciple R. Solomon of Lutsk would do it for him at a later date.[162] However, a teaching in a manuscript attributed to R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev (Rus. Berdichev; mod. Ukr. Berdychiv) is followed by the phrase "from the writing of my master himself" (*mi-ketivat mori 'atsmo*), implying that it was copied from a version transcribed by the none other than the Maggid.[163] I have been unable to find other evidence supporting this notion, but we should not rule out the possibility that such private writings did exist.

Perhaps an explanation for the Maggid's reticence may be found in R. Solomon's introduction to MDL, where R. Solomon explains that the inspiration to transcribe the R. Dov Baer's sermons originally came from the master himself:

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[160] See John F. Carter and Nicholas H. Van Matre, 'Note Taking Versus Note Having', *Journal of Educational Psychology* 67.6 (1975), pp. 900-904; David L. Rosenhan, Sara L. Eisner, and Robert J. Robinson, 'Notetaking Can Aid Juror Recall', *Law and Human Behavior* 18.1 (1994), pp. 53-61.

[161] Here we might recall the *hypomnemata* and *syngramma*, two different types of transcriptions found in Greek-influenced educational institutions. The former are notes taken for private use, whereas the latter are literary works intended to become an authoritative text.

[162] Gries, *The Book in Early Hasidism*, p. 58.

[163] Scholem MS RS 28, fol. 136a; printed in ST, p. 62a.

> Once my master and teacher asked me why I have not been writing down what I hear. I responded to him as above.[164] I also said that I have noticed that those who do transcribe [the sermons] abbreviate [i.e. and misconstrue] the master's intention. Often they lack comprehension, and write according to their understanding. He told me, "Nevertheless, however they will be written down, it will be for the good, so that it may be a reminder for the service of the blessed Creator" (*mazkeret le-'avodat ha-bore*).[165] I asked him, "Why does our master and teacher want such a thing?" He said, "Is what King David asked for such a small matter, saying "I shall dwell in your house forever" (*'olamim*, Ps. 61:5)—in this world and in the next.[166] Nevertheless, I did not want to write them down, and certainly not publish them because of the abovementioned reasons [of fear of misinterpretation and oversimplification].[167]

R. Solomon of Lutsk balks at the idea of writing down the Maggid's teachings, and is a reluctant editor and publisher. Others were already transcribing the Maggid's homilies, but their versions are—in his view—riddled with misunderstanding. Gries suggests that R. Solomon of Lutsk may have been afraid to publicize the Maggid's teachings because of the many references to Lurianic Kabbalah found there, but this seems a stretch given

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[164] Immediately before this story, R. Solomon described the near impossibility of putting the Maggid's profound sermons into writing.

[165] The word *mazkeret* is of biblical origin (Num. 5:15), but to my knowledge this rare word is only found as a noun in rabbinic literature when this verse is cited. However, a similar tradition is found in the hagiographical collection *Toledoth ha-Ari*, ed. Meir Benayahu, Jerusalem 1967, p. 164: "One day his [R. Isaac Luria's] students said to him, 'Our master, light of Israel, why do you not write one book of your wisdom to illuminate the eyes of the coming generations.' He said to them, 'Were all the reeds [made into] quills, they would not be enough to write my wisdom. When I open my mouth to tell you some secret of Torah, the effluence overtakes me like a rushing river, and I [must seek] different strategies by which to open some small, sublime channel so that you may grasp it. If I [say] too much, you will lose everything, like the babe who chokes from too much milk at one time. Therefore, my advice is that each of you should write down what you hear from me, and it will be a reminder (*zikaron*) for you and the generations that come after you.'" Both the Maggid and R. Solomon of Lutsk could have known about this legendary account.

[166] See b. Bekhorot 31b; cf. Yevamot 96b. It is interesting to note that the Talmud is *not* discussing the act of writing down teachings, but rather their oral transmission from master to disciple.

[167] MDL, p. 3. On this story, see Gries, *The Book in Early Hasidism*, pp. 57-58; Dynner, *Men of Silk*, p. 201. This text is also the subject of Moshe Rosman's unpublished paper 'Shlomo Lutzker's Introduction to Magid Devarav Le-Ya'akov', presented at the *Early Modern Workshop: Reading across Cultures: The Jewish Book and Its Readers in the Early Modern Period*, The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies at Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass., Aug. 24, 2009.

that the issue at hand is transcribing them, not publishing and distributing them to a wider audience.[168] This may have been so, but our text offers a different reason for R. Solomon's trepidation: the impossibility of capturing the Maggid's sermons in written form.

But R. Dov Baer himself suggests that even with the shortcomings inherent in transcribing his teachings, these records will be "a reminder for the service of the blessed Creator" (*mazkeret le-'avodat ha-bore barukh hu*).[169] This elliptical phrase bears many possible interpretations. The Maggid's request may reflect his understanding that in order for his ideas to continue beyond the span of his life, they needed to be preserved in written form. These texts could become a way for his disciples to review his teachings after his death, and new students could become exposed to his ideas. However, perhaps the Maggid sensed the impending transition from oral pathways of communication and foresaw the role books would play as the Hasidic movement began to take shape.

It is interesting to note that in this story the Maggid does not address the question of printing his teachings as a book. Equally fascinating is that unlike R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, who tightly controlled the written versions of his teachings,[170] I have found no testimonies that the Maggid ever tried to edit or standardize the texts written by his students.[171] Transcription, translation, abbreviation, and even misunderstanding seem not to have concerned him. The Maggid seems to have had no interest in establishing a single

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[168] Gries, *The Book in Early Hasidism*, pp. 58-59.

[169] The word *mazkeret* may draw upon Maimonides' term *zikaron ba-shemu'ot*, which he uses to describe the written records of oral traditions transcribed by rabbinic sages for personal use even during the classical period of the Oral Torah; see *Mishneh Torah*, *haqdamah*.

[170] Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite*, pp. 66-68; Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, pp. 87-88.

[171] This conversation between R. Dov Baer and R. Solomon cannot be dated, and we cannot rule out the possibility that it happened shortly before his death. Had he lived longer, perhaps the Maggid would have interested himself in editing the sermons.

authoritative text that would become the authentic written form of his teachings, and certainly not a printed book. In this context I would like to offer the following way of understanding the phrase *mazkeret le-'avodat ha-bore*: teachings written in abbreviated form that nonetheless offer a valuable access point for continued religious inspiration.

A conceptual basis for the Maggid's trust in written words may be found in several teachings that describe the correct intention (*kavvanah*) the scholar must have when studying a written text. One such tradition explains that the scholar should imagine that the author of a work, in some cases a rabbinic sage, is standing in front of him and reciting those very words. The scholar can then draw vitality from the letters of that teaching. After contemplating it and speaking it aloud, he can bring forth energy from an even deeper source—the sage's intellectual understanding (*binah*) that is hidden within the words. Quoting a Talmudic maxim, R. Dov Baer claims that this process causes the sage's lips to murmur in their grave.[172] Thus the vitality derived from the written text, and from the wisdom imbued within it, both extends the life of teacher and brings the reader to a new state of enlightened redemption.[173]

Teachings such as this one suggest that a student can attain the wisdom of his master through contemplating his words even long after his death.[174] Reading a transcription of a teacher's ideas does not hinder this process, because the written words come to life as they are spoken aloud. By means of these written records a student may

[172] See y. Sheqalim 2:5; cf. b. Yevamot 97a; b. Megillah 15a. Perhaps it is no coincidence that this continuation of the same Talmudic passage that appears in R. Solomon's introduction.

[173] See LY #91, fol. 16b; MDL #28, p. 46; OHE, fol. 16a. Cf. *Liqqutei Moharan* I:12.

[174] We might distinguish between reading a canonical text such as the Talmud, whose words are taken to be authoritative and authentic, and reading the teachings of a Hasidic master as they were copied down by one of his students. We shall see, however, that the Maggid describes all acts of communication between a master and a disciple in a similar manner. The teacher must focus his ineffable wisdom into language, but through contemplating his master's words the student can reach beyond the letters and recover the original idea; see below, pp. 460-476.

even come to grasp a master's original wisdom, including someone who was not privy to R. Dov Baer's teachings during his lifetime. The Maggid never explicitly applies this model to his own sermons, but it may be the intention behind the term *mazkeret*.

THE PRIMARY SOURCES

The sermons of the Maggid were recorded by his disciples and published after his death, and we know of only a few documents written by R. Dov Baer himself. The earliest are letters from circa 1766, in which the Maggid voiced his opinion on a local economic dispute regarding possession of an *arenda*, the authorized monopoly rights that protected the one's livelihood and were crucial for Jewish economic stability.[175] Another short letter was addressed to R. Eliezer ha-Levi and R. Hayyim of Pinsk. In this letter, which is written in the lofty register typical of rabbinic correspondence, the Maggid describes the untarnished character of his student R. Aaron of Karlin and reassures the addressees that he is a capable leader and that his teachings are not in the slightest suspect. Rabinowitz dated this letter to circa 1769, and interpreted it as evidence that by this time Maggid was a well known, and perhaps more importantly, respected rabbinic figure even in the Lithuanian world.[176] These letters offer important historical

[175] These letters were first printed in *Zikhron Tov*, Piotrkow 1892, fol. 34b. On the importance of these commodity monopolies, see Chone Shmeruk, 'The Hasidic Movement and the "Arendars"', *Zion* 35 (1970), pp. 187 [Hebrew]; Shmuel Ettinger, 'Hasidism and the *Kahal*', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 66-67; Immanuel Etkes, 'The Study of Hasidism: Past Trends and New Directions', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 449-450.

[176] See Wolf Zeev Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hasidism*, New York 1971, pp. 13-14; reprinted in Mordecai Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, Jerusalem 1970, vol. 2, pp. 343-344. It seems that the Maggid allowed for the spread of Hasidism into Lithuania, in that he attracted learned figures from Lithuanian lands/families and also his students went there. Rabinowitsch and Dubnow argued that this letter represents the Maggid trying to fend off the attacks of the *mitnaggedim*, who were already causing trouble for R. Aaron of Karlin. Azriel Shohet, however, suggested that this letter had to do with an internal disagreement (i.e. amongst the Maggid's circle), a position supported by Wilensky as well.

information about the Maggid's relationship with his students and other scholarly figures of his day. They also demonstrate that it was the force of his religious personality and his reputation for piety that granted him authority, since his office of *maggid* was significantly lower in prestige than that of the rabbis he was addressing.[177] But these missives have little to offer in terms of R. Dov Baer's thought or theology.

The other text attributed to the Maggid is a short approbation to *Halakhah Pesuqah* (Turka 1765), a digest of the laws of ritual slaughter by a certain Todros ben Tsevi Hirsh. Here the Maggid insists that although he generally refrains from offering endorsements, the innovative nature of this particular book compels him to do so.[178] The work included approbations from several other prominent scholars from Mezritch, Rovno and Torchin, which may suggest that the Maggid's name carried significant local cache by the mid-1760s. *Halakhah Pesuqah* is a complicated legal work intended for scholars and professional ritual slaughterers, not a popular collection of inspirational homiletics. The Maggid's approbation may thus imply that he had enjoyed some renown as a legal scholar as well as a popular preacher, but is equally likely that his approval was garnered simply because of his prominence in that region. Like the letter, this brief text holds nothing of direct theological interest.

The most important sources of the Maggid's teachings for the contemporary scholar are the printed collections of his homilies. Like the works of many early Hasidic masters, these were based on manuscripts of sermons recorded and edited by his students;

[177] This point is made by Ettinger, 'Hasidism and the *Kahal*', p. 67. In this way the Maggid seems to have been much like the Gaon of Vilna, who never occupied an official rabbinic position but commanded authority because of his scholarship and the force of his personality.

[178] The somewhat obscure work, which was never reprinted, is concerned with determining the definitive *halakhah*, not the casuistic sophistry (*pilpul*) often found in eighteenth-century Polish legal writings.

the printed editions of the Maggid's homilies share all of the problems and complexities mentioned above. These texts are terse and laconic in style,[179] and while it is possible that this is how the Maggid delivered them, it seems more likely that the written versions are abbreviated.[180] They vary greatly in length, from short teachings of only a few sentences to extended discourses that run across several printed pages. It is also clear that there are a host of textual problems. In some cases homilies lack a word, or even an entire stage in the conceptual development.[181] The transcriber (or transcribers) occasionally laments that he could not remember the homily in its entirety, or even entirely accurately; these notes were later incorporated into some of the printed books.[182] The editor of one collection even left a blank space where a particularly obtuse and difficult passage in the manuscript had been.[183] Some written versions appear to be combinations of sermons heard at

[179] For example, in many cases the transcriber uses the elliptic shorthand *u-pi*, which may be shorthand for either *u-peirush* ("and the explanation is") or *u-piresh* ("and he explained"). This small semantic ambiguity might indicate a world of difference. The first possibility, *u-peirush*, implies that this is a textual representation of the Maggid's sermon as it was delivered—i.e., in the first person. By contrast, *u-piresh* suggests that it is a third-person account, a description of the homily. Similarly, the written versions of some homilies by the Maggid's students begin with the phrase, "the master opened, saying" (*patah ha-rav ve-amar*), clearly indicating that the text before us is a transcription of sermon delivered by writer's teacher. See *Peri ha-Arets*, inter alia, *va-era*, p. 46; *bo*, p. 48. Ibid, *va-yeshev*, p. 30, includes the phrase "the master explained" (*ha-rav piresh*), written in the same shorthand *u-pi* mentioned above. Many of the sermons of R. Shmu'el Shmelke of Nikolsburg, printed as *Divrei Shmu'el*, begin with *patah ha-rav* as well.

[180] This is similar to the work *Sefat Emet*, a book written by the R. Judah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger that is known for its brevity. His style is elliptical, even enigmatic, and he seems to assume that his reader has instant access to the biblical, midrashic and Zoharic sources he quotes in fragments. A book of responsa by R. Saul Moses Zilberman, rabbi of Wieruszów and close disciple of the Gerer Rebbe, records an interesting meeting with R. Judah Aryeh Leib: "Our master and teacher, the author of *Sefat Emet*, once asked him [R. Saul Moses] if he was writing down the novellae developed in his studies. He replied that he does not, because writing takes time away from his learning. Our master and teacher, of blessed memory, said to him in these words: 'then write them in shorthand, for I too write in shorthand' (*shrayb men be-qitsur, ikh shrayb oykh be-qitsur*)"; see *She'elot u-Teshuvot Rabbi Sha'ul Mosheh*, Tel Aviv 1959, p. 7.

[181] MDL #51, p. 72-74.

[182] See, for example, LY #97, fol. 18a. This phenomenon is found in the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye, who occasionally bemoans his imperfect memory of the BeSHT's teachings; see *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 2, *qedoshim*, p. 640.

[183] KTVQ, fol. 18d.

different times.[184] In one passage the editor, the copyist or the transcriber declares that a certain teaching is not from the Maggid, even though he makes no attempt to attribute to someone else.[185] There is much overlap between the different collections of the Maggid's teachings, and they seem to represent only one or two stemmata of manuscripts. Let us examine each of these in turn:[186]

1) *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov—Liqqutei Amarim* (Koretz 1781; henceforth, MDL) was the first collection of the Maggid's teachings to be published,[187] making it the third Hasidic book to have been printed.[188] MDL was also the given the apt subtitle *Liqqutei Amarim* ("Collected Sayings"), which is how it is generally referenced in other compendia of the Maggid's teachings and in the works of his disciples.[189] This name is quite appropriate, since MDL is an anthology that brings together long, intricate sermons,[190] as well as short, incisive teachings on the devotional life or instructions for

[184] See MDL #101, pp. 178-181.

[185] OT #135, *be-ha'alotekha*, p. 183

[186] As noted above, in early Hasidic literature it is not uncommon for a teaching cited in the name of one master to be attributed to another *rebbe* in different book. Occasionally, this problem arises in the case of the Maggid as well. In addition to the examples that will be discussed below, Gedalyah Nigal suggested that the sermons of R. Barukh of Kossov were more than just an important influence on the Maggid's thought. In one place he identified a teaching from R. Barukh that he believed had been printed in the collections of the Maggid's teachings; see Gedalyah Nigal, 'An Unknown Source in the Hasidic Conduct Literature', *Kirjat Sepher* 48 (1973) pp. 526-527 [Hebrew]. However, Piekarz, *Beginning of Hasidism*, p. 57 notes that R. Barukh's writings were edited rather poorly, and it is therefore more likely that the sermon came from the Maggid and was erroneously included in R. Barukh's work by the editor.

[187] The title is based on the verse, "He spoke (*maggid*) His words unto Jacob, His laws and decrees unto Israel" (Ps. 147:19), and a play on the word *maggid*.

[188] On the publication of MDL, see Gries, *Book in Early Hasidism,* pp. 56-59; idem, 'Hasidic Managing editor', pp. 150-152.

[189] Both names are found on the title page of the first edition, but *Maggid Devarav Le-Ya'aqov* appears first and in larger print. In fact, *Liqqutei Amarim* may have been offered more as a description of the contents than a proper title.

[190] See MDL #192, pp. 300-306;

proper conduct (*hanhagot*).[191] One complicated passage is even framed as a responsum addressing the question of whether or not one may abandon the traditional Ashkenazi prayer rite and adopt the Sephardic liturgy favored by the Kabbalists.[192]

MDL was published eight additional times within the lifetime of the editor, suggesting that this was a very popular book.[193] But the sermons within it are relatively complex and often quite difficult to understand, and it is interesting that MDL was so widely distributed—and presumably read. Furthermore, the fact that it was reprinted far more often than the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye is another important piece of evidence suggesting the Maggid's centrality in the emergence of the Hasidic movement.

The editor of MDL, R. Solomon of Lutsk, was a close disciple and relative of the Maggid.[194] R. Solomon claims to have received transcriptions of the Maggid's homilies from many different hands, but asserts that most of the sermons appearing in MDL were copied from the manuscripts of a certain R. Ze'ev Wolf from the Lithuanian city of Hrodna (Pol. Grodno).[195] R. Solomon acknowledges that the work includes many

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[191] See MDL #34, p. 53-54; #43, p. 66; #57, pp. 85-86.

[192] MDL #96, pp. 167-168.

[193] MDL was subsequently printed in Koretz 1784, Lemberg 1792; Ostroha 1793; Lemberg 1797; Koretz 1797, Zolkiev 1804, and Barditshev 1808. The second printing included a few pages of additional materials that did not appear included in the first edition. The number of times it was republished makes MDL one of the most frequently printed books before 1815, shortly behind R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's *Sefer ha-Tanya* (eleven printings) and tied with *Tsava'at ha-Ribash*. See Dynner, *Men of Silk*, p. 202. After that, it was reprinted somewhat less frequently before the Second World War; Lemberg c. 1830, 1862; Lember 1863; Satmar 1905; Lublin 1927. The works of R. Jacob Joseph of Polnnoye were printed many fewer times in the years of the early Hasidic movement. *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef* was published in Koretz 1780 and 1783; and Shklov 1797; and *Ben Porat Yosef* was printed in Koretz, 1781. See Dynner, *Men of Silk*, p. 248.

[194] R. Solomon was a very active editor and publisher of kabbalistic works in the 1770s-80s; see Gries, 'Hasidic Managing Editor', pp. 146-154.

[195] We know almost nothing about this R. Ze'ev Wolf of Hrodna. Rabinowitsch, *Lithuanian Hasidism*, p. 9, cites him an example of a Lithuanian scholar who was attracted to the Maggid's teachings. But R. Ze'ev Wolf is not mentioned in *'Ir Giborim*, Vilna 1880, a history of the Jews in Grodno. However, there was apparently a significant Hasidic community in Hrodna, since the Hasidim there burned on the early anti-Hasidic tract. See Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1, p. 34. In fall 1781 there was a ban against the Hasidim in this city as well, but the primary complaint in this ban was the Hasidic adoption of the

beautiful teachings that have been marred by the process of transmission, and he laments the fact it would be virtually impossible to write them anew in a more ordered and eloquent fashion. Indeed, the sermons have no discernable order, and the divisions between one homily and another are not always clear.[196]

R. Solomon's two introductions to MDL are noteworthy as well.[197] The first offers a brief history of Kabbalah, highlighting the importance of R. Simeon bar Yohai, R. Moses Cordovero, R. Isaac Luria, the BeSHT and culminating with the Maggid. This places the latter in a chain that includes the most important—and authoritative—mystical figures in the Jewish tradition. The second introduction a remarkable summary of the core ideas of the Maggid's thought, paraphrased by R. Solomon and without specific reference to any of the teachings.[198] These introductions appear in all subsequent editions of MDL.[199]

The first edition of MDL was printed without approbations from any major rabbinic figures. The editor R. Solomon, whom we may assume authored the brief apologia (*hitnatslut*) printed at the beginning of this edition, gives two reasons for this lack. He claims that he had no time to gather the endorsements because the typesetting

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Sephardic liturgical rite, and not their theology; see Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1, pp. 112-113.

[196] Beginning with the Koretz 1784 printing, most of the later editions of MDL divide the sermons differently.

[197] The title page, perhaps written by R. Solomon himself, recommends that one must read these introductions in order to understand anything of the contents of MDL.

[198] For a translation of this text, see Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Thought*, pp. 67-74.

[199] R. Solomon asked that these introductions be reprinted at the beginning of *Dibrat Shelomoh*, a collection of his own sermons that was published posthumously in Zolkiev 1848.

took so much time,[200] and he was afriad that Jewish printing would soon be banned in the region.[201] The second reason is even more noteworthy: he felt pressured to produce the work quickly because of the great public desire for a printed volume of the Maggid's teachings.[202]

MDL has been reprinted several times in recent decades. R. Abraham Isaac Kahn, a contemporary Hasidic leader, published a new edition in 1971.[203] Kahn divided the sermons differently in a new way, included many helpful sources and citations to biblical and rabbinic texts, and offered an intermittent but useful commentary to the Maggid's teachings. Kahn was aware of the problems with the text of MDL, and he used the first two editions as his base and then compared and corrected against other printings of the Maggid's teachings and a private manuscript in his possession.[204] This edition also includes scriptural and subject indices, and a list cross-referencing the teachings in MDL to parallel passages found in the works of his students.[205] Kahn's edition is

[200] A similar claim is made in the anonymous introduction printed on the reverse side of the title page of the Koretz 1781 edition of *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*. This short passage must have been written by one of the book's editors, and perhaps may even be the work of R. Solomon of Lutsk himself.

[201] See Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, trans. from Yiddish by Eugene Orenstein, and trans. from Hebrew by Aaron Klein and Jenny Machlowitz Klein, Philadelphia 1985, pp. 105-119. See also Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, *The Golden Age Shtetl: A New History of Jewish Life in East Europe*, Princeton 2014, pp. 305-340.

[202] Perhaps it is telling that this reason does not appear in front matter of the first edition of *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*.

[203] R. Abraham Isaac Kahn (d. 1996) was the *rebbe* of the *Toledot Aharon* Hasidic community of Jerusalem.

[204] Of course, correcting the text of MDL against other printed versions is a dangerous task.

[205] Kahn notes that the sermons in MDL often feel as if they were written in shorthand, and in many cases they are expanded when cited in the works of his students. To this end Kahn included a short anthology of the Maggid's teachings excerpted from books of his students, arranged by subject, as well as a small number of hagiographical stories; *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, ed. A.I. Kahn, Jerusalem 1971, fol. 125a-154b.

complemented by a more recent printing from the Habad Hasidic community.[206] This version, which divides the sermons into even smaller teachings, is noteworthy for its several excellent indices and extensive notes.[207]

Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer's 1976 critical edition of MDL was an important milestone in the study of Hasidic texts.[208] She established a new text by comparing several important manuscripts to the original Koretz 1781 printing. The sermons are accompanied by elucidatory notes, source citations, and followed by thorough indices of biblical verses and subjects. The primary manuscript used by Schatz-Uffenheimer is a private manuscript copied from notes taken by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, some of which were written down within the Maggid's life.[209] We will have more to say about this textual artifact in our discussion of the extant manuscripts of the Maggid's sermons.

Zeev Gries lauded Schatz-Uffenheimer's efforts to establish an authoritative and stable text, but he also demonstrated that her work has serious flaws.[210] He argues that her edition was not based on the Koretz 1781 printing, as she had claimed, but rather on the faulty Jerusalem 1962 version.[211] Furthermore, Schatz-Uffenheimer's edition provides no critical apparatus, making it nearly impossible to compare the various

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[206] *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, Brooklyn 2012.

[207] Editors have assembled a collection of several hundreds of traditions about the Maggid from the various leaders of the Habad community. Many of these come from the sixth *rebbe* R. Joseph Isaac Schneersohn, whose prolific literary output and acute interest in writing the history of Hasidism from the Habad has been well documented. These passages constitute a very interesting reception history of the Maggid.

[208] *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, ed. R. Schatz-Uffenheimer, Jerusalem 1976. A few years later Gedalyah Nigal published his critical edition of *No'am Elimelekh*, but to date there is still a rather small number of critical editions of Hasidic works; see *No'am Elimelekh*, ed. G. Nigal, Jerusalem 1978, 2 vols.

[209] A photocopy of this manuscript is held in Scholem Collection of the National Library of Israel; see Scholem MS RS 28. For more on this manuscript and others with the teachings of the Maggid, see below.

[210] Zeev Gries, 'Hasidism: The Present State of Research and Some Desirable Priorities (Sequel)', *Numen* 34 (1987), pp. 196-200.

[211] The Jerusalem 1962 printing was based on a similarly problematic Lemberg edition (undated).

manuscripts. Gries also points out that she refers to the Maggid's sources of inspiration only intermittently in her commentary, which was exacerbated by the fact that she ignored the useful Kahn 1971 printing. More deeply, Gries suggeststhat in some cases Schatz-Uffenheimer fundamentally misunderstand *how* the Maggid was interpreted earlier sources, which she regarded as nothing more than a springboard for his own ideas. Gries claims that the Maggid's reading of earlier sources is actually quite nuanced and perceptive. Only examining these passages, whether they are taken from the *midrashim*, the Talmud, the Zohar or Lurianic Kabbalah, in their original context will reveal clear which elements of the Maggid's thought are creative, and which are already there in the classical sources. Most contemporary academic studies of the Maggid's thought and teachings continue to use her edition, but should do so with these caveats in mind. I have made use of both Kahn's and Schatz-Uffenheimer's editions; all references to MDL in the present study refer to Schatz-Uffenheimer's text unless otherwise noted.

2) The title page of *Liqqutim Yeqarim* (Lemberg 1792; henceforth, LY) claims that it is a collection of teachings from four different figures: the BeSHT, the Maggid, R. Menahem Mendel of Premishlan (Przemyślany), and R. Yehiel Mikhel of Yample (later of Zlotshev; Pol. Złoczów; mod. Ukr. Zolochiv). The importance of LY lies more in its overall accessibility than its originality, since many of the teachings therein were already printed in MDL.[212] Many of the teachings in LY are short, pithy statements clearly

[212] The editor of LY refers to MDL, referring to it as *Liqqutei Amarim*, which he notes had already been published three times. See Arthur Green, 'Teachings of the Hasidic Masters', *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, ed. B.W. Holtz, New York 1984, p. 364.

intended to inspire and awaken the reader.[213] This book is also an anthology of different types of teachings, but it includes fewer of the complicated and involved sermons that generally characterize MDL.[214]

LY was edited by R. Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh, who was a disciple of the Maggid but primarily a student of R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zlotshev.[215] Schatz-Uffenheimer suggested that this work must have been based in part on a manuscript of the Maggid's teachings as transcribed by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, but this claim cannot be proven.[216] Relatively little of the material included in LY is specifically attributed to one of the four people who appear on the title page.[217] However, it seems likely that the editor wanted the reader to understand all anonymous material as coming from the Maggid. All three of the approbations refer to the Maggid explicitly and with great reverence, but make no mention at all of the other figures listed on the title page.[218]

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[213] Indeed, in his introduction to the first edition the editor explains that he set out to bring together teachings that were attributed to these great and inspiriting masters, so that they would all be in one place and that the wellsprings would spread outward.

[214] However, the series of complicated teachings grounded in Lurianic Kabbalah is an interesting exception to this rule; see LY #137-159, fol. 46a-53b.

[215] On this figure, see Miles Krassen, *Uniter of Heaven and Earth: Rabbi Meshullam Feibush Heller of Zbarazh and the Rise of Hasidism in Eastern Galicia*, Albany 1998. In fact, fol. 19b-31a of the original Lember printing of LY is the text of what would be later published as *Yosher Divrei Emet*, a fact that was not made clear until the Zolkiev 1800 edition. See Dubnow, *Toledot ha-Hasidut*, pp. 323-324, n.5; Krassen, *Uniter of Heaven*, p. 38.

[216] MDL, p. xvii. In one passage, the transcriber writes down something he does not understand fully, and Schatz-Uffenheimer identifies this as R. Levi Isaac speaking in the first person (Schatz, 18, LY 10b in 1865 edition).

[217] For specific attributions, see: BeSHT: LY #3 p. 1a; R. Yehiel Mikhel: #105, p. 19b-20a; #165 p. 54b-55a, #205 p. 62a-62b; #274 p. 90b. R. Menahem Mendel of Premishlan does appear anywhere in LY by name.

[218] *Liqqutim Yeqarim* bears the approbations of R. Issakhar Baer of Zlotshev, R. Abraham Hayyim of Zbarib and R. Joseph of Zamosht. R. Abraham, author of *Orah le-Hayyim*, was a student of the Maggid's. Dated July 17, 1792.

LY was a popular book, and it was frequently reprinted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[219] R. Abraham Isaac Kahn published a new edition of this work in 1973, correcting the text against several of his own manuscripts, including the one held by R. Shmu'el Shmelke of Nikolsburg. R. Kahn also compared the teachings in LY to the other printed collections of the Maggid's teachings. His edition includes brief explanatory notes, a new collection of teachings previous printed in other collections of the Maggid's sermons,[220] and an index that outlines parallel teachings found elsewhere in the Maggid's corpus.[221] All references to LY in the present study refer to this edition.

3) *Tsava'at ha-RiBaSH* (Zolkiev 1793; henceforth TSVHR) is a short compendium of teachings purportedly belonging to the BeSHT and the Maggid. This book was quite popular, and was often reprinted in the 1790s and early 1800s.[222] TSVHR includes some radical elements that are articulated rather explicitly, including the advice to pray loudly, references to uplifting "strange thoughts," and a depreciation of Torah study in favor of other devotional activities. These teachings seem to have sparked the ire of the *mithnaggedim*, for TSVHR was among the early Hasidic writings to be burned by the opponents of Hasidism.[223]

The title implies that this work an ethical "will" (*tsava'ah*) from the BeSHT, but Zeev Gries has proven that TSVHR is actually a collection of teachings and *hanhagot*

[219] Other printings include 1794; 1798; 1800; Ostroha c. 1820.

[220] LY, fol. 183a-207b.

[221] LY, fol. 179a-181a

[222] Dynner, *Men of Silk*, p. 247.

[223] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 179, accepts the possibility that this work may have been influenced by Sabbatian anti-nomianism, but does not find this claim irrefutably compelling.

("ritual practices") from the school of the Maggid.[224] It was heavily edited, and indeed its more controversial elements, in particular the diminished importance of Torah study, were eventually censored by the Hasidim themselves. He argues that TSVHR was not originally formulated as a book, and that it represents a printed collection drawn from a much larger pool of *hanhagot*.[225] Given the problems in establishing this work's authorship, and that there is little original material in TSVHR that cannot be found elsewhere in the body of teachings attributed to the Maggid, I draw on this work only rarely in the present study.

4) *Keter Shem Tov* (Zolkiev 1794; henceforth KSHT) [226] is an anthology of early Hasidic teachings assembled by R. Aaron ha-Kohen of Apt.[227] He claims that this work is a

[224] Zeev Gries, 'The Editing of *Tsavat ha-Ribash*', *Kirjat Sefer* 52 (1977), pp. 187-210 [Hebrew]; idem, *Conduct Literature*, esp. pp. 149-230. Of course, TSVHR may included homilies delivered by R. Dov Baer that were based on those of the BeSHT. Some early Hasidic figures already sensed that this work was not really the words of the BeSHT. In a letter R. Shneur Zalman acknowledges that *TSVHR* was not "written" by the BeSHT per se, though he clearly believes that the ideas are the BeSHT; see *Sefer ha-Tanya*, *iggeret ha-qodesh*, ch. 25. R. Nahman of Tcherin, however, understood that TSVHR was primarily the teachings of the Maggid; see his introduction to *Derekh Hasidim*, Lemberg 1876.

[225] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 150. More will be said about the importance of the *hanhagot* literature below.

[226] R. Israel Loebel thought this was the first Hasidic book to be printed. See Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 2, p. 328. For a preliminary appraisal of this work see Gedalyah Nigal, 'A Primary Source for Hasidic Tales: On the Book *Keter Shem Tov* and its Sources', *Sinai* 79 (1976), pp. 132-146 [Hebrew]; reprinted in idem, *Studies in Hasidism*, Jerusalem 1999, vol. 2, pp. 349-364. See also Jeffrey G. Amshalem, 'Why Do You Not Tell Stories in My Praise Also? The Image of Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritsh, in the Earliest Hasidic Tales', *Kabbalah* 31 (2014), pp. 27-64. A full scholarly analysis of this important early Hasidic anthology and its author is still a desideratum. All citations in this study come from the annotated Brooklyn 2014 edition recently published by the Habad community. On the merits of this version, see Gries, *The Book in Early Hasidism*, p. 104; idem, 'Hasidism: The Present State of Research (Sequel)', p. 201.

[227] R. Aaron's name is absent from the title page of the first half of KSHT, but was included on the title page second half published shortly afterward. Very little is known about this figure. Nigal points out that he could not have died before 1794, the date of the second volume of *Keter Shem Tov* was printed, and Alfasi suggests 1803 his date of death, but we know almost nothing else about his life and times. R. Aaron was the author of several other works that quote the early Hasidic masters with great frequency, including *'Oneg Shabbat* (Levov 1793); *Or ha-Ganuz la-Tsaddiqim* (Zolkiev 1800); *Keter Nehora* and *Or la-Yesharim* (Zhytomir 1864); and *Ner Mitsvah* (Piotrkow 1911).

collection of the BeSHT's homilies, primarily as excerpted from the books of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye.[228] KSHT also contains a number of early Hasidic stories, including a tale about the first meeting of the BeSHT and the Maggid.[229] KSHT is first and foremost a compendium of the BeSHT's teachings, and is the very first printing of this sort of anthology. R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye's books represent an effort to preserve traditions from the BeSHT, but the vast majority of the material within them is his own original writing. R. Aaron's compendium is thus a very different of project.

R. Dov Baer's name appears nowhere on the title page of KSHT, but closer inspection reveals that a substantial number of its homilies were taken from published works attributed to the Maggid.[230] R. Aaron claims to have gathered teachings from the BeSHT from MDL (referred to as *Liqqutei Amarim*) and LY, but it seems that he often took the Maggid's original homilies and presented them as belonging to the BeSHT in KSHT. R. Aaron makes this explicit in only a very few such cases.[231]

Why would R. Aaron include the Maggid's teachings in KSHT, attributing them both implicitly and explicitly to the BeSHT? He seems to have no personal connection with the Maggid, though he may have been associated with the Maggid's students and was certainly familiar with all major printed works of early Hasidic literature.[232] Perhaps

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[228] On the title page to the second part, R. Aaron notes the interesting fact that he is including previously unpublished oral traditions as well.

[229] See KST #424, pp. 263-264.

[230] In addition to those taken from MDL and LY, R. Aaron included teachings found in the Maggid's name in *Darkhei Yesharim/Hanhagot Yesharot* (1794) and *Helqat Binyamin* (Lemberg 1794). For a list of the parallels between KSHT and the works from which R. Aaron drew, see Nigal, 'Primary Source', pp. 359-363.

[231] For example, KSHT #243, p. 140 cites from the "writings in the name of R. Baer."

[232] In a eulogy printed in *Tiferet 'Uziel* dedicated to several prominent rabbinic figures, including R. Shmu'el Shmelke Horowitz of Nikolsburg, the author R. 'Uziel Meisels includes "my student the illustrious rabbi, head of the rabbinical court in Zhelikhov, known as Aaron." Some have suggested that this person should be identified as R. Aaron ha-Kohen, author of KSHT. However, this R. Aaron is not

R. Aaron was motivated by the prestige and commercial value that would be commanded by a sizeable collection of teachings from the BeSHT. Indeed, some of the homilies in KSHT are actually taken from the original writings of R. Jacob Joseph that were not cited in the BeSHT's name. But R. Aaron's book *Or ha-Ganuz le-Tsaddiqim* (Zolkiev 1800) adds another dimension to this question,[233] this work presents teachings from the BeSHT that are elsewhere attributed to other early Hasidic figures. This may suggest that R. Aaron assumed that the BeSHT's students and intellectual heirs were simply passing on traditions received from their master, or at least that he wished to present them as such.[234] His works portray the BeSHT as the primary source of theological creativity in Hasidic thought, even as they incorporate teachings from other early masters.

5) *Or Torah* (Koretz 1804, henceforth OT) was published from a manuscript that belonged to R. Isaiah of Dinovitz, also known as R. Isaiah of Yanov.[235] Abraham Joshua

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referred to as "ha-Kohen," while R. Shmu'el Shmelke receives the appropriate honorific "ha-Levi." Furthermore, the timing of this eulogy suggests this R. Aaron died sometime near the time of R. Shmu'el Shmelke's death in 1778, a date which precludes R. Aaron ha-Kohen, given his later literary activities. Hence we cannot certain of any affiliation with R. 'Uziel Meisels. See Nigal, 'Primary Source', p. 351; see also the introduction to the new reprinting of *Or ha-Ganuz le-Tsaddiqim,* Jerusalem 2008, p. xxv. However, given his tenure as a rabbinic figure in Zelekhev, it is possible that R. Aaron knew R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, who served as a rabbi in Zelekhev before fleeing from the city to Pinsk circa 1775; see R. Joshua Asher's approbation to *Ner Mitsvah*, Piotrkow 1911. Finally, R. Aaron quotes from R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady's *Sefer ha-Tanya* dozens of times throughout *Or ha-Ganuz le-Tsaddiqim*. He clearly held this work in great esteem, but R. Aaron never cites anything heard from R. Shne'ur Zalman himself, and seems unlikely that the two had a personal connection.

[233] *Or ha-Ganuz le-Tsaddiqim* follows the weekly Torah reading, as opposed to the random presentation of texts in KSHT.

[234] For a short list of examples, see *Or ha-Ganuz le-Tsaddiqim*, p. xxvii n. 30. R. Aaron rarely quotes from the Maggid by name, but see ibid, *va-yaqhel*, p. 114.

[235] Isaac Alfasi claims that R. Isaiah was a student of the BeSHT and the Maggid, as well as R. Liber of Barditshev. Abraham Joshua Heschel published a letter to R. Isaiah of Dinovits from R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk in 1781, which suggests that the former was in some sense a member of the Maggid's loose knit circle of associates. OT was printed with approbations from R. Asher Tsevi ben David of Ostrog and the other from R. Mordecai ben Pinhas of Koretz, both whom gave similar approbations to several other early Hasidic books. Neither R. Asher Tsevi nor R. Mordecai say anything about the content of the work, and

Heschel suggested that R. Isaiah may have been the one to write down the teachings printed as OT. This would mean that another early Hasidic figure, in addition to R. Solomon of Lutsk and R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, was engaged in transcribing the teachings of the Maggid.[236] However, given the nearly verbatim overlap between some teachings in OT with those in MDL and LY, it seems more that R. Isaiah held a manuscript of the Maggid's teachings that had been copied from another handwritten text.[237]

The title page of OT refers to both MDL and LY, and this collection includes a significant number of homilies that appear in these earlier compendia with small differences. OT does contain a number of original homilies to which there are no other textual witnesses in the Maggid's corpus, but the degree of precise overlap between the parellels found in LY and MDL is striking and suggests that OT was printed—at least in part—from a manuscript reliant upon those published by R. Solomon of Lutsk. Thus the text published as OT may have been based on earlier manuscripts, or the editor of OT may have copied teachings from the earlier printed books and combined them with the original material.

The first section of OT includes homilies ordered according to the weekly Torah reading, unlike previous collections of the Maggid's teachings. This is followed by sermons on the rest of Scripture and on portions of the Talmud. Schatz-Uffenheimer is

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only R. Asher Tsevi mentions the previous collections of the Maggid's teachings, perhaps since he himself gave an approbation to MDL.

[236] Abraham Joshua Heschel, 'Unknown Documents in the History of Hasidism', *YIVO Bleter* 36 (1952), p. 123 [Yiddish].

[237] At the beginning of the twentieth century Abraham Kahana published a copy of the famous epistle of the BeSHT based on a manuscript that had once been in the possession of R. Isaiah; see his *Rabbi Yisra'el Ba'al Shem Tov (BeSHT): Hayyav, Shittato u-Fe'ulato*, Zhytomir 1900, p. 100-102. According to its title page, TSVHR was also printed from a manuscript held by R. Isaiah of Yanov. See Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol 2, p. 101.

rather ungenerous in her evaluation of OT, suggesting that the decision to divide the homilies in this way represents the beginning of the "atomization of understanding of the Maggid's teachings."[238] That is, the editor of OT carved up longer sermons in order to make them easier to grasp, but in doing so lost the structural flow that undergirds each homily and gives the teaching its conceptual and rhetorical power. But the editorial decision to follow the order of the Torah reflects the fact that at least some of the Maggid's teachings were originally homilies grounded in the weekly Torah portions. And we should remember that the structure of MDL is not necessarily any more authentic than that of OT, since R. Solomon may have edited, rearranged and even reconfigured the teachings therein.[239]

6) *Kitvei Qodesh* (Lemberg 1862; henceforth KTVQ) is a collection of the Maggid's teachings that claims to be based on a relatively early manuscript.[240] According to the remarks of the editor Moses ha-Kohen, the sermons in KTVQ belong to four early Hasidic masters: the BeSHT, the Maggid, R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, and R. Israel of Kozhenits (Pol. Kozienice). In his introduction the editor explains that R. Israel of Kozhenits was in the habit of transcribing the teachings he heard from his masters,[241] setting him apart from many of the other early Hasidic masters.[242]

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[238] See MDL, p. x.

[239] All citations refer to the Brooklyn 2011 edition of OT published by the Habad Hasidic community, which features very learned and useful notes and excellent indices. I have found it true to the original Koretz printing in all cases, including the same acronyms, abbreviations and very basic (and often problematic) punctuation.

[240] Subsequent editions of KTVQ include Warsaw 1884; Barditshev 1900; Lublin 1928; Brooklyn 1990.

[241] Moses ha-Kohen was the son-in-law of R. Issachar, the son of R. Moses Eliyakim Beri'ah and grandson of R. Israel of Kozhenits himself. He claims to have received the manuscript to be printed from a student of R. Israel himself. Moses ha-Kohen was also the managing editor responsible for printing the kabbalistic prayer book *Tefillah le-Mosheh*, Lemberg 1864, based on the teachings of R. Moses Eliyakim Beri'ah, the

Despite the general identification of the teachings in KTVQ with the four important early Hasidic leaders mentioned above, very little of the material found within this work is explicitly attributed. The work does not seem to have been heavily redacted, and there is often no clear connection between one teaching and the next.[243] However, we must consider the provenance of its teachings before it may be used for our study of the Maggid. There is no reason to suspect that KTVQ is a forgery. Scholem argued that KTVQ was written by R. Israel of Kozhenits, and that the unattributed teachings within generally represent the theology of the Maggid himself.[244] Schatz-Uffenheimer agreed with the identification of KTVQ as the teachings of the Maggid, but maintained that it came from same stemma of manuscripts as *Or ha-Emet*, to which we will turn shortly.[245] If she is correct, KTVQ is based on transcriptions by R. Levi Isaac and was published without any further editing or consideration to what had already been printed in MDL and LY. KTQK fits the style and content of many of the other teachings recorded in the Maggid's name, and thus I see no reason to doubt the authentication of Scholem and Schatz-Uffenheimer. We should keep in mind that R. Israel of Kozhenits may have

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son of R. Israel of Kozhenits. Interestingly enough, like KTVQ, this prayer book received a *haskamah* by R. Isaiah Moshkat of Prague as well.

[242] Together with R. Levi Isaac and R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, R. Israel of Kozhenits was one of the first Hasidic masters to pen their own works. See Dynner, *Men of Silk*, p. 212.

[243] In one case the editor excised a particularly cryptic teaching, replacing it with a blank space and brief explanatory note; see KTVQ, fol. 18b.

[244] Moses ha-Kohen reports that in addition to transcribing teachings from his masters, R. Israel wrote down his own original ideas as well, though out of humility he would sometimes obscure his own name. In a marginal gloss to his personal copy of KTVQ, fol. 35b, Scholem identifies a passage in which he believes the transcriber of the text is speaking in the first person, and points out that it is nearly identical to a teaching found in one of R. Israel of Kozhenits's own books; see *'Avodat Yisrael,* p. 151. Scholem mentions this parallel and expands upon his claim in his notes an index card describing the contents of KTVQ, a photocopy of which may be found in the first edition of the work housed in the Scholem Collection of the National Library of Israel.

[245] MDL, xviii.

imbricated his own teachings with those of his master, but this issue is true of all other collections of the Maggid's homilies.

6) *Or ha-Emet* (Husyatin 1899; henceforth OHE) was printed quite late in the history of Hasidism.[246] The title page claims that this book represents the homilies of the Maggid as transcribed down by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, as well as select teachings from other Hasidic masters. [247] Most, but by no means all, of the teachings in OHE have parallels in the previously printed collections of the Maggid's sermons. In some cases the variance between the parallel accounts is minimal, but in others the differences are striking. Furthermore, the language and style of the teachings in OHE is particularly elliptical and elusive. This may have been the fault of the copyist or editor, it seems more likely to assume that this reflects the way in which the teachings were originally transcribed. Dubnow believed that this work too was a spurious forgery, but Scholem, Weiss and Schatz-Uffenheimer disagreed, and this work should be considered another important textual witness of the Maggid's teachings.[248]

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[246] OHE was printed together with short collection entitled *Imrei Tsaddiqim* ("Sayings of the Righteous"), which includes teachings from R. Levi Yitshak of Barditshev, as well R. Zushya of Annipoli and R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zlotshev, all as transcribed by R. Tsevi Hasid of Yampola. OHE was quickly republished in Zhytomir 1900, and then again in Brooklyn 1960, and Benei Berak 1967.

[247] The managing-editor of OHE was a certain R. Moses Mordechai, the grandson of Tsevi Hasid of Yampola (d. 1815). The latter was a student of Hayyim of Krasna (d. 1793), was known as a disciple of the BeSHT. See Dan Ben-Amos and Jerome R. Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov [Shivhei ha-Besht]: The Earliest Collection of Legends About the Founder of Hasidism*, New York 1984, #208 p. 207; *Qehal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, Lemberg 1902, fol. 25b. R. Hayyim was also a student of R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, who used to write down teachings he had transcribed for himself. R. Zevi Hasid copied R. Levi Isaac's manuscript, giving it back to him after he had finished. The original was then destroyed in a fire, leaving only this copy

[248] Dubnow, *Toledot ha-Hasidut*, p. 396; Scholem, 'The Unconscious and the Concept *Qadmut ha-Sekhel*', p. 271; Joseph Weiss, 'The Authorship and Literary Unity of the *Darkhei Yesharim*', *Studies in East European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism*, ed. D. Goldstein, London and Portland 1997, pp. 175-176 points out that OHE includes some material previously published in the work *Darkhei Yesharim* (Zhytomir 1805) This suggests that the printers of OHE (or the copyist at some stage of the manuscript transmission) included material from *Darkhei Yesharim*.

7) *Sefer Liqqutei Amarim* (Lemberg 1911; henceforth, SLA) was originally published in the name of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, one of the eldest and most prominent members of the Maggid's circle.[249] However, comparison to the other published volumes of the Maggid's sermons and several of the unprinted manuscripts reveals that a significant number of teachings in SLA belong to the Maggid himself.[250] There are also a small number of original teachings in SLA that do not have parallels elsewhere in the Maggid's corpus. A new edition of this work printed in 2009, with footnotes cross-referencing to the other collections of the Maggid's teachings,[251] and additional material from several other manuscripts from this same stemma that are now available.[252]

However, SLA must still be used with some caution. The Maggid is quoted by name in the middle of one sermon, suggesting that, at least in this case, the remainder of the teaching came from someone other than him.[253] Furthermore, a significant number of sermons in SLA also appear in *Me'or 'Einayim*, the collection of teachings by R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil.[254] The editors of the 2009 edition are aware of this

[249] Among the introductory materials included in the 1911 printing is a "bill of sale" (*shetar mekhirah*) that establishes the origin of the manuscript in Safed, where R. Menahem Mendel's teachings were apparently written down by one of his close students.

[250] See Gries, *The Book in Early Hasidism*, pp. 111-112 n. 11, 118 n. 83. If the manuscript of SLA truly came from Safed, which we have no reason to assume was made up, then it may represent a bundle of the Maggid's teachings taken by R. Menahem Mendel when he moved to Israel in the 1777. However, the letters from R. Menahem Mendel and R. Abraham of Kalisk included in this printing are indeed authentic.

[251] *Sefer Liqqutei Amarim*, Jerusalem 2009. All citations refer to this version unless otherwise noted.

[252] The editors of this edition made use of three manuscripts: 1) NLI MS HEB 8°1467, which was the base text for their edition; 2) an anonymous manuscript written in Slonim and completed in the fall of 1783, which included some twenty-six teachings not found in NLI MS Heb. 8°1467; and 3) JER KARLIN 13, a manuscript held in the collection of the Rebbe of Karlin. For more on the manuscripts of the Maggid's sermons, see below.

[253] SLA, p. 157.

[254] This includes the very first sermon printed in *Me'or Einayim*, often considered one of the classic teachings of that book; see SLA, p. 166-170. A significant number of the parallels, however, are found in

problem, and, in addition to listing the parallels to *Me'or 'Einayim* and noting them in the footnotes, they suggest several possible reasons for the confusion: 1) the printer of *Me'or 'Einayim* found manuscripts from the Maggid amongst R. Menahem Nahum's writings and erroneously published them under the latter's name; 2) R. Menahem Nahum was the editor, or perhaps compiler, of the work published as SLA; 3) a student of R. Menahem Nahum assembled SLA from manuscripts found in his teacher's house, combining sermons belonging to both him and the Maggid. The editors cautiously admit that there is no conclusive proof, so in order to avoid this problem I have refrained from quoting passages from SLA that also appear in *Me'or 'Einayim*.

8) *Shemu'ah Tovah* (Warsaw 1938; henceforth ST) was the last manuscript of the Maggid's teachings to be published. According to the title page, ST was written by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, who transcribed the sermons as he heard them delivered by the Maggid himself. The publisher claims that although many different collections have been printed, much of this work is new. This assertion, though surely meant as a justification for yet another compendium of the Maggid's teachings, is in part true. This book also includes many teachings that are framed as traditions heard by the transcriber (*sham'ati*), and there is a small but significant collection that were apparently addressed as questions directly to the Maggid (*sha'alti me-admo*).[255] The editor claims that one part came from a manuscript from Kozhenits, and the other another came from a text dating from the 1770s

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the *liqqutim* of *Me'or 'Einayim*. This may well suggest that R. Menahem Nahum was in possession of transcribed copies the Maggid's teachings, which were then included in the volume of R. Menahem Nahum's sermons by one of his own students. For a listing of the homilies included in both volumes, see SLA, *haqdamah*, pp. 74-75.

[255] See ST, pp. 58-60.

held by the Ger dynasty. These two manuscripts, the relationship between which is not clear, were thus spliced together and published as one.

However, not every teaching in ST represents a tradition from the Maggid. This point is already made clear by the notes on the title page, in which the printer adds that R. Levi Isaac added his own ideas (*ve-hosif mi-dileih*) to his transcriptions.[256] In addition, there are number of teachings in this work are specifically attributed to the BeSHT.[257] If the dates printed alongside some other anonymous sermons are correct, they were delivered and recorded after the Maggid's death, and obviously cannot be his.[258] Yet the majority of the teachings in ST have parallels to the other collections of the Maggid's sermons, and it seems reasonable to assume that the reader is meant to understand that the unattributed homilies belong to him.[259]

The compendia OHE, SLA, and ST were all published many years after the manuscripts upon which they are based were transcribed. But the Maggid is not the only Hasidic thinker from the early Hasidic movement from whom manuscripts were published much later. R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye's book *Ketonet Passim* was first published in 1866, many years after the author's death and long after his first three books were printed.[260] These works should be distinguished from posthumous "books" of

[256] Given this fact it is interesting to note that the publisher's introduction devotes several pages to extolling the virtues and piety of R. Levi Isaac, but is virtually silent about Maggid himself. Furthermore, the letters of R. Levi Isaac's name (and his book, *Qedushat Levi*) are greatly enlarged on the title page, but the name of the Maggid is in regular print.

[257] See ST, pp. 81a-b.

[258] See ST, pp. 84a-86b.

[259] Schatz-Uffenheimer relied heavily upon the material in this work in her studies of the Maggid; see Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'Contemplative Prayer in Hasidism', p. 216 n. 19, where she even suggests that the material attributed to the BeSHT in ST actually represents the thought of the Maggid.

[260] For Joseph Weiss's convincing arguments for the authenticity of this work, see Joseph G. Weiss, 'Is the Hasidic Book "Kethoneth Passim" A Literary Forgery?', *The Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (1958), pp. 81-83.

figures R. Barukh of Mezhbizh (d. 1811)[261] and R. Zushya of Hanipoli (Pol. Annopol; d. 1800), which are late composites of oral (or literary) traditions and thus belong to a different category.[262] During their lifetimes these figures were revered more for their charisma than their intellectual teachings, which were collected and written down long after their death. By the nineteenth century it was becoming increasingly important for Hasidic leaders to have a book of their teachings, and it was becoming quite common for *rebbes* in this period wrote their own works.[263] Responding to this shift, there were several attempts to compile teachings from earlier Hasidic figures whose sermons were never printed, thus retroactively giving them a sense of legitimacy by publishing a book of their teachings as well.

9) *Torat ha-Maggid* (Tel Aviv 1969; henceforth, THM) was compiled by Israel Klapholtz.[264] This useful collection of the Maggid's teachings draws primarily from the compendia that had already been printed, though he does quote from a manuscript that belonged to R. Shmu'el Shmelke of Nikolsburg and was later published in SLA. Klapholtz's goal, however, was not to introduce new material, but rather to bring the great variety of traditions of the Maggid together for the first time, including those cited

[261] See *Botsina De-Nehora*, Lemberg 1880; Piotrkow 1886.

[262] See *Menorat Zahav*, Warsaw 1902. On the figure of R. Zushya and his place in Hasidic memory, see Zsippi Kauffman, 'On the Portrait of a Saddiq: R. Zusha of Annopol', *Kabbalah* 30 (2013), pp. 273-302 [Hebrew].

[263] The *rebbes* of the Pshiskheh (Pol. Przysucha) school were the exception to this rule. On the deep ambivalence toward writing in this group, see Aviezer Cohen, '"I Wanted to write a Book... and I Would Call it 'Man'": The Attitude Toward Writing Homiletical Books in the Peshiskheh School', *Dimui* 28 (2006), pp. 4-18, 86 [Hebrew]; Michael Rosen, *The Quest for Authenticity: The Thought of Reb Simhah Bunim*, Jerusalem and New York 2008, pp. 167-169.

[264] THM was republished in Benei Berak 1990; all references in the present study refer to this edition. The Maggid's teachings also figure prominently in R. Nahman of Tcherin's thematic compendium *Derekh Hasidim,* Lemberg 1876.

in the works of his disciples. Klapholtz had no interest in identifying a single book as the most authentic representation of the Maggid's teachings, nor does he try to decide which of the versions of any particular teaching is the most correct. He simply displays the full spectrum of the Maggid's thought.[265] THM thus serves as a useful model for how the different traditions of the Maggid may be view together holistically, fully aware of both consistency and contradiction between them. However, occasionally Klapholtz cites traditions that are attributed to "the Maggid" that actually come from the R. Yehiel Mikhel, the Maggid of Zlotshev.[266] THM is an interesting conceptual model and a useful resource, but one must always return to the original sources from which Klapholtz collected the Maggid's teachings.

Let us conclude our description of these compendia by posing the question of who should be considered the author of the Maggid's books. Despite the fact that he claimed to have written down the Maggid's teachings at his master's behest, R. Solomon of Lutsk referred to R. Dov Baer as *ba'al ha-mehabber*, the "author" of MDL. Presumably R. Solomon was invoking the term "author" in a flexible and inclusive manner, not attempting to mislead the reader.[267] Instead of suggesting that the Maggid transcribed his

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[265] A similar point is made by Daniel Abrams regarding the work *Sefer Ba'al Shem Tov 'al ha-Torah*, a compendium of teachings ascribed to the BeSHT. Abrams applauds this format as an interesting model for studying the highly flexible and unstable literature of early Hasidism; see Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, p. 627. In his introduction to *Derekh Hasidim*, R. Nahman of Tcherin points out that some teachings from the Maggid and his students are in tension with one another, and he has no interest in determining which one of them is more "correct." His intention is simply to display the great profundity of these early Hasidic texts.

[266] For example, see THM, p. 286, quoting *Mevasser Tsedeq,* pp. 67-68; THM, p. 403-404, quoting from *Yosher Divrei Emet*, *quntres derekh emet* #3, fol. 146a. According to Kahn's notes, this attribution refers to none other than R. Yehiel Mikhel.

[267] See Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, pp. 8, 294, 456-458, 577; and, more broadly, Alastair Minnis, *Medieval Theory of Authorship: Scholastic Literary Attitudes in the Later Middle Ages*, Philadelphia 2010; *Author, Reader, Book: Medieval Authorship in Theory and Practice*, ed. S. Partridge and E. Kwakkel, Toronto 2011; *The Construction of Authorship: Textual Appropriation in Law and Literature*, ed. M. Woodmansee and P. Jaszi, Durham 1994. For an exploration of notions of authorship in

own homilies, or even that the written records are precise reconstructions of his sermons, I take R. Solomon to mean that MDL is a faithful textual representation of the Maggid's teachings. It is in this sense that he should be understood as their author.

CONDUCT LITERATURE (*HANHAGOT*)

In addition to Hasidic sermons and homilies, both oral and in written form, the early *hanhagot* (conduct) literature was an important medium through which Hasidic ideas and practices were spread.[268] These works represent a distinct sub-genre of Hasidic literature, although they were often printed in larger collections of the homilies. The *hanhagot* in particular incensed the *mitnaggedim*, because these texts sought to establish new types of normative behavior that complemented—and competed with—traditional praxis.[269] They were a very important element of Hasidic self-definition, and offered ways in which the ideas developed in the sermons could, and *should*, be embodied through ritual practices.

Of course, the *hanhagot* literature was not a unique invention of Hasidism. Indeed, whereas Piekarz underscores the continuity of Hasidic sermons with earlier Eastern European homiletical literature, Gries has demonstrated the great degree to which Hasidic *hanhagot* are inspired by medieval Jewish texts. This genre emerged as early as the twelfth century, embodied in works such as *Sefer Hasidim* and the numerous ethical wills. Works of *hanhagot*, including *Kitsur SheLaH*, were an important pathway through

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modern and post-modern literature, Seán Burke, *The Death and Return of the Author: Criticism and Subjectivity in Barthes, Foucault and Derrida*, Edinburgh 1998.

[268] Zeev Gries wrote the seminal work on the *hanhagot*; see his *The Conduct Literature*. See also Idel, *Hasidism*, p. 25; Elior, *Mystical Origins of Hasidism*, p. 15-16. See also Dinur, 'Origins of Hasidism', p. 90.

[269] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 150.

which kabbalistic customs and ideas of Safed began to circulate in seventeenth and eighteenth-century Europe.[270] The boundaries between *halakhah* and more popular *hanhagot* were often quite ambiguous, and in some cases the two terms were used almost interchangeably. This reflects the fact that the *hanhagot* possess a tremendous amount of authority.[271] The power of the *hanhagot*, Gries argues, lies in their ability to express the customs of a small group or elite fellowship through a readily accessible literary format. *Hanhagot* often include exhortations for people to read them regularly; this repetition became another dimension of their sacred or ritual component.[272]

Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer argued that the full radicalism of early Hasidism is found in the *hanhagot*, which she describes as "propaganda to the masses."[273] She believed that the Hasidic masters articulated their ideology in the *hanhagot* without any compromise, even in their attempt to missionize to a popular audience. Gries, however, has suggested that the *hanhagot* represent a relatively conservative element of the Hasidic movement. Even if the more radical elements found within them change details of laws or rituals, rarely does one find anything truly antinomian.[274] The radicalism of the *hanhagot* is rather found in the fact that they describe a worldview other than that defined by *halakhah*. If law is to some degree inflexible in its application and the universal norms

[270] See the *hanhagot* published in Solomon Schechter, 'Safed in the Sixteenth Century: Appendix A', *Studies in Judaism* 2, Philadelphia 1908, pp. 292-301; and *Toledoth ha-Ari*, ed. Benayahu, pp. 315-334; translated in Lawrence Fine, *Safed Spirituality: Rules of Mystical Piety, The Beginning of Wisdom*, New York 1984, pp. 30-77.

[271] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 15-22 (introduction). See also Avriel Bar-Levav, 'Ritualization of Jewish Life and Death in the Early Modern Period', *The Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 47.1 (2002), pp. 69-82.

[272] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, pp. 12-13 (introduction).

[273] Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 55.

[274] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 23 n. 103.

it demands, the *hanhagot* articulate a mode of ritual practice and piety that depends primarily on the individual.[275]

Hanhagot from the Maggid are integrated into the collections of his sermons and short teachings, such as MDL, LY and TSVHR. Other important lists of his *hanhagot* were published as separate sections in *Hayyim va-Hesed*,[276] SLA,[277] and ST.[278] Several short pamphlets of *hanhagot* also claim to represent the ideas of the Maggid, including *Darkhei Tsedeq* (Lemberg 1796).[279] We will quote from these sources throughout our study as a complement, and occasionally a challenge, to the ideas found in the Maggid's sermons.

MANUSCRIPTS

The teachings of early Hasidism were spread by means of both oral traditions and written texts. Some of the latter were printed as books or short pamphlets in the 1780s-1790s, but handwritten manuscripts had an important role in the dissemination of Hasidic ideas, including those of the Maggid.[280] Transcriptions of the R. Dov Baer's teachings

[275] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p 23-26 (introduction).

[276] *Hayyim va-Hesed*, pp. 1-8.

[277] SLA, pp. 53-57.

[278] ST. p. 4. These various lists of *hanhagot* were collected by Klapholtz and published together in THM, pp. 53-87 (introductory materials).

[279] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, pp. 314-353. The short tract *Darkhei Yesharim* (Zhytomir 1805) also claims to represent the *hanhagot* of the Maggid, although it purports to include teachings from the BeSHT as well. Weiss, 'Authorship and Literary Unity of the *Darkhei Yesharim*', pp. 170-182, noted that the work includes four sermons of the Maggid that had already been printed in OT, despite the compiler's claim that they were hitherto unpublished. Weiss suggested, however, that these sermons were published from a different manuscript and not lifted directly from OT.

[280] Several scholars have dealt with these manuscripts at great length, particularly those housed in the National Library of Israel. See Shlomo Zucker, 'An Early Hasidic Manuscript', *Kirjat Sefer* 49 (1973-1974), pp. 223-235 [Hebrew]; Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, MDL, *introduction* pp. 9-23; Gries, 'Editing of *Tsavat ha-Ribash*', pp. 187-210; idem, *Conduct Literature*, p. 151-181; Abrams, *Kabbalistic Manuscripts*

were already circulating within the Maggid's lifetime, and continued to do so after his death.[281] Early Hasidic masters quoted from them, referring to them as "copies" (*he'etaqot*)[282] or "manuscripts" (*kitvei yad*).[283] Indeed, it is possible that some of his students may have wished to study the manuscripts even after books were published. Printed works could be rather expensive, and some early Hasidic communities even preserved a sacrosanct place for handwritten texts after they had been printed.[284]

Gries argues that at least three of the Maggid's many disciples possessed copies of his teachings in written form: R. Levi Isaac, R. Shmu'el Shmelke, and R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk.[285] To this list we should add R. Solomon of Lutsk, who claimed that the Maggid asked him to write down his teachings, and R. Israel of Kozhenits, from whose collection several important compendia of the Maggid's teachings emerged. A number of manuscripts of the Maggid's teachings still exist. Let us refer to each of them briefly:

- JER NLI MS HEB 8°5198 (esp. fol. 20a-43b, 45a-65b, 66a-102a) – Includes a significant number of teachings from the Maggid, most likely transcribed by R. Levi Isaac.[286] Zucker and Gries have noted that although some of these teachings

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and Textual Theory, especially p. 626 n. 376. For a recent summary of their work, see the appendix to Hoffman, 'Where One Thinks', pp. 69-76.

[281] This fact is made clear from the story in R. Shlomo of Lutsk's introduction to MDL, as well as the dating of some teachings in Scholem MS RS 28. At least one teaching printed in collections of the Maggid's sermons concludes with the words *nero ya'ir* ("may his light shine on"), only appended to the names of living sages, suggesting that it too was written down within the Maggid's lifetime; see LY #256, fol. 78b, with parallels in OT #441, *aggadot*, p. 459; and OHE, fol. 60a.

[282] See *Tsemah ha-Shem li-Tsevi*, *mattot*, p. 624.

[283] *Be'erot ha-Mayim*, p. 150. See also ibid, p. 154, where the author quotes a teaching from the Maggid that he found in a manuscript belonging to Abraham Hayyim of Zlotshev.

[284] See Naftali Loewenthal, 'Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi's *Kitzur Likkutei Amarim* British Library Or 10456', *Studies in Jewish Manuscripts*, ed. J. Dan and K. Hermann, Tübingen 1999, pp. 89-137.

[285] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, pp. 157-8.

[286] See Zucker, 'Early Hasidic Manuscript', p. 228-233; Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'The BeSHT's Commentary to Psalm 107', *Tarbiz* 42 (1973), pp. 160-162 [Hebrew]; Abraham Rubinstein, 'Hasidism and Hasidim in Warsaw', *Sinai* 78 (1974), pp. 69-73 [Hebrew]; Gedalyah Nigal, 'Analysis of an Early Hasidic

match those in the printed collections of the Maggid's teachings,[287] this manuscript includes several dozens of teachings without parallels in MDL, LY, OT, KTVQ and OHE.[288] Unlike many of the other manuscripts, in which the teachings are either separated by slight punctuation marks or simply run together, the sermons in this collection are visibly distinguished from one another by clear lines.

- JER NLI MS HEB 8°3282 (esp. fol. 30a-43b, 44b, 45a-102a, 105a-185a) – This manuscript was in the possession of R. Hayyim Haykl of Amdur, and it includes some of his own teachings.[289] However, the Maggid's teachings included in 8°3282 seem to represent the transcriptions of R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev.[290] A significant number of these sermons have parallels in 38°5198,[291] and many of the teachings herein were published in MDL, LY, OT and OHE.[292]
- JER NLI MS HEB 8°1467 (fol. 40b-69a) – This compendium of the Maggid's teachings includes title page referring to the collection as *Sefer Liqqutei Amarim*, collected and combined (*nilqetu ve-nithabru*) by R. Shmu'el Shmelke of Nikolsburg. This manuscript may have been the basis for the Lemberg 1911 SLA attributed to R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, but it is also possible that the two were copied from the same original manuscript.[293] The format of this collection is quite strange. The text is presented in two neatly ordered columns, the whole work is divided into sections and chapter, has its own internal pagination independent of the 8°1467, the words *Liqqutei Amarim* appear at the top of each page, and, finally, the page claims that this work was originally published in Amsterdam. While to my knowledge there was no such printing, these facts together suggest that this section of 8°1467 may have been copied from a published book, or was written in such a way as to mimic a book.[294] If we could

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Manuscript', *Heqer ve-'Iyun be-Mada'ei ha-Yahadut*, ed. E. Carmon, Haifa 1976, pp. 177-192 [Hebrew]; Gries, *Conduct Literature* p. 154.

[287] Comparison reveals that the teachings in fol. 88a-90b seem to have been copied from MDL, and the words *Liqqutei Amarim* appear on top of fol. 89a.

[288] Zeev Gries has created an extensive and detailed list of all of these parallels, in addition to cataloguing all of the passages in this manuscript that have not yet appeared in print. His notes are housed in the Scholem Collection of the National Library of Israel; see Scholem MS RS 35.

[289] See fol. 103a-104b.

[290] Gershom Scholem, 'The Historical Image of Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov', *The Latest Phase: Essays on Hasidism by Gershom Scholem*, ed. D. Assaf and E. Liebes, Jerusalem 2008, p. 135 [Hebrew].

[291] Zucker, 'Early Hasidic Manuscript', pp. 228-229 n. 31, argues that parts of 38°3282 may even have been copied from 38°5198.

[292] In fact, fol. 105a-133a may have been copied from the first edition of MDL.

[293] If so, the manuscript published SLA may have been a collection of teachings from the Maggid owned by R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk and taken with him when he moved to the land of Israel in 1787. See Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 152 n. 15.

[294] It was not uncommon for eighteenth-century publishers of Hebrew books in Poland and Germany to place the word "Amsterdam" on the title page. This referred to the type of font being used, but it also granted the work greater prestige by implying that it was printed in Western Europe. In fact, many scribes

date this part of the manuscript to before the publication of MDL, that would make this the first book of the Maggid's teachings. The Maggid's name appears with the blessing affixed to the title of those who are already dead, but no such honorific is given to R. Shmu'el Shmelke. That could give us a tentative dating of between 1773, when he moved to Nikolsburg, and 1778, the year of his death.

- Scholem MS RS 28 (202 fol.) – This private manuscript was used by Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer as the primary text of comparison in her edition of MDL. According to fol. 40b, this collection represents the teachings of the Maggid as they were transcribed by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev,[295] thought it also refers to other existence of other manuscripts from which the writer was copying.[296] In a few places this manuscript refers to the Maggid as being alive, demonstrating that at least some of these homilies were written down during his lifetime.[297] Parallels to these teachings were published in MDL, later OT, OHE, KTVQ and ST. Schatz-Uffenheimer believed that this was the very manuscript held by R. Zvi of Yampola mentioned in the front matter of OHE, which he claimed was copied from that of R. Levi Isaac himself.
- JER NLI MS HEB 8°5307 (fol. 1a-117b) – This collection is the third of the manuscripts used by Schatz-Uffenheimer. Though the sermons are nowhere attributed to the Maggid, this manuscript also includes many teachings that were printed in LY addition to those of MDL.[298] The descendants of the original owner and author claim that this collection was copied from a different manuscript at the beginning of the nineteenth century.
- JER NLI MS HEB 8°5979 (110 fol.) – This manuscript, dated c. 1776, is almost entirely composed of teachings from the Maggid. It includes many sermons that appear in MDL, with some slight differences in wording, as well as teachings included in OHE, though their ordering in this manuscript is quite different. Some of the teachings included in this collection also appear in SLA, which has led Gries to argue that it is related to 8°1467.[299]

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used this type of letters when copying manuscripts in a conscious effort to mimic print. However, it is somewhat more rare for publishers to claim erroneously that the work was printed in Amsterdam. See Emile G.L. Schrijver, '"Be-ôtiyyôt Amsterdam" Eighteenth-century Hebrew Manuscript Production in Central Europe: The Case of Jacob ben Judah Leib Shamas', *Quaerendo* 20.1 (1990), pp. 24-62, esp. p. 30; and L. Fuks, 'Amsterdam: Hebrew Printing', *European Judaism* 5.2 (1971), pp. 17-20. This manuscript also includes material in Yiddish (fol. 70a-81b). One of these teachings was attributed to the Maggid or his student R. Shmu'el Shmelke; see Meir Eidelbaum, 'A Rare Hasidic Sermon in Yiddish', *Sinai* 88 (1981), pp. 165-179. This identification of the homily, however, was definitively disproven by the late Yehoshua Mondshein, 'Truly a Rare Hasidic Sermon?', *Sinai* 90 (1982), pp. 93-94, who demonstrated that the sermons originated in the Habad court.

[295] This manuscript also includes teachings in the name of the Rabbi of Zelekhev, who can be none other than R. Levi Isaac; see fol. 73a, 139a, 145a

[296] See fol. 19b, 115a

[297] See fol. 13b.

[298] For example, see fol. 90a; and cf. LY #134, fol. 40b-41b.

[299] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 165.

- MOS RSL 182:353 (forty-six fol.) –This manuscript was recently uncovered in the Russian State Library in Moscow.[300] Most of the teachings within appear in MDL with minor changes in language, ordering and the divisions between them.[301] This text also includes a teaching from R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, referring to him with the honorific of a Hasidic leader who has already died.[302] Thus the manuscript, or the original text from which it may have been copied, must have been written after R. Shne'ur Zalman's death in 1812, thirty years after the first edition of MDL was published.
- Chabad MS 187, 1821 and 2220 – These three manuscripts are housed in the Chabad Library at the movement's headquarters in New York, where they were briefly on display between September 1996 and February 1997. I have been unable to see these texts, but in a private correspondence the chief librarian Rabbi Berel Levin informed me the material found within them has not been published. Even if this is true, we still do not know whether or not these manuscripts match the printed texts word for word, and if there are significant differences in the ways in which the teachings are ordered or divided.

These collections, all of which include a significant number of the Maggid's sermons, are complemented by manuscripts of several later compilations of sermons from different Hasidic leaders.[303]

A significant number of these manuscripts have been attributed to R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, and several bear his name explicitly.[304] However, if this identification is correct, it seems rather strange that R. Solomon of Lutsk makes no mention of this fact in

[300] All references to this manuscript follow the original pagination, which begins with fol. 10a.

[301] However, this manuscript seems to follow the versions of the teachings found in MS RS 25 and 8°5307; cf. fol. 12b and MDL #30-31, p. 49-50, and MS RS 25, fol. 164b and 8°5307, fol. 6a.

[302] See fol. 15a.

[303] For example, a privately held and unpublished manuscript of Rabbi Israel ben Shalom of Rozhin, private collection, written in Briceni c. 1870, collects together great number of teachings from R. Israel of Ruzhin, the Maggid's great-grandson, but includes traditions from the Maggid on fol. 51a, 65b, 68b, and 73a. See also JER SCHOC 17379, fol. 15a, 20b (second half of 19th c.); and Montreal-Elberg 177, fol. 5a-6a, for five teachings from the Maggid. Bar Ilan 1030-Moussaief 114 (c. 1817) includes some twenty-four folios of the Maggid's teachings, perhaps taken from the printed work *Liqqutei Amarim* (MDL). This text is interesting not for its content but because of the handwriting, which is not typical of the script used in Eastern Europe. I am preparing a separate article detailing the importance of this particular manuscript.

[304] A later Hasidic tradition claims that R. Levi Isaac kept a book with him in which he would write down every word that the Maggid said, transcribing not only his sermons but also his ordinary conversations and anecdotes. See *Divrei David*, *haqdamat ha-melaqet*, fol. 2b. It is interesting to note that this tradition appears for the first time in a book printed in Husyatin 1904, just a few years after a collection of the Maggid's teachings written down by Levi Isaac of Barditshev was printed in that very same town.

his introduction to MDL.[305] It is possible that they were copying down the Maggid's teachings at different times, but perhaps there may have been some rivalry between the two. Might R. Solomon have been alluding to R. Levi Isaac when he relates that other people were writing down the Maggid's teachings without truly understanding them?

The silence from the opposite direction as well is noteworthy as well.[306] R. Levi Isaac gave his approbation to MDL, but only to the Barditshev 1808 printing, surely at the request of a publisher hoping to capitalize on his reputation in that city. In this endorsement R. Levi Isaac refers only to the importance of respecting the work's copyright and refraining from reprinting it. He says nothing regarding how the book was edited or its felicity to the Maggid's sermons, and, perhaps most importantly, R. Levi Isaac is silent regarding his own efforts to write down his master's teachings. If a great many of the sermons in MDL were indeed based on his transcriptions, the fact that he makes no reference to this in his approbation is remarkable.[307]

We can only speculate as to how these manuscripts were formed. The longer ones seem to have copied teachings from the Maggid from earlier manuscripts, combining them together in a new order. A few rare passages are accompanied by dates, or are framed as questions and answers between the Maggid and his disciple. But we do not know how long after the fact these teachings were originally transcribed. Many of the sermons in these manuscripts are long and intricate, and it may be that the Maggid's students wrote down his teachings either as they heard them or shortly afterward. But we

[305] R. Solomon is also absent from the tales about the Maggid and his followers in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*.

[306] Scholem MS RS 28, fol. 188b, however, mentions a teaching from the Maggid that R. Levi Isaac received from R. Solomon of Lutsk, but to my knowledge this case is unique.

[307] R. Levi Isaac gave an approbation to each book published in Barditshev during his lifetime. It is possible that such endorsements had become perfunctory, and R. Levi Isaac may never have examined this printing of MDL, which was published shortly before his death.

cannot rule out that the sermons may have been reconstructed from memory some time later, which must have been the case for that were delivered on the Sabbath or holidays.[308]

These manuscripts complicate our study of the Maggid's sermons, given the uncertainties regarding their authorship, provenance and the relationship between them. Some of the manuscripts may have been transcribed by students of the Maggid who heard the teachings directly from their master, while others may have been copied and pieced together from preexisting manuscripts. Still others may have been based primarily upon printed works. Only a careful comparative study of these manuscripts will demonstrate the degrees of variance between them and reveal which sections have not yet been published. The goal of the present study is to analyze the full spectrum of teachings on language attributed to the Maggid. I will draw upon sermons found in these manuscripts, but this type of comprehensive textual project must be left for another day.[309]

Works by the Maggid's Disciples

In addition to the published collections and manuscripts of the Maggid's sermons, the works of his students are another important repository of his teachings.[310] R. Dov

[308] The Habad Hasidic community has long charged certain individuals gifted with prodigious auditory memories, known as *hozrim* ("repeaters"), with memorizing the *rebbe*'s teachings and repeating them verbatim after the conclusion of the Sabbath; see Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, p. 88.

[309] Abrams has been calling for such a study for many years. His proposal differs from most synoptic projects, because no one manuscript or book would be prized as the base text against which the authority of all other witnesses would be vetted. See his *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory*, pp. 625-628.

[310] Scholars have long recognized this fact, and generally consider traditions quoted in his students work as representative of his thought. Later Hasidic leaders were aware the importance of these traditions as well. See *Ohalei Ya'aqov*, Jerusalem 2006, pp. 86-88, where the author recommends that "one who wishes to taste the words of his [the Maggid's] teachings should look to the books of his disciples, for his spirit speaks in them and his word is upon their tongue" (based on 2 Sam. 23:2). He recommends against reading the printed works of the Maggid, since they were not copied down as he said them, and the teachings included in them were shortened and simplified. He also notes that the very *experience* has been lost in the

Baer had a great many disciples, and his teachings are quoted in dozens of early Hasidic books.[311] Of course, these valuable traditions must be used with some caution. There is undoubtedly a process of interpretation anytime a student records the words of a teacher, either by actually writing them down or simply holding them in his memory.[312] However, a significant element of mediation is present in *all* extant written records of the Maggid's teachings, since it was his disciples who transcribed the sermons attributed to him and published in his name.

It would be naïve to approach the Maggid's teachings as presented in the works of his students as verbatim transcriptions of the homilies. But there is no reason to assume a qualitatively greater level of interpretation *a priori* when his students are citing the Maggid in the course of their own homilies. It is possible that the wish to make his views

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writing process, which presumably applies to both the collections of his teachings and the quotations in his disciples' works. Cf. Abraham Kahn's introductions to LY and MDL.

[311] Israel Klapholtz estimates that the Maggid is quoted in at least seventy early Hasidic works; see THM, *haqdamah*, p. 41. Teachings from the Maggid also appear in works by contemporary Hasidic leaders who were by no means his disciples, such as R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye and R. Moses Ephraim Hayyim of Sudylkow.

[312] Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 137-142, argued that historians should not use the many citations of teachings from the BeSHT recorded in the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye to reconstruct the BeSHT's thought. Etkes offered a critique of Rosman's position, emphasizing that R. Jacob Joseph's citations are reliable witnesses of his understanding of the BeSHT's teachings, even if they do not represent verbatim quotes from his master; see Immanuel Etkes, 'The Historical BESHT: Between Reconstruction and Deconstruction', *Tarbiz* 66 (1997), pp. 432-433 [Hebrew]. More recently, Rosman has provided nuance for his perspective. Although Jacob Joseph's citations of his master should not be considered word for word transcriptions of the BeSHT's teachings, they may indeed represent an authentic element of spiritual legacy for which the BeSHT has been remembered; see the new introduction to his *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Ba'al Shem Tov*, Oxford and Portland 2013, pp. xlii-xliv; and idem, 'Hebrew Sources on the Baal Shem Tov: Usability vs. Reliability', *Jewish History* 27 (2013), pp. 163-166.

Similar questions face the historian of Kabbalah who reads Hayyim Vital's transcriptions of the teachings of his master R. Isaac Luria; see Ronit Meroz, 'Faithful Transmission versus Innovation: Luria and his Disciples', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism 50 Years After*, ed. P. Schäfer and J. Dan, Tübingen 1993, pp. 257-274. See also the insightful remarks of Louis Ginzberg, *Students, Scholars and Saints*, Philadelphia 1945, p. 132: "Some of the works ascribed to the Gaon [of Vilna] were really composed by his disciples, who put into writing the lectures and remarks of the master, and are therefore to be used with great care. No teacher would like to be held responsible for the lecture notes of his students—even the cleverest of them." For a broader reflection on this phenomenon outside of the specifically Jewish context, see Blair, 'Note Taking as Transmission', pp. 85-107.

support their own ideas might lead his students to transform them, either consciously or subconsciously, but one need not adopt a hermeneutic of suspicion and assume that this is always the case. Unless proven otherwise, the Maggid's teachings quoted in his students' works are not necessarily more heavily interpreted than the written sermons preserved in his name.[313]

Defining who should be considered a disciple of the Maggid is a very difficult question.[314] Rarely do we know how often individuals came to visit the Maggid, or if they remained with him at his *beit midrash* in Mezritch for a significant length of time.[315] But neither length of stay nor frequency of visit is necessarily indicative of the degree of his influence. Nor is there a direct correlation between which students quote the Maggid with the greatest frequency and those who were his closest students. The intensely mystical R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk was deeply influenced by the theology of the Maggid, but his sermons refer to R. Dov Baer only once.[316] This is also true of the homilies of R. Hayyim Haykl of Amdur, for although he does not quote the Maggid

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[313] Mor Altshuler argued that virtually all teachings quoted in the name of "the Maggid" in early Hasidic books, even those of R. Dov Baer's students, are actually none other than R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zlotshev; see her *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*, Leiden and Boston 2006, esp. pp. 52 n. 6, 358-360. Her claims, however, were effectively dismantled by Mendel Piekarz's devastating review 'A Light that Does Not illuminate', *Haaretz*, July 18, 2003. In fact, Zeev Gries has proven that sometimes the opposite happened: teachings from the Maggid were erroneously attributed to R. Yehiel Mikhel; see Gries, *Conduct Literature*, pp. 116-118. Yet Altshuler's point that quotations from "the Maggid" may indeed refer to R. Yehiel Mikhel—or indeed, to R. Israel Hapstein, the Maggid of Kozhenits—in *some* early Hasidic sources is valid, and one must be careful with teachings attributed only to "the Maggid." See above, p. 73 and n. 266.

[314] We will devote more time to this question in the following chapter, but for several lists of the Maggid's students, see Israel Berger, *'Eser Orot,* Piotrkow 1907, p. 17b-18a, who cites thirty-nine of the most prominent; Menahem Mendel Bodek, *Seder ha-Dorot ha-Hadash,* Lemberg 1865; reprinted Jerusalem, 2000, pp. 35-49. All citations refer to this edition.

[315] R. Aaron ha-Kohen says that during his youth he spent two or three weeks with the Maggid each year in the cities of in Tultshin and Rovno. If this is true, it suggests that the Maggid was already some type of a public figure before moving to Mezritch, and that some students came to him for significant periods of time; see his *Ve-Tsivah ha-Kohen*, p. 84.

[316] See *Peri ha-Arets*, *ki tissa*, p. 67. The Maggid's influence upon his student was so profound that the original editors of SLA published it under R. Menahem Mendel's name rather than that of his teacher.

directly, even a cursory reading of his teachings reveals the Maggid's influence.[317] Nor do teachings of the Maggid appear in the book *Beit Aaron*, a collection of traditions from the first three generations of *rebbes* of Karlin Dynasty.[318] On the other hand, R. Jacob Isaac Horowitz of Lublin does not seem to have spent a great deal of time with the Maggid in person, but traditions from the R. Dov Baer abound in his works.[319]

For the purposes of this study, I will define as one of the Maggid's disciples someone who met him on at least one occasion and was in a position to cite teachings from him firsthand—and does so. This rubric, however, should not be misconstrued as a conclusive meter of authenticity. Teachings, stories and traditions quoted by later Hasidim who did not know the Maggid during his lifetime may very well represent oral parts of his legacy that were not written down during the first few decades after his death.[320]

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[317] For a few examples of the Maggid's influence, see *Hayyim va-Hesed*, *ki tissa* #90, p. 47; *naso* #115, p. 55; *be-ha'alotekha* #117, p. 56-58; *hagigah* #483, p. 111; *shavu'ot* #557, pp. 192-193. Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer points out an instance in which a manuscript in the possession of R. Hayyim Haykl preserves a teaching of the Maggid, see *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 159-160. She, and to a lesser degree Weiss, underscored the importance of R. Hayyim Haykl as an interpreter of the Maggid's teachings; see Weiss, 'Via Passiva', p. 71; Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 67-73, 158-161, 209-213, 320-21.

[318] For a story about the Maggid and the first R. Aaron of Karlin, as told by his grandson, see *Beit Aharon*, fol. 145b. Berger, '*Eser Orot*, p. 14b, quotes a teaching from the Maggid found in *Beit Aharon*. I have not been able to locate the original version. Even given the fact that R. Aaron the Great of Karlin was functioning as an independent Hasidic leader by the time of the Maggid's death, this lack is still surprising.

[319] See, inter alia, *Zot Zikhron*, fol. 18a; Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland', pp. 200-204. R. Jacob Isaac also quotes from other members of the Maggid's circle; see *Zot Zikhron*, fol. 40a.

[320] Citations of the Maggid's teachings continue to appear throughout the nineteenth century in Hasidic works written by individuals who might have heard them from the Maggid's disciples or read them in a book, but were too young to have heard them from the Maggid himself. An excellent case study is the book *Ma'or va-Shemesh* by R. Qalonymous Qalman Epstein of Krakow. He came of age in the generation after the Maggid's death. He was a student of R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk and R. Jacob Isaac of Lublin, both of whom were disciples of the Maggid. See *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, *qedoshim*, p. 365, for a teaching he heard in his youth attributed to the Maggid; ibid, *shabbat rosh hodesh*, p. 251, where the author cites a tradition that he heard from his teacher R. Jacob Isaac in the Maggid's name. In one case R. Kalonymous Kalman cites a teaching from his teacher R. Elimelekh, who heard it from the Maggid. R. Dov Baer, in turn, apparently related it in the name of the BeSHT; see *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, *shemini*, p. 315. For a very interesting late tradition on the nature of language, see also *Bi'ur Menahem,* Józefów 1885, *introduction*, unpaginated.

The Maggid's ideas reached his students by means of four channels. First, a disciple may have received a teaching from R. Dov Baer directly, whether through a public sermon or personal instruction. Second, he may have heard it quoted and transmitted orally by another of the Maggid's students.[321] Third, he may have gleaned it from handwritten manuscripts. Finally, even a student who had studied personally with the Maggid might have become aware of new teachings once they appeared in printed collections. Of course, it is possible that students absorbed the master's ideas in more than one way. Though all of these avenues are represented in the works of his students, the first two are by far the most common. This suggests that the oral pathways of communication were more important as well as more accessible than the written pathways of communication.[322]

In many cases the Maggid's disciples cite their master's teachings in a way that reveals the complexity of this transmission. In some instances a student will quote a teaching from the Maggid and puzzle over its meaning, then offer his own interpretation of his master's cryptic words.[323] In others, students admit to lacking clarity altogether and simply offer their master's teachings as they heard them,[324] or claim to have written

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[321] R. Dov Baer's students often quote traditions that they heard *be-shem* ("in the name") of the Maggid. However, in some cases the disciple offers the name of the other student from whom he heard the teaching; see *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *balaq*, p. 363; *Ve-Tsivah ha-Kohen*, ch. 13, p. 105; *Bat 'Ayin*, *huqqat*, p. 367.The fact that the Maggid's disciples heard things from other students in his name suggests that R. Dov Baer's teachings were indeed being transmitted orally.

[322] For examples of disciples citing from manuscripts, see *Yosher Divrei Emet* #19, fol. 120a (referring to LY); #17, p. 118b (where he cites that only a few people had them); #15, fol. 117b. See also #19, fol. 120a, which refers to teaching found in MDL and thus implies that R. Meshullam Feibush had a selection of early manuscripts. Judging from the frequency by which it is cited, MDL seems to have been the most popular and influential of the early published collections of his teachings. This may in part be due to the theological sophistication of this book, but more likely because it was the first to be printed. See, inter alia, *Mevasser Tsedeq*, *be-shalah*, pp. 53-54; *be-har*, p. 164; and *Ginzei Yosef*, *nitsavim*, 2:193.

[323] See *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *va-yera*, p. 34; *Liqqutei Torah*, *masa'ei*, fol. 96b-96c.

[324] *Zot Zikaron*, fol. 43a; cf. OHE, fol. 62a-b.

exactly what they heard but acknowledge that they do not remember them fully or correctly.[325] Indeed, in some cases the Maggid's disciples offer a summary or paraphrase of his teaching, acknowledging that their account is somewhat imprecise.[326] Sometimes a student will cite a tradition from the Maggid regarding a certain biblical verse or rabbinic teaching, and then consciously offer a different interpretation than that of his teacher.[327] In another, a student records a difficult teaching of the Maggid and puzzles over its meaning, only to explain that it was clarified by an explanation given in a work by another of R. Dov Baer's disciples.[328]

A detailed account of the reception of the Maggid's homilies and the image of his religious personality as they were preserved his students' works of has yet to be written. Some of the Maggid's teachings and interpretations of biblical verses or rabbinic passages are also found in the works of his students without being explicitly attributed to him, though they rarely appear verbatim.[329] These subtle influences, which are particularly difficult to identify, reflect the profound conceptual influence of the Maggid's theology upon his disciples' thought.[330]

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[325] *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *va-yeshev*, 58; ibid, *qorah*, p. 339; ibid, *shoftim*, p. 401.

[326] For example, see *Zikaron Zot*, *lekh lekha*, fol. 10a.

[327] *Mevasser Tsedeq*, *va-yiqra*, p. 102.

[328] See *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *noah*, pp. 49-51.

[329] See *Bat 'Ayin*, *toledot*, p. 42, where the author cites a tradition that he heard from R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir. However, in R. Ze'ev Wolf's own work *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *derush haftarat va-yera*, p. 34, this same teaching is explicitly attributed to the Maggid. For an exceptional case, see *Ohev Yisra'el*, *'eqev*, p. 252, which parallels MDL #85, p. 148, and OT #164, *'eqev*, pp. 213-214. See below, n. 1714

[330] We should remember that this is true of the Maggid's sermons as well, which are infused with the BeSHT's teachings even when not cited explicitly. To my knowledge, none of the Maggid's students consciously reflect upon the relationship between their teachings and those of their master in writing. R. Shne'ur Zalman, however, claims in one letter that all of his words are those of his teacher and his son, i.e. the Maggid and his son R. Abraham. However, this claim should be understood in its context. In this letter R. Shne'ur Zalman is responding to the claims of R. Abraham Kalisker that he has abandoned the Maggid's path and is doing something else entirely. See below, p. 136.

While some of his disciples simply preserved his teachings, it is clear that many of R. Dov Baer's students carried forward his theological project by exploring and developing his ideas in their own way.[331] In order to fully understand this, we must chart specific ideas as they were adopted and reinterpreted by his disciples. The teachings of R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, which have been compared to those of his teachers by a number of recent scholars, provide an excellent illustration of this point. Schatz-Uffenheimer offered the following description of the relationship between the teachings of R. Shne'ur Zalman and those of the Maggid:

> There were many disciples in Mezhirech [sic], each one of whom clearly derived his own personal message from the teaching of the Maggid, but who nevertheless shared a common ground giving meaning to the concept, "the school of the Maggid." Within the pages of the *Tanya*, one finds a completely different spirit which, more than it seeks to explain the teachings of the Maggid (albeit in a more rationalist manner), seeks to substitute for it another, substantially different teaching.[332]

She interprets R. Shne'ur Zalman's teachings as having been inspired by those of his master, but the two began to diverge significantly as R. Shne'ur Zalman's thought matured. Weiss, however, argued that R. Shne'ur Zalman's theology follows that of the Maggid quite closely. In his view, R. Shne'ur Zalman's teachings simply represent a new stage in the conceptual development and complexity of the Maggid's religious ethos.[333]

Yet perhaps the picture is somewhat more complicated than a simple question of diachronic continuity or development. Arthur Green has recently suggested that the

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[331] Krassen, *Uniter of Heaven*, p. 165, notes that although R. Meshullam Feibush claims to convey only those teachings that he received from his masters, he clearly adds things of his own. Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 238-239, has shown that he relegates some of the more radical elements of the Maggid's spiritual path, such as the emphasis on *devequt*, to a few of the elites.

[332] Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism and Mysticism*, p. 260, and, more broadly, pp. 255-289.

[333] Weiss, 'Mystical Hasidism and the Hasidism of Faith', pp. 277-285. For a summary of their debate endorsing Weiss's perspective, see Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, pp. 196-199.

homilies of the different figures in the Maggid's school may be read together as an internal conversation, or debate, regarding the major issues of Hasidic theology and practice.[334] While the Maggid's students agreed on a great many things, they disagree sharply in their understanding of key theological ideas as well as specific devotional practices like prayer and study. These ideational differences, claims Green, emerged in Hasidism's transformation from a circle of elite devotees into a mass movement. He examines the question of leadership as a case study, demonstrating that the sermons of the Maggid's disciples offer a wide variety of different models for the *rebbe* or *tsaddiq*. Some perspectives, such as those of the Maggid and R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, describe an elitist form of spiritual leadership. Other voices in the conversation, such as R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, emphasize a much more popular approach to leadership.

Of course, Green does not assume that the homilies printed in early Hasidic books are transcriptions of real conversations that took place in the Maggid's *beit midrash*. Rather, he suggests that these teachings from the Hasidic movement's earliest years were the medium through which the Maggid's disciples explored and articulated their conceptions of what Hasidic thought and society should become. We cannot know whether or not these issues were debated openly and in person, since it is not clear to what extent these major figures overlapped at the Maggid's *beit midrash*. However, they are all exploring similar questions of theology, divine service, and society, and their positions on these issues are notably different.

The students of the Maggid each developed their own theological vision, influenced by their master's teachings and perhaps by those of their colleagues as well.

[334] Green, 'Around the Maggid's Table', pp. 73-106.

The scope of the present study will be limited to the Maggid's own teachings, but those interested in how his ideas were expanded upon, rearticulated, and transformed by his disciples will find some discussion of this in the footnotes.[335] These references are meant to be exemplary, not exhaustive, but will form the framework of a later study I plan to devote to the theology of early Hasidism. Regarding the question of language in particular, figures such as R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir, R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, R. Hayyim Haykl of Amdur, R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil and R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady were intensely concerned with role of thought and words in religious life. I hope to turn to each of them in good time.

Looking beyond Maggid's immediate context, we do not yet fully understand the continued influence of R. Dov Baer's personality and teachings on Hasidism as it developed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Maggid is important to Hasidic groups in different ways. For example, his image in the Habad community reflects their understanding of the Maggid as R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady's spiritual and intellectual father.[336] The Hasidic communities of Ruzhin are his actual descendants, and they have preserved his memory in a different way. In times of crisis, later Hasidic leaders have looked back to the Maggid for inspiration and renewal

[335] Here we might recall the words of R. Abraham of Kalisk, who accused his colleague R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady of "garbing the words of the Maggid, which are truly the teachings of the BeSHT, in the holy language of R. Isaac Luria." See David Zvi Heilman, *Iggerot Ba'al ha-Tanya u-Venei Doro*, Jerusalem 1953, p. 105.

[336] For example, Yehoshua Mondshein, *Migdal 'Oz*, Kefar Habad, 1980, p. 373 recently published an early manuscript claiming that the Maggid told R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady that a person's spiritual ability is largely determined by the essential nature with which they are born. Of course, this fits with Habad interpretation of a *tsaddiq* as a gifted leader who is qualitatively and intrinsically different than his disciples. See *Sefer ha-Tanya*, *sefer shel beinonim*, ch. 1.

spiritual.[337] And in a very different way, neo-Hasidic theologians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have also sought inspiration in the teachings of early Hasidism, including those of the Maggid.[338]

CONCLUSION:

How do we account for the variations and contradictions in the Maggid's teachings as they appear in the published collections and in the writings of his disciples? Moshe Idel has suggested that it is possible to chart the evolution of the BeSHT's theology by analyzing the variations in teachings attributed to him.[339] We have relatively little ground for doing this with the Maggid's sermons, since there is no reliable way of determining when the vast majority of them were delivered. There are a few exceptions

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[337] R. Abraham Kahn's republication of the Maggid's works reveals an interesting historical note about the modern Hasidic world. Sensing the decline in Hasidic spirituality and the caliber of its leadership, R. Kahn hoped that the study of this book would spark a renewed sense of mystical devotion in contemporary Hasidic society. He argues that since they have no real leaders, modern Hasidim must return to reading the works of the early masters, whose power still dwells within their words. R. Kahn felt that the teachings of the Maggid were particularly suited for this task because they serve as an "introduction to many great and precious matters"; see the unpaginated introductions to his editions of MDL and LY

R. Abraham Kahn was a remarkable figure. He published other early Hasidic books, such as those of R. Aaron ha-Levi of Staroselye (d. 1828), perhaps in an attempt to build a new Hasidic canon. The Maggid was a part of this greater project. But Hungarian Hasidim in general see themselves as connected to the BeSHT more than to the Maggid. None of the Maggid's immediate students settled there. For another reflection on the Maggid's spiritual message and his role in the formation of Hasidism, see *Ohalei Ya'aqov*, pp. 20, 82-92. He saw the Maggid, together with the BeSHT, as the progenitor of a new path in the service of God that saved the people from spiritual decline, and the threat of the Frankists and the Jewish enlightenment. The Maggid ordered his students to descend to the masses and uplift them by bringing them into the world of holiness, showing them the profundity of the spiritual life and helping abolish rote worship and superficial religious observance.

[338] Zeitlin, 'Fundaments of Hasidism', pp. 11-52; Arthur Green, *Radical Judaism: Rethinking God and Tradition,* New Haven 2010, pp. 68, 174 n. 49, 187 n. 48. In a certain sense Lederberg's more popular book, which introduces the Maggid's thought to a contemporary Hebrew readership, is also a very recent addition to this trend.

[339] See Moshe Idel 'Prayer, Ecstasy, and "Alien Thoughts" in the Religious Experience of the Besht', *Let the Old Make Way for the New: Studies in the Social and Cultural History of Eastern European Jewry Presented to Immanuel Etkes*, *Vol. 1: Hasidism and the Musar Movement*, ed. D. Assaf and A. Rapoport-Albert, Jerusalem 2009, pp. 57-120, esp. pp. 113-118 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Your Word', pp. 276-286; and Rosman's critique of this methodology in his 'Hebrew Sources', pp. 164-166.

to this rule,[340] and in some cases the town with which he is associated with may suggest a range for dating that particular teaching.[341] But information of this type is quite scarce indeed, and it is nearly impossible to date most of the Maggid's sermons with any degree of certainty.

One possible method for establishing the authenticity of a certain teaching is to check if it is found independently in the Maggid's name in the works of several different students. This is particularly useful if it can be compared to a sermon attributed to the Maggid in one of the published collections of his teachings. Even if there is no single *Urtext* of his homilies, perhaps this might allow us to verify which ideas go back to the Maggid himself. However, this approach rules out the possibility of using traditions that appear in the work of only one or two of his disciples without any parallel in his printed sermons. Only accepting an idea that can be verified in many different works assumes that all of Maggid's teachings were delivered publicly to a large group of his disciples, all of whom must have been visiting his *beit midrash* at the same time. As we will see in the upcoming chapter, we have no evidence that all of the Maggid's students were in Mezritch simultaneously. It is quite likely that they came independently, and perhaps stayed in residence for rather short periods of time.

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[340] JER NLI MS HEB 8°3282, fol. 94a includes teachings given by the Maggid in the month of Elul 1770; and Scholem MS RS 28, fol. 112a records sermons delivered by in Elul 1772, shortly before his death. See also ibid, fol. 65b-70a, for a series of teachings delivered on subsequent nights of Hanukkah. MDL #209, pp. 334-335, printed as the final passage in the work in all editions since the second printing, is framed as a further explanation given by "the holy Rabbi and author" regarding a teaching that appears earlier in the volume and. In a few instances R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady quotes something he heard from the Maggid on a specific date or season; see his *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, Brooklyn 1988, #14 p. 69.

[341] R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye and R. Moses Ephraim Hayyim of Sudlikow both refer to him as "Torchiner," a town in which R. Dov Baer lived early in his career. Most others, including the majority of his students, refer to him as the Maggid of Mezritch. R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk and R. Joseph Isaac of Lublin cite R. Dov Baer as the Maggid of Rovno, perhaps suggesting that they knew the Maggid toward the end of his life. However, this evidence may prove to be no more than circumstantial. R. Jacob Joseph cites him as Torchiner in a teaching from the fall of 1767, long after the Maggid had settled for Mezritch.

Introduction

The published collections of the Maggid's teachings do not seem to follow a chronological order, and it is possible that the first homily ever transcribed appears immediately after his last teaching in print. Thus we cannot determine the chronology from the order of the published books, and only in very rare cases is it possible to do so in the manuscripts. Scribal errors must certainly have crept into the texts, especially (but not limited to) when they were circulating as manuscripts. We cannot rule out the possibility of censorship, since particularly radical teachings may have been suppressed, amended, or consciously prevented being written down.[342] And given that several of the Maggid's students were transcribing his teachings, we should expect the different textual witnesses to have divergent styles, not to mention differences in understanding and interpretation.

In order to demonstrate the textual fluidity of the Maggid's corpus, I have prepared a table that charts the development of one of the Maggid's homilies. This sermon, the famous teaching about "the two trumpets" (Num. 10:2), is often considered one of the Maggid's most interesting and theologically challenging homilies.[343] The table demonstrates that there is a relatively high degree of consistency between the different printed versions, the handwritten manuscripts, and the ways in which the Maggid is cited by his immediate disciples. However, there are small differences between each one of the textual witnesses, some of which are substantive. Furthermore, this provides a case study for the ways in which the Maggid's disciples quote their teacher, as well as later Hasidic masters who cited his teachings without having heard them firsthand.

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[342] On censorship, see Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 376. This trend continued even into the twentieth century. For example, the writings of R. Abraham Isaac Kook were heavily edited and shaped by disciples; see Avinoam Rosenak, 'Hidden Diaries and New Discoveries: The Life and Thought of Rabbi A.I. Kook', *Shofar* 25 (2007), pp. 111-147; Yehudah Mirsky, *Rav Kook: Mystic in a Time of Revolution*, New Haven and London 2014, pp. 231-232.

[343] For an analysis of the content of this sermon, see below, pp. 495-497.

The quest for a stable, fully cohesive collection of sermons is predicated on the assumption that there should be an overall consistency throughout the Maggid's teachings. He was without a doubt a powerful and original mystical thinker, but he was not a systematic theologian. There is no reason to take for granted that the Maggid intended all of his teachings to fit together seamlessly and without contradiction.[344] Furthermore, even without considering the complications of orality, textual transmission, and translation, it seems likely that the Maggid matured, changed and developed as a theologian over the years in which he functioned as a public spiritual teacher.

We cannot say anything with certainty about the historical sermons of R. Dov Baer of Mezritch, and there is no way for us to determine which of the teachings attributed to him are the most authentic or reliable. If several books or manuscripts came from the same stemma of texts, the most we can do is trace back and try to establish the most reliable version of *that* version of the teaching as transcribed by that particular disciple. But the oral sermons, the historical words of R. Dov Baer himself, are forever lost. Accepting this fact, however, frees us from the Sisyphean task of reconstructing the Maggid's most authentic teachings.

Here I would like to reinforce a point that will inform much of the discussion in the upcoming chapters. We must distinguish between the historical R. Dov Baer of Mezritch and the wealth of textual traditions that surround the figure of the Maggid. The former was a person about whom few verifiable details remain, and who left almost no written texts behind him. But the figure of the Maggid and the legacy of his mystical teachings are deeply embedded within the heart of Hasidic memory. His immediate

[344] In the studies cited above, Moshe Idel makes this point about the BeSHT, demonstrating that many different conceptions of prayer are found in his teachings, and that none of them should be considered more authentic than the others.

disciples, the leaders who essentially transformed the Hasidic movement from a small circle of elite disciples into a mass movement, were deeply influenced by his spiritual path, and subsequent generations of Hasidic thinkers have drawn inspiration from his teachings for over two hundred years. This dissertation is devoted to exploring his theology and philosophy of language as preserved by his students and disciples in the years and decades after his death.

Chapter 1: The Maggid

INTRODUCTION

Our account of the Maggid's life and times must be pieced together from internal Hasidic sources and stories. These traditions represent a type of sacred history that must be used with great caution by the critical historian.[345] This dissertation focuses primarily on the Maggid's theology as found in his sermons, and does not attempt to establish the biography of the historical R. Dov Baer of Mezritch. The paucity of reliable sources makes writing a precise chronicle of his life nearly impossible. However, the stories about the Maggid and his life are another dimension of the ways in which he has been canonized within Hasidic memory. Just as the written versions of his homilies, transcribed and translated by his disciples, are textual witnesses to his original oral sermons, the tales about the Maggid reveal how his image was preserved in the generations after his death.

The question of whether or not Hasidic traditions and stories may be used to write the history of Hasidism remains a point of contention.[346] For many years it was assumed

[345] The lives of some Hasidic masters have been so well documented that writing historical biographies is indeed possible; see Arthur Green, *Tormented Master: The Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav*, Alabama 1979; David Assaf, *The Regal Way: The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin*, trans. David Louvish, Stanford 2002; Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, Jerusalem 2011. To this list we should add the biographical studies of key Hasidic figures by Abraham Joshua Heschel in both Hebrew and Yiddish, some of which were published in his posthumous collection *The Circle of the Ba'al Shem Tov*. For an intellectual biography of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye, see Samuel Dresner, *The Zaddik: The Doctrine of the Zaddik According to the Writings of Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoy*, New York 1974. Dresner often approached Hasidic sources uncritically, but his work is still an important contribution. It is possible that we will find a new document akin to the communal tax record signed by the BeSHT discovered by Moshe Rosman. Indeed, there may be additional letters and teachings from the Maggid in the lost Stolin archive, where the original note to R. Eliezer ha-Levi and R. Hayyim of Pinsk was found. On this remarkable collection and the chances of its recovery, see Yitzhak Y. Melamed, 'The Lost Textual Treasures of a Hasidic Community', *Jewish Review of Books* (Spring 2012). However, until such documents are unearthed, we must work primarily with the hagiographical traditions.

[346] Elements of this controversy echo the famous debate between Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem regarding the relationship between Hasidic tales and the theoretical sermons published in Hasidic books. Buber argued that the vibrant and living vitality of Hasidism was to be found in the tales, the vast majority

that most Hasidic stories held a kernel that could be carefully sifted from the tales and relied upon as a historical fact.[347] This approach was rejected by later scholars who interpreted the tales as literary creations without any reliable historical information. Scholars have recently begun to reevaluate the claims on both sides of this debate.[348] To

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of which were transmitted and retold orally. Scholem, on the other hand, claimed that the written homilies of the Hasidic masters represent the heart of Hasidic thought and theology. See Martin Buber, 'Interpreting Hasidism', *Commentary* 36 (September 1963), p. 218; Gershom Scholem, 'Martin Buber's Interpretation of Hasidism', *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York 1995, pp. 228-250. For scholarly appraisals of their debate, see, inter alia, Michael Oppenheim, 'The Meaning of *Hasidut*: Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem', *The Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 49.3 (1981), pp. 409-423; Maurice Friedman, 'Interpreting Hasidism: The Buber-Scholem Controversy', *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 33 (1988), pp. 449-467; Idel, 'Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem', pp. 176–202; Jerome Gellman, 'Buber's Blunder: To Scholem and Schatz-Uffenheimer', *Modern Judaism* 20.1 (2000), pp. 20-40; Rachel White, 'Recovering the Past, Renewing the Present: The Buber-Scholem Controversy over Hasidism Reinterpreted', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 14.4 (2007), pp. 364-392; Claire Sufrin, 'On Myth, History, and the Study of Hasidism: Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem', *Encountering the Medieval in Modern Jewish Thought*, ed. J.A. Diamond and A.W. Hughes, Leiden 2012, pp. 129-151.

[347] See Simon Dubnow, 'The Beginnings: The Baal Shem Tov (Besht) and the Center in Podolia', *Essential Papers on Hasidism: Origins to Present*, ed. G.D. Hundert, New York 1991, pp. 25-26. At this point we should note an interesting parallel to the study of Talmudic *aggadah*. These stories were once considered historically authentic, and were relied upon for writing the biographies of rabbinic figure or histories of the rabbinic period. However, in the past few decades scholars have become increasingly aware of the problems with this approach; see Jacob Neusner, 'The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70 in Modern Historiography', *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism, Third Series,* Chico, Cal., 1981, pp. 185-213; idem, 'Story and Tradition in Judaism', *Judaism: The Evidence of the Mishna,* Chicago 1981, pp. 307-328; William Scott Green 'What's in a Name?—The Problematic of Rabbinic "Biography"', *Approaches to Ancient Judaism: Theory and Practice*, ed. W.S. Green, Missoula, MT 1978, pp. 77-96. In place of the quest to read rabbinic stories as history there has emerged an entire field of literary analysis, which approaches these tales as carefully constructed and finely redacted literary units intended to convey some lesson; for two of the most important contributions, see Jonah Fraenkel, *The Methods of the Aggada and Midrash*, Givatayim 1991 [Hebrew]; Jeffrey L. Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories: Narrative Art, Composition, and Culture,* Baltimore 1999, esp. 1-33. A similar debate, mutatis mutandis, rages over the question of historical sources for the formative period of Islam; see Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*, Cambridge 1977; Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies: Volume Two*, trans. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern, Albany 1971; John E. Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, Oxford 1977; Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*, Princeton 1987; Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, Cambridge, Mass. 2010. Regarding question of using Christian hagiographies as historical sources versus their literary analysis, see Stephen Wilson, *Saints and Their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, Cambridge 1983; Katherine Ludwig Jansen, *The Making of Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*, Princeton 2001, pp. 18-48; and the challenging study Felice Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical" Texts as Historical Narrative', *Viator* 25.1, pp. 95-114.

[348] For a few of the most important and relevant studies, see Joseph Dan, *The Hasidic Story*, Jerusalem 1975 [Hebrew]; Rapoport-Albert, 'Hagiography with Footnotes', pp. 119-159; Rivka Goldberg, 'The Hasidic Story as Told by the Zaddik: Literary Form and Idea—Studies in a Representative Sample of Stories with Special Emphasis Upon the Stories of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin', Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997 [Hebrew]; Zeev Gries, 'Hasidic Prayer Stories as a Source for the Hasidic Weltanschaaung', *Shefa Tal: Studies in Jewish Thought in Honor of Bracha Sack*, ed. Z. Gries, Beer-Sheva

be sure, the tales often have elements of imagination, exaggeration, and fantasy, especially once they began to be collected and retold by modern thinkers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[349] Yet hagiographical traditions are an important part of Hasidic culture, and they certainly played an important role in spreading the new ethos of Hasidism. While they cannot necessarily be relied upon for history, the tales offer a different perspective: they show us how the Hasidic movement has preserved, interpreted, and at times reconstructed, the memory of its early masters.

I have restricted my analysis of the Maggid's theology to the collections of his teachings and quotations in works by his immediate disciples. However, we will need to cast our net somewhat more widely in tracing his biography, since the earliest layers of Hasidic hagiography do not have enough material to construct even a sacred history of his life. Stories about the Maggid appear in several compendia of Hasidic teachings and tales printed after his death, including KST[350] and the later collection *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* (Kopost 1815).[351] These stories are complemented by rare anecdotes that appear in his

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2004, pp. 219-235 [Hebrew]; Gedalyah Nigal, *The Hasidic Tale*, trans. Edward Levin, Oxford and Portland 2008; Lewis, *Imagining Holiness*; Glenn Dynner, 'The Hasidic Tale as a Historical Source: Historiography and Methodology', *Religion Compass* 3/4 (2009), pp. 655-675; David Assaf, *Untold Tales of the Hasidim: Crisis and Discontent in the History of Hasidism*, trans. Dena Ordan, Waltham 2010; Green, 'Hasidism and its Response to Change', pp. 319-336.

[349] Gries, *Book in Early Hasidism*, pp. 35-40; Joseph Dan, 'A Bow to Frumkinian Hasidism', *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991), pp. 175-193; Jonatan Meir, *Michael Levi Rodkinson and Hasidism*, Tel Aviv 2012 [Hebrew]; Uriel Gellman, 'An Author's Guide: Authorship of Hasidic Compendia', *Zutot* (2013), pp. 85-96; Levi Cooper, 'Tales of a Hasidic Tale', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 22.2 (2014), pp. 127-163. The anthologizing and retelling of Hasidic stories by and for people outside of the Hasidic world has continued into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries; see Elie Wiesel, *Souls on Fire: Portraits and Legends of Hasidic Masters*, trans. Marion Wiesel, New York 1972; idem, *Somewhere a Master: Further Hasidic Portraits and Legends*, trans. Marion Wiesel, New York 1982; Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, *Wrapped in a Holy Flame: Teachings and Tales of the Hasidic Masters*, ed. N.M. Miles-Yepez, San Francisco 2003.

[350] For an analysis of the Hasidic tales in KST, see Nigal, 'A Primary Source for Hasidic Tales', pp. 349-364 [Hebrew]; and Amshalem, 'Stories in My Praise', pp. 33-42.

[351] *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* contains over two hundred stories about the Ba'al Shem Tov and his associates. It is the first and perhaps most important collection of Hasidic tales. For two very different approaches to how

disciples' books, as well as oral traditions passed down by his descendants and published much later.[352] Tales about the Maggid appear in more recent collections of Hasidic tales, including Hayyim Meir Heilman's *Beit Rabbi* (Barditshev 1902),[353] Menahem Mendel Bodek's *Seder ha-Dorot ha-Hadash* (Lemberg 1865)[354] and Israel Berger's *'Eser Orot*

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this work may be used by contemporary historians, see Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 143-158; and Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 203-248. See also Moshe Rosman, 'In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov: a User's Guide to the Editions of "Shivhei haBesht"', *Polin* 10 (1997), pp. 183-199; Immanuel Etkes, 'The Historical Besht: Reconstruction or Deconstruction', *Polin* 12 (1999), pp. 297-306; Zeev Gries, 'Between Literature and History—Prolegomenon for Discussion and Analysis of Examples from "In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov"', *Tura* 3 (1994), pp. 153-181 [Hebrew]; idem, 'The Historical Image of the Besht – Between the Scalpel of the Historian to the Paint Brush of the Literature Researcher', *Kabbalah* 5 (2000), pp. 411-446 [Hebrew]; Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, p. 77; Green, 'Hasidic Homily', p. 258 n. 6.

Understanding the historical value of this work is made even more complicated by the fact that it was published almost simultaneously in both Hebrew and Yiddish; see Yehoshua Mondshine, *Shivhei ha-Besht: A Manuscript*, Jerusalem 1982 [Hebrew and Yiddish]; Abraham Yaari, 'Two Basic Rescensions of *Shivhe ha-BeSHT*', *Kirjath Sepher* 39 (1964), pp. 249-272, 394-407, 552-562 [Hebrew]; Karl Erich Grözinger, 'The Source Value of the Basic Recensions of *Shivhei haBesht*', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 354-363; and Amshalem, 'Stories in My Praise', pp. 27-64. Furthermore, the accounts in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* are clearly modeled on the earlier work *Shivhei ha-Ari*, a popular sacred biography of R. Isaac Luria; see Rapoport-Albert, 'Hagiography With Footnotes', esp. pp. 122-123; Morris M. Faierstein, 'Charisma and Anti-Charisma in Safed: Isaac Luria and Hayyim Vital', *From Safed to Kotsk: Studies in Kabbalah and Hasidism*, Los Angeles 2013, pp. 34-48. For a complete English translation of *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*, see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of The Baal Shem Tov*.

[352] Works from the Ruzhin Hasidic dynasty, a community founded by the Maggid's great-grandson, include many stories about the Maggid. In some cases these tales portray him anachronistically as a *rebbe* in the pattern of later Hasidism, they do not describe the Maggid as a stately, opulent leader in the style of the Ruzhiner *rebbes*. For an extensive collection of traditions from the Ruzhin community about the Maggid, see the recent *Bi-leshon Hasidim Tithadesh*, Zürich 2012.

[353] *Beit Rabbi* offers an image of the Maggid from the perspective of the Habad Hasidic community. All citations refer to the Jerusalem, 2014 edition. On the importance of *Beit Rabbi*, the complications of its historiography, and its place in modern scholarship, see Nahum Karlinsky, 'The Dawn of Hasidic—Haredi Historiography', *Modern Judaism* 27.1 (2007), pp. 20-46. More recent Habad traditions of the Maggid have been complicated by the infamous Kherson Geniza letters. These texts were found in Ukraine after the First World War, and they give a whole new account of early Hasidism, filling in many of the holes in our knowledge. Their authenticity was quickly challenged and then disproven by scholars, though they continue to be accepted by some traditional Hasidic communities. See Yitzhak Raphael, "The Kherson Geniza," *Sinai* 81 (1977), pp. 3-24 [Hebrew]; Rapoport-Albert, 'Hagiography With Footnotes', esp. pp. 131-159. The Habad community has since written their own version of the Maggid's role in the history of Hasidism informed by these letters; see Shmu'el Bukiet, ed., *Nezer ha-Maggid mi-Mezritch*, Kefar Habad 2001); Shne'ur Zalman Ruderman, *Sippurei Mofet: ha-Maggid mi-Mezritch*, Kefar Habad 2006. See also J. Immanual Schochet's *The Great Maggid: The Life and Teachings of Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezhirech*, Brooklyn 1974. Schochet's work is based in large part on the earlier I. J. Klapholtz, *The Maggid of Mezritch*, Benei Brak 1971 [Hebrew].

[354] See Menahem Mendel Bodek, *Seder ha-Dorot ha-Hadash*, Lemberg 1865, pp. 31-32. On this figure, see Nigal, *Hasidic Tale*, pp. 25-30. He suggests that Bodek emphasized the value of tales about *tsaddiqim* as a medium for inspiring piety, it is easier to absorb their message than from moralistic or theological books. There are a number of stories about the Maggid in *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, though the majority of its

(Piotrkow 1907).[355] But these collections, which represent a later phase in the development of the Hasidic story, have a relatively small number of tales about the Maggid. Their authors generally allotted considerably more space to exploring his theology, revealing how few hagiographical traditions about the Maggid have been preserved.[356]

Beginnings and Early Life

Dov Baer Friedman was born circa 1704 in Lokatch (Pol. Lokacze, Ukr. Lokachi), a small town in the vicinity of Rovno (Ukr. Rivne).[357] We know little about his family, and there are no indications that he was descended from an established rabbinic or scholarly line.[358] He was well educated, however, and must have studied Kabbalah in

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tales are about his students. This book, compiled by Isaac Dov Baer ben Zevi Hirsh, was first published as *Emunat Tsaddiqim*, Warsaw 1900; later printings refer to the collection as *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, Lemberg 1902.

[355] Berger, *'Eser Orot,* Piotrkow 1907, pp. 12a-14a.

[356] This is even true of Martin Buber, *Or ha-Ganuz*, Jerusalem, 2005, pp. 97-106, which includes an uncharacteristically large number of teachings from the Maggid and relatively few hagiographical tales.

[357] For reflections on this town from shortly before the Second World War, see *Sefer Yizkor le-Qehilat Lokatsh (Polin)-Gedenk Bukh far di Shtetl Lokatsh*, ed. E. Verba and Sh. Matlofsky, Jerusalem 1993 [Hebrew, Yiddish, and English].

[358] Later Hasidic tradition imagines him as having an illustrious lineage, but even these tales lack any specific details about his parents or immediate antecedents; see *Kerem Yisrael*, Lublin 1930, pp. 7-8; *Ner Yisra'el*, Benei Berak 1994, vol. 6, p. 427. These sources from the Ruzhin Hasidic dynasty, founded by the Maggid's great-grandson, have a rather obvious vested interest in imagining his lineage. They include a tale in which the young Maggid, when he learns that the written deed proving his illustrious lineage was burned in a fire, claims that the dynasty will restart with him. Another tradition from the Ruzhin community claims that the Maggid's father was a hidden *tsaddiq*; see *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 424. See also *Ohalei Ya'aqov*, p. 89, where the author claims that R. Dov Baer was descended from R. Hai Gaon. Ruzhin sources describe the Maggid as having been aware of his greatness and acknowledged that his stature would be inherited by his descendants; see *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 428. Dynner, *Men of Silk*, pp. 132-134, notes that lineage became a particularly important part of determining Hasidic leadership in Poland, and early figures who lacked this type of pedigree, such as the BeSHT and the Maggid, became the exception rather than the norm.

addition to the traditional curriculum of Talmud and legal codes.[359] It seems that the young Dov Baer made his living as a *melammed*, a teacher of young children. Several of his later disciples in Mezritch recalled having heard the Maggid tell anecdotes about his experiences in those early years.[360] For a time he worked as a teacher in Torchin (Pol. Torczyn),[361] a small town to the east of Lokatch, perhaps after having married the daughter of one of its residents and coming to live near his in-laws.[362] Later Hasidic traditions describe the great poverty of his family in these years.[363] Indeed, a few of the Maggid's own homilies refer to the fact that even spiritual adepts may find themselves in dire circumstances, and some sermons even underscore the religious significance of poverty.[364] Perhaps these teachings were born out of personal experience during his young married life.

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[359] Despite his distaste for all things Hasidic, Graetz, *History of the Jews*, p. 379 claims that the Maggid was a learned figure: "He was well read in Talmudical and Kabbalistic writings... [and] removed from the Chassidim the stigma of ignorance." Some scholars claimed that in his youth the Maggid studied with the renowned Talmudist R. Jacob Joshua Falk (1680-1756), the author of the *Penei Yehoshua*, but there is no firm evidence for this. Horodetsky, *Torat ha-Maggid*, p. 9; Dynner, *Men of Silk*, p. 232. See also *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 413. Lederberg, *Gateway*, p. 318 even proposes that only after Falk's death in 1754 did the R. Dov Baer look for another master. While the Maggid's teachings demonstrate his proficiency in Talmud, he left behind no legal works and Jewish law was not an important part of his intellectual legacy. On the Maggid's theoretical teachings about the nature of *halakhah* and how it should be determined, see below, pp. 421-445.

[360] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *hayyei sarah*, pp. 36-37; *Or ha-Hokhmah*, *bo*, p. 11b; Lederberg, *Gateway*, p. 43-44. See also *'Irin Qaddishin*, *pesah*, p. 169.

[361] R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye describes him as Dov Ber Tortchiner in a homily dated 1767, but the Maggid may well have moved to Mezritch by that time.

[362] This was a common custom for the Jews of Eastern Europe; see Jacob Goldberg, 'Jewish Marriage in Eighteenth-Century Poland', *Polin* 10 (1997), pp. 1-30; and Shaul Stampfer, *Families, Rabbis and Education: Traditional Jewish Society in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Europe*, Oxford and Portland 2010, pp. 404.

[363] See *Igra de-Pirqa*, ch. 1; See *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 430 for a story in which the Maggid was so poor that he could not even give his own son a single coin as a wedding present.

[364] See SLA, pp. 35-36. Pedaya, 'Social-Religious-Economic Model of Hasidism', pp. 343-344, identifies poverty as a religious value as one of the elements that connects certain early Hasidic leaders, including the Maggid, to older models of Eastern European piety.

R. Dov Baer later moved to the nearby city of Mezritch, presumably in the early 1760s.[365] There he was employed as the *maggid* ("preacher"), serving in the neighboring town of Koretz (Pol. Korzec) as well. The position of *maggid* was an important one in Eastern Europe, though it was considerably less prestigious than that of the official town *rav* ("rabbi"). *Maggidim*, both itinerant and stationary, represented a social class that is often referred to as second-tier intellectuals, standing somewhere between the masses and the rabbinic elites.[366] However, despite the fact that he was employed as a *maggid*, we do not know how often R. Dov Baer actually addressed the larger community of Mezritch and Koretz. The title *maggid meisharim* was generally conferred upon one who had been appointed as the preacher of a particular community, but to my knowledge there are no stories—or teachings—that refer to him giving a sermon before a large public audience.[367] In fact, we know very few details regarding the extent of R. Dov Baer's official public role in those years other than the fact that he was the community's official preacher.

Mezritch was home to a *beit midrash* for scholars that included a number of Kabbalists, but R. Dov Baer was not one of its members.[368] This *beit midrash* was one of

[365] *Ohalei Tsaddiqim*, p. 39, claims that Maggid lived in Tortshin, Rovno, Mezritch, and then Hanipoli.

[366] Weiss, 'Beginnings of Hasidism', esp. pp. 125-128; Piekarz, *Beginning of Hasidism*, pp. 42-44, 114-115, 142-146, 163-168. On the license (*reshut*) required to preach in Poland in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, see Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, pp. 47-48. On preachers more broadly and their role in society, see ibid, pp. 27, 44-63. See also Haim Hillel Ben-Sasson, *Hagut ye-Hanhagah: Hashkefoteihem ha-Hevratiyot shel Yehudei Polin be-Shilhei Yemei ha-Beinayim*, Jerusalem 1959, pp. 39-42; Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis: Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, trans. Bernard Dov Cooperman, Syracuse 2000, pp. 144-147, 186-187, 194, 208.

[367] R. Dov Baer's name appears with the title *maggid meisharim* in his approbation to *Halakhah Pesuqah* (Turka 1765). The title page of MDL and R. Abraham Hayyim's approbation to LY explain that R. Dov Baer gave a sermon each and every Shabbat but these may have been more of a rhetorical flourish than a historical fact. Given that R. Dov Baer is inscribed in Hasidic memory as "the Maggid," the absence of any testimonies about him speaking in a public synagogue is intriguing.

[368] The Maggid is not mentioned in the introduction to the book *Mahberet ha-Qodesh*, published in Koretz 1783. This Kabbalistic work was printed by Solomon of Lutsk from a manuscript held in the Mezritch *beit*

many similar institutions sprinkled throughout towns and cities of Central and Eastern Europe. The disastrous collapse of the Sabbatean movement in the late seventeenth century had left many Jews suspicious of mystical religion and its misuses. In Central Europe bans were issued against the dissemination of Kabbalah in an attempt to restrict its knowledge to small circles of elites. But in Eastern Europe, a region whose culture had long been infused with mystical pietism and magical practices, the roots of popular kabbalistic ideas and rituals were deeply entrenched. In these communities folk practices were blended with rituals adapted from those of the Safed Kabbalists.[369] Numerous *kloyzen* (elite "study-houses") were established in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries so that scholars could study mystical texts in a sequestered environment,[370] but in Eastern Europe Kabbalah remained an integral part of folk practice as well as elite religion.[371]

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midrash, and even though the Maggid had been gone for over ten years, had he been a member of that group it seems likely that they would have mentioned him. R. Solomon was evidently not a member of this community either, since the introduction claims that he came to the *beit midrash* in his search for manuscripts; see Gries, 'Hasidic Managing Editor', pp. 150-151. Perhaps the Maggid was not allowed to join the Mezritch *beit midrash*, either because it was an aristocratic institution or because his relationship with the BeSHT and the new ethos of Hasidism made him suspect.

[369] On these mystical rituals and their diffusion, see Gershom Scholem, 'Tradition and New Creation in the Ritual of the Kabbalists', *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim, New York 1996, pp. 118-157; R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic,* Philadelphia 1977, pp. 38-83; Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 65-74; Arthur Green, 'Some Aspects of Qabbalat Shabbat', *Sabbath—Idea, History, Reality*, ed. G.J. Blidstein, Beer Sheva 2004, pp. 95-118; David Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1997, pp. 101-118. See also Marla Segol, 'Performing Exile in Safed School Kabbalah', *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 7.2 (2012), pp. 131-163; Morris M. Faierstein, *Jewish Customs of Kabbalistic Origin: Their History and Practice,* Boston 2013.

[370] Elhanan Reiner, 'Wealth, Social Position, and the Study of Torah: The Status of the Kloyz in Eastern European Jewish Society in the Early Modern Period," *Zion* 58.3 (1993), pp. 287-328 [Hebrew]; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, p. 29; Maoz Kahana, 'Changing the World's Measures – Rabbi Zeev Olesker and the Revolutionary Scholars Circle in Brody Kloyz', *AJS Review* 37 (2013), pp. 29-53 [Hebrew]; Monika Preuss, *Gelehrte Juden: Lernen als Frömmigkeitsideal in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Göttingen 2007, pp. 43-64; Shaul Stampfer, "How and Why Hasidism Spread," *Jewish History* 27.2-4 (2013), p. 208.

[371] On the state of Kabbalah in Eastern Europe, see Idel, *Hasidism,* pp. 33-44; idem, '"One from a Town, Two from a Clan": The Diffusion of Lurianic Kabbala and Sabbateanism: A Reexamination', *Jewish History* 7.2 (1993), pp. 79-104; Gershon D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 2004, pp. 119-185

Eastern Europe was home to a great many types of mystical pietists.[372] Some of these retreated from the world, fleeing into ascetic solitude or forming small fellowships that withdrew from society. Others, such as the seventeenth-century R. Samson of Ostropolye, were popular figures known for their skills in practical Kabbalah.[373] Professional *ba'alei shem*, or "masters of the Name," represented an important element of Eastern European Jewish society. *Ba'alei shem* were essentially faith healers or shamans, and many claimed magical abilities like clairvoyance or the ability to work miracles, in addition to expertise in practical Kabbalah. *Ba'alei shem* often wrote amulets based on divine names, used incantations to cure the sick, and performed similar magical feats. They also developed expertise in herbal healing, and some knew bits and pieces of early modern medicine.[374]

R. Dov Baer, however, was neither a *ba'al shem* nor a miracle worker. He was a traditional pietist whose devotional life centered on study and penitence. His teachings and the stories about him reveal a religious ethos defined by a deep fear of sin, similar to—but not identical with—the attitude of eighteenth-century moralistic literature. Many of his sermons refer to the importance of withdrawing from all forms of physical

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[372] Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 27-41; Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, pp. 73-80. See also Jacob Elbaum, *Repentance and Self-Flagellation in the Writings of the Sages of Germany and Poland, 1348-1648*, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 40-53, 80-93 [Hebrew].

[373] Yehuda Liebes, 'Mysticism and Reality: Towards a Portrait of the Martyr and Kabbalist R. Samson Ostropoler', *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. I. Twersky and B. Septimus, Cambridge, Mass. 1987, pp. 221-255.

[374] Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 13-21; Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 7-45; Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, 'The Master of an Evil Name: Hillel Ba'al Shem and His *Sefer ha-Heshek*', *AJS Review* 28 (2004), pp. 217-248; idem, '"You Will Find it in the Pharmacy": Practical Kabbalah and Natural Medicine in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, 1690-1750', *Holy Dissent: Jewish and Christian Mystics in Eastern Europe*, ed. G. Dynner, Detroit 2011, pp. 13-54; and, more broadly, Nimrod Zinger, 'Who Knows What the Cause Is?: "Natural" and "Unnatural" Causes for Illness in the Writings of *Ba'alei Shem*, Doctors and Patients Among German Jews in the Eighteenth Century', *The Jewish Body: Corporeality, Society, and Identity in the Renaissance and Early Modern Period*, ed. M. Diemling and G. Veltri, Leiden 2009, pp. 127-155.

pleasure, and he even endorsed bodily mortifications, fasting and penitential practices. The Maggid was remembered as having been infirm and suffering from a physical ailment of his legs, perhaps as a result of his extreme asceticism. R. Dov Baer's approach to religion was transformed after meeting the BeSHT, but the ascetic impulse remained an important part of the Maggid's spiritual path.[375]

THE BESHT AND THE MAGGID

Describing the nature of the Maggid's connection to the BeSHT is particularly difficult. R. Dov Baer's sermons do not include many details regarding his relationship with his master. Hagiographical traditions began to fill in this lacuna by the 1790s, but even these tales offer relatively little information about the frequency and nature of their interactions.[376] It seems likely that the BeSHT and the Maggid met at some point in the 1750s, though we cannot pinpoint the date of their first interaction.[377] However, the ambiguities in our knowledge of their relationship should not be mistaken for tepidity. The BeSHT's influence upon the Maggid was profound. R. Dov Baer's sermons do not

[375] See, for example, LY #191, fol. 58a. In this teaching the Maggid endorses the value of ascetic practices in helping one become divested from the physical world, but notes the ultimate goal is not fasting but mystical contemplation. This aspect of the Maggid's religious personality is found in his students' works as well; see *Qedushat Levi*, *yitro*, p. 211. See also *Imrei Pinhas*, vol. 1, p. 268. Some later Hasidic traditions describe his ascetic practices; see *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 432; and Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, p. 40. Teachings from some of the Maggid's students and stories about them suggest that some of his disciples continued in this ascetic path as well. See, for example, the complicated legacy of R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk; *No'am Elimelekh*, vol. 1, *lekh lekha*, p. 34; ibid, *hayye sarah*, p. 56; Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland', pp. 180, 181-182 n. 22

[376] Indeed, the attempt by the author of the Kherson Geniza letters to fill this in demonstrates precisely how little we actually know about their relationship. Rapoport-Albert, 'Hagiography with Footnotes', pp. 136-137. For a few stories not influenced by the Kherson Geniza that seek to build a connection between the BeSHT and the Maggid, see *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, pp. 432-433. See also Mondshine, *Migdal 'Oz*, p. 368.

[377] According to a story in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*, the Maggid was still working as a *melammed* in Torchin when he met the BeSHT for the first time; see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, p. 81. Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, pp. 81, 342 n. 117-118, cites several later Hasidic sources that attempt to date their initial encounter to a specific year.

frequently quote from the BeSHT explicitly, but they reveal that the latter's religious ethos had a great impact on the Maggid's thought. Furthermore, in some cases the Maggid clearly refers to a specific teaching of the BeSHT, even when he does not cite him by name.

R. Solomon of Lutsk's introduction to MDL is the earliest text describing the relationship between the Maggid and his teacher. This important preface, printed nine years after the Maggid's death, contextualizes the book—and the Maggid—within R. Solomon's narrative of the history of kabbalah. Let us begin by quoting the relevant passage in full, and then examine each part in turn:

> Once I heard from his [the Maggid's] holy mouth that he had studied the language of the birds and the palm trees, etc., with the BeSHT. He learned the secrets of the holy names and unifications, and studied the book *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah* with him as well; he taught him the explanation of each word. He [the Maggid] showed me the letters and script of the angels *Sefer Razi'el*, saying that [the BeSHT] had taught him all this. Each angel has an alphabet with letters that are shaped differently than all the other [angels], according to his measure, value and world of origin. One who understands, will understand.
>
> He showed me a few angelic names in that same book, and told me that through them the BeSHT knew which [heavenly] leaders (*memunim*) would be appointed over the world in [the month of] Nisan each year, in order to know how to act with it and through it.[378] I asked him why [this happened] on the New Moon of Nisan, and he told me that this is because it is the New Year for the reign of kings.[379] I said, "Now our master [the Maggid] told me that he learned all this [with the BeSHT]; surely our master knows it as well." He answered, "Why should it not be known to me? But one must perform certain unifications for this."[380]

[378] The Hebrew *kedei leid'a eikh le-hitnaheg 'imo ve-'al yado* is rather cryptic.

[379] See m. Rosh ha-Shanah 1:1.

[380] MDL, pp. 2-3.

R. Solomon of Lutsk first testifies that the BeSHT taught the Maggid "the language of the birds and the palm trees, etc." The ellipsis suggests that the author is calling the reader's attention to a legendary skill found in rabbinic literature,[381] later attributed to R. Simon bar Yohai in the Zohar,[382] and appearing once again in the hagiographical stories about R. Isaac Luria.[383] R. Solomon's reference thus reflects a literary trope for secret knowledge. According to Hasidic tradition, the Maggid was not the only person to have learned these abilities from the BeSHT[384] but it interesting to note that neither the homilies attributed to the Maggid nor the hagiographical stories about him mention the skill of understanding

[381] b. Sukkah 28a.

[382] See Zohar 3:228a (R.M.); cf. Zohar 1:11a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 79:6, Zohar 2:6b, 3:201a-b.

[383] *Shivhei ha-Ari*, ed. Y.M. Hillel, Jerusalem 1991, p. 20. See also Rapoport-Albert, 'Hagiography with Footnotes', p. 123; and Eitan Fishbane, 'Perceptions of Greatness: Constructions of the Holy Man in *Shivhei ha-Ari*', *Kabbalah* 27 (2102), pp. 205-6, who notes that, "The mystical sage is represented as one whose perception and cognition bridges the natural and the supernatural; he is able to understand the subsurface language and meaning of the cosmos, to translate those markers latent in the phenomena of the natural world." *Shivhei ha-Ari* was printed together with *'Emeq ha-Melekh* in 1648, and may certainly have been known to R. Solomon of Lutsk.

[384] For another interesting account of someone coming to learn this skill from the BeSHT, see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, pp. 242-44. In this tale the BeSHT, who understood the *Mokhiah* of Pollnoye joined his group in order to learn this ability, says, "It is known that in the upper chariot there is the face of an ox, the face of a man, the face of an eagle, and the face of a lion. The choicest one in the chariot is the face of the man, and from him the life power extends downward to lower man. From the face of the upper ox through the chain of phases, through risings and fallings and many contractions, the life power descends to all the lower animals. From the face of the lion the life power extends down to the lower beasts, and from the face of the eagle it goes to all the lower birds. This is the secret of *Pereq Shirah*. Similarly, the language of each animal in the upper chariot descends to the lower animals, beasts, and birds. The wise man who can understand and examine everything in its upper sources in the upper chariot will be able to comprehends the origin of all and the details and the means of the speech of the animals, beasts, and birds."

The notion that holy people can understand the language of nature was not totally lost in the Hasidic world after the BeSHT. *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *va-yetse*, p. 93 explains that Torah study with no ulterior motive (*lishmah*) grants one the ability to understanding the language of the birds, trees and the ministering angels. See also *Me'or 'Einayim*, *liqqutim*, p. 452, where R. Menahem Nahum explains that because the physical world was created by means of the divine Word, everything within it must also have some sort of a capacity for language. This ability to speak and interpret the language of nature recalls to mind the tales about Francis of Assisi, but it is also representative of a broader European cultural phenomenon; see Edward Allworthy Armstrong, *Saint Francis: Nature Mystic; the Derivation and Significance of the Nature Stories in the Franciscan Legend*, Berkeley 1973; and Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, Princeton 2013, pp. 319-326.

the language of nature. In fact, in one teaching he recommends that one meditate in solitude, because the chirping of birds can cause him to lose focus.[385]

R. Solomon of Lutsk claims that the Maggid studied two kabbalistic books with the BeSHT. He refers to the first of these as *Sefer Razi'el*, which is presumably *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh*. First published in Amsterdam in 1701, this work is a compilation of texts from several different genres, fusing together works of *merkavah* mysticism, the German Pietists and pre-Lurianic kabbalah.[386] The printed form of *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* brings together experiential mysticism and practical kabbalah, and includes the text for a number of amulets, the names of angels, and other types of incantations. This book enjoyed considerable popularity in Eastern Europe,[387] and its content is very much in keeping with the BeSHT's image as a mystical faith healer.[388] One of the Maggid's teachings refers to a passage found in *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh*,[389] but this work is not

[385] LY #175, fol. 56a-56b.

[386] Although *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* was printed quite late, the material within it was certainly known much earlier, and collections by this name were known in medieval Europe. See Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion*, Philadelphia 2004, pp. 76-77, 92-100. See also Michael E. Stone, 'The Book(s) Attributed to Noah', *Dead Sea Discoveries* 13.1 (2006), pp. 20-22; Rebecca Scharbach, 'The Rebirth of a Book: Noachic Writing in Medieval and Renaissance Europe', *Noah and His Book(s)*, ed. M.E Stone, A. Amihay and V. Hillel, Atlanta 2010, pp. 113-133; Bill Rebiger, 'Zur Redaktionsgeschichte des "Sefer Razi'el ha-Mal'akh"', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 32 (2005), pp. 1-22; François Secret, 'Le 'Raziel' et le Livre d'Enoch chez Postel et l'Hermes de Goropius Becanus', *Hermétisme et Kabbale* (1992), pp. 119-146; idem, 'Sur Quelques Traductions du Sefer Razi'el', *Revue des Études Juives* 128 (1969), pp. 223-245; Haddewijch Dekker, 'A Perfect Book for a Bibliographer', *Studia Rosenthaliana* 38-39 (2006), pp. 262-263.

[387] We should note that *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* is mentioned by name in the introduction to *'Emeq ha-Melekh*, p. 24. Much later, the prominent Polish legal scholar R. Malkiel Zevi Tannenbaum (1847-1910), refers to a custom of putting the book under the pillow of woman during childbirth to ensure a safe delivery; see *She'elot u-Teshuvot Divrei Malki'el* 5:166; and cf. *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh*, p. 43a for the text and instructions regarding an amulet for warding off evils forces during childbirth.

[388] Idel, 'R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov "in the State of Walachia"', p. 103, suggests that the BeSHT had the 1701 edition of *Razi'el ha-Malakh*, and that the influence of this important mystical-magical work upon his thought has not been fully recognized or explored by scholars.

[389] See LY #276, fol. 93a. Some printed versions of the book attribute this tradition to *Sefer Yetsirah*, but the editors the most recent editions have corrected this error. Cf. OT #79, *va-era*, p. 111; and OHE, fol. 88a.

often cited in his sermons.[390] This does not rule out the possibility of its influence upon his thought, since this work is full of passages that explore the role of language in Creation, and the magical/mystical significance of the shapes of the Hebrew letters.[391]

R. Solomon also writes that R. Dov Baer studied the work *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah* with the BeSHT. Several works by this name were known in eighteenth-century Poland.[392] Mark Verman claimed that R. Solomon was referring to the short text produced by the early medieval *'Iyyun* ("contemplation") school of Jewish mystics.[393] Much of this work is devoted to issues of language, including visualizations and meditations of God's name that grant their practitioner knowledge of the language of animals, palm trees and the seas. However, the Maggid's student R. Israel of Kozhenits cites a slightly different and expanded work with the same name, which was printed together with *Pirqei Heikhalot* in 1785.[394] A third book called *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah*, this one a rather detailed description of the role of Hebrew letters in Creation according

[390] *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* was not forgotten by the Maggid's disciples. R. Israel of Kozhenits published an edition of *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* in 1812, along with his notes and some annotations attributed to R. Isaac of Barditshev. *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* is also quoted by R. Levi Isaac himself; see *Qedushat Levi*, *nitsavim*, p. 409. *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakah* was printed and bound together with the Lemberg 1850 edition of *Qedushat Levi*. R. Israel of Kozhenits also refers to *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* in his commentary to Avot 2:8; pp. 245.

[391] *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh,* fol. 10-12.

[392] A work called *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah* is mentioned by name in *Pardes Rimmonim*, 8:4, and *'Emeq ha-Melekh*, p. 24. Cordovero puts it in his list of highly recommended books; see *Or Ne'erav* 3:3, 24. The final lines of *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* read, "Here concludes the commentary on the forty-two letter divine name, and the book *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah* of the mysteries of the great Razi'el." This may be a reference to *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* as a "font of wisdom," but it may also allude to another name for the book.

[393] Mark Verman, *Books of Contemplation: Medieval Jewish Mystical Sources*, Albany 1992, p. 49. For a critical edition of this book, see Oded Porat, *The Works of Iyyun: Critical Editions*, Los Angeles 2013, pp. 53-87 [Hebrew]. See also the Berlin 1706 and Shklov 1784 printings.

[394] *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *liqqutim*, p. 219. The collection *'Amudei Shesh*, which includes six medieval Kabbalistic works, and both *Pirqei Heikhalot* and a much shorter text called *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah*, was published in Lemberg 1785. This version of *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah* was also published in Koretz 1785, together with other works from *'Amudei Shesh*, such as *Sod ha-Hashmal*, *Sefer ha-Niqud*, and the book *Sha'arei Tsedeq*, attributed to R. Joseph Gikatilla.

to the teachings of Isaac Luria, was also known in Eastern Europe.[395] There is no clear way of determining which of these books R. Solomon had in mind, for the three works are quite similar and the Maggid's teachings may be interpreted as reflecting the influence of each of them.

Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh and *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah* typify the kind of literature that the BeSHT and the Maggid may have studied together. Neither of them is a mainstay of the traditional kabbalistic canon, nor is the ability to decipher God's Will through the fluctuations of the natural world required of most rabbinic leaders. And it is interesting to note that R. Solomon does not claim that the BeSHT taught the Maggid classical mystical works such as the Zohar or the texts of Safed Kabbalah, either popular or theosophical. *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* and *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah* are kabbalistic books that draw no distinction between phenomena that modern scholars might divide into separate categories of mysticism and magic.[396] According to R. Solomon's narrative, the Maggid and the BeSHT studied the type of mystical literature in which the magical, theosophical and experiential elements of religion come together.

R. Solomon also reports that the BeSHT also showed the Maggid a different kind of kabbalistic knowledge. The BeSHT taught him how certain angelic names, found in the works mentioned above, may be invoked at the beginning of Nisan in order to predict

[395] This work, also known as *Hathalat ha-Hokhmah*, was preserved in manuscript in many different recensions before it was published in Koretz 1784. On its history, see Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 1, pp. 204-208; vol. 2, pp. 564-568.

[396] On ways in which mysticism and magic intertwine in Hasidic texts, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 348-350; Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 29-30, 65-81, 206-207. For a discussion of this phenomenon in Jewish mysticism more broadly, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 77-78; Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*, Cambridge and New York 2008, esp. pp. 322-350; the collected studies in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism*, ed. K.E. Grözinger and J. Dan, Berlin and New York, 1995; and Valerie I. J. Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe,* Princeton 1991; David R. Ruderman, *Kabbalah, Magic, and Science: The Cultural Universe of A Sixteenth-Century Jewish Physician*, Cambridge, Mass. 1988, esp. pp. 102-120, 139-160.

the events that year.[397] There are several other reports in early Hasidic literature of the Maggid having learned this skill from the BeSHT.[398] However, while many of the Maggid's teachings claim that prayer can change the divine Will, his own sermons never refer to using angelic names in order to alter the future.

R. Solomon seems to have been aware of this difference between the Maggid and the BeSHT. He reports that he asked the Maggid why he did not use his knowledge to the same clairvoyant purpose as his teacher. The Maggid replied that although he too was in command of these angelic names, one must "perform certain unifications" in order to foresee the future. It may be that the Maggid was suggesting that he felt that his kabbalistic knowledge was incomplete, but it is also possible that R. Solomon is assuring his readers that although not famous as a practitioner of magic, the Maggid also had command of the field. R. Dov Baer's reticence may also reflect a conscious turn away from the magical approach of the BeSHT. Or perhaps the Maggid sought to distance himself from the role of *ba'al shem*, but did so without depreciating or subverting the BeSHT's skills in any explicit way.

This section of the introduction to MDL concludes with a brief but intriguing exchange between R. Solomon and his teacher R. Dov Baer:

> Because of his [the Maggid's] great humility, he did not want to speak about his own level at all. I [R. Solomon] asked him, "Why does our master and teacher not wish to reveal his [spiritual] rung? Did not the BeSHT reveal his level?" He replied that, "He [the BeSHT] too only revealed the tiniest fraction, and revealed nothing of Elijah's revelation. Yet perhaps only I grasped this

[397] m. Rosh ha-Shanah 1:1 refers to the first of Nisan as one of several different beginnings for various cycles of the calendar.

[398] *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *bo*, p. 207, where it is cited as something the author heard from his grandfather the BeSHT directly. See also *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *shavu'ot*, p. 133. Of course, these sources would have been aware of R. Solomon's account, but neither of them refers to the introduction to MDL.

> before his death, by the grace of God, when I came to him and a number of events (*kamah ma'asiyyot*) [transpired]—"these words cannot hope to describe it."[399]

This passage, which describes the Maggid as a more introspective, private religious personality than his teacher, is one of the few texts in which the Maggid reflects upon his relationship with the BeSHT. It is also the earliest witness, for it predates any of the written tales by more than a decade. But the terse and ambiguous exchange between R. Solomon and the Maggid is difficult to interpret with certainty. Was the Maggid suggesting that he had met the BeSHT previous to the visit before the latter's death, or was that the first time the two of them met? What are the "events" that happened when they were together on that visit? Are they the same as those described by later hagiographical stories in KST and *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*, or does R. Solomon have a different tradition about the relationship between the Maggid and the BeSHT? And how are we to understand the final phrase, "these words cannot hope to describe it?" Was the Maggid claiming that he could not explain the greatness of the BeSHT's spiritual rung? Perhaps the mysterious "events" that transpired just before the BeSHT's death were utterly indescribable. Or, alternatively, R. Solomon may be telling the reader that he cannot adequately convey what he heard from the Maggid.[400] All of these interpretations are possible.

One additional aspect of this passage deserves closer attention. The Maggid seems to claim an exclusive and unparalleled understanding of the BeSHT's spiritual level. This implies that other students of the BeSHT, like R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye and R. Pinhas

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[399] Lit. "the covering is too short to encompass" (*qatsra ha-yeri'ah me-hakhil*); MDL, p. 3. See Lederberg's discussion of this passage in *Gateway to Infinity,* p. 82.

[400] R. Solomon uses this phrase at least once in his own book, and employs it there to emphasize the inability of his writing to convey the depth of the Maggid's teachings; see *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *be-huqqotai*, p. 292.

of Koretz, grasped only part of their master's true greatness.[401] As short as their time together may have been, for this introduction makes no claims as to the frequency of their interactions, R. Dov Baer is portrayed as the only one of the BeSHT's disciples to have truly comprehended his teacher. Of course, the Maggid's claim is not entirely unequivocal, for the "only I" is immediately qualified by a more modest "perhaps."

Many of the later stories about the BeSHT and the Maggid focus upon their first meeting, describing it as an intense and transformative encounter. Tales such as these, which may be aptly referred to as "conversion" stories, have an important place in Hasidic literature.[402] Stories about Hasidic masters including the BeSHT and the Maggid, describe them as illuminated spiritual leaders whose actions and personalities made a tremendous impression upon their disciples. In some instances the newcomer is struck by the great profundity of the sermon, but in many others he is awed by the leader's charisma or the experiential ceremony that surrounded the delivery of the teachings.[403]

The tales in KSHT and *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*, to which we shall now turn, offer a more detailed picture of the Maggid's relationship with the BeSHT than R. Solomon's

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[401] For a later tradition suggesting why the Maggid was the only one to truly grasp the BeSHT's greatness, see *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, fol. 4b, cited by Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, p. 342 n. 120.

[402] For some reflections on charismatic leadership in early Hasidism, see Moshe Idel, '"The Besht Passed his Hand Over his Face": On the Besht's Influence on His Followers—Some Remarks', *After Spirituality: Studies in Mystical Traditions*, ed. P. Wexler and J. Garb, New York 2012, pp. 79-106; Nehemia Polen, 'Charismatic Leader, Charismatic Book: Rabbi Shneur Zalman's *Tanya* and His Leadership', *Rabbinic and Lay Communal Authority*, ed. S.L. Stone, New York 2006, pp. 53-64; Gadi Sagiv, 'Hasidism and Cemetery Inauguration Ceremonies: Authority, Magic, and Performance of Charismatic leadership', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 103 (2013), pp. 328-351; Stephen Sharot, 'Hasidism and the Routinization of Charisma', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 19. 4 (1980), pp. 325-336; Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, pp. 113-114, 144, 214 n. 104-106. More broadly, see Max Weber, *On Charisma and Institution Building*, Chicago 1968; Douglas F. Barnes, 'Charisma and Religious Leadership: An Historical Analysis', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 17.1 (1978), pp. 1-18; Lewis R. Rambo, 'Charisma and Conversion', *Pastoral Psychology* 31.2 (1982), pp. 96-108; Gary Yukl, 'An Evaluation of Conceptual Weaknesses in Transformational and Charismatic Leadership Theories', *The Leadership Quarterly* 10.2 (1999), pp. 285-305.

[403] Maimon, *Autobiography*, pp. 168-169, refers to both elements.

account.[404] However these stories represent a later stage in the development of Hasidic hagiography. This is especially true of *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*, published over fifty years after the BeSHT's death. Several scholars have dealt with these tales in great detail, and there is no need to replicate their work here.[405] However, an overview of the tales about these two figures will help us understand how the early Hasidic tradition constructed its memory of the relationship between the Maggid and the BeSHT.

The account of the Maggid's first meeting with the BeSHT is one of the most prominent stories in KST.[406] In this tale the Maggid decides to visit the BeSHT, who had developed a reputation for the efficacy of his prayer. The Maggid, described as a scholar of Kabbalah as well as Jewish law, is distressed at the prospect of abandoning his studies in order to travel. He resolves to undertake the journey, but is astonished to hear strange and irrelevant stories rather than deep spiritual teachings from the BeSHT upon arriving in Mezhbizh.[407] The Maggid, disappointed and disheartened, resolves to return to his home in Mezritch.

But before he can depart, the Maggid is invited to a private nighttime audience with the BeSHT. The latter asks him to explain a certain passage in *Ets Hayyim*, a

[404] Nigal, 'Primary Source for Hasidic Tales', p. 137 points out that the tales in KST are the first printed Hasidic stories, predating *Shivhei ha-Besht* by two decades.

[405] In addition to the writings by Nigal, Grözinger, Lederberg and Amshalem, who will be cited throughout the next few pages, we should note the contributions of Moshe Idel to our understanding these tales; see Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 171-174; and idem, 'On the Besht's Influence on His Followers', pp. 79-106.

[406] KST #424, pp. 263-264. The importance of this study is underscored by the fact that it was reprinted in the Barditshev 1808 edition of MDL, along the BeSHT's epistle and *kavvanot* for ritual immersion attributed to him. These texts also appear in KST #1-2, pp. 4-7

[407] This may reflect an important notion found in the teachings of both the BeSHT and the Maggid: even ordinary stories about mundane things may actually convey a deep spiritual truth. Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, pp. 86-89; Amshalem, 'Stories in My Praise', p. 34.

classical work of Lurianic Kabbalah.[408] The Maggid gives several interpretations, none of which satisfy the BeSHT, who claims that the Maggid's explanations lack spirit and soul (*beli neshamah*). He then shows the Maggid an entirely new way of reading the mystical text. As the BeSHT recites the angelic names that appear in the passage, the room is filled with light, a heavenly fire descends from above, and the angels themselves appear. The Maggid is transformed by this experience, and he remains with the BeSHT in Mezhbizh for a period of time. The BeSHT teaches him "great and deep wisdoms" (*hokhmot gedolot ve-'amuqot*), which the Maggid takes with him upon his return to Mezritch.

The editor of KSHT writes that this story represents Maggid's own testimony regarding his first encounter with the BeSHT.[409] However, the unreliable attributions of material throughout KSHT should make us cautious in accepting this claim.[410] Even if the story originated as an account from the Maggid, surely the tale was edited and crafted before its publication in 1794. In its present version, the story offers a relatively clear picture of the relationship between the Maggid and the BeSHT. The Maggid was a learned scholar long before traveling to Mezhbizh, but he lacked the BeSHT's ability to evoke a mystical experience through reading religious texts.[411] This encounter with the BeSHT's new way of interpreting Kabbalah, transformed the Maggid into a student of the BeSHT.

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[408] *Ets Hayyim* was printed for the first time in 1772. It was already available in manuscript and was known to the Maggid, but this fact may be a historical retrojection.

[409] This attribution is given credence by Nigal, 'Primary Source for Hasidic Tales', p. 138.

[410] See above, pp. 62-64.

[411] Nigal, 'Primary Source for Hasidic Tales', p. 139, argues that this story should be read as complementing another tale in KSHT, in which the BeSHT is described as a traditional Talmudic scholar who uses his genius to attract another such learned man in his town.

The account in KSHT is complemented by a parallel in the later collection of stories *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*.[412] This report of the Maggid's conversion describes him as a severe ascetic who became ill from his penitential regimen. R. Menahem Mendel of Bar, an associate of the BeSHT, encounters the infirm Maggid as a schoolteacher in Torchin and recommends that he journey to Mezhbizh to seek a cure from the BeSHT. The Maggid is apprehensive at the prospect of being healed by a human being, but eventually he is convinced and travels to Mezhbizh. The BeSHT welcomes the scholar with a short, bizarre, and seemingly irrelevant statement: "my horses do not eat *matsot*." Yet the reader learns that BeSHT is already aware of the Maggid's great spiritual power, and has been longing for him to visit Mezhbizh.

The Maggid is sorely disappointed by this greeting, and he leaves the BeSHT's house at once. The BeSHT responds by assembling a group of his followers and visiting the Maggid in order to appease him. Some time later he summons the Maggid to meet with him at midnight, where he is asked to read aloud from a certain kabbalistic book. The Maggid agrees and recites several passages from the text, a work of the *heikhalot* literature,[413] but the BeSHT is unsatisfied. As the BeSHT begins to read, the room is filled with noise and intense light, like the splendor that accompanied the theophany of Sinai. The Maggid, who is awestruck by the BeSHT's way of reading the text, remains in Mezhbizh to study with his new teacher. But it is the BeSHT who asks the Maggid for a

[412] See Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov* #62, pp. 81-84.

[413] This fits quite well with R. Solomon of Lutsk's testimony that the Maggid and the BeSHT studied *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh* and *Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah*, either of which might aptly be described as *heikhalot* texts. Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, p. 111, suggests that this may have been the Maggid's first exposure to this type of material, but this has not been proven.

blessing before the latter can leave Mezhbizh, and he literally forces R. Dov Baer's hand when he refuses.

The tale of the Maggid's conversion in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* seems to be an expanded and more developed version of the story in KSHT. The two accounts agree on many key structural and conceptual points. Each describes the Maggid as a mature intellectual before meeting the BeSHT, and in both versions R. Dov Baer accepts the BeSHT as his spiritual master after showing him an illuminated new way of reading mystical texts. Neither of these tales refers to any of the Maggid's other teachers, emphasizing the special connection between R. Dov Baer and the BeSHT.[414]

Yet the story in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* articulates a more specific claim about the uniqueness of the relationship between the Maggid and the BeSHT. There are significant differences between the Hebrew and the Yiddish versions of this tale. Grözinger argues that the Maggid's election is much less clear in the Hebrew edition.[415] But recent scholarship has suggested that *both* versions frame the Maggid as the sole inheritor of the BeSHT's spiritual legacy, or, at the very least, his most foremost disciple.[416] This development is important, since *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* is one of the earliest attempts to construct a sacred history of Hasidism and a reflection on the movement's intellectual and spiritual origins. This version of the Maggid's transformation portrays R. Dov Baer as being destined to inherit the BeSHT's mantle and become the leader of the emerging Hasidic movement.

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[414] Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, p. 81.

[415] Grözinger, 'Basic Recensions', p. 361-362.

[416] Amshalem, 'Stories in My Praise', pp. 41-42.

The conversion stories in KST and *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* describe how the BeSHT taught the Maggid a new way of reading kabbalistic texts. But if early Hasidism generally favored oral traditions over the written word, why did the BeSHT not invoke the mystical experiences through prayer, incantations or reciting a magical formula?[417] Why would the BeSHT need to anchor the mystical experience in reading a text? I believe that the answer is twofold. First, this tale demonstrates the complexity, and even hybridity, of Hasidism's relationship to written words. The locus of the mystical experience is grounded in the very act of studying a text, but intoning the words is an oral gesture that brings to life the spiritual elements of the world around the reader.

Furthermore, both of the accounts refer to the Maggid as a scholar immersed in the traditional works of rabbinic literature and Kabbalah. Perhaps they suggest that a figure like R. Dov Baer could not have been converted by means of the BeSHT's stories, or even through a powerful mystical experience alone. The evocative power of the BeSHT's method of interpretation emerges precisely from the meeting of the text and its reader.

The parallel tales in KSHT and *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* are the earliest and most elaborate accounts of the relationship between the BeSHT and the Maggid. Other Hasidic sources frame their interactions differently. A tradition from the Ruzhin dynasty claims that the two of them only met twice, though the Maggid's second visit consisted of a six-month period of study.[418] This framing limits the connection between the BeSHT and the Maggid, thus highlighting the importance and originality of the Maggid himself. Perhaps

[417] In his famous letter to his brother-in-law, the BeSHT writes that he performed an ascent of the soul by means of an "adjuration" (*hashba'at 'aliyat ha-neshamah*).

[418] *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 423. Cf. *Ohalei Ya'aqov*, p. 87, who suggests that the Maggid only began to visit the BeSHT toward the end of the latter's life.

this emphasis reflects the fact that the founder of the Ruzhin dynasty was a great-grandson of R. Dov Baer. Other Hasidic stories, however, accentuate the Maggid's submission and fealty to his master by referring to him having brought his own students to visit the BeSHT.[419]

The BeSHT's teachings had a deep impact upon the Maggid's thought, and meeting the BeSHT was a crucial moment in the Maggid's spiritual development. Indeed, *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* portrays the encounter in which the Maggid discovered a new way of reading Kabbalah as transformative moment like the theophany on Mt. Sinai. Some hagiographical traditions describe the BeSHT as having revealed new ideas to the Maggid, but even these suggest that the Maggid learned a holistic reorientation toward religious life from the BeSHT and not necessarily a large body of specific teachings. The Maggid's sermons reflect the core ideas of the BeSHT's spiritual ethos, such as panentheism, serving God in the physical world, a commitment to joy, and an intense devotion to prayer. But the Maggid never fully broke with asceticism, and a significant number of his homilies praise the value of withdrawing from the pleasures of the physical world. The legends about the Maggid as well as his sermons suggest that he was an introverted, contemplative mystical thinker, one who possessed a very different religious personality than the more expansive and extroverted BeSHT.[420]

The teachings of the BeSHT and the Maggid underscore the absolute centrality of language in the mystical life. Their focus on the importance of words is clearly something

[419] See the story about the Maggid bringing R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk to meet the BeSHT in *Nefesh Menahem*, printed at the beginning of the Lemberg 1911 edition of SLA, fol. 9a.

[420] This point is illustrated by the story in which the BeSHT prays so loudly and vociferously that the Maggid cannot endure it and retreats to a small room in which he was accustomed to pray alone; see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, #36 p. 51.

that they shared in common, and perhaps this too is an area in which the BeSHT's impact of the Maggid is visible. The Maggid's own students understood this theological affinity between him and his master.[421] R. Solomon of Lutsk describes one of the BeSHT's primary messages as the "[knowledge of] God's unity in the lower world, in every motion, step, word and deed."[422] That is, the divine Presence is embodied in all language, just as God's sacred energy is manifest in all aspects of the earthly realm. Regarding the Maggid's approach to language, R. Solomon refers to a theological position of greater sophistication and depth:

> One should contemplate his voice and his thoughts, coming to realize that they are nothing but [divine] vitality and sprit. Each [faculty] derives from its root and source on high.... So it is with regard to the World of Speech, the origin of language for all speaking creatures. Indeed, [this sacred linguistic energy] extends to all other creatures, for Holy One's words are in all things. His energy is like the [wordless] voice, and the garment into which that energy is focused is like the word that embodies and focuses the voice. He who understands, will understand."[423]

The immense power of human language derives from the fact that it is an embodiment of the divine quality of speech. Furthermore, God's sacred word remains present in all elements of the physical realm, which is described as a garment that embodies divine speech. This new approach to language was among the most important theological ideas that the Maggid received from his teacher.

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[421] R. Aaron of Zhytomir, a disciple of R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, understood this connection between the Maggid and the BeSHT as well. See *Toledot Aharon*, *shelah*, fol. 20c: "By what means can one uplift a thought? The essence is through awe, which is a fire that can burn any strange thoughts, as is explained in the book of the holy master R. Baer, the preacher of Mezritch. This is the wisdom of the holy and pure BeSHT. The most important thing is to speak words of Torah and prayer with all of one's power, and thereby connecting himself to the light of the blessed *Ein Sof* within the letters. This subdues all bodily powers and brings him to a state of true divestment from the physical. He ascends to the higher worlds and intellects, each time attaining new illumination."

[422] MDL, p. 2.

[423] MDL, p. 6.

The Maggid was deeply influenced by the BeSHT, and some of the hagiographical traditions describe them as having a uniquely intense relationship. Historical evidence, however, suggests that the Maggid was a member of a loose-knit circle of disciples around the BeSHT. There is no evidence of a formal group over which the BeSHT might be described as the central leader, but a legal will from 1765 refers to a variety of different people connected with the BeSHT.[424] This testament, commissioned by a certain wealthy man by the name of David ben Israel Halperin, lists the Maggid of Mezritch as a beneficiary of a small sum of money. But it also refers to many other prominent early Hasidic figures, including R. Pinhas of Koretz and R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zlotshev. Although this text neither singles out the Maggid as the leader of a unified movement nor describes him as the primary disciple of the BeSHT, it does demonstrate that the Maggid's connection to his teacher was publicly known.[425]

THE MAGGID'S CIRCLE AND EARLY HASIDISM

It is difficult to know if the Maggid had already begun to attract students during the BeSHT's lifetime.[426] R. Dov Baer's influence peaked from the second half of the 1760s until his death in 1772, during which he lived in the towns of Mezritch, Rovno and

[424] David ben Israel Halperin, *Darkhei Tsiyyon,* Pollnoye 1797, unpaginated.

[425] Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 200-201, interprets this list as a rough description of the BeSHT's most prominent associates. It includes figures often described in stories as having been close to the BeSHT, like R. Zeev Kitses, as well as the BeSHT's son R. Zevi, and others became important leaders in their own right, such as the Maggid, R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zoloczow, R. Pinhas of Koretz, R. Menahem Mendel of Premishlan, and R. R. Nahman of Horodenka. It is difficult to know if the will reflects their social position in early 1760s (at time of BeSHT's death), or in 1765. However, the absence of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye from this document is quite striking.

[426] There are legends about R. Dov Baer bringing his own students to meet the BeSHT, but these cannot be substantiated. Other tales, however, portray the Maggid as refusing to accept a certain student until after the BeSHT's death; see *Qahal Hasidim*, fol. 41a.

Hanipoli.[427] Throughout these years the Maggid became an increasingly well-known figure in the region. Occasionally he was called upon to intervene in communal matters,[428] but, more importantly, in the 1760s the Maggid began to establish himself as the leader of a group of disciples. Many of the leaders who became important forces in the spread of the religious ethos of Hasidism spent time in the Maggid's *beit midrash*. We do not know how many disciples surrounded the Maggid at any given point, when each of them arrived in Mezritch for the first time and how long they stayed,[429] or even who should be considered one of his students.[430] But it is clear that many different types of young men gravitated to the Maggid. Some were the intellectually gifted sons of the elites, while others seem to have been spiritually talented individuals whose powers lay more in their charisma than in their scholarly abilities.

What attracted these talented young men to the Maggid? His reputation was spreading in the 1760s, at least within the region, but it is unclear if he had achieved renown as a scholar, a preacher, or a charismatic mystic, or some combination of all three. The hagiographical conversion stories about the students' first encounter with him

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[427] Dubnow, 'The Magid of Miedzyrzecz', pp. 59-60, suggests that the shift of the center of gravity to Mezritch was important, since it was in Volhynia the north, closer to Lithuania.

[428] See Dinur, 'Origins of Hasidism', pp. 139-140; Ch. Shmeruk, 'The Hasidic Movement and the "'Arendars"', *Zion* 35 (1970), pp. 182-192, esp. 187; Ettinger, 'Hasidism and the *Kahal*', p. 66-7.

[429] R. Menahem Mendel is remembered as being one of the first to join the Maggid, studying with him already in his early adolescence; see *Qahal Hasidim*, fol. 31b. He was clearly one of the Maggid's prominent disciples, and was mentioned by name in some of the earliest bans; see Wilensky, *Hasidim and* Mitnaggedim, vol. 1, pp. 43, 28, 6405; Moshe Hallamish, 'The Teachings of R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, p. 268. R. Zushya of Hanipoli, is often described as one of the earlier members, coming before R. Shmu'el Shmelke and R. Pinhas Horowtiz; see *Qahal Hasidim*, fol. 45b. R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady seems to have come while in his twenties, circa 1765 or 1767; see Heilman, *Beit Rabbi*, p. 8.

[430] For several attempts to list of the Maggid's students, see Aaron Walden, *Shem ha-Gedolim ha-Hadash*, Warsaw 1864, fol. 11a-b; *Seder Dorot ha-Hadash*, pp. 31-49; Yitzhak Alfasi, *he-Hasidut: mi-Dor la-Dor*, Jerusalem 1995, vol. 1, pp. 139-192. See also R. David of Makow's listing of early Hasidic figures in his *Shever Posh'im*, reprinted in Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 2, pp. 101-102.

differ widely, certainly reflecting the variety of people who traveled to see him. Solomon Maimon decided to visit Mezritch after learning of the Maggid's teachings from one of his other students. After meeting R. Dov Baer, Maimon was greatly impressed both by his charismatic presence and the depth of his sermon.[431] There is a well known and often quoted story in which R. Aryeh Leib Sarah's claims that he traveled to the Mezritch not to learn from the Maggid's homilies, but simply to observe how the master tied his shoes.[432] This tale offers a very different perspective, for it seems that R. Aryeh Leib was attracted to the Maggid's *beit midrash* by the charismatic presence and personal conduct of master himself. Elsewhere R. Shne'ur Zalman is remembered as having gravitated toward the Maggid's *beit midrash* because of the inspirational and ecstatic prayer, not because of the scholarship.[433]

But other stories emphasize that the impact of the Maggid's homilies upon his listeners came from more than the semantic meaning of his words. One tale recounts how the learned brothers R. Shmu'el Shmelke and R. Pinhas Horowitz traveled to Mezritch in order to discover a new way of serving God. They were quite confused by the Maggid's teachings, finding them elliptical and mundane rather than the learned discourse they would expect from such a famous scholar. However, R. Zushya of Hanipoli convinced them that the inscrutability of R. Dov Baer's sermon actually reflected the great depth of his theology, and the two young men decided to stay in Mezritch and study with the

[431] Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, p. 93, suggests that the BeSHT was able to convert people with the power of his stories alone, whereas the Maggid used more explicitly theological teachings.

[432] *Seder Dorot ha-Hadash*, p. 35; cited by Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 344.

[433] Heilman, *Beit Rabbi*, p. 8 n. 2.

Maggid.[434] Several other stories like this one portray R. Dov Baer as having bewildered his would-be disciples and piqued their interest by greeting them with seemingly banal stories instead of involved homilies.[435] This calls to mind the hagiographical traditions regarding the Maggid's first interaction with the BeSHT, who shocked him by offering mundane anecdotes rather than spiritual teachings.

In some tales, particularly those found in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*, the Maggid inspires newcomers by demonstrating clairvoyance or working wonders.[436] A story from a different collection tells of R. Menahem Mendel of Premishlan introducing himself to R. Dov Baer under an assumed identity. But the Maggid was not deceived, and he promptly greeted him by name.[437] These tales are complemented by the small number of the Maggid's homilies that discuss how *tsaddiqim* accomplish miracles.[438] However, R. Dov Baer seems to have differed from his teacher the BeSHT in his approach to miracles. The BeSHT, who was a *ba'al shem* as well as a spiritual revivalist, was widely known for his supernatural abilities. R. Dov Baer achieved renown as a scholar, not a faith healer, and the intellectual element of his legacy was far more prominent than his capacity to work wonders. R. Solomon of Lutsk's introduction to MDL claims that the BeSHT was willing to intercede in the heavens at the beginning of Nisan. The Maggid, though he received

[434] *Qahal Hasidim*, fol. 45b. In a different version of this tale, R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev first visited the Maggid together with R. Shmu'el Shmelke Horowitz. See *Imrei Pinhas*, vol. 1, p. 267. This account suggests that R. Levi Isaac convinced R. Shmu'el Shmelke, his study partner, to visit the Maggid. This is strange, given that R. Shmu'el Shmelke was the older of the two and already a rabbi in the nearby city of Rychwol. However, it may be that R. Levi Isaac, the younger, was attracted by something the new ethos of the Maggid.

[435] *Divrei David*, fol. 4b-5a.

[436] Amshalem, 'Stories in My Praise', pp. 42-49.

[437] *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, fol. 11a. This parallels the account in Maimon, *Autobiography*, p. 168, in which all of the guests around the Maggid's Sabbath table are greeted by name

[438] Weiss, 'Theory of Contemplative Magic', pp. 137-147.

this same wisdom from his teacher, demurred from doing do so.[439] It is likely that some of the Maggid's students were attracted by the sophistication of his theology, despite the more popular accounts given in these conversion stories. Indeed, it is interesting to consider whether or not his more scholarly disciples like R. Pinhas and R. Shmuel Shmelke Horowitz, R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, R. 'Uziel Meizels, R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, or R. Israel of Kozhenits would have been attracted to the BeSHT.[440]

What did the Maggid's students do while at his *beit midrash*? Of course, considerable attention would have been devoted to the rituals of Sabbath and other holidays, particularly since these may have been the times in which most people visited Mezritch. But some students may have come to the *beit midrash* in order to study with the Maggid for longer periods of time. Which texts formed the heart of their curriculum, and what was the structure and style of their learning?[441] In a letter from 1797 R. Abraham of Kalisk describes the studies in the Maggid's *beit midrash* as having been slow and contemplative, moving from one matter to another only after a long period of internalization.[442] However, he offers no information about the format of their studies or the specific texts they read.

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[439] The Habad tradition downplays this aspect of the Maggid's spiritual legacy; see Heilman, *Beit Rabbi*, p. 12.

[440] Of course, R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye and the Maggid, both of whom were scholars, were attracted to the BeSHT.

[441] See Reiner, 'Wealth, Social Position, and the Study of Torah', pp. 287-328. For a description of studies in the European academies in late medieval period, see Mordechai Breuer, 'The Ashkenazic Yeshiva', Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem 1967, pp. 52-95 [Hebrew]. Ze'ev Gries suggested in a private conversation that the sermons printed in MDL loosely follow the order of the Babylonian Talmud. This suggests that the scholars assembled in the Maggid's *beit midrash* may have been studying Talmud, and he addressed them regularly, grounding his homilies in the text they would all have been studying. However, in an admittedly late story R. Zushya of Hanipoli asked his friend R. Shmelke Horowitz to educate him in some basic elements of the study of Jewish law, since this subject was totally unkown to him; see *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, p. 18d-19a.

[442] *Peri ha-Arets*, letter #37, p. 221.

The model of the *yeshivah* came rather late to the Hasidic world, and we should not assume that the primary function of the Maggid's *beit midrash* was as an academy of textual learning.[443] To my knowledge there are no traditions, hagiographical or otherwise, in which students come to Mezritch with learning traditional works of Jewish thought as their foremost goal. But if disciples like R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev and R. Solomon of Lutsk were transcribing hundreds of pages of teachings, the Maggid must have spoken with some frequency. We do not know which of these texts represent transcriptions of private classes, and which were originally sermons or homilies delivered before a broader community.

There is little historical information about how the Maggid's students related to one another during his lifetime, both in the context of the *beit midrash* in Mezritch and in their respective homes throughout Eastern Europe. It is even difficult to determine which of these figures were present at the Maggid's *beit midrash* at the same time, since rarely do we know which disciples were in Mezritch in any given year or how long they stayed.[444] Commenting on the relationship between R. Dov Baer's students, Ada Rapoport-Albert suggests that:

> To the best of our knowledge the Maggid's disciples who, at the end of their apprenticeship at his court, went back to their home towns or left for other places in order to establish and head Hasidic

[443] Stampfer, *Families, Rabbis and Education*, pp. 252-274.

[444] R. Aaron ha-Kohen, *Ve-Tsivah ha-Kohen*, pg. 84, claims that during his youth he spent two or three weeks with the Maggid each year in the cities of in Tultshin and Rovno. In a letter addressed to R. Pinhas Horowitz, R. Shn'eur Zalman suggests that R. Pinhas was with the Maggid in Mezritch for a significant period before accepting a rabbinical position in Frankfurt; see Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1, p. 308. *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, fol. 11a-b, includes a story in which R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady was forced to tarry at the Maggid's court for an extended time. A later Hasidic tradition attempts to fill this lacuna by claiming that the Maggid asked his students to appear before him during the seven weeks between Passover and Shavuot. *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 413. See also the tale in *Divrei David*, fol. 4b-5a, which emphasizes that students must come and stay with their master for a long period of time in order to absorb the profundity of his teachings.

> communities of their own rarely visited him and did not maintain any links by regular correspondence with him.[445]

Rapoport-Albert claims that students traveled to Mezritch in order to study with the Maggid for a period of time, the terms of which we rarely know, and then left without maintaining any close ties to him. This model, though difficult to disprove, is an argument grounded primarily in silence. It is based on the fact that we have few textual witnesses of communications between R. Dov Baer and his students, and among the disciples themselves.

But references to one another in their later published works offers some evidence of an emerging "circle" of disciples,[446] as do the many letters they exchanged[447] and the hagiographical traditions in which the Maggid's students interact with one another. R. Shne'ur Zalman maintained a strong bond with R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, whom he accepted as his teacher after the Maggid's death.[448] Familial connections were also forged between R. Dov Baer's disciples as well. For example, the grandson of R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev married the granddaughter of R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady.[449] Of course, there are some interesting lacunae. R. Solomon of Lutsk is scarcely mentioned in any of the hagiographic traditions or theological works by the Maggid's other disciples.[450] This absence is striking given that R. Solomon, a relative of R. Dov Baer, was an important enough figure in Maggid's *beit midrash* to have been entrusted with

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[445] Rapoport-Albert, 'Hasidism After 1772', p. 98.

[446] *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 2, *va-ethanan*, p. 293; *Qedushat Levi*, *liqqutim*, p. 481.

[447] For example, see Heilman, *Iggerot Ba'al ha-Tanya u-Venei Doro*.

[448] Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, esp. 23-39, 40-42, 48-50, 122-128; Hallamish, 'R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk' pp. 268-287; Rapoport-Albert, 'Hasidism After 1772', p. 105;

[449] See R. Shne'ur Zalman's letter of consolation to R. Levi Isaac after the death of the latter's son, included in *Sefer ha-Tanya*, *iggeret ha-qodesh*, ch. 28 fol. 147b-148b.

[450] For a rare story in which R. Solomon is a minor player, see *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, fol. 11b.

writing down the master's teachings. He later edited the first printed collection of the Maggid's teachings, and in his introduction he makes no mention of any other students.

The fullest description of the Maggid's *beit midrash* comes from Solomon Maimon's account of his short visit to Mezritch in his youth.[451] His memoirs include a valuable testimony of the proceedings of the Maggid's *beit midrash*, a description of the basic tenets of Hasidism (as compared with other forms of Eastern European Jewish piety), and a record of the Maggid's teachings he heard while in Mezritch. Maimon's testimony is hardly impartial, for his heavily-edited memoirs were intended to present Eastern European Judaism to an audience in the West, but his account has been verified and is considered reliable by scholars.

Maimon's memoirs are an important source for thinking about whether the Maggid's study-hall be considered a *beit midrash*, a traditional house of study, or a Hasidic court in the pattern of what the institution became in the late eighteenth century. Based in part on his testimony, Haviva Pedaya has suggested that the Maggid's study-hall was a prototype of the Hasidic court, anticipating of many of the elements that came to define a Hasid's encounter with his master as the movement developed.[452] People traveled to see the Maggid, and not the other way around. R. Dov Baer may even have sent out disciples in order to encourage people to travel to Mezritch, which would have cultivated a new base disciples as well as spread his teachings throughout the region.[453]

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[451] On this importance of this description, see above, pp. 1-2. Maimon does not say how he long he stayed in Mezritch, but from his account it seems that he must have been there for several weeks.

[452] Pedaya, 'Social-Religious-Economic Model of Hasidism', pp. 351-356.

[453] Dubnow, 'The Maggid of Miedzyrzecz', p. 64. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, pp. 110-111. See also the interesting story about the Maggid's emissaries found among the sermons of R. Nahman of Bratslav; *Liqqutei Moharan* I:162.

We should not underestimate the importance of the transition to a model of leadership in which the Hasidic master is stationary.[454] The legends about the BeSHT describe him as continuing the tradition of a wandering spiritual master whose peregrinations took him from place to place. This shift may have been precipitated by R. Dov Baer's difficulty in walking, as well as the fact that he held an official appointment as *maggid meisharim* in Mezritch and Koretz, but it had great social and ideological implications. Staying in Mezritch gave the Maggid control of the environment, allowing him to introduce a set procedure with certain theatrical elements. This was integral to establishing of the office and institution of the *tsaddiq*.

The delivery of a sermon during a Sabbath meal, presumably in addition to public sermons and personal instruction given to his close disciples, was one ritual of the Maggid's *beit midrash* that was adopted by almost all later Hasidic courts. Maimon describes a homily given by R. Dov Baer at the Sabbath table in great details, and it is clear from his testimony that these addresses were not delivered exclusively to scholars. Indeed, a story included in a book by one of the Maggid's disciples refers to his house as being filled with of many different people, varying both in age and in scholarly ability.[455] Some later Hasidic leaders had a public area in which they met with the community, and another private space in which they studied with more advanced disciples.[456] These

[454] Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Walking as a Sacred Duty: Theological Transformation of Social Reality in Early Hasidism', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 180-207. Later Hasidic stories describe the spiritual significance of journeying to the Maggid; see *Divrei David*, fol. 4a-b.

[455] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *devarim*, p. 160. R. Israel of Kozhenits records an incident in which an unlearned person (*'am ha-arets*) came to ask the Maggid a question, but did not really understand the answer; see *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *avot*, p. 291.

[456] Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland', 39-40.

Hasidic courts included concentric circles of people of differing proximity to the *tsaddiq*, a model that would suit what we know of the Maggid's *beit midrash* quite well.[457]

Many of R. Dov Baer's teachings refer to the *tsaddiq* as a mystic whose spiritual powers are nearly limitless. The *tsaddiq*'s contemplative service transforms the world around him, but the Maggid's sermons do not describe *tsaddiq* as a communal leader like a typical Hasidic *rebbe*. In fact, the Maggid's conception of the *tsaddiq* as a holy individual who sustains the universe is more similar to that of earlier kabbalistic literature than the *tsaddiq* of later Hasidic texts. And the Maggid's works include very little of the biting criticism of the rabbinic establishment found in the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye. In texts from as early as the 1780s the Maggid's students refer to him as *admor* ("our teacher and master"), a title that eventually came to signify a distinctly Hasidic leader, but this appellative was primarily a title of great respect and does not prove that R. Dov Baer functioned in the social role of a Hasidic *tsaddiq*.[458]

However, Haviva Pedaya has pointed out that there was a notable rift between R. Dov Baer's theoretical teachings and the events of his life, for the Maggid's *beit midrash* laid at least some of the foundations of the institution of the *tsaddiq*.[459] Green suggests that R. Dov Baer was reluctantly drawn into this position of leadership despite his natural

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[457] The custom of a personal audience with the *rebbe*, known as *yehidut*, became an important Hasidic practice in the generations after the Maggid's death. Maimon records that he wished to meet with R. Dov Baer immediately upon arriving in Mezritch, but was told that he must wait until the Sabbath with the other strangers; see Maimon, *Autobiography*, pp. 168-169. Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, p. 56, suggests that R. Shne'ur Zalman's belief that Hasidic leaders should give personal instruction to their disciples came from the Maggid. And there is some evidence that the Maggid accepted *pidyonot*, "redemption" offered by a Hasid to his master, which Pedaya argues that this institution is one of the things that allowed the Maggid to establish himself as *the* preeminent leader of what was becoming the early Hasidic movement. See Pedaya, 'Social-Religious-Economic Model of Hasidism', p. 353; Berger, *'Eser Orot*, p. 13b.

[458] See R. Solomon's introduction to MDL, pp. 1-4.

[459] Pedaya, 'Social-Religious-Economic Model of Hasidism', p. 351-352. Piekarz also argued that Maggid's the subject of the *tsaddiq* is such a central concern in many of his sermons that it must have influenced his reality. See Mendel Piekarz, *Hasidic Leadership*, Jerusalem 1999, pp. 92-94.

affinity for an introverted mode religious service.[460] The Maggid's homilies describe the *tsaddiq* as an intensely contemplative and inwardly-oriented mystic, yet R. Dov Baer was actively involved in in his students' lives and to some degree in the formation of the Hasidic movement.

It is interesting to note that none of the BeSHT's close disciples became students of R. Dov Baer after the former's death.[461] The Maggid lived in close proximity to R. Pinhas of Koretz, and some later Hasidic traditions suggest that there was a pronounced tension between the two.[462] A few stories describe a somewhat more cordial relationship between the Maggid and R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye, who even refers to R. Dov Baer in a sermon from 1765.[463] Yet Hasidic hagiography remembers the Maggid and R. Jacob Joseph as having possessed very different religious personalities. This point is made nicely by a story, which, although rather late, illustrates the very real dissonance between these early Hasidic leaders. R. Jacob Joseph decides to travel to Mezritch to investigate a new stringency in the laws of slaughter that the Maggid's community had adopted. Since the BeSHT had made no mention of this innovation, R. Jacob Joseph's suspicions are aroused. The Maggid appeases him by explaining that the BeSHT's merit prevented any questionable cases from having arisen during his lifetime, thus circumventing the problem, and then asks him to spend the Sabbath in Mezritch. R. Jacob Joseph replies:

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[460] Green, 'Around the Maggid's Table', pp. 85-86.

[461] *Seder Dorot ha-Hadash*, pp. 19b-23b, offers a sizable list of significant early Hasidic leaders who were contemporaries of the Maggid but were not his disciples.

[462] For example, see *Imrei Pinhas*, vol. 1, p. 484. Heschel, *Circle of the Baal Shem Tov*, pp. 19-29, argued that there was a certain amount of rivalry between R. Pinhas and the Maggid, and that their respective approaches to leadership and divine service were actually quite different from one another.

[463] *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 2, *derush le-shabbat ha-gadol,* p. 606. See also *Imrei Pinhas*, vol. 1, p. 391. Neither R. Jacob Joseph nor R. Pinhas appear anywhere in the Maggid's sermons.

"On Shabbat I behave just like an ordinary householder. I must sleep immediately after I eat, and I cannot spend as much time at the table as you. You are the teacher of many disciples, and you speak Torah before them." The Maggid replied, "I have two small rooms near my courtyard. I will pick up and leave from my house and move to these two rooms to be with my students for Shabbat. We will arrange our holy Sabbath table there, and I will give my house to you. You will be able to rest there alone, behaving just as you do in your own house.

The Rabbi of Pollnoye spent the Sabbath in the Maggid's house, sequestered with his disciple R. Moses. The Maggid and his students were in the two rooms. On the Sabbath night the Rabbi of Pollnoye ate with his disciple, and after the meal he laid down to sleep. His holy disciple longed to go to the holy table of the Maggid, for he had heard so often in his house that the Maggid was quite famous, and that all the great men of the generation (*tsaddiqei ha-dor*) were his students. But he was terrified to go to the Maggid's table that evening because of his master's irascibility, lest he awake from his sleep and become angry with him. For this reason he did not go.

On the Sabbath day, after the Rabbi had eaten his afternoon repast, he said to his disciple, "Let us go to Maggid's table to hear something from him." He went through the courtyard to the Maggid's rooms. In the courtyard he heard the Maggid speaking Torah, and wanted to open the door to the Maggid. When he arrived at the doorway, the Maggid fell silent within, and the Rabbi of Pollnoye returned through the courtyard to his home. As soon as he had reached the threshold of the house in which he was staying, he heard the Maggid begin to speak words of Torah once more. He returned to the Maggid's house, and the Maggid's holy words stopped upon his arrival. This happened several times, and his student R. Moses, the Maggid of Chodnov, stood with him and watched it take place. After all of these matters had passed, the Rabbi of Pollnoye walked this way and that in the courtyard, his hands over his heart, and said, "What can be done? Since the day our master the BeSHT died, *shekhinah* departed with her pack and established her place with the Maggid." The Rabbi of Pollnoye was never again at the Maggid's table, and after the Sabbath he and his student went on their way in peace.[464]

[464] *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, fol. 11d-12b.

This story is anachronistic on several points, particularly in the way that it frames the succession of the BeSHT's mantle of leadership as a competition between R. Jacob Joseph and the Maggid. But the profound difference between the characters of these two men is not necessarily a late hagiographical invention. The Maggid, unlike R. Jacob Joseph, is often portrayed in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* as a mature and accomplished spiritual leader. Furthermore, while R. Jacob Joseph's works include hundreds of teachings from the BeSHT, and his original writings are theologically rich, to our knowledge he had no community of students. No important Hasidic leaders in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth century claimed to be his disciple. It was the Maggid's combination of philosophical complexity and personal charisma that allowed him to play a very different role in establishing a religious movement.

In conclusion, I believe we may outline three possible models for explaining the Maggid's place in the formation of Hasidism. According to the first one, the Maggid inherited a well-defined position of leadership from the BeSHT, who founded Hasidism as both a spiritual revival and new social movement. This option, though once accepted by scholars, has been thoroughly rejected. A second model describes the Maggid as the true architect and "founder" of Hasidism, consciously shepherding the movement in its infancy and establishing himself as the central leader of the various early groups. This would mean that the Maggid was aware of Hasidism's transition from an elite circle of disciples into a mass movement, and that R. Dov Baer sought to accomplish this by sending out his disciples to carve up the territory of Eastern Europe.

A third model, and the one I believe is most appropriate in light of the historical and literary evidence, proposes that the Maggid trained a generation of extraordinary and

gifted students. But although he may indeed have sent out disciples in order to attract new students to Mezritch, there is no evidence to suggest that he carved up the geography of Poland and White Russia by sending his disciples to establish Hasidic centers in specific areas. Some of the Maggid's students, such as R. Shmuel Shmelke of Nikolsburg and R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, traveled in order to secure official positions as rabbis. Others, like R. Solomon of Lutsk, remained in the area of Mezritch and Koretz long after the Maggid's death. Still others, like R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady and R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, went back to the northern communities from which they had originally come. These disciples transformed the Hasidic movement from a small group of devotees into a mass movement.[465]

THE MAGGID'S FINAL YEARS

The Maggid moved to the town of Rovno toward the end of his life.[466] He remained there for some time, presumably from 1770-1772, and several of his disciples refer to him exclusively as the "Maggid of Rovno."[467] Conflict played a major role in the last two years of the Maggid's life. The *mithnaggedim* grew more vocal in their opposition to early Hasidic leaders around the time of his move to Rovno, although the first official ban against the Hasidim was not published until the spring of 1772.[468] The fiercely polemical anti-Hasidic tract *Zemir 'Aritsim* began to circulate in that same year. The Maggid's students had been spreading his teachings throughout Eastern Europe,

[465] Green, 'Around the Maggid's Table', pp. 73-106.

[466] Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, p. 61, raises the possibility that the Maggid may have relocated to Rovno because of the outbreaks that followed in the wake of the Ottoman-Russian wars in 1768-69.

[467] For example, see *No'am Elimelekh*, pp. 109-110, 404; *Zot Zikhron*, fol. 18a.

[468] The conflict with the *mithnaggedim* may have started as early as the 1760s; see the sources cited in Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1, p. 27 n. 1; and Dynner, *Men of Silk*, p. 284 n. 198.

including the regions of White Russia and Lithuania as well as Galicia and Polesia.[469] However, the writings of the *mithnaggedim* suggest that they were more incensed by the social improprieties of some of his students than by their theology.[470] The *mithnaggedim* decried the Hasidim, to whom they referred as "Mezritcher" or "Karliner," because they formed their own prayer quorums, adopted new regulations for ritual slaughter, performed unbecoming and boisterous movements during prayer, and acted disrespectfully toward scholars and sages.

R. Dov Baer's name appears rather infrequently in these polemics, and it seems that the *mithnaggedim* were reticent to ridicule the Maggid himself. R. Israel Loebel, an important *mithnaggedic* writer, claimed that the BeSHT ascended to prominence between 1760-1765; only after his death did the movement splinter into smaller groups governed by individual leaders. The BeSHT, of course, died in 1760, and the Maggid's popularity and power increased throughout the decade as Hasidism grew. Wilensky suggests that Loebel purposefully omitted the Maggid's name from his account of the fledgling sect so as not to criticize him directly, for perhaps he considered R. Dov Baer an important scholar and authentic Kabbalist. Indeed, Loebel mentions the Maggid in one of his other

[469] Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1, p. 27.

[470] Despite the fact that R. Solomon of Lutsk printed MDL without any official rabbinic approbations, the Maggid's works do not seem to have sparked the same ire as the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye, whose books were burned publicly; Dresner, *The Zaddik*, pp. 66-73. Perhaps the answer lies in the fact that the Maggid's teachings did not include the incendiary and bitter criticism of the failings of the current rabbinic elite found in the works of R. Jacob Joseph. Not until the publishing of TSVHR, in which study is depreciated in favor of other modes of devotion, were works of the Maggid's teachings flagged as controversial. See Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1, pp. 42-43, 66, 182, 252-267; ibid, vol. 2, p. 201. See also Dubnow, *Toledot ha-Hasidut*, p. 165; Gries, *Book in Early Hasidism*, p. 19. See, however, Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1, p. 150, for an anti-Hasidic ban from 1787 that explicitly mentions MDL (as *Liqqutei Amarim*).

polemical works, but R. Dov Baer's name appears briefly and without any of the vehemence marshaled against some of the other early Hasidic leaders.[471]

It is hard to determine the Maggid's reaction to the growing opposition by the Lithuanian elites from the textual evidence. He may have attempted to prevent his students from becoming too radical and inciting the wrath of the *mithnaggedim*.[472] In a letter R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady claimed that the R. Dov Baer reprimanded R. Abraham of Kalisk for his outrageous public displays of enthusiasm at a special conference of the Maggid's disciples in 1770.[473] Another tradition from the Habad community directly attributes that Maggid's death to his students' eagerness to strike back against the *mithnaggedim*, for R. Dov Baer himself discouraged his disciples from combatting them openly.[474] R. Shne'ur Zalman described the account as follows in a letter written in the 1790s:

> These [anti-Hasidic] books were sent throughout the communities of the diaspora. It would not be believed were I to tell of the great humiliations and afflictions suffered by the famous *tsaddiqim* of Volhynia. They were unable to remain in their houses, and they sought refuge beneath the wings of our great master, of blessed memory, in the holy community of Rovno. [They held] a meeting of counsel, inquiring what to do. There were many ways to do something to thwart and disrupt their thoughts, writing things about them that are bitter many times over, in the language of truth that endures forever, and publishing them as well and sending them throughout [the lands of]

[471] Wilsensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 2, pp. 259-260.

[472] See Zeev Gries, 'Hasidic Conduct Literature from the mid-18th Century to the '30s of the 19th Century', *Zion* 46, pp. 198-236, 278-305 [Hebrew.]

[473] See Heilman, *Iggerot Ba'al ha-Tanya*, pp. 156-158. We should note that this letter was written long after the fact, and within the context of a mounting controversy between R. Shne'ur Zalman and R. Abraham of Kalisk; see Zeev Gries, 'From Myth to Ethos – Outlines for the History of Rabbi Avraham of Kalisk', *Umah Ve-Toldoteiah*, ed. S. Ettinger, Jerusalem 1984, vol. 2, pp. 117-146 [Hebrew]; Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, pp. 317-413.

[474] Heilman, *Beit Rabbi*, pp. 17-19. In this story the Maggid claims that R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady is destined to become the leader of all the communities of Russia.

> Jacob. And there were other paths as well. But our great master chose to take no action against them, since all the power of Israel lies in their mouths, to cry out to God to disrupt their wicked thoughts and prevent their hands from doing anything. And just as he interpreted it for us, so it was...[475]

This letter describes the Maggid's students, downtrodden and pursued, fleeing to their leader in order to escape the wrath of the *mithnaggedim*. They were ready to turn the tables on their opponents by circulating polemical literature of their own. But the Maggid called upon them to take no other action other than prayer, trusting that their supplications would inspire divine intercession without them needing to act in their defense.[476] It is noteworthy that the Maggid attributes such great power to human language addressed to the Divine, for it is words rather than deeds that will deliver him and his students from the *mithnaggedim*. The potency of such heart-felt prayers is mirrored in several of the Maggid's sermons.[477]

R. Dov Baer relocated to the small town of Hanipoli in the last few months of his life.[478] The Maggid had been infirm and physically weak for many years, but in this period his illness seems to have intensified considerably.[479] He was buried in Hanipoli

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[475] *Iggerot ha-Qodesh*, pt. 2, pp. 19-20. See Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, pp. 228-229. This account of the Maggid's refusal to engage in retribution against those who opposed his circle is mirrored in a letter from R. Pinhas Horowitz in Heilman, *Iggerot Ba'al ha-Tanya*, pp. 117-118

[476] A later Habad source, told by someone who was close to a student of R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, offers a longer description of an event that sounds very much like this. See Mondshein, *Migdal 'Oz*, pp. 246-248.

[477] See below, pp. 501-516. Cf. ST, p. 61.

[478] R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady claimed to have visited the Maggid in Rovno in the summer of 1772 together with R. Abraham Kalisker. See Heilman, *Iggerot Ba'al ha-Tanya*, p. 175.

[479] Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1, p. 40 n. 24. See also *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 416-417.

after his death in late 1772,[480] and his close disciple R. Zushya, a native of that city, was interred next to him a few years later.[481]

R. Dov Baer did not bequeath leadership of his *beit midrash* to his son after his death. Hasidic tradition remembers the Maggid and his wife as having had only one child, a son born after many years of infertility.[482] R. Abraham, named for the Maggid's father, is described as intensely introspective and pietistic; the hagiography portrays him as even more withdrawn from the physical world than his father.[483] Hasidic sources often refer to him as R. Abraham "the Angel" (*ha-malakh*), referring to his saintly and ascetic nature. Some legends describe him as having served as the preacher of Fastov, but R. Abraham is depicted as extremely reclusive and pietistic even in those stories in which he occupied some communal position.[484] He was counted among the Maggid's disciples, and according to later Hasidic traditions he was the study partner (*havruta*) of R. Shne'ur

[480] A later *mithnagged* author attributed great significance to the fact that the Maggid died within a year of the initial ban; see Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 2, p. 237, 247. This hardly seems likely, but the Habad movement felt threatened enough by this suggestion that they attempted to refute it in writing; Heilman, *Beit Rabbi*, p. 19 n. 6.

[481] The Maggid's grave never became a major site of Hasidic pilgrimage. A later Hasidic master and descendent of one of the Maggid's students described his experience at the Maggid's grave as smelling of the fragrance of the Garden of Eden; see *Magen Avraham*, fol. 29b. On Hasidic journeys to and prayer at the graves of leaders, see Naftali Loewenthal, 'From the Source of *Rahamim*: Graveside Prayer in Habad Hasidism', *Studies in Jewish Prayer*, ed. R. Hayward and B. Embry, Oxford 2005, pp. 207-223; Sagiv, 'Hasidism and Cemetery Inauguration Ceremonies', pp. 328-351; and more broadly, Jonathan Garb, 'The Cult of the Saints in Lurianic Kabbalah', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 98 (2008), pp. 211-229.

[482] However, Israel Berger *'Eser Orot*, fol. 13a, quotes an early Hasidic source that refers to the Maggid's children in the plural. See Zevi Elimelekh of Dynov*'s Igra de-Pirqa*, #2; Green, 'Around the Maggid's Table', p. 84 n. 41. There is little other support, hagiographical or otherwise, for the interesting claim that R. Dov Baer had more than one child. The editors of the Ruzhiner compendium *'Irin Qaddishin*, p. 58, claim that "his sons" might refer collectively to the Maggid's sons and grandchildren, or less likely, to the students who became his metaphorical children.

[483] *Seder Dorot ha-Hadash*, pp. 33-34, recounts a tradition in which R. Abraham was greatly distressed even by his obligation to be intimate with his wife.

[484] Some Hasidic stories describe R. Abraham as the *maggid* of Fastov/Khvastov (Ukr. Fastiv), where he is buried; see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, #72 pp. 91-2.

Zalman of Liady.[485] A collection of R. Abraham's sermons was published as *Hesed le-Avraham* in 1851,[486] and snippets of his teachings appear in the works of the Maggid's students.[487]

R. Abraham did not become the leader of a centralized Hasidic movement after his father's death because inherited succession was not yet the rule. There was no assumption that all, or even any, of the Maggid's students would necessarily pledge allegiance to their master's son after his death.[488] However, R. Abraham apparently married the daughter of a scholar, perhaps in order to achieve a greater *yihus* ("familial standing") for his children.[489] Indeed, dynastic rule became commonplace in communities founded by some of the Maggid's descendants as well as his students. R. Abraham died at a young age in 1776, and his son R. Shalom Shakhna was raised by R. Solomon of Karlin. R. Abraham's grandson, R. Israel Friedman of Ruzhin, established one of the most important and powerful dynasties in Ukrainian Hasidism. R. Israel's claim to

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[485] *Beit Rabbi*, pp. 9-10, 178-179; *Qahal Hasidim*, fol. 41b. See also Etkes, *Ba'al ha-Tanya*, pp. 341-342.

[486] *Hesed le-Avraham* was published rather late, but Gries, *Conduct Literature*, p. 132 argues that the fact that it was reprinted in Lemberg 1858, 1860 and 1864 reveals a high demand for this relatively popular work.

[487] See *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *balaq*, p. 356; *Orah le-Hayyim*, *noah*, p. 63; *Me'or 'Einayim, be-shalah*, p. 170; *Liqqutei Torah, derushim le-shemini 'atseret*, fol. 87a; *Torah Or*, *bereshit*, fol. 6a. See also the small number of teachings attributed to R. Abraham recently published from manuscript in Mondshine, *Migdal 'Oz*, pp. 389-398. He is not, however, cited with great frequency.

[488] On the emergence of Hasidic dynasties, see Nehemia Polen, 'Rebbetzins, Wonder-Children, and the Emergence of the Dynastic Principle in Hasidism', *The Shtetl: New Evaluations*, ed. S.T. Katz, New York 2007, pp. 53-84. A fascinating responsum by the later Hasidic leader R. Hayyim Halberstam of Zanz (1797-1876) reflects upon the fact that there was no assumption of hereditary leadership in the movement's early years; see his *She'elot u-Teshuvot Divrei Hayyim*, vol. 2, *hoshen mishpat* #32; Mendel Piekarz, *Ideological Trends of Hasidism in Poland During the Interwar Period and the Holocaust*, Jerusalem 1990, pp. 193-195; Assaf, *Regal Way*, pp. 54-5. Habad sources, as reflected in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* as well, go to greater lengths in order to demonstrate that R. Abraham was unfitting for communal leadership because of the great intensity of his piety. This is likely a reflection of the fact that dynastic succession quickly became the norm in the Habad community.

[489] Dynner, *Men of Silk*, pp. 232-233. According to a story in *Shivei ha-BeSHT*, R. Abraham was remarried to the daughter of R. Feivel of Kremenets some twelve years before he died; see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, #75 pp. 94-99.

authority was at least in part based in his lineage from the Maggid, which by the early eighteenth century had become a defining factor in the legitimacy of most Hasidic leaders.[490]

Conclusion

R. Dov Baer of Mezritch occupies a central place in Hasidic memory. The Maggid and his disciples played a crucial role in the development of Hasidic theology and in the growth of Hasidism as a socio-religious phenomenon. In light of his importance, the relatively small number of hagiographical stories about R. Dov Baer is remarkable. And with the exception of some traditions from the Habad community, rather few of the tales about the Maggid depict him as a Hasidic leader in the pattern of what the office became in the late 1700's and early 1800's. Some tales, such as those in KST and in particular *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*, sought to flesh out and embellish R. Dov Baer's connection with the BeSHT, who was later imagined as the Hasidic movement's founder. Most hagiographical traditions describe the Maggid as a reluctant communal figure, one whose position at the heart of the emerging Hasidic movement was defined by ambivalence about public leadership. The tales portray the Maggid as an inspiring but introspective mystic, whose authority was rooted in the force of his religious personality and ability of his theological teachings to strike awe into his disciples.

[490] For a comprehensive biography of R. Israel of Ruzhin, see David Assaf, *Regal Way*. For a selection of hagiographic but useful works about the Friedman family, see Paul J. Jacobi, *The Friedmann Family*, Jerusalem 1987; Yisroel Friedman, *The Golden Dynasty*, Jerusalem 2000; Dov Baer Rabinowitz, *Iggerot ha-Rav ha-Qadosh mi-Ruzhin u-Vanav*, Jerusalem 2003, 3 vols.

Chapter 2: Philosophy of Language

The question of language is one of the most important recurrent themes in the teachings of R. Dov Baer of Mezritch. His sermons frequently return to issues such as the origins and nature of language, the notion of sacred speech, the role of words in mystical experiences, the relationship between letters, language and cognition, and, perhaps most fundamentally, the essential connection between human and divine language. We will explore each of these topics more fully in the subsequent chapters, as we examine specific theological and devotional issues in the Maggid's thought. In the present chapter we will lay the conceptual foundation by giving an overview of his philosophy of language. But in order to truly grasp this element of Maggid's theology, we must first turn to the sustained Jewish discourse on the issues of language that extends back over two millennia.

BACKGROUND

Debates over the question of language have long been at the heart of Jewish thought, and many of these are rooted in the Hebrew Bible and its interpretation. Scripture accords language an importance place in certain rituals and cultic cermonies,[491] although some biblical sources describe worship in the Temple in terms of cultic acts without language.[492] However, some sacrifices were accompanied by verbal confession,

[491] Daniel Miller, 'Another Look at the Magical Ritual for a Suspected Adulteress in Numbers 5:11-31', *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 5.1 (2010), pp. 1-16. More broadly, see the collected studies in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki, Boston 2001.

[492] Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*: *From its Beginnings to the Babylonian Exile*, trans. and abr. Moshe Greenberg, Chicago 1960, pp. 110, 303-5, 309; Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: the Priestly Torah and the Holiness School*, trans. Jackie Feldman and Peretz Rodman, Minneapolis 1995; idem, 'Between Voice and Silence: The Relationship between Prayer and Temple', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 115.1 (1996), pp. 17-30. While there are references to a Levitical liturgy that accompanied the

suggesting that words were an integral part of purging oneself of sin.[493] Spontaneous verbal prayers, structured as both prose and song, are found throughout the Hebrew Bible.[494] Vows and oaths are binding because of the power of language and not simply because of social convention.[495]

These elements, while noteworthy, are present in many traditional societies. However, three biblical narratives are crucial to later Jewish thinking on language. The first of these is the opening chapter of Genesis, in which God creates the world through issuing a series of commands ("let there be light," etc.).[496] This narrative lends itself to the interpretation of language that God created the world by means of language, though not all post-biblical exegetes were convinced by this interpretation. As we shall see, some of them argued vociferously against it. Later debates over the identity of an original language refer to the story of the Tower of Babylon (Gen. 11), a tale that also makes a claim regarding the multiplicity of human languages.[497] The final biblical narrative that crops up in the works of medieval Jewish thinkers is the story of Adam naming the animals (Gen. 2:18-23). This tale is often interpreted as an explanation of the origins of human language, and is thus at the center of debates over the naturality or conventionality of language.

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sacrificial cult, this theme is developed more fully in post-biblical literature; see Simon J. De Vries, 'Moses and David as Cult Founders in Chronicles', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107.4 (1988), pp. 619-639.

[493] Jay C. Hogewood, 'The Speech Act of Confession: Priestly Performative Utterance in Leviticus 16 and Ezra 9-10', *Seeking the Favor of God, Volume 1: The Origins of Penitential Prayer in Second Temple Judaism*, ed. M.J. Boda, D.K. Falk, and R.A. Werline, Atlanta 2006, pp. 69-82.

[494] On prayer in the Hebrew Bible, see below, pp. 482-483.

[495] Tony W. Cartledge, *Vows in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Sheffield, England 1992.

[496] This subject will be examined in the following chapter. On another aspect of the divine voice found elsewhere in the Bible, see Azzan Yadin, '*Kol* as Hypostasis in the Hebrew Bible', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 122.4 (2003), pp. 601-626.

[497] In some cases these debates also invoke Zephaniah 3:9, which refers to God restoring the speech of all nations to "a pure language" (*safah berurah*) in the messianic future.

The Hebrew language may have had particular importance as a mark of national Israelite identity in some periods of Antiquity, but the Bible makes no exclusive claims regarding the uniqueness of Hebrew as a divine tongue.[498] This attitude began to change, however, during the time of the Second Temple. In this period the term *leshon ha-qodesh* first emerged. It appears for the first time in a Qumran text, where it is the original language, preserved only by Abraham.[499] The book of Jubilees also refers to the special status of Hebrew as the "revealed language" and the "language of Creation."[500] It was lost after the Tower of Babel, and revealed to Abraham once more as he set off toward the land of Israel.

Jewish thinking about language developed significantly in the rabbinic period. God's creation of the world through the letters, though not a major theme in rabbinic literature, is mentioned explicitly.[501] The Jerusalem Talmud records a debate regarding the original language mentioned in Gen. 11:1. One opinion claims that all seventy languages were known before the Tower of Babel, suggesting that people could understand one another because everyone was multilingual, but another sage identifies this language as that of "the singular One of the world, the sacred tongue (*yehido shel*

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[498] See Seth L. Sanders, *The Invention of Hebrew*, Urbana 2009; Daniel I. Block, 'The Role of Language in Ancient Israelite Perceptions of National Identity', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 103.3 (1984), pp. 321-340.

[499] See H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary*, Leiden 1985, pp. 446-450; Esther Eshel and Michael Stone, 'Leshon haqodesh in the End of Days in the Light of a Fragment from Qumran', *Tarbiz* 62 (1993), pp. 169-177 [Hebrew]; Josef Eskhult, 'Augustine and the Primeval Language in Early Modern Exegesis and Philology', *Language & History* 56.2 (2013), pp. 98-119. See also Steve Weitzman, 'Why Did the Qumran Community Write in Hebrew?', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 119 (1999), pp. 35-45.

[500] Jubilees 12:25-27.

[501] B. Berakhot 55a; and cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 18:1. The assumption that God created the world through language is also visible in rabbinic usage of "the One who spoke and the world came into being" (*mi she-amar ve-hayah ha-'olam*) as epithet for the Divine. See t. Bava Qamma 7:10; Sifrei Devarim, *'eqev*, *pisqa* 49.

'olam, *leshon ha-qodesh*)."[502] A later rabbinic midrash weaves these themes together in a claim that while Hebrew was the universal pre-Babel language, the subsequent division into the seventy languages became a part of the cosmic hierarchy along with the seventy prototypical nations.[503] Another midrashic work describes a return to Hebrew as part of the messianic redemption, interpreting the "pure speech" mentioned in Zephaniah 3:9 as a reference to the primordial language.[504]

Entire tractates of the Talmud are devoted to detailing the many laws of asseverations, oaths, and vows,[505] and words, and especially divine names, are an important part of magical rituals.[506] For example, the Talmud includes what appears to be an ancient legend about King David writing the name Y-H-V-H on a potsherd and casting it into the primordial depths to prevent them from overwhelming the world above.[507] But many rabbinic texts ascribe a unique status, and in some cases, special qualities, to the

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[502] y. Megillah 1:9.

[503] *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eli'ezer* ch. 26.

[504] Tanhuma, *noah* #19. This section of Zephaniah was read as the *haftarah* for the Babel story in the Palestinian liturgical tradition; see Jacob Mann, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue: A Study in the Cycles of the Readings From Torah and Prophets*, Cincinnati 1940, vol. 1, pp. 91-2.

[505] Zeev W. Falk, 'Notes and Observations on Talmudic Vows', *The Harvard Theological Review* 59.3 (1966), pp. 309-312; Simcha Fishbane, 'The Structure and Implicit Message of Mishnah Tractate Nazir', *The Mishnah in Contemporary Perspective II*, ed. A.J. Avery-Peck and J. Neusner, Leiden 2006, pp. 110-135. See also Lawrence Schiffman, 'The Law of Vows and Oaths (Num. 30.3-16) in the Zadokite Fragments and the Temple Scroll', *Courtyards of the House of the Lord: Studies on the Temple Scroll*, ed. F. Garcia Martinez, Leiden 2008, pp. 557-572; Jo-Ann A. Martens, 'A Second Best Voyage: Judaism and Jesus on Oaths and Vows', Ph.D. Dissertation, McMaster University, 1991.

[506] For examples of the creative power of words, see b. Sanhedrin 65a. See E. E. Urbach, *The Sages—Their Concepts and Beliefs*, trans. Israel Abrahams, Jerusalem 1987, pp. 124-134. The incantation bowls from the rabbinic period, which use magical formulae to accomplish tasks like banishing demons, are an excellent case study in linguistic magic; Lawrence Schiffman and Michael D. Swartz, ed., *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Sheffield 1992; Shaul Shaked, 'Dramatis Personae in the Jewish Magic Texts: Some Differences Between Incantation Bowls and Geniza Magic', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* (2006), pp. 363-387. More broadly, see Daniel Sperber, *Magic and Folklore in Rabbinic Literature*, Ramat-Gan 1994, pp. 47-118; Brigitte Kern-Ulmer, 'The Depiction of Magic in Rabbinic Texts: The Rabbinic and the Greek Concept of Magic', *Journal for the study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman period* 27.3 (1996), pp. 289-303.

[507] b. Sukkah 53a-b. See Sperber, *Magic and Folklore*, pp. 47-54, and the many parallels he gives from the literature of Late Antiquity.

Hebrew language.[508] Indeed, Hebrew may have retained its national implications into the early rabbinic period, but this changed as Hebrew ceased to function as a vernacular and became a literary and liturgical language.[509]

Despite the embrace of Greek and Aramaic as spoken languages, some rabbinic texts display ambivalence toward translation. The *targum*, or translation of Scripture accompanying its reading in the synagogue, was an important institution,[510] and the Aramaic translations of various Scriptural books were a significant genre of biblical commentary and interpretation. But some rabbinic traditions approach the project of translating Scripture, and certain translations in particular, with a great deal of skepticism.[511]

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[508] For example, *Bereshit Rabbah* 18:4 declares that just as the Torah was given in *leshon ha-qodesh*, so too was the world created through Hebrew. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, ch. 37, gives the ability to speak in *leshon ha-qodesh* as one of the ways in which human beings are like the ministering angels; cf. b. Shabbat 12b; b. Sotah 33a; *Sifrei Devarim*, *'eqev*, *pisqa* 46, refers to a father's obligation to "speak to" (i.e. teach) his son in *leshon ha-qodesh*. See also m. Sotah 7:1-2, which list various liturgical units and ritual texts that may be recited in all languages, juxtaposed with those that must be recited in *leshon ha-qodesh*.

[509] Seth Schwartz, 'Language, Power and Identity in Ancient Palestine', *Past and Present: A Journal of Historical Studies* (1995), pp. 3-47. A limited number of non-Hebrew texts were also accepted as part of the liturgy; see Joseph Yahalom, 'Angels do not Understand Aramaic: On the Literary Use of Jewish Palestinian Aramaic in Late Antiquity', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 47.1 (1996), pp. 33-44; idem, 'Syriac for Dirges, Hebrew for Speech: Ancient Jewish Poetry in Aramaic and Hebrew', *The Literature of the Sages II: Midrash and Targum, Liturgy, Poetry, Mysticism, Contracts, Inscriptions, Ancient Science and the Languages of Rabbinic Literature*, ed. S. Safrai, et al., Assen, Netherlands 2006, pp. 375-391.

[510] See t. Megillah 3.20, 35; b. Megillah 35a-b. More broadly, see Steven D. Fraade, 'Rabbinic Views on the practice of Targum, and Multilingualism in the Jewish Galilee of the Third-Sixth Centuries', *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. L.I. Levine, New York 1992, pp. 253-286; idem, 'Locating Targum in the Textual Polysystem of Rabbinic Pedagogy', *Bulletin of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* 39 (2006), pp. 69-91; Avigdor Shinan, 'Sermons, Targums, and the Reading from Scriptures in the Ancient Synagogues', *The Synagogue in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. I. Levine, New York 1987, pp. 97-110; Rachel S. Mikva, 'Midrash in the Synagogue and the Attenuation of Targum', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 18.4 (2011), pp. 319-342. For example, see Christian M. M. Brady, ed., *The Rabbinic Targum of Lamentations,* Leiden 2003.

[511] *Massekhet Sefer Torah* 1:6 compares the day that the Torah was translated into Greek to the sin of the Golden Calf. Cf. y. Megillah 1:9. See the statement of R. Judah preserved in t. Megillah 3:4; and b. Qiddushin 49a: "one who translates a verse literally is fabricator, and one who adds on to it is a blasphemer." In the Bavli version, R. Judah refers to the *targum* as an integral part of reading the Torah in the synagogue, but then adds the preceding caveat. For examples of rabbinic ambivalence toward *targum*, see b. Shabbat 115a-115b; b. Megillah 3a. See also Naomi Janowitz, 'The Rhetoric of Translation: Three Early Perspectives on Translating Torah', *Harvard Theological Review* 84 (1991), pp. 129-140; Emanuel

Two other points about rabbinic attitudes to language are relevant for our study. The first is the particular importance attributed to spoken words. Vows and oaths are only considered binding once articulated verbally.[512] And liturgical units such as *shema'*, and even the words of the silent *'amidah* ("standing prayer"), should be pronounced.[513] The Talmudic sages raise the question of to what extent a thought may be considered the liturgical equivalent of oral speech.[514] This debate refers to the legal status of internal speech versus words that are articulated aloud, but not necessarily to the more abstract issue of whether or not one's thoughts may be correctly described as a linguistic act.[515]

A second, broader point about the rabbinic conceptions of language emerges from the ways in which the sages interpreted Scripture.[516] The canonization of the Hebrew

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Tov, 'The Evolution of the Greek Scripture: Translations in Rabbinic Sources', *Interpreting Translation: Studies on the LXX and Ezekiel in Honour of Johan Lust*, ed. F. García Martínez and M. Vervenne, Leuven 2005, pp. 385-399; Moshe Simon-Shoshan, 'The Tasks of the Translators: The Rabbis, the Septuagint, and the Cultural Politics of Translations', *Prooftexts* 27.1 (2007), pp. 1-39; Richard Kalmin, 'The Miracle of the Septuagint in Ancient Rabbinic and Christian Literature', *Follow the Wise: Studies in Jewish History and Culture in Honor of Lee I. Levine,* ed. Z. Weiss, et al, Winona Lake, Indiana 2010, pp. 241-253. In some cases the question of translation was linked to issues of authority over the sacred writ, for translations are often undertaken in order to make a text more accessible to a wider number of readers; see Marc Bregman, 'Mishnah and the LXX as Mystery: An Example of Jewish-Christian Polemic in the Byzantine Period', *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine Palestine*, ed. L.I. Levine, Jerusalem, 2004, pp. 333-342.

[512] See the discussion on b. Shevu'ot 26b.

[513] m. Berakhot 2:3; b. Berakhot 24b.

[514] See b. Shabbat 150a, 113a-113b; b. Bava Qamma 73a-73b.

[515] There is, however, a fascinating debate between several later commentators regarding the linguistic definition of thought. R. Aryeh Leib Gunzberg (d. 1785), took issue with a ruling of R. Solomon ben Aderet, who claimed that the notion of language cannot apply to thought, because intellection does not take place in any one specific language. Gunzberg, on the other hand, insists that one can think within a particular language, and can therefore fulfill certain liturgical obligations that one is required to recite in a specific language by reciting them in his mind; see his *She'elot u-Teshuvot Sha'agat Aryeh*, #7. R. Abraham Isaiah Karelitz defends Solomon ben Aderet's position by arguing that speech is defined by the fact that it is being communicated to someone else. Thoughts, although they may happen in words of one language or another, cannot ever truly be considered speech; see *Hazon Ish*, *orah hayyim* #14.

[516] The study of rabbinic hermeneutics and philosophies of language has blossomed in recent years. For a few examples, see Susan A. Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Theory*, Albany 1982; José Faur, *Golden Doves with Silver Dots: Semiotics and Textuality in Rabbinic Tradition*, Bloomington 1986; Azzan Yadin, 'The Hammer on the Rock: Polysemy and the School of Rabbi Ishmael', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 10 (2003), pp. 1-17; Gabriel Levy, 'Rabbinic

Bible transformed it into an authoritative text that lies at the heart of all Jewish theological and legal exegesis. Of particular significance is the notion that the words of the Scripture must be painstakingly interpreted in order to reveal new depths of meaning. This exegetical privilege, based on a faith in the polysemous nature of biblical language, is what gave the sages their authority, and was a cornerstone of the entire rabbinic enterprise.[517]

The short but influential *Sefer Yetsirah*, an early work that had a profound impact on later Jewish mysticism,[518] further developed the idea of creation through language that is implied by the Hebrew Bible. *Sefer Yetsirah* describes God's formation of the universe by means of the "thirty-two pathways of wisdom," namely the ten *sefirot* and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This work thus introduces the term *sefirot* into the Jewish lexicon for the first time. In this context, however, they refer to something very

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Philosophy of Language: Not in Heaven', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 18.2 (2010), pp. 167-202; Shalom Rosenberg, 'Notes on the Sages' Philosophy of Language', *Avi 'Ofarim: A Collection of Essays in Memory of Tsevi Korekh*, Jerusalem 2002, pp. 111-119 [Hebrew]; Nehemia Polen, '*Derashah* as Performative Exegesis in Tosefta and Mishnah', *Midrash and the Exegetical Mind*, ed. L. Tuegels and R. Ulmer, Piscataway, New Jersey 2010, pp. 123-153, and his forthcoming 'Rabbis in Paradise: Law and Holy Spirit in Early Rabbinic Judaism'. See also Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, 'Who's Kidding Whom?: A Serious Reading of Rabbinic Word Plays', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 55.4 (1987), pp. 765-788; the reply by Jacob Neusner, 'A Rabbinic Theory of Language?', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56.4 (1988), pp. 762-763; and the rebuttal by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, 'A Rabbinic Theory of Language?', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 56.4 (1988), pp. 763-763.

[517] Simon Rawidowicz, 'On Interpretation', *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 26 (1957), pp. 83-126; Moshe Halbertal, *People of the Book: Canon, Meaning, and Authority*, Cambridge, Mass. 1997, pp. 1-89. See also David Kraemer, 'The Formation of Rabbinic Canon: Authority and Boundaries', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 110 (1991), pp. 613-630.

[518] *Sefer Yetsirah* in its current form has been heavily edited, and several distinct recensions have been passed down. For a study of the different versions of this work and a critical edition of the earliest recoverable text, see A. Peter Hayman, *Sefer Yesira: Edition, Translation and Text-Critical Commentary*, Tübingen 2004. The work is very difficult to date, but its overall worldview and finely balanced literary structure suggest that it was roughly contemporaneous with the Mishnah (ca. 200 CE); see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1974, pp. 26-28; Yehuda Liebes, *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetsirah*, Tel Aviv 2000, pp. 229-237 [Hebrew]; Peter Hayman, 'Some Observations on Sefer Yesira: (1) Its Use of Scripture', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35 (1984), pp. 181-183. For a different view that pushes forward *Sefer Yetsirah*'s redaction into the Islamic period, see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Text, Context, and Pretext: Review Essay of Yehuda Liebes's *Ars Poetica in Sefer Yetsira*', *The Studia Philonica Annual XVI* (2004), pp. 226-227.

different from the complex web of symbols they will represent in medieval Kabbalah. Here the *sefirot* are simply the numerical (*mispar*) elements used by God to fashion the world. It is interesting to note that *Sefer Yetsirah* does not examine the shapes of the letters nor their numerical values, techniques that were central in later Jewish mysticism.[519] Nor does this work assign a special status to Hebrew or designate it a "holy tongue" vis-à-vis other languages.[520] Of course, the election of Hebrew is implied by the fact that the world was created through twenty-two letters, but it is possible that *Sefer Yetsirah* extends similar creative powers to all languages. Its preoccupation with the creative power of the letters was one of this work's greatest contributions to the Jewish mystical tradition.[521]

Words, and especially divine names, had an important role in the apocalyptic literature of Late Antiquity as well as the later *heikhalot* literature. These ancient ascent texts assume a rift between humanity and the Divine, which the mystic hopes to bridge through his heavenly journey.[522] In the classical apocalypses, which are generally older and closer to the biblical tradition, individuals are overtaken by a moment of

[519] Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 16-17, 53.

[520] Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 118-120.

[521] Joseph Dan, 'The Language of Creation and Its Grammar', *Jewish Mysticism: Late Antiquity*, Northvale, New Jersey 1998, pp. 129-154; Peter Hayman, 'Some Observations on Sefer Yesira: (2) The Temple at the Centre of the Universe', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37 (1986), pp. 176-182. See also Giulio Busi, '"Engraved, Hewed, Sealed": Sefirot and Divine Writing in *Sefer Yetzirah*', *Gershom Scholem (1897-1982): In Memoriam II (Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought 21)*, ed. J. Dan, Jerusalem 2007, pp. 1*-12*.

[522] The distinction between these two genres is not always clear, especially given that late apocalypses and early *heikhalot* works could very well have overlapped. For an analysis of *heikhalot* and *merkavah* texts within the broader context of Late Antiquity apocalypses and early Christianity, see Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity*, University Park 2002, esp. pp. 63-84. See also Philip S. Alexander, 'Comparing *Merkavah* Mysticism and Gnosticism: An Essay in Method', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35 (1984), pp. 1-18.

overwhelming prophetic rapture.[523] But the mystics of the *heikhalot* literature sought to induce their own experience through repeating names of God, mantras, and adjurations, fasting, and reciting liturgical hymns, some of which are similar to the liturgical poems developed for use in synagogues. Words have a performative quality in these texts, for their recitation inspires and guides mystical ascents.[524] Yet we should note that unlike the earlier *Sefer Yetsirah*, the *heikhalot* works do not give a sustained theory of language.

The German Pietists of the twelfth and thirteenth century Rhineland developed a rich esoteric theology that was inspired by the *heikhalot* literature, Neo-Platonism, and early Jewish philosophical works.[525] The Pietists believed the God was utterly transcendent and incorporeal, although the emanated divine Glory (*kavod,* also called *shekhinah*) and other intermediary powers that stand between humanity and God could indeed be known. For these mystics, language was the primary medium through which

[523] For an overview of these texts and their broader historical context, see Michael E. Stone, 'Apocalyptic Literature', *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, ed. M.E. Stone, Philadelphia 1984, pp. 383-422; Martha Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, New York and Oxford 1993.

[524] Naomi Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent: Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text*, Albany 2012; Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*, Princeton 1996; Shaul Shaked, '"Peace be Upon You, Exalted Angels": on Hekhalot, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 1995, pp. 197-219; Gideon Bohak, 'Remains of Greek Words and Magical Formulae in Hekhalot Literature', *Kabbalah* 6 (2001), pp. 121-134; Daphna V. Arbel, '"Understanding of the Heart": Spiritual Transformation and Divine Revelations in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999), pp. 320-344; Rachel Elior, 'From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayer and Sacred Song in the *Hekhalot* Literature and Its Relation to Temple Traditions', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* (1997), pp. 217-267. See also Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism,* Leiden 1980, pp. 3-72; Karl Erich Grözinger, 'The Names of God and the Celestial Powers: Their Function and Meaning in the Hekhalot Literature', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987), pp. 53-69. For a broader study of ascent texts in later Jewish thought, see Moshe Idel, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism: Pillars, Lines, Ladders*, Budapest 2005.

[525] See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 80-118. The most comprehensive summary of their mystical theology is Joseph Dan, *The Esoteric Theology of Ashkenazi Hasidism*, Jerusalem 1968, esp. pp. 54, 63, 70 [Hebrew]. In many respects the theology of the German Pietists represents a crucial step in the transition from the rabbinic paradigm of Late Antiquity to the new Jewish worldview of the Middle Ages.

the rift between the human and divine realms could be bridged.[526] Rabbinic texts had long venerated the act of studying Torah, but the writings of the Pietists imbue sacred study with a mystical valence. For them the Torah was a manifestation of the divine Glory and the *shekhinah*, and its study could even induce an ecstatic experience. Scripture is encoded with a host of divine names that must be teased forth from the narrative and laws, and, basing themselves on a numerical association, the Pietists occasionally refer to the Torah itself as a representation of the name Y-H-V-H.[527] Reading its words aloud was likened to intoning God's most sacred name.

The German Pietists also emphasized the importance of mystical prayer, which replaced the ascent to the Throne of Glory as the framework of mystical experience. They offered complex mystical interpretations of the liturgy, tallying the number of letters in various prayers, or reading its text as full of acronyms referring to other words.[528] The Pietists had no doctrine similar to the notion of *kavvanot* ("intentions") found in later Kabbalah, but their teachings do attribute special significance to one's inner state while performing the commandments. The ideal Hasid was an ascetic who lived with absolute fear of God and served Him with loving devotion, but not necessarily someone who had perfected his intellect.[529]

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[526] Joseph Dan, 'The Ashkenazi Hasidic Concept of Language', *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, Northvale, New Jersey 1998, pp. 65-87; idem, 'The Language of the Mystics in Medieval Germany', *Jewish Mysticism: The Modern Period,* Northvale, New Jersey 1999, pp. 161-190.

[527] See Elliot R. Wolfson, 'The Mystical Significance of Torah Study in German Pietism', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 84 (1993), pp. 43-78.

[528] Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 100-103; Talya Fishman, 'Rhineland Pietist Approaches to Prayer and the Textualization of Rabbinic Culture', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11 (2004), pp. 313-331.

[529] Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 91-95; Haym Soloveitchik, 'Three Themes in the *Sefer Hasidim*', *AJS Review* 1 (1976), pp. 339-357.

New approaches to language took place within the Islamic orbit, where Jewish thinkers were first brought into dialogue with sophisticated theological and linguistic reflection on the nature and origins of words.[530] In this context they were also confronted by polemics over language, for Islamic scholars extolled Arabic for its divine origins as well as its unparalleled aesthetic beauty.[531] These debates reached their peak in medieval Islamic Spain, but a new phase in Jewish thinking on language began as figures from the Babylonian Geonate became aware of new ideas. The tenth-century philosopher Saadya Gaon described Hebrew as a natural language, exalted because of its beauty in addition to the fact that it was the language of Revelation. Yet he translates "and God spoke" (*va-yomer*, Gen. 1:3) as "God willed" (*ratsah*), thus providing us with a clear example of a philosopher who was uncomfortable reading Genesis 1 as suggesting that God literally created the world through language. Indeed, in a sense Saadya's commentary to *Sefer Yetsirah*, one of the first of its kind, de-mystifies the work by providing a rational and often scientific explanation.

The Andalusian R. Judah Halevi (c. 1075-1141) ascribed great particular significance to Hebrew. In addition to deeply enriching Jewish discourse by incorporating religious terms taken from Arabic philosophy,[532] Halevi argued that Hebrew was a

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[530] For a masterful overview of attitudes toward language in medieval Jewish philosophy, see Irene E. Zwiep, *Mother of Reason and Revelation: A Short History of Medieval Jewish Linguistic Thought*, Amsterdam 1997.

[531] See Norman Roth, 'Jewish Reactions to the "Arabiyya" and the Renaissance of Hebrew in Spain', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 28 (1983), pp. 63-84; Nehemya Allony, 'The Reaction of Moses ibn Ezra to "Arabiyya"', *Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies* 2 (1975), pp. 19-40. In some sense, the rise of Hispano-Jewish poetry was a response to Islamic claims regarding the unique aesthetic qualities of Arabic.

[532] Of course, the *Kuzari* was written in Arabic, but these terms entered the Hebrew lexicon via translation. See Shlomo Pines, 'On the Term *Ruhaniyyut* and Its Origin, and on Judah Ha-Levi's Doctrine', *Tarbiz* 57 (1988), pp. 511-534 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Shi'ite Terms and Conceptions in Judah Halevi's Kuzari', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980), pp. 165-251; Diana Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy: Sufi Language of Religious Experience in Judah Ha-Levi's* Kuzari, Albany 2000.

unique and divine language. He draws a distinction between human language and divine language, explaining that the words of human languages have a meaning that is conventionally agreed upon, but the words of God's language are particularly appropriate to their objects of reference.[533] Halevi was responding to the glorification of Arabic, especially that of the Qur'an, in Muslim culture, but this nationalistic element of his thought is inseparable from his theology.[534]

The controversial thought of Maimonides represents the apex of rationalist Jewish thinking about language.[535] Two of his central ideas will be particularly relevant for the present discussion. The first is Maimonides' declaration that all languages are conventional.[536] Although Hebrew is a beautiful language without any profanity or inappropriate words, Maimonides claims that it is not intrinsically holy.[537] This claim sparked the ire of Kabbalists like Nahmanides, who were firmly committed to the divine

[533] *Kuzari* IV:25, referring to *Sefer Yetsirah*; and II:68. But see also Halevi's polemic against magical misuses of language in *Kuzari* III:53. More broadly, see W. Bacher, 'The Views of Jehuda Halevi Concerning the Hebrew Language', *Hebraica* 8.3/4 (1892), pp. 136-149; Y. Tzvi Langermann, 'Science and the *Kuzari*', *Science in Context* 10 (1997), pp. 495-522. See also Halevi's usage of the phrase *ha-'inyan* or *ha-davar ha-elohi* in *Kuzari* IV:25 and I:97. For a study of this term in the context of Christian teachings on the Logos and Islamic notions of the divine Word, see Harry Austryn Wolfson, 'Hallevi and Maimonides on Prophecy', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 32.4 (1942) pp. 353-370. On the influence of Halevi's views on language in later Jewish thought, see Adam Shear, *The Kuzari and the Shaping of Jewish Identity, 1167-1900*, Cambridge 2008, pp. 101, 150, 161, 288-289, 306.

[534] Islamic scholars glorified Arabic for its beauty, but not all of them agreed that it was a divine language. The conventionality of language is a teaching of the Aristotelians, and indeed the philosopher in Halevi's dialogue claims that it does not matter in which language one says something; see *Kuzari* I:1.

[535] See Bernard Septimus, 'Maimonides on Language', *The Heritage of the Jews of Spain*, ed. A. Doron, Tel Aviv 1994, pp. 35-54; Josef Stern, 'Maimonides on Language and the Science of Language', *Maimonides and the Sciences*, ed. R.S. Cohen and H. Levine, Dordrecht 2000, pp. 173-226; Aviram Ravitsky, 'Maimonides' Theory of Language: Philosophy and Halakhah', *Tarbiz* 76 (2007), pp. 185-231 [Hebrew]; David B. Burrell, 'Aquinas and Maimonides: A Conversation About Proper Speech', *Immanuel: A Journal of Religious Thought and Research in Israel* 16 (1983), pp. 70-85.

[536] See *Guide* II:30. Cf. *Commentary to the Mishnah*, *megillah* 2:1.

[537] *Guide* III:8; Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*, p. 324; Menachem Kellner, 'Maimonides on the "Normality" of Hebrew', *Judaism and Modernity: The Religious Philosophy of David Hartman*, ed. J.W. Malino, Aldershot 2004, pp. 413-444.

nature of Hebrew.[538] Maimonides' second important contribution is his foregrounding of the notion of negative theology.[539] God cannot be described, argued Maimonides, in positive statements, and must therefore be described either through divine actions or by declaring what He is not. Maimonides' position demonstrates his understanding of the boundaries of language as a medium of communication, but it also reflects a skepticism regarding the limits of what human beings can think about God. Negative theology also informed Maimonides' descriptions of religious rituals, for he suggested that the highest form of praise for God is a silence born of restraint and negation.[540] The notion of negative theology and its implications for devotional practice had a profound effect on later mystics as well as philosophers.[541]

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[538] See his comments to Ex. 30:13, and the commentary of Rabbenu Bahye ad loc. See also Gad B. Sarfatti, 'The Language of the Patriarchs according to Nachmanides', *Studies in Ancient and Modern Hebrew in Honour of M.Z. Kaddari*, ed. S. Sharvit, Ramat Gan 1999, pp. 277-283 [Hebrew]. R. Yom Tov ben Avraham Asevilli (RITVA, 1235-1310), a follower of Nahmanides' school of Kabbalah, authored *Sefer ha-Zikaron*, a defense of Maimonides against the criticism of Nahmanides. When he reaches Maimonides' comments about the conventionality of Hebrew in *Guide* III:8, however, he vociferously refuses to defend them. See also the comments of R. Nissim of Gerona on b. Nedarim 2a, where he singles out Hebrew as the only language governed by inherent meaning. All other tongues, he argues, simply represent the agreement of a particular community regarding the meaning of certain signs and sounds.

[539] *Guide*, I:59. This element is among the best documented aspects of Maimonides' thought; see Harry Austryn Wolfson, 'Maimonides on Negative Attributes', *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), pp. 411-443; Kenneth Seeskin, 'Sanctity and Silence: The Religious Significance of Maimonides' Negative Theology', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76.1 (2002), pp. 7-24; Ehud Z. Benor, 'Meaning and Reference in Maimonides' Negative Theology', *Harvard Theological Review* 88.03 (1995), pp. 339-360; Hilary Putnam, 'On Negative Theology', *Faith and Philosophy* 14.4 (1997) 407-422. Of course, negative theology was a theme that pervaded Hispano-Jewish thought from the time of its encounter with Neo-Platonism; see Steven T. Katz, 'Utterance and Ineffability in Jewish Neoplatonism', *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L. E. Goodman, Albany 1992, pp. 274-298.

[540] *Guide*, I:59. This notion is consistent with Maimonides' surprising decision that if one has recited a blessing silently (*be-libo*), he has still fulfilled his obligation; see *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot berakhot*, 1:7; and cf. *Kesef Mishneh* ad loc. See Diana Lobel, '"Silence is Praise to You": Maimonides on Negative Theology, Looseness of Expression, and Religious Experience', *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 76 (2002), pp. 25-49; Peter Eli Gordon, 'The Erotics of Negative Theology: Maimonides on Apprehension', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 (1995), pp. 1-38; David R. Blumenthal, *Philosophic Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion*, Ramat Gan 2007; José Faur, *Homo Mysticus: A Guide to Maimonides's Guide for the Perplexed*, Syracuse 1999.

[541] Some later philosophers, such as Gersonides and Hasdai Kreskas, rejected Maimonides doctrine of negative attributes; see Menachem Marc Kellner, 'Maimonides and Gersonides on Mosaic Prophecy',

Issues of language are found at the very heart of Kabbalah, which offered some unique solutions. Confronting the austere and transcendent God that emerged from the negative theology of Maimonides, the writings of the early medieval Jewish mystics also explore the extent God may be known within the limits of human language and thought.[542] The Kabbalists were also deeply influenced by apophatic tendencies of Neo-Platonism, and they were both skeptical of the mind's ability to understand the Divine and the capacity of words to describe God.[543] But many of these Kabbalists were influenced by the school of thought typified by Judah Halevi, which understood Hebrew as a divine language. God created language, and therefore could be approached through the medium of words.

Jewish mystics rarely lapse into the claim that God's infinite nature can only be adequately represented with total silence. In general they affirm the power of words in religious life and theology.[544] The Kabbalists used language in creative ways in order to overcome the limitations words. Sometimes they used language paradoxically, saying

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Speculum 52 (1977), esp. p. 75; Hannah Kasher, 'Self-Cognizing Intellect and Negative Attributes in Maimonides' Theology', *The Harvard Theological Review* 87 (1994), pp. 471-472.

[542] See Gershom Scholem, 'The Name of God and the Linguistic Theory of the Kabbala', *Diogenes* 79 (1972), pp. 59-80; and *Diogenes* 80, pp.164-194; Joseph Dan, 'The Name of God, the Name of the Rose, and the Concept of Language in Jewish Mysticism', *Medieval Encounters* 2.3 (1996), pp. 228-248. See also Adreas Kilcher, *Die Sprachtheorie der Kabbala als ästhetisches Paradigma: die Konstruktion einer ästhetischen Kabbala seit der Frühen Neuzeit,* Stuttgart 1998.

[543] Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Negative Theology and Positive Assertion in the Early Kabbalah', *Daat* 32-33 (1994), pp. v-xxii; idem, '*Via Negativa* in Maimonides and its Impact on Thirteenth-Century Kabbalah', *Maimonidean Studies* 5 (2008), pp. 393-442; Eitan P. Fishbane, 'Mystical Contemplation and the Limits of the Mind: The Case of *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 93 (2002), pp. 1-27; Sandra Valabregue-Perrym 'The Concept of Infinity (*Eyn-sof*) and the Rise of Theosophical Kabbalah', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 102 (2012), pp. 405-430.

[544] This point is made succinctly and eloquently by Moshe Idel, 'Reification of Language in Jewish Mysticism', *Mysticism and Language*, ed. S.T. Katz, New York 1992, pp. 42-79. See, however, Moshe Hallamish, 'On Silence in Kabbalah', *Religion and Language: Philosophical Essays*, ed. M. Hallamish and A. Kasher, Tel Aviv 1981, pp. 79-89 [Hebrew]; and Ronit Meroz, 'The Path of Silence: An Unknown Story from a Zohar Manuscript', *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 1 (2007), pp. 319-342.

something about the realm of the Divine and immediately retracting it.[545] But the early Kabbalists also sought to overcome the limits of language in another way: the development of symbolic language, or a rich matrix of associations and symbols inspired by biblical verses and rabbinic teachings, which have been expanded and refined over the years. At the heart of these are the *sefirot*, the conceptual anchors to which the vast array of symbols adhere. The flexibility and richness of these symbols offer the mystic a way of speaking about divine matters that extends beyond the literal meaning of words.[546] As we will see, the development of symbolic language and specific theories of language go hand in hand.

The symbolic language of Jewish mysticism had already begun to take on a recognizable, relatively stable form in the Bahir. This work, which appeared in late twelfth- or early thirteenth-century Provence,[547] is much closer to the associative style of midrash than a linear work of biblical exegesis.[548] However, the Bahir is distinguished from its rabbinic antecedents by its matrix of mystical symbols. Biblical verses are not deployed simply as proof texts, but are conceived as embedded with keywords that refer

[545] Michael Sells has referred to this phenomenon, common to Jewish, Christian and Islamic mystics, as "unsaying"; see Michael A. Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, Chicago 1994, esp. pp. 1-13.

[546] See Arthur Green's discussion of the symbolic language of Jewish mysticism in his *A Guide to the Zohar*, Stanford 2004, esp. 55-59. For a history of one key symbol, see Arthur Green, *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism*, Princeton 1997.

[547] Scholem argues that an ancient nucleus of the Bahir arrived in Europe from the East, to which other textual layers were then added; see: Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 106-23; and Ronit Meroz, 'On the Time and Place of Some of *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Daat* 49 (2002), pp. 137-80 [Hebrew]; Joseph Dan and Daniel Abrams, however, have suggested that the Bahir should be considered primarily the work of German Pietists, and that there is no concrete evidence linking it to traditions from the Middle East. See Daniel Abrams, *The Book Bahir: An Edition Based on the Earliest Manuscripts*, Los Angeles 1994, pp. 4-20 [Hebrew] (henceforth, *Sefer ha-Bahir*); and Dan's remarks in the introduction to his *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages,* Northvale, New Jersey 1998, pp. xiv-xx.

[548] See Joseph Dan, 'Midrash and the Dawn of Kabbalah', *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, Northvale, New Jersey 1998, pp. 1-18.

to Kabbalistic concepts. The symbols and the motifs and parables in which they appear are the Bahir's most significant contribution to the development of Jewish mysticism.[549]

The earliest Kabbalists of Provence and Spain devoted much of their literary efforts to interpreting the story of Creation in light of the *sefirot* and the various divine names, especially the sacred and ineffable Y-H-V-H. R. Isaac the Blind of Provence, the first of these mystics that we know by name, authored an influential commentary to *Sefer Yetsirah*. His writings reveal a mystical system that was deeply contemplative, rich in aural and linguistic metaphors as well as in visual imagery.[550] He and the other Kabbalists of Provence and Gerona describe Creation as the unfolding, or revelation of the divine name as well as the *sefirot*, flowing forth from the innermost realms of the Godhead. The name Y-H-V-H in particular is described as the heart of divine language, but the *aleph*, the most subtle and unsounded of all Hebrew letters, is identified with the

[549] Important themes and symbols in the Bahir include the metaphor of an inverted tree, with roots above and branches below, to describe the genesis of multiplicity out of divine unity; the role of God's wisdom in creation; the relationship between the many divine names; the nature and origins of evil; and the place of the feminine in the divine superstructure; see Scholem, *Origins*, pp. 68-80. Elliot R. Wolfson, 'The Tree That Is All: Jewish-Christian Roots of a Kabbalistic Symbol in *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 3 (1993), pp. 31-76; idem, 'Hebraic and Hellenic Conceptions of Wisdom in *Sefer ha-Bahir*', *Poetics Today* 19 (1998), pp. 147-176; Arthur Green, '*Shekhinah*, the Virgin Mary and the Song of Songs: Reflections on a Kabbalistic Symbol in Its Historical Context', *AJS Review* 26 (2002), pp. 1-52. The term *sefirot* briefly appears in the Bahir for the first time since *Sefer Yetsirah*. Their number, structure, and the names associated with them remain obscure, however, and we should not confuse them with the more fully defined *sefirot* of later Kabbalah. In the Bahir they are divine powers, manifestations of interacting forces with the Godhead.

[550] Mark Brian Sendor, 'The Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah: Rabbi Isaac the Blind's Commentary on Sefer Yezirah', Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 1994; Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, esp. pp. 69-76. The *'Iyyun* ("Contemplation") Circle, a loosely associated group of scholars and texts roughly contemporaneous with the Provençal and the Gerona kabbalistic schools, were also intensely concerned with language. However, the doctrines and style of the *'Iyyun* literature are radically different from those of *Sefer ha-Bahir* and the Kabbalists of Gerona, and they should be considered a theologically independent circle of scholars. Their writings remained influential and are cited with reverence by sixteenth-century Kabbalists such as Rabbi Moses Cordovero and Rabbi Hayyim Vital. On the linguistic elements of their thought, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 313-316, 332-333; and Mark Verman, *Books of Contemplation*, esp. pp. 50-54, 60-63.

energy that infuses this name.[551] These mystics also articulated a conception of contemplative prayer that emphasized the importance of *kavvanah* ("intention") in prayer, through which the mystic turns inward and ascends through the symbolic words of the liturgy to the realm of divine Thought.[552]

R. Abraham Abulafia (c. 1240-1291) and his disciple R. Joseph Gikatilla (c. 1248-1305) were among the most important early Kabbalists who devoted themselves to issues of language.[553] For these mystics, spiritual illumination was achieved primarily through various techniques of contemplation of words and letters. The unique spiritual qualities of Hebrew, the only divine language and the source of all others, were the foundations of their enterprise.[554] In addition to the statutory prayers, Abulafia developed a wide range of linguistic methods for provoking ecstatic experiences, including numerology, letter permutations and mantra-like recitations of words and divine names

[551] For an insightful study of the attitudes toward language in early Kabbalah, see Eitan P. Fishbane, 'The Speech of Being, the Voice of God: Phonetic Mysticism in the Kabbalah of Asher ben David and His Contemporaries', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 98.4 (2008), pp. 485-521. It is interesting to note that this blossoming of theological explorations into the nature of language took place at a time in which Kabbalah was transforming from oral traditions into a written literature. See Idel, *Kabbalah*, pp. 250-56; idem, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 390-409; Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, pp. 59-69; Wolfson, 'Beyond the Spoken Word', pp. 166-224; Fishbane, 'Speech of Being', p. 485.

[552] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 243-248, 299-309, 415-421; Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, pp. 57-59, 86, 161, 164-169, 178, 185-186; Isaiah Tishby, *The Writings of R. Ezra and R. Azriel of Gerona*', Jerusalem 1982, pp. 11-20; Gabrielle Sed-Rajna, ed., *Azriel de Gerone: Commentaire sur la Liturgie Quotidienne*, ed. G. Gajda, Leiden 1974; Yolanda Antínm, 'La "kavanah" en el "Comentario a la Liturgia Cotidiana" de Azriel de Gerona,' *Anuari de Filologia* 22 (2000), pp. 65-87.

[553] Moshe Idel has explored Abulafia's relationship to language in many influential studies over the past three decades. For some of the most important see, Moshe Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. Menahem Kallus, Albany 1989, esp. pp. 1-28; idem, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, trans. Jonathan Chipman, Albany 1989. See also Elke Morlok, *Rabbi Joseph Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, Tübingen 2011.

[554] In addition to the studies cited above, see Moshe Idel, 'Multi-Lingual *Gematriyyot* in the Thought of R. Abraham Abulafia and Their Significance: From the Bible to Texts and Language', *Nit'e Ilan: Studies in Hebrew and Related Fields Presented to Ilan Eldar*, ed. M. Bar-Asher and I. Meir, Jerusalem 2014, pp. 193-223 [Hebrew].

with different vowels vocalizations.[555] Their methods included both oral and visualization techniques, and in the writings of Gikatilla, describe a technique referred to as "cleaving" to specific letters.[556] Abulafia's understanding of symbolical and spiritual nature of language led him to interpret individual letters of biblical verses independently of the overall semantic meaning of the word or sentence, an approach that Idel has called to "monadization." Their theories of language and ecstatic techniques remained influential throughout the development of Kabbalah, reaching subsequent generations primarily through the works of the less controversial Gikatilla.[557]

The Zohar, the most important work of medieval Kabbalah, is filled with a great many stories about the letters of the Hebrew alphabet and interpretations of the names of God.[558] However, as opposed to Abulafia, the Zohar is more concerned with offering specific interpretations of the letters and words of Scripture in light of the *sefirot* than in developing practical techniques meant to spark ecstatic experiences. This is not to say that the Zohar is only concerned with theosophical matters, for it describes the very act of

[555] Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, p. 3.

[556] See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 378. See also Adam Afterman, 'Letter Permutation Techniques, *Kavannah* and Prayer in Jewish Mysticism', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 6.18 (2007), pp. 52-78.

[557] Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 53-65.

[558] Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Circumcision and the Divine Name: A Study in the Transmission of Esoteric Doctrine', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 78 (1987), pp. 77-112; idem, 'Anthropomorphic Imagery and Letter Symbolism in the Zohar', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 8 (1989), pp. 147-181 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Letter Symbolism and Merkavah Imagery in the Zohar', *Alei Shefer: Studies in the Literature of Jewish Thought Presented to Rabbi Dr. Alexandre Safran*, ed. M. Hallamish, Ramat Gan, pp. 195-236 (English section). The most sustained discussion of the name Y-H-V-H in the Zohar is the cryptic *Sitrei Otiyyot* ("Secrets of the Letters [of the Divine Name]"). For a critical edition, analysis and partial translation of this work see Stephen G. Wald, *The Doctrine of the Divine Name: An Introduction to Classical Kabbalistic Theology*, Atlanta 1988.

interpreting scripture as a mystical experience,[559] and reflects upon the personal and cosmological significance of devotional acts such as prayer.[560]

The Zohar also maps the different aspects of language (thought, voice, and articulated speech), both human and divine, onto the matrix of the *sefirot*. These symbolic associations were influential upon the development of later Kabbalah, which we will explore at greater length below.[561] The language in which the Zohar was composed also deserves mention. Unlike the kabbalistic texts surveyed thus far, which were written in Hebrew, the Zohar was composed in a unique form of Aramaic.[562] This was no doubt part of the author's attempt to prove the antiquity of the Zohar, but it also imbues the language of the text itself with a certain mystique. But it would have been impossible for a Jewish scholar in Islamic Andalusia to conceive of writing a great and profound work in a language like Aramaic. These thinkers wrote in Arabic in order to make their message accessible or to employ a technical vocabulary, but they used Hebrew when composing a work with an aesthetic element.[563] The great rift between the attitudes of the

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[559] Yehuda Liebes 'Zohar and Eros', *Alpayim* 9 (1994), pp. 67-119 [Hebrew]; idem, *Ars Poetica*, p. 114; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Forms of Visionary Ascent as Ecstatic Experience in the Zoharic Literature', *Gershom Scholem's Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism: 50 Years After*, ed. P. Schäfer and J. Dan, Tübingen 1993, pp. 209-235; idem, 'The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience: Revelation and Interpretation in the *Zohar*', *Through a Speculum that Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, Princeton 1994, pp. 326-392; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, esp. pp. 204-228, 253-350.

[560] Isaiah Tishby, 'Prayer and Devotion in the Zohar', *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. L. Fine, New York 1995, pp. 341-399. See also Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Mystical-Theurgical Dimensions of Prayer in *Sefer ha-Rimmon*', *Approaches to Medieval Judaism*, ed. by D.R. Blumenthal, Atlanta 1988, pp. 41-80.

[561] Charles Mopsik, 'Pensée, Voix et Parole dans le Zohar', *Revue de l'histoire des Religions* 213 (1996), pp. 385-414; Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 113-114.

[562] See Ada Rapoport-Albert, 'Late Aramaic: The Literary and Linguistic Context of the Zohar', *Aramaic Studies* 4 (2006), pp. 5-19; Charles Mopsik, 'Late Judeo-Aramaic: The Language of Theosophic Kabbalah', *Aramaic Studies* 4 (2006), pp. 21-33; Yehuda Liebes, 'Hebrew and Aramaic as Languages of the Zohar', *Aramaic Studies* 4 (2006), pp. 35-52.

[563] See Menachem Kellner, 'The Literary Character of the *Mishneh Torah*: On the Art of Writing in Maimonides' Halakhic Works', *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, ed. E. Fleischer, et al, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 29-45; Haym Soloveitchik, 'Mishneh Torah:

author(s) of the Zohar and the earlier Spanish Jewish thinkers is revealed by the Zohar's declaration that if the Torah was purely a collection of tales and not a book of divine wisdom, human beings could have written tales that were more interesting and pleasing.[564] This statement is anathema to the Hispano-Jewish claims to the sacred beauty of the Hebrew language.

The lines between magic and mysticism are blurred in many medieval works of Kabbalah. Texts such as *Sefer ha-Temunah*,[565] *Sefer ha-Pel'iah*,[566] and *Berit Menuhah*,[567] fused cosmology, detailed listings and explanations of various names of God and angels, and the magical techniques based on the letters. In these books, words and divine names are used not only as a part of the symbolic language of Kabbalah, but also function as a means of controlling the natural world.[568]

The writings of R. Moses Cordovero (1522-1570), like the Zohar, give a detailed account of the role of the letters in emanation and their relationship to both the divine names (including Y-H-V-H) and the ten *sefirot*.[569] But Cordovero also describes the letters as "vessels" (*kelim*), "palaces" (*heikhalot*), and a "habitation" (*makhon*) for

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Polemic and Art', *Maimonides after 800 Years: Essays on Maomonides and His Influence*, ed. J.M. Harris, Cambridge, Mass. 2007, pp. 327-343.

[564] See Zohar 3:152a.

[565] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 460-474; Moshe Idel, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption in Kabbalah and Hasidism', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 101 (2011), esp. 47-51. See also Nicolas Séd, 'Le *Sefer ha-Temunah* et la Doctrine des Cycles Cosmiques', *Revue des Etudes Juives* 126 (1967), pp. 399-415.

[566] Israel Ta-Shma, 'Where Were the Books *ha-Qanah* and *ha-Peliah* Composed?', *Studies in the History of Jewish Society in the Middle Ages and in the Modern Period: Presented to Professor Jacob Katz*, e. E. Etkes and Y. Salmon, Jerusalem 1980, pp. 53-63 [Hebrew].

[567] See Oded Porat, '"A Peace without Interruption': Renewed Speculation in *Sefer Brit ha-Menuha*', *Kabbalah* (2011), pp. 223-292 [Hebrew].

[568] See Moshe Idel, *The Angelic World-Apotheosis and Theophany*, Tel Aviv 2008 [Hebrew]; and, more broadly, Valentina Izmirlieva, *All the Names of the Lord: Lists, Mysticism, and Magic*, Chicago 2008.

[569] See *Pardes Rimmonim* 3:5, and 15:3, where the letters are described vessels that emerge from the names of God.

ruhaniyyut, or spiritual vitality.[570] More broadly, Cordovero devoted an entire section (*sha'ar*) of *Pardes Rimmonim* to explicating the meaning of each of the Hebrew letters.[571] Explorations of the various names of God—and their relationship to one another as well as the *sefirot*—are found in every aspect of his theology, including his descriptions of the process of emanation.[572] Cordovero also developed the notion that all commandments must be performed with the correct *kavvanah* in three interconnected realms, namely "thought, speech and deed."[573] In addition to Cordovero's own writings, some of which were widely read, his teachings about language reached a popular audience through R. Abraham Azulai's more accessible *Hesed le-Avraham*.[574]

R. Isaac Luria (1534-1572) raised the question of language to a new level of sophistication and complexity, as he did with most areas of kabbalistic thought. A section of *Ets Hayyim* is devoted to the role of the *te'amim* ("cantillation notes"), *nequdot* ("vowels"), *tagin* ("letter crowns"), and *otiyyot* ("letters") in the process of emanation.[575] This same chapter of *Ets Hayyim* includes another very important point: the anthropomorphic language of Kabbalah is not to be taken literally, but rather as a

[570] See, for example, *Pardes Rimmonim* 27:2, 30:3. The word *heikhal* may also be translated as "sanctuary," for the *heikhal* was a part of the Temple structure; see 1 Kings 6:3; Jer. 7:4. The term *kelim* is a very common one for the vessels used in the Tabernacle and the Temple, and the word *makhon* is also associated with the Temple, as in Ex. 15:17; and 1 Kings 8:13, 39, 43. Noting this, perhaps Cordovero is drawing a subtle association between the presence of God in the Jerusalem Temple and the divine immanence manifest in language.

[571] *Pardes Rimmonim* 27. Bracha Sack argues that he was influenced by, and selectively quotes from, *Sefer ha-Temunah*; see Sack, *Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordevero,* pp. 279-290.

[572] *Pardes Rimmonim* 19:1.

[573] See Bracha Sack, 'The Concept of Thought, Speech, and Action', *Daat* 50-52 (2003), pp. 221-241 [Hebrew].

[574] For example, see *Hesed le-Avraham* 2:10-11, 2:24, 7:28.

[575] *Ets Hayyim* 5. On divine names, see also Shaul Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash: Myth, History, and the Interpretation of Scripture in Lurianic Kabbala*, Bloomington 2008, pp. 31-33.

symbolic representation for the processes of emanation.[576] That is, the specific clusters of *sefirot* described in personified terms are part of theological vocabulary that may be used to signify the Godhead. Furthermore, he underscores that the terms describe only the emanated structure of the *sefirot*, but do not refer to the divine essence that lies beyond the *sefirot*.[577]

The Safed Kabbalists insisted that religious rituals and devotional acts be performed with the correct "contemplative intentions" (*kavvanot*) and "unifications" (*yihudim*). These meditations often included visualizing combinations of the various divine names and focusing upon a specific part the complex structure of the *sefirot*.[578] Studying Torah required one set of *kavvanot*, and each of the prayer services was accompanied by an elaborate set of contemplative exercises.[579] In the realm of legend, Luria was remembered as having been able to see Hebrew letters on the foreheads of the people around him. He believed that just as there are letter permutations through which the universe was created, so too are there Hebrew letters in the different levels of each

[576] On this subject, see Yehuda Liebes, 'Myth vs. Symbol in the Zohar and in Lurianic Kabbalah', *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. L. Fine, New York 1995, p. 212-242. Of course, Luria was not the first Kabbalist to describe the language of the *sefirot* as a symbolic vocabulary, but this point was perhaps even more important for him because of the strikingly anthropomorphic and mythic aspects of his mystical teachings.

[577] See Rachel Elior, 'The Metaphorical Relation between God and Man and the Significance of the Visionary Reality in Lurianic Kabbalah', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (1992), pp. 47-58 [Hebrew].

[578] These *kavvanot* often refer to a specific action's role in restoring the cosmos to a state of equilibrium and healing the intra-divine fracture between the *sefirot*. But in addition to this universal goal, striving for a more personal experience of *devequt* through traditional rituals was crucial for the Safed Kabbalists; see Mordechai Pachter, '*Devequt* in Sixteenth Century Safed', *Roots of Faith and Devequt: Studies in the History of Kabbalistic Ideas*, Los Angeles 2004, pp. 235-316.

[579] This aspect of Luria's legacy was particularly important to the school of R. Shalom Sharabi, a Yemenite mystic who moved to Jerusalem and founded an important Kabbalistic institution; see Pinchas Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi and the Kabbalists of Beit El,* Oxford 2008, pp. 34, 39-54.

person's soul. By sensing them Luria could diagnose their sins and their spiritual illness, and therefore proscribe the correct expiation (*tiqqun*).[580]

R. Isaiah Horowitz (c. 1570-1626) developed an important theory of language in his magnum opus *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, a book that was influential in Europe and well known to the Hasidic masters.[581] Following Halevi, Nahmanides, and others, Horowitz argues that the Hebrew language is inherently meaningful and not conventional. However, citing the disagreement between Maimonides and Nahmanides, he suggests that the latter proved only that Hebrew is holy because it is the language of Revelation. He does not explain *why* God chose this particular language or why it is so special.[582] Horowitz suggests that two primary aspects of Hebrew make it unique. Horowitz refers to the Hebrew language as a conduit through which divine energy and vitality can flow into the world, at least when used correctly.[583] This idea echoes the teachings of Cordovero, from whose writings Horowitz quoted extensively. But Horowitz also suggests that Hebrew words, even anthropomorphisms, refer primarily to "the sacred realm." When applied to the physical world, however, all words become metaphorical. This approach totally reverses the traditional hierarchy in which language is understood to be a metaphor when describing God. For Horowitz, however, words are to be interpreted metaphorically when their referents are in the earthly realm.

This is the backdrop against which the Hasidic approach to language unfolds. However, stepping back from the immediate historical context of early Hasidism, it is

[580] Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 98, 154-160.

[581] See above, p. 26 n. 91.

[582] See Krassen, *Isaiah Horowitz*, pp. 137-138.

[583] See *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit, bayit ne'eman tinyana*; trans. in Krassen, *Isaiah Horowitz*, pp. 148-163, and his insightful remarks in the introduction to that volume, pp. 30-31.

interesting to note that the eighteenth century was also a period of great creativity in Central and Western Europe. In addition to new ideas about music, literature and politics, philosophers were developing new theories regarding the origins, nature and function of language in the mid-to-late eighteenth century.[584] Johann Gottfried Herder published his monumental *Treatise on the Origin of Language* in 1772, the same year as the Maggid's death.[585] The works of Wilhelm von Humboldt came shortly afterward.[586] And in these decades Moses Mendelsohn was reflecting on the nature of language, especially Hebrew, and the relationship between language and epistemology.[587]

This creativity came in the wake of a radical transformation in the attitude toward language. The deeply religious medieval paradigms of language, regnant for hundreds of years, were beginning to shift.[588] Its desacralization was linked in part to the Protestant Reformation and the rise of the vernacular in the sixteenth century. The Bible was being translated into English and German with new enthusiasm,[589] thus ushering in the end of

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[584] James J. Bono, *The Word of God and the Languages of Man: Interpreting Nature in Early Modern Science and Medicine, vol. 1 Ficino to Descartes*, Madison 1995; Hans Aarsleff, 'The Tradition of Condillac: the Problem of the Origin of Language in the Eighteenth Century and the Debate in the Berlin Academy before Herder', *From Locke to Saussure: Essays on the Study of Language and Intellectual History* (1974), pp. 146-209.

[585] Johann Gottried von Herder, 'Treatise on the Origin of Language', *Philosophical Writings*, trans. and ed. Michael N. Forster, Cambridge 2002, 65-164; Michael N. Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition*, Oxford 2010; F. M. Barnard, 'National Culture and Political Legitimacy: Herder and Rousseau' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 (1983), pp. 231-253.

[586] Wilhelm Humboldt, *On Language: On the Diversity of Human Language Construction and its Influence on the Mental Development of the Human Species*, Cambridge and New York 1999. See James W. Underhill, *Humboldt, Worldview and Language*, Edinburgh 2009.

[587] Michah Gottlieb, *Faith and Freedom: Moses Mendelssohn's Theological-Political Thought*, Oxford 2011, pp. 92-94, 150 n. 159-160. See also Grit Schorch, *Moses Mendelssohns Sprachpolitik,* Berlin and Boston 2012; Tomás Hlobil, 'Two Concepts of Language and Poetry: Edmund Burke and Moses Mendelssohn', *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 8.3 (2000), pp. 447-458.

[588] Margreta de Grazia, 'The Secularization of Language in the Seventeenth Century', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 41.2 (1980), pp. 319-329.

[589] Of course, medieval European translations of the Bible and other important classics into the vernacular existed long before the Protestant Reformation; see Alastair Minnis, *Translations of Authority in Medieval*

the Latin—and hence Catholic—hegemony of the Middle Ages.[590] In the seventeenth century, philosophers like John Locke and Thomas Hobbes began to offer new conceptions of language.[591] At the same time older scientific paradigms were being revised, reformulated and overturned, which led to new attitudes toward the nature of words and the processes of cognition.[592] The humanist tradition first applied its scientific philology to the Greco-Roman classics, but then extended it to include Biblical languages. This critical approach became a central and highly influential element of the new emergent concepts of language in early modern Europe.

The ideas of the enlightenment reached the Jews of Poland and the Russian Empire rather late, taking hold only in the nineteenth century.[593] There is no reason to assume that the Maggid was aware of the new philosophical developments. The elite scholars of the *kloyzen* in Brody and Vilna may have been acquainted with these ideas,

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English Literature: Valuing the Vernacular, Cambridge 2009 pp. 107-109; Jeremy N.H. Lawrance, 'The Spread of Lay Literacy in Late Medieval Castile', *Bulletin of Hispanic Studies* 62.1 (1985), pp. 79-94.

[590] R. F. Jones, *The Triumph of the English Language*, London 1953; Rita Copeland, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Translation in the Middle Ages: Academic Traditions and Vernacular Texts*, Cambridge 1991; Richard Gawthrop and Gerald Strauss, 'Protestantism and Literacy in Early Modern Germany', *Past & Present* 104 (1984), pp. 31-55. See Curtius, *European Literature and the Late Middle Ages*; Jamie Harmon Ferguson, 'Faith in the Language: Reformation Biblical Translation and Vernacular Poetics', Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 2007; Alexandra Walsham, 'Unclasping the Book? Post-Reformation English Catholicism and the Vernacular Bible', *Journal of British Studies* 42 (2003), pp. 141-166.

[591] Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs, 'Language Philosophy as Language Ideology: John Locke and Johann Gottfried Herder', *Regimes of Language: Ideologies, Polities, and Identities*, ed. Paul V. Kroskrity, Santa Fe 2000, pp. 139-204; Philip Pettit, *Made with Words: Hobbes on Language, Mind, and Politics*, Princeton 2009; David R. Bell, 'What Hobbes Does with Words', *The Philosophical Quarterly* (1969), pp. 155-158.

[592] Richard F. Jones, 'Science and Language in England of the Mid-Seventeenth Century', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 31.3 (1932), pp. 315-331.

[593] Marcin Wodziński, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland: A History of Conflict*, trans. Sarah Cozens, asst. trans. Agnieszka Mirowska, Oxford 2005. For a dated, but still relevant study, see Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*.

but there is no evidence suggesting that they were known to the Maggid.[594] Some of his younger students may have come in contact with the *haskalah* as it spread deeper into Eastern Europe in the early 1800s, but this seems to have taken place well after the Maggid's death.[595] Thus I am not suggesting that there was any direct historical influence of the western philosophical tradition upon the R. Dov Baer's thought. In fact, in these years the gap between the Jewish cultures of Western and Eastern Europe widened considerably. But the fact that bold new conceptions of language were emerging in both regions at the same time is certainly worth noting.[596]

THE BESHT

In order to make sense of the linguistic theology of the Maggid, we must briefly discuss that of the BeSHT, for in this realm the Maggid's thought was deeply influenced by his master's teachings. The BeSHT's understanding of language, which was central to his spiritual path, has a few fundamental principles.[597] The first is the application of his

[594] See the controversial claims of Eliyahu Stern, *The Genius: Elijah of Vilna and the Making of Modern Judaism*, New Haven 2013, pp. 1-12, 63-82.

[595] Some of Mendelssohn's Hebrew writings were circulating in Eastern Europe as early as the 1770s, but there is nothing to suggest that the Maggid saw them. Amiel Vick, 'Through Which All of Israel Can Ascend: On R. Shneur Zalman of Lady's Composition of Nusah haAri', M.A. thesis, Hebrew University, 2012, pp. 55-56 [Hebrew], has identified a passage in which a grammatical point made by R. Shne'ur Zalman seems to have been influenced by a work by Isaac of Satanow, a prominent *maskil*. We know quite a bit about how Hasidim are portrayed in *maskilic* literature, but we know very little about the reverse. Only future research will demonstrate the degree to which the Maggid's disciples were engaged in some sort of dialogue with the new ideas coming in from the West.

[596] Determining the role of Zeitgeist in cultural or intellectual history, and its place in historiography, is quite complicated. See Arthur O. Lovejoy, 'The Meanings of "Emergence" and its Modes', *Philosophy* 2.6 (1927), pp. 167-181; Friedrich Kreppel, 'Das Problem Zeitgeist', Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte 20.2 (1968), pp. 97-112; David R. Topper, 'On a Ghost of Historiography Past', *Leonardo* 21 (1988), pp. 76-78; Dean Keith Simonton, *Creativity in Science: Chance, Logic, Genius, and Zeitgeist*, Cambridge 2004, esp. pp. 10-12, 91-96, 168-171.

[597] See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 57-58, 83-84, 92-93, 160-170; idem, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 155-163; idem, 'Modes of Cleaving to the Letters', pp. 299-317; Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 147-150; Elior, *The Mystical*

panentheistic conception of divine immanence to words and letters. In the BeSHT's teachings, language is not only a medium that one may use to reach toward God. Rather, words are vessels that hold divine energy and embody this sacred vitality. All physical phenomena hold a divine spark that gives them light, and language too is animated by a divine element.

The second foundation of the BeSHT's teachings on language is that the human mind holds nearly unlimited spiritual potential. He did not deprecate the importance of physical deeds and serving God through the corporeal world, but many traditions transmitted in the name of the BeSHT emphasize that the worlds are affected by the thoughts of men below. Finally, the BeSHT describes a unique form of mystical praxis in which one enters into the letters one speaks speaking with the fullness of one's being, cleaving to the spiritual energy within them. This type of intense concentration on the language of prayer and study is the devotional core of the BeSHT's theology, and unites the sacred energy within the spoken word with the transcendent aspect of the Divine.

Let us choose just a few of the most important examples from the many that illustrate the BeSHT's theology of language. The first comes from the BeSHT's letter to his brother-in-law, the most important document of the very few that we have directly from him. The BeSHT reports that in 1747 he performed "an ascent of the soul," arising into the heavens and eventually meeting the Messiah. He also includes a few points of instruction for his brother-in-law:

> While you are praying and studying, aim to achieve a unification (*yihud*) through each and every utterance that crosses your lips. In each word and every letter there are worlds, souls and divinity

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Origins of Hasidism, pp. 41-58. Kauffman, *In All Your Ways Know Him*, pp. 77-82; Ron Wacks, 'The *Yihud* in Speech in Hasidism', pp. 143-163.

> (*'olamot, nefashot, ve-elohut*) that rise and connect and become linked to each other. Afterward the letters come together to form a word, and are truly unified in their divinity. You should join your soul to them in every one of these aspects. Then all the worlds will form a single unity. They will then rise up and produce immeasurable joy and delight [in the heavens]. If you consider the joy of a bride and groom in our diminished and material realm, [you will get some sense] of how much greater it is in this exalted sphere...[598]

Words spoken while performing sacred deeds, such as study and prayer, must be accompanied by the correct meditations. Although the BeSHT illustrates this procedure with prayer and study, he also writes that such intentions must complement "each and every utterance that crosses your lips." He seems to extend this principle to include all language. Each word contains "worlds, souls and divinity." The precise meaning of this triad remains mysterious and is without clear kabbalistic precedent.[599]

The BeSHT also notes that aligning one's thoughts with his spoken words also helps to rightly align the *sefirot*. More specifically, it unites *tif'eret* and *shekhinah*, traditionally referred to in Kabbalah as the "groom" and "bride." This union between these *sefirot* brings God great joy, much as pleasure is born from the union between male and female in the earthly realm.

The notion that God is immanent in all aspects of the world is one of the core teachings of the BeSHT. In several traditions he refers to the sacred energy imbued

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[598] Translation based on Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 276-277. See Moshe Idel, 'Adonay Sefatay Tiftah: Models of Understanding Prayer in Early Hasidism', *Kabbalah* 18 (2008), pp. 23-26. There are at least three known versions of this letter, with substantial differences between them. The passage cited above is in the 1781 printing as well as one of the manuscripts, but is missing from a version published from a manuscript held by the Maggid of Kozhenits. For an appraisal of these different versions and their relationship to one another, see Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 97-113; idem, 'Hebrew Sources', pp. 155-162; Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 272-288; Gries, 'Between the Scalpal', pp. 418-421; Haviva Pedaya, 'The BeSHT's Holy Epistle', *Zion* 70 (2005), pp. 311-354 [Hebrew]; Jonathan Dauber, 'The Baal Shem Tov and the Messiah: A Reappraisal of the Baal Shem Tov's Letter to R. Gershon of Kutov', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 15 (2008), pp. 210-241.

[599] See Idel, 'Models of Understanding Prayer', p. 23 n. 45.

within corporeality as the twenty-two Hebrew letters through which the world was created:

> It is written, "You made them all with *hokhmah*" (Ps. 104:24).[600] This means that the *yod*, which is associated with [the *sefirah*] *hokhmah*,[601] is the undifferentiated source (*kelal*)[602] of the twenty-two letters with which the world was created. The twenty-two letters expand out from it, since it is formless potential for all the letters. This is the meaning of, "You made them all with *hokhmah*"[603]—
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> all are present [in undifferentiated form] within Thought,[604] and the ten *sefirot* are then completed through [its translation into] speech. Thus I have heard from my teacher.[605]

Just as the twenty-two letters existed in potential within the *yod*, or the *sefirah hokhmah*, so does the mind hold the seeds for all spoken words. But that potential, whether that of the mind or the *yod*, is unexpressed and indeed unfinished; it must be revealed and completed by translating it into speech. But although words have this great capacity to reveal, they can embody only a tiny fraction of the potential of thought.[606] Indeed, the BeSHT taught that wherever one's thoughts are at the moment, that is where one is entirely present.[607] He also emphasized that the mind is a sacred channel through which

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[600] Understood here as referring to the *sefirah hokhmah*.

[601] Lit. "included in *hokhmah*" (*nikhlal ba-hokhmah*), perhaps indicating that the *yod* is a part of the larger cluster of symbols associated with this *sefirah*.

[602] Lit. "generality."

[603] *Be-hokhmah* may be read as "in *hokhmah*" as well as "with *hokhmah*."

[604] In this teaching *mahshavah* ("thought") is associated with *hokhmah*. In contrast, we will see that the Maggid generally uses *mahshavah* in reference to the *sefirah binah*.

[605] *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 1, *bereshit*, p. 64. See Idel, 'Your Word', pp. 219-286.

[606] *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *liqqutim*, p. 595.

[607] *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *hayye sarah*, p. 136; ibid, *shelah*, p. 910; ibid, *mattot*, p. 1115; *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 2, *derush le-shabbat tesuhvah* 1767, p. 672. See also *Qedushat Levi*, *eikhah*, p. 372.

the divine voice is revealed.[608] For this reason, one's thoughts must always be trained on God, and must never be allowed to drift for even a moment.[609]

There are also magical elements to the BeSHT's approach to language. For example, changing letter combinations in the "text" of a harsh heavenly decree can neutralize its impact.[610] In the previous chapter we underscored the significance of the BeSHT's identification as a *ba'al shem*, a master of the divine name and faith healer. Many of the traditions and stories about his ability to effect miraculous cures refer to his ability to do so by harnessing the power of language.[611] But alongside these traditions we find teachings in which there is an ecstatic, experiential dimension to the word. One encounters the Divine through penetrating the spiritual core of letters and words as he articulates them:

> "Make a light source for the *teivah* " (Gen. 6:16).[612] My grandfather [the BeSHT] explained that *teivah* means "word"[613]... and he interpreted "make a light source in the ark" to mean "see to it that you illuminate the word that you articulate."[614] He commented on this at great length.
>
> Scripture is saying that if you sometimes notice that the light is hidden, and cannot be seen at all, and you do not know what to do in order to open the word and remove the occlusion so that the

[608] *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 2, *va-yiqra*, p. 507; *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *va-yiqra*, pp. 319-20, 323.

[609] *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *va-yiqra*, p. 328; ibid, *qedoshim*, pp. 388-389. This same teaching is found in ST, p. 29b, as something "we heard from the BeSHT"; and MDL #151, p. 251 without any attribution.

[610] *Ketonet Passim*, *pinhas*, pp. 354-355.

[611] The BeSHT's grandson refers to his ability to transform an "affliction" *(nega')* into something positive *('oneg)* through rearranging the letters that compose its spiritual root; see *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *metsora'*, p. 373. See also *Me'or 'Einayim*, *naso*, p. 258. We should also note that in hagiographical conversion story in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT*, the BeSHT had originally wanted to heal the Maggid with his words alone. However, for some unexplained reason, the BeSHT could not do so and he was forced to heal him with the lesser cure of medicine; see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Ba'al Shem Tov*, #62 p. 82.

[612] The plain-sense meaning of the word *teivah* is ark.

[613] *Teivah* ("word") and *teivah* ("ark") are homonyms.

[614] The BeSHT is interpreting the word "window" (*tsohar*) as "light", related to the word "noonday" (*tsahorayim*) in Isa. 16:3; Ps. 96:1.

> light is revealed, the verse explains, "the opening of the word" (ibid)—open the word so that it is not closed and sealed, as in " I was silent, speechless" (Ps. 39:3).
>
> "Put [the entrance to the ark] at its side" (Gen. 6:16). If you seek it, you will find "an entrance" to the word "at its side," meaning that surely there is light in the very same darkness.[615] It is simply hidden.
>
> "Make lower, second and third levels for it" (Gen. 6:17). This should be explained according to what I heard from my grandfather: there are worlds, souls and divinity in each and every word. The "ark" is alluding to this, since "ark" means "word." "Lower" means worlds, which is the lowest level. "Second" refers to the souls, and "third" (*shelishim*) means divinity, as in "and leaders (*shalishim*) over them all" (Ex. 14:7), for He rules and directs all. "Make" all of these, meaning that the word the you speak should be with this intention and with perfect faith that each word holds "lower, second and third levels," which are the worlds, souls, and divinity. Understand this.[616]

Here too we see the BeSHT describing the power within the letters as worlds, souls and divinity. These are accessed precisely through the aural quality of the word, and this journey of discovery cannot happen through silence. But neither does it happen automatically, for the speaker must enter into the heart of the word with both consciousness and trust in order to find the layers of divinity within it. In another formulation, we read:

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[615] The BeSHT is reading *be-tsidah* ("at its side") in light of the Talmudic idiom for a question with a self-obvious answer (*teshuvato be-tsido*). See, for example, b. Sotah 29b.

[616] *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *noah*, pp. 18-19. Cf. *Or ha-Me'ir*, *be-shalah*, vol. 1, p. 128. This very important teaching highlights the difficulty in separating between the teachings of the BeSHT and those of the Maggid. It is found quoted in the BeSHT's name in several collections of the Maggid's teachings; see OT #18, *noah*, pp. 25-26; OHE, fol. 18a; SLA, p. 116. But a significant number of early Hasidic figures remember having heard different versions of it, and similar ones about Gen. 7:1, 18, from the Maggid himself; see *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *noah*, p. 8; *Divrei Emet*, *noah*, fol. 2a; *Divrei Shmu'el*, *noah*, p. 14; *Ginzei Yosef*, vol. 2, *ki tavo*, p. 188; *Teshu'ot Hen*, *noah*, p. 8; *Qedushat Levi*, *perushei aggadot*, p. 614; *Torei Zahav*, *noah*, p. 7, 9. Versions of these teachings also appear in the name of other Hasidic masters, such as R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zlotshev; see *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *noah*, p 65. A synoptic collection of these different texts would make an excellent point of departure for studying the fluidity of early Hasidic teachings.

> One cleaves to Him through the letters of Torah and of prayer. One must attach his mind and innermost vitality (*penimiyyuto*) to the inner spiritual energy in the letters. This is how we are to understand [the Zoharic exegesis], "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (Song. 1:2)—a connection of soul to soul,[617] as I heard from my teacher.[618]

The connection of the human soul to the Divine happens precisely through the letters, because they are vessels that hold divine energy. This spiritual vitality within them may be accessed through study and prayer, but only if the person speaking the letters has the correct awareness.[619]

Finally, several traditions from the BeSHT underscore that *all* speech has a divine quality.[620] Some of these stress that *yihudim* ("contemplative meditations")—in the mind of the speaker or listener—must accompany all words, whether they are the words of study or spoken to another in the market place. An element of the Divine is found in all of them, since they are composed of the same twenty-two letters.[621] However, in some teachings the BeSHT clearly distinguishes between the *yihudim* of words in religious contexts and those in mundane settings. All speech unifies the Holy One and *shekhinah*. But different types of words bring about this communion on different levels. Words spoken in the marketplace are like a union between the king's servant and maidservant; a conversation between two friends is like a unification between the king's son and his daughter-in-law; but the *yihud* performed in the context of religious speech is the

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[617] See Zohar 2:124b, reinterpreting Song of Songs 1:2; and cf. Zohar 1:184a; 2:146a-b. See below, p. 368.

[618] *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 1, *va-yetse*, p. 310; cf. *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 3,*'eqev*, p. 1183.

[619] See Idel, 'Models of Understanding Prayer', p. 29 and n. 59.

[620] *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *liqqutim*, p. 605.

[621] *Tsofnat Pane'ah*, *yitro*, pp. 405-406.

communion of the king with his wife.[622] Thus although the power of language ultimately extends to all of its forms, some of the BeSHT's teachings nevertheless maintain some level of distinction between religious language and ordinary speech.[623]

The Origins of Language and Human Speech

Our discussion of the Maggid's philosophy of language begins with the question of whether language is conventional or natural. Do words represent a system of signs agreed upon by a certain group or culture, or do they possess inherent meaning?[624] The Maggid follows the position of the Kabbalists, who uniformly describe Hebrew as a divine language in which words connect fundamentally to their referents.[625] However, we should note that he repeatedly underscores an even more basic point about the nature of language: human speech has essential power precisely because it is an expression, or perhaps better, an embodiment of divine speech. This does not necessarily refer to the special capacity of a particular language, but rather to the fundamental nature of language in general.

The Maggid repeats with great frequency that all human language comes from the World of Speech (*'olam ha-dibbur*), and that this capacity is one of humanity's defining

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[622] *Ketonet Passim*, *be-ha'alotekha*, p. 276; cf. *Tsofnat Pane'ah*, *va-era*, p. 131.

[623] See *Tsofnat Pane'ah*, *yitro*, p. 402, for a cryptic teaching from the BeSHT on the nature of Hebrew as a holy language.

[624] This question has been a fundament of the philosophical tradition since Plato's *Cratylus*, in which two of the protagonists argue over the relationship between names and reality; see Donald James Allan, 'The Problem of Cratylus', *American Journal of Philology* (1954), pp. 271-287; Morris Henry Partee, 'Plato's Theory of Language', *Foundations of Language* 8 (1972), pp. 113-132; Georgios Anagnostopoulos, 'The Significance of Plato's "Cratylus"', *Review of Metaphysics* 27 (1973), pp. 318-345; Asa Kasher, 'Are Speech Acts Conventional?', *Journal of Pragmatics* 8 (1984), pp. 65-70; Timothy M. S. Baxter, *The Cratylus: Plato's Critique of Naming*, Leiden 1992; John E. Joseph, *Limiting the Arbitrary: Linguistic Naturalism and its Opposites in Plato's Cratylus and Modern Theories of Language*, Philadelphia 2000.

[625] See, inter alia, *Pardes Rimmonim* 27:2; *Hesed le-Avraham* 2:11; *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *toledot adam*, *bayit ne'eman tinyana*; translated in Krassen, *Isaiah Horowitz*, pp. 148-155.

aspects.[626] We will explore this term, which in the Maggid's thought refers to the *sefirah malkhut* or *shekhinah*, in what follows.[627] But for now, let us say that the Maggid employs *'olam ha-dibbur* as a way of explaining that human speech is a divine quality because it has its source in the Godhead. His homilies abound with statements like, "the speech of the righteous is intimately connected to its source. It is like God's speech, from which heaven and earth were created."[628] A significant number of the Maggid's teachings are devoted to showing that human language derives more specifically from the name of God.[629] In one sermon we read:

> The name Y-H-V-H is necessarily embodied in each word (*dibbur*) and speech act (*amirah*). The letter *yod* from the name is the "point within the palace,"[630] since it is clothed within them all, even all of the letters. The *yod* then spreads out into the first *heh*. The voice, which is [the letter] *vav*, the six rings of the windpipe,[631] then expands from the *heh*, which enters the mind.[632] The mind, through its understanding, combines (*metsaref*) the letters. This is the inner meaning of the verse "the word [that emerges from] Y-H-V-H is a composite (*tserufah*)" (Ps. 18:31).[633] From

[626] The uniqueness of mankind is often defined in Jewish thought as a speaking being, and in a few teachings the Maggid makes this point explicit. See KTVQ, fol. 18b. Occasionally the Maggid refers to the oft-quoted division of creation into four categories: *domem* ("silent" or "inanimate,"), *tsomeah* ("plant"), *hayah* ("animal beings"), and *medabber* ("speakers"). Mankind's status as the highest order of being entails a responsibility to raise up all the others. See MDL #68, p. 114-115.

[627] For a particularly clear example, see MDL #112, p. 187.

[628] LY #271, fol. 89b.

[629] The name of God is often conceived of as a product of language. Here, however, the opposite is the case, for language itself grows out of the most sacred divine name.

[630] Zohar 1:15b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol. 12b.

[631] See Zohar 3:121b (R.M); *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 21, fol. 63b. This Zoharic passage lies behind a remarkable homily of R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady on the contemplative power of song, a medium that is unique in its ability to touch the innermost reaches of the soul; see *Ma'amarei Admor ha-Zaqen* 5566 [1806], Brooklyn 2004, vol. 1, p. 220. See also *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *terumah*, vol. 1, p. 155

[632] Lit. "enters the heart." The heart is associated with intellection in many different cultures; see Ning Yu, 'The Chinese Heart as the Central Faculty of Cognition', *Culture, Body, and Language: Conceptualizations of Internal Body Organs Across Culture and Languages*, ed. F. Sharifian, R. Dirven, N. Yu, S. Niemeier, Berlin and New York 2008), pp. 131-168.

[633] The Maggid is interpreting the word *tserufah* ("refined") as related *le-tsaref*, i.e. "to combine" or "permute."

> there it goes to the mouth, where speech is completed and the four letters of Y-H-V-H are manifest.[634]

The process of human speech correlates with to the sacred four-letter name of God. The stages of verbal expression, in which an idea, which holds the potential for speech, is then focused into logical structures, voiced through a physical sound, and finally articulated by means of fully-formed language, are associated with the most sacred divine name.[635]

The various steps of cognition and speech represent the unfolding of the name Y-H-V-H. This theme will be revisited in the Maggid's teachings with great frequency, and we will see that the cosmological processes of Creation and Revelation represent a similar type of linguistic theophany, a progression from pure silence into the structures of language. However, in another of his sermons the Maggid reminds us that mankind should not directly pronounce this sacred name.[636] It is a proper noun that alludes to God's essence, which is beyond humanity's ability to grasp. We can only relate to the appellative A-D-N-Y, which represents the Divine as it has been focused into the lower worlds.[637]

Human beings serve the Divine through the sacred power of language that has been infused within them, for a person's voice is in fact God's voice. The Maggid does

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[634] LY #264, fol. 81a. For discussion of a longer version of this teaching, see below, pp. 284-285.

[635] OT #203 p. 268. See also MDL #189, pp. 291-292, which draws a distinction between written and oral language. All written letters as starting from *yod*, but all spoken letters begin with the sound of an *aleph*, which also represents the *sefirah hokhmah*.

[636] See m. Sanhedrin 10:1. As the Maggid himself notes in this teaching, the name Y-H-V-H was pronounced on Yom Kippur; see m. Yoma 6:2. In fact, it was articulated on a daily basis the Temple as part of the priestly benediction; see m. Tamid 7:2; m. Sotah 7:6; t. Ta'anit 1:11-13. On pronouncing the name of God as a mystical praxis, see Idel, *Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia,* pp. 20-21, 28, 41.

[637] MDL #153, p. 252; cf. KTVQ, p. 21b. This recalls Maimonides' discussion of the name Y-H-V-H in *Guide* I:61; See Alexander Broadie, 'Maimonides and Aquinas on the Names of God', *Religious Studies* 23 (1987), pp. 157-170.

not seem threatened by the radical implications of this idea. He even describes God as engaging in an act of self-worship through our words. We read:

> "Your God is a priest."[638] This means that we serve God only through the power that He has given [us]. [Our] thought and speech are the World of Thought and the World of Speech. Therefore we serve Him because of Him. This is "God is a priest"—He worships Himself, as it were, through Himself [i.e. through the divine speech which God grants to man]....
>
> A person must consider himself nothing (*ayin*), for the Holy One does not dwell, embodied within him if he considers himself something (*yesh*). He is infinite (*ein sof*) and cannot be held by any vessel.[639]

Self-transcendence and nullifying the ego are the keys for unlocking the spiritual power of language. A worshiper who considers himself to be something is a finite vessel. By breaking down the walls of the ego, one is transformed into a vessel capable of receiving the infinite Divine, allowing him to embody the quality of divine speech. This does not entail a posture of non-action or retreat into pure contemplative silence. In fact, it is precisely the opposite, for the words of a person speaking with this degree of awareness literally become a revelation of divine language.[640] As the Maggid often repeats in different forms, the joy and pleasure a person experiences in his divine service mirrors that of God; his arousal parallels the divine arousal, and his ecstasy parallels the ecstasy of God.[641]

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[638] b. Sanhedrin 39a. It is worth noting that the speaker of these words is a heretic making fun of the cultic service.

[639] SLA, p. 85. Cf. MDL #105, pp. 183-184, with parallels in OT #387a-c, *aggadot*, pp. 412-413; and OHE, fol. 4a. The teaching continues by explaining that one must forget his own identity and desires entirely during prayer, thinking only of *shekhinah*'s needs. We will return to this in our discussion of prayer. See also Weiss, 'Via Passiva', pp. 69-94; Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 368-369.

[640] See also OT #92, *be-shalah*, p. 128.

[641] See MDL #119, p. 194; *Or ha-Me'ir*, *pesah*, p. 255a. See also *Qedushat Levi*, *be-shalah*, pp. 185-186. For a study of the notion of divine self-worship in different religious traditions, see Kimberley

This point will become clearer in subsequent chapters, which discuss the ways in which divine and human language merge, but one example is in order at this point:

> When a *tsaddiq* prays using the [divine power within the] letters, he connects himself to the supernal wisdom.... so that he has entered the gateway to Nothing (*ayin*), aware that (*ma'aleh 'al libo*) were it not for the power of God, he would be nothing at all. That being the case, all [that he is] derives from God's power. Human speech is the Divine World of Speech, through which the [lower] world was created. The World of Speech proceeds from *hokhmah*. This is the source of pleasure and delight that God receives from the worlds. The worshiper too should speak only for the sake of divine pleasure, whereby he returns the letters to their ultimate source in *hokhmah*.[642]

Prayer is essentially a method through which a person links human language to its divine counterpart, for the worshiper must become aware that his words are an embodiment of the World of Speech. This forges a union that brings God great delight. There is a crucial difference between "entering the gateway to Nothing" and feeling like nothing (*efes muhlat*). Transcending the ego and realizing that one is filled with divine power leads to a state of empowerment and an encounter with the Infinite

This practice of attaching one's speech to God negating the ego is a defining characteristic of the *tsaddiq*. The wicked, in contrast, consider their capacity for language to be entirely their own:

> We say, "A-D-N-Y, open up my lips" (Ps. 51:17) [before reciting the *'amidah*]. [A-D-N-Y] refers to *shekhinah*, the World of Speech, for the mouth is unable to speak unless [*shekhinah*] embodied within it. But the wicked say, "Our lips belong to us" (Ps. 12:5)—he speaks of his own accord. "A slanderer separates himself from the lord" (*mafrid aluf*; Prov. 16:28), that is, he separates himself

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Christine Patton, *Religion of the Gods: Ritual, Paradox, and Reflexivity*, Oxford 2009. A reference to this teaching from the Maggid appears on p. 439 n. 11.

[642] MDL #60, pp. 94-95, with parallels in OT #424, *aggadot*, p. 442; and OHE, fol. 29a-30a.

> from the Master (*alufo*) of the world.[643] He separates his speech from the World of Speech, and his thoughts from the World of Thought.[644]

Ignorance of the divine Presence embodied in the human faculty of speech sets the wicked apart from the *tsaddiqim*. This creates a rift between a person and God. In another homily, the Maggid makes this distinction even more strongly:

> The *tsaddiqim* could create a world if they so desired.[645] For "the heavens were created by the word of Y-H-V-H" (Ps. 33:6), and it is written "and He breathed into him the soul of life [and man became a living soul]" (Gen. 2:7), which is rendered by the Targum as "a speaking being."[646] One cannot talk about parts when speaking of God, for He is infinite (*ein sof*). And one cannot speak of the Infinite blowing only His speech into his nostrils. Therefore, [all of the divine] was included in this speech.
>
> This is why the *tsaddiqim* could create a world if they so wished. The speech of the *tsaddiq* is wholly pure, with no separating veil [to alienate it from the divine realm]. Unlike the [speech of the] slanderer, who separates himself from the Master. The *tsaddiq*'s speech is bound up with its divine source, and is therefore exactly like the word of God through which the heavens were created.[647]

The *tsaddiq* is aware that his speech was imbued within him by God. Indeed, understands that the innate connection between the divine and human word has never been severed.

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[643] See RaSHI's commentary to Proverbs ad loc. This seems to differ from the Zoharic interpretation of this verse, where it is taken as a reference to one who creates separation in the world of the *sefirot*; see Zohar 3:12a, 16b.

[644] OHE, fol. 12b, with parallels in OT #302, *pesuqim*, p. 352; and SLA, p. 118. Cf. JER NLI MS HEB 8°5979, fol. 31a.

[645] b. Sanhedrin 65b.

[646] This seems to be an original interpretation by the Maggid. Aristotle defined speech as a uniquely human characteristic, a notion that is reflected in the Aramaic translation. The Maggid, however, is claiming that the divine Word, and with it the divine essence, was breathed into Adam. Perhaps he also has in mind Nahmanides' comment to Gen. 2:7: "one who blows into the nose of another, does so from his very essence." On the evolution of this phrase, see Moshe Hallamish, 'Toward the Source of the Kabbalistic Expression: "One Who Blows—Blows From Within Himself"', *Bar-Ilan* 13 (1976), pp. 211-223 [Hebrew].

[647] LY #271, fol. 89b, with parallels in OT #60, *va-yehi*, pp. 82-83; and OHE, fol. 77b. See also 8°5307, fol. 117a-b.

Just as God's word creates, so too does that of the *tsaddiq*, because the two are one and the same. Thus *tsaddiqim* and the wicked are characterized by their differing relationship to language. But the creative power of words can in theory be accessed by everyone. All have the same potential, since the same divine vitality dwells within each person.[648]

Hebrew and Other Languages

The Maggid's description of human speech, and indeed mankind's very capacity for language, as an embodiment of the divine Word brings us to a related question: does this hold true for all languages, or is it a special quality reserved for Hebrew? The term *leshon ha-qodesh* ("the holy language"), the traditional epithet for Hebrew, is quite rare in the Maggid's teachings.[649] Yet it is clear from his homilies that he assumes the uniqueness of the Hebrew language. Perhaps the Maggid had no need to assert the singularity of Hebrew because it was so obvious to his community.

But I suspect there is another reason for his reserve. Exalting Hebrew over all other languages would be in tension with his broader, more universal understanding of the power of all words. When the Maggid refers to human speech as an embodiment of

[648] MDL #146, p. 247.

[649] On the history of this term, see Milka Rubin, 'The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language: A Case of Cultural Polemics in Antiquity', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49.2 (1998), pp. 306-333. It is also interesting to note that the term *targum*, literally "translation" but often referring specifically to Aramaic, is even more rare in the Maggid's teachings. Jewish thinkers often describe Aramaic as a lesser, but related, form of Hebrew. See also b. Pesahim 87b; and R. Moses Isserles, *she'elot u-teshuvot* #126. Lurianic tradition associates Aramaic with the "backside" (*ahorayyim*) of holiness, a realm of the "husks" in which all of the letters are bound to one another. In Hebrew, however, the letters are separate and may therefore be combined and recombined greater dynamism. See SLA, p. 22; *Liqqutei Torah ve-Ta'amei ha-Mitsvot*, *va-ethanan*; *Sha'ar ha-Mitsvot* ad loc. Teachings that distinguish between *leshon ha-qodesh* and *targum*, while not common, are indeed found in the works of the Maggid's students; see *No'am Elimelekh*, *yitro*, pp. 219-220, where *leshon ha-qodesh* represents a pure mystic, a *tsaddiq* who dwells in a permanent state of *devequt* and for this reason cannot ever share a connection with the ordinary people. *Targum*, on the other hand, represents a second type of leader who does immerse himself in the problems of the people. The relationship between *targum* and *leshon ha-qodesh* is central to the thought of R. Nahman of Bratslav. For example, see *Liqqutei Moharan* I:19; and Shore, 'Letters of Desire, pp. 210-215.

the divine Word, there is no reason to assume that he is referring only to Hebrew. Here we should emphasize that the vernacular of the Maggid's community was Yiddish, not Hebrew, and the language in the marketplace of the cities around him would have been Ukrainian. Of course, Hebrew can still be unique even if all language is—or can become—sacred. But constantly harping on its singularity would undercut his more far-reaching understanding of the power of language.

The Maggid explores the distinctive qualities of Hebrew in a sermon about the biblical story of Adam naming the animals.[650] A midrash recounts that Adam succeeded in naming the animals, a task that even the angels were unable to accomplish.[651] The Maggid protests that this does not seem to be a terribly impressive feat. Indeed, each of the seventy languages of the world has words for the animals.[652] He explains that the Hebrew name for an animal is its true name, while all other ways of referring to it are simply conventional. The letters of a Hebrew name, be it that of an animal, an object or a person, are linked to that referent's source in the heavenly realm. Those same letters are the divine energy that sustains and animates it.

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[650] See MDL #188, p. 287-288, commenting on Genesis 3:18-25. This story has long been a source for speculation regarding the beginnings of language; see the studies collected in *The Language of Adam [= Die Sprache Adams]*, ed. Allison P. Coudert, Wiesbadenn 1999 [English and German]. See also Hans Aarsleff, 'An Outline of Language—Origins Theory Since the Renaissance', *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 280 (1976), pp. 4-13; Morris Jastrow, 'Adam and Eve in Babylonian literature', *The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 15 (1899), pp. 193-214; Christopher Eagle, '"Thou Serpent That Name Best": On Adamic Language and Obscurity in Paradise Lost', *Milton Quarterly* 41.3 (2007), pp. 183-194; Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth*, New York 1953, pp. 82-83.

[651] *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:4.

[652] On the seventy languages, see m. Sotah 7:5; b. Megillah 13b; *Bereshit Rabbah* 49:2. Yadin, 'Hammer on the Rock', pp. 14-17; and Hananel Mack, 'Torah has Seventy Aspects – The Development of a Saying', *Rabbi Mordechai Breuer Festschrift: Collected Papers in Jewish Studies*, ed. M. Bar-Asher, Jerusalem 1992, vol. 2, pp. 449-462 [Hebrew]; Warren Zev Harvey, 'The Seventy Languages of Shem and Yafet', *Tra Torah e Sophia*, ed. O. Ombrosi, Genova 2011, pp. 60-66. On this myth in kabbalistic literature, see Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, pp. 9-10, 22-27, 102-110, 143-146. See also *Pardes Rimmonim* 22:1; *Hesed le-Avraham* 7:28.

Adam was graced with the wisdom to discern each animal's root in the worlds above, thus grasping the letters from which it derives its vitality. But the Maggid explains that the ability to assign things their appropriate name lies in everyone's grasp. As an example he cites a Lurianic tradition that the names given to children by their parents result from divine inspiration.[653]

In another homily the Maggid suggests that each word of the Hebrew language has a root in the worlds above, playing on the double-meaning of the term *shoresh*. A grammatical *shoresh* refers to the three letters that are the basic structure of most Hebrew words. However, in kabbalistic literature the term *shoresh* also denotes an object's or person's place of origin in the Godhead. Words may therefore be broken down into their essential root letters, which are grounded in the formless realm of *hokhmah*, and then effectively recreated as different words. This linguistic flexibility inherent in the Hebrew language allows the meaning of all biblical verses to be dramatically reinterpreted.[654]

This point is mirrored by a passage in R. Solomon of Lutsk's second introduction to MDL. It should be remembered that R. Solomon's goal in this text is to formulate the fundamental points of the Maggid's theology in his own words: He writes:

> Everything has a root on high. This is why in Hebrew there is a basic root of the verb, and its active and passive forms. The root of the verb represents its Root. The active form of the verb

[653] See *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 1:4, p. 127. In several teachings the Maggid says that the names of people are linked to their vitality. See MDL #13, pp. 26-27; LY #272, fol. 90a-b. On the Torah itself as the name of God, see below, pp. 298-299, 306-313.

[654] MDL #85, pp. 147-148. This ancient midrashic technique was a favorite of the BeSHT, and wordplays based on Hebrew roots appear with great frequency in his teachings. The Maggid and other Hasidic masters seem to understand a Hebrew root as encompassing all of the various permutations of any three letters, whereas in Hebrew grammar the root is defined by the order of the letters. Thus in the Hasidic imagination, *'oneg* ("pleasure") and *nega'* ("affliction") share the same root.

> represents the active person (*ha-adam ha-po'el*), whose actions draw [vitality] from that Root. The passive form represents the thing as it is drawn forth from its source and root.[655]

R. Solomon is using terminology drawn from Hebrew grammar in order to describe the relationship between the physical world and the spiritual realm. Root letters, the most abstract form of a Hebrew word, represent an object's source in the realm of the *sefirot*. The verb itself represents people, who are able to bring new vitality into the world through their deeds. And, as we saw in the Maggid's sermon above, they have the power to permute the letters of the root into a new combination. Rearranging those letters changes the way in which the divine energy is manifest in the world, represented by the verb in its passive form. Yet we should note that despite being cloaked in linguistic terminology, this text is more about the relationship of the world to language than it is about the singularity of Hebrew. It does not necessarily imply that Hebrew is the only inherently meaningful language.

When read together, however, teachings such as these demonstrate that the Maggid assumes that Hebrew is singular among the languages of the world. Its words are linked to divine roots above, so only Hebrew nouns are true names. Another example of the Maggid's particularism is the way he ascribes a unique status to the Jewish people and the power of their words.[656] Although the Maggid's teachings do not frequently depict an essential relationship between Israel and the Hebrew language in particular, several sermons make it clear that he has the Jewish people in mind when he references the power of language.[657]

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[655] MDL, p. 6. Based on the translation in Jacobs, *Hasidic Thought*, p. 71.

[656] See MDL #209, p. 334.

[657] In one teaching the Maggid says that the land of Israel is the source of the vitality of all other lands, and that the Jewish people are the source of vitality for all other nations, but he does not refer to language; see

Yet in many ways the Maggid's mystical approach to language extends beyond Hebrew. In several homilies the Maggid argues that all languages, and indeed all peoples, are rooted in the letters of the Torah.[658] Though he does not invoke the term *leshon ha-qodesh* in this context, this notion suggests that Hebrew—the language of Scripture—is the source of all other languages.[659] That Hebrew is somehow the source of all languages need not imply that they too are sacred. But this notion can also be interpreted otherwise, for it suggests that all other languages cannot truly be conventional. Indeed, if Hebrew is imbued with a measure of holiness, perhaps the sacred nature of Hebrew infuses the words of all other languages. The fact that *all* human language can become sanctified, not only Hebrew or the words of religious rituals, is a pillar of the Maggid's theology of language.[660]

MDL #20, p. 33. See also *Qedushat Levi*, *qedushah sheniyah*, pp. 521-522, where R. Levi Isaac cites a tradition about the power of Hebrew in the name of his teacher the Maggid. However, the author also cites Maimonides in accordance with his position, which is strange given Maimonides' understanding of Hebrew as the holy language because of its noble lack of profane words rather than its mystical qualities. *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *shelah*, p. 321-322, however, argues that Hebrew is rooted in the land of Israel, and that the Jewish people living there could more easily be exiled from their land if they there speak another language. It was not uncommon for medieval thinkers, under on the influence of Galen, to link the qualities of a certain language to the climate of the people who spoke it; see Alexander Altmann, 'The Treasure Trove: Judah Halevi's Theory of Climates', *Aleph* 5 (2005), pp. 230. Of course, modern nationalist movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often invoked this cluster of identities. For a few important examples, see *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, ed. B.B. Schieffelin, K.A. Woolard, and P.V. Kroskrity, New York 1998; *Language and Nationalism in Europe*, ed. S. Barbour and C. Carmichael, Oxford 2000; Yasir Suleiman, *A War of Words: Language and Conflict in the Middle East*, Cambridge 2004; John DeFrancis, *Nationalism and Language Reform in China*, Princeton 1950; Francesca Orsini, *The Hindi Public Sphere 1920-1940: Language and Literature in the Age of Nationalism*, Oxford 2002; Raphael Berthele, 'A Nation is a Territory with One Culture and One Language: The Role of Metaphorical Folk Models in Language Policy Debates', *Cognitive Sociolinguistics: Language Variation, Cultural Models, Social Systems* (2008), pp. 301-332.

[658] A similar notion is found in the works of his students; see *Qedushat Levi*, *devarim*, pp. 368-369; *Me'or 'Einayim*, *noah*, p. 27.

[659] ST, fol. 9b-10a. The copyist (or printer) notes that all languages stem from Hebrew, and the closer a language is to Hebrew, the purer it will be. Cf. SLA, p. 130, with a parallel in OHE, fol. 14a, where the editor notes that there has been an error in the transcription. See also SLA, p. 47, with a parallel in *Me'or 'Einayim*, *liqqutim*, p. 535.

[660] This profound transformation is even more explicit in the works of some Hasidic masters, including the Maggid's students; see *Peri ha-Arets*, *va-yiggash*, pp. 37-42. A similar approach may be found in R. Qalonymous Qalman Epstein's slightly later work *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, *rimzei pesah*, p. 333. For very

SACRED AND MUNDANE SPEECH

The idea of a holy language that is set apart from the realm of the ordinary and mundane is found in many different religious traditions and cultures.[661] This notion is often linked to a dualistic understanding of the world, in which the sacred nature of one thing is defined by its being set apart from the mundane.[662] However, the Maggid's panentheistic vision offers a different understanding of the relationship between the holy and the profane. Of course Torah study and prayer, religious rituals that by their very nature are focused upon words, have a special status for the Maggid.[663] But there seems to be an unresolved tension in his thought, for he frequently stresses that the contemplative meditation and awareness of the speaker can transform ordinary language into holy speech. This is a logical extension of the idea that God is immanent in all things, a bedrock theme of early Hasidic theology. There is a continuum between the words used in religious activities and those spoken in more mundane, secular situations. In one of the Maggid's sermons, we read, "What is the difference between the letters of

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different views from among the Maggid's immediate disciples, see *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *shoftim*, pp. 203-207; *Tanya*, *iggeret ha-qodesh*, ch. 19.

[661] For a few interesting examples, see Niloofar Haeri, *Sacred Language, Ordinary People: Dilemmas of Culture and Politics in Egypt*, New York 2003; Jan Nattier, 'Church Language and Vernacular Language in Central Asian Buddhism', *Numen* 37 (1990), pp. 195-219; Irven M. Resnick, 'Lingua Dei, Lingua Hominis: Sacred Language and Medieval Texts', *Viator* 21.1 (1990), pp. 51-74; Aram A. Yengoyan, 'Language and Conceptual Dualism: Sacred and Secular Concepts in Australian Aboriginal Cosmology and Myth', *The Attraction of Opposites: Thought and Society in the Dualistic Mode*, ed. D. Maybury-Lewis and U. Almagor, Ann Arbor 1989, pp. 171-190; Webb Keane, 'Religious Language', *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1997), pp. 47-71, esp. pp. 50-51, 55.

[662] See Mike Gane, 'Durkheim: The Sacred Language', *Economy and Society* 12 (1983), pp. 1-47; Matthew T. Evans, 'The Sacred: Differentiating, Clarifying and Extending Concepts', *Review of Religious Research* 45 (2003), pp. 32-47; William E. Paden, 'Before 'The Sacred' Became Theological: Rereading the Durkheimian Legacy', *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 3 (1991), pp. 10-23.

[663] *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *balaq*, p. 365.

idle chatter and the letters of Torah? The distinction is that the letters of idle speech are held captive [in the *qelippot*], and the Holy One wants them to be redeemed."[664]

The Maggid's theology of language demands more than simply being aware that human words hold a divine energy. Speech must be consciously raised up through active contemplation, which takes place within the mind of either the person speaking the words or the one hearing them. The time of prayer is a particularly good opportunity for lifting up empty words:

> When one prays in a place where there are idle words (*devarim betelim*), he can raise them up if they are words of joy. Lifting them up brings about great joy above, and fiery ecstasy is born within the person praying as well. But it will be difficult to raise them up if they are words of sadness.[665]

During prayer one may return the letters of idle chatter, which have fallen into the "husks" because they were spoken with inattention, back to their source in the Divine. The process of raising fallen words transforms the one who lifts them up. God's joy in the restoration of language to its root above is mirrored by the joy and fiery passion felt by its restorer. But not all "empty words" are identical, and the Maggid distinguishes between those spoken in joy and those uttered in sadness. This relates to a broader theme found throughout early Hasidic literature: joy leads to connection, both among people and between man and God, whereas sadness leads only to depression and disconnection.[666]

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[664] LY #251, fol. 77a. For more on this passage, see below, pp. 323-324. See also *Me'or 'Einayim*, *va-yeshev*, p. 123.

[665] MDL #29, p. 47.

[666] For example, see the BeSHT's teaching about the jesters in b. Ta'anit 22a, whom he describes as bringing people closer to God precisely by bringing them joy. This same passage appears nearly two dozen times in the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye. For a few of the most important, see Toledot Ya'aqov *Yosef*, vol. 1, *va-yetse*, p. 163; *va-yehi*, p. 245; *tetsaveh*, p. 454. Cf. Zohar 2:107a; 1:148b.

But the Maggid also recommends that the *tsaddiq* lift up fallen words in contexts other than prayer. Returning idle words and letters to their source above may also be accomplished in ordinary settings:

> I heard this explanation of the verse ["and Isaac went out to converse in the field" (Gen. 24:63)] in the name of my master and teacher Dov Baer: if one speaks even with [ordinary] people and thinks holy thoughts while doing so, through this one will uplift those sparks. Raising the sparks brings joy before the blessed One. This is the meaning of "Isaac went out"—he went out in joy.[667] "To converse in the field" means that [he did this] even when speaking in [or "of"] the field, talking about earthly things.[668]

Isaac has become a model for the *tsaddiq*, whose mind is trained upon God even as he converses with ordinary people. His contemplative attachment to the Divine uplifts the words; even if there is nothing holy in speaking about physical matters, the thoughts of the *tsaddiq* sanctify the words of that conversation.[669]

The *tsaddiq* is called to raise his own words, but he also charged with lifting up the coarse, banal speech he hears from the people around him. Regarding this process, R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir writes:

> This is how the Maggid explained [the mishnah]: "and their opposite (*ve-hillufeihem*) is true for the boor (*golem*)."[670] What emerges from his holy words is thus: the enlightened one must raise up whatever he sees and hears from another. Even [if] one person is speaking to another about material things and the like, [his speech] must be raised up to the Creator. He must transform (*la-hahlif*) that which was originally a earthly combination [of letters] into a spiritual one. This cannot

[667] Earlier in this sermon the reader is been reminded that Isaac's name (*yitshaq*) is related to the word laughter (*tsehoq*). Cf. Isa. 55:12.

[668] *Qedushat Levi*, *hayye sarah*, p. 62. The Maggid's reading of *la-su'ah ba-sadeh* is diametrically opposed to the rabbinic interpretation of *la-su'ah* as "to pray," derived from the word *sihah*; see b. Berakhot 26b.

[669] This recalls Maimonides' remarks in *Guide* III:51, in which he refers to contemplating matters of the spirit even when engaged in mundane tasks.

[670] m. Avot 5:6.

> be accomplished unless he raises them to *hokhmah*, the primordial point, the letter *yod*, which is formless matter (*golem*). From that point he can draw forth and make whatever letter he wishes, any combination required for the service.[671]

The *tsaddiq* is charged with the responsibility of uplifting all conversations, whether he is the speaker or the listener. This is possible because the letters of speech may be returned to their source in the *yod*, or the world of *hokhmah*, where letters combinations have no defined form. From this infinite pool deep within his mind, the *tsaddiq* may draw forth new and refined permutations.

Does the Maggid recommend that the *tsaddiq* search for opportunities to uplift conversations with ordinary people, or is he simply expected to do so when confronted with a situation in which he cannot avoid such a banal verbal exchange? In other words, is the notion that the *tsaddiq* may raise up ordinary words intended to prescribe a type of religious behavior, or does it simply represent a compromise to be invoked when one has no choice? The previous interpretation of "Isaac went out to converse in the field" suggests that the *tsaddiq* is meant to seek out language in need of restoration. The Maggid addresses this question directly in several of his sermons:

> "Behold, they may gather together, but nothing is devoid of Me" (Isa. 54:15).[672] A person who is connected to the *tsaddiq*, watching him serve God by sitting and learning, will sometimes [encounter] the *tsaddiq* speaking idle words. This is like a parable about the king's son who walks among the villagers to search out the treasure held by one of them. He must dress up like a villager, so that they will not recognize him as the king's son. [Thus they will] reveal all of their secrets to him, [such as] the location of the treasure.

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[671] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *shir ha-shirim*, p. 283b-284a; cf. *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *va-yera*, pp. 33-34. See also *Orah le-Hayyim*, *ki tetse*, p. 362.

[672] A plain-sense translation of the verse reads, "Behold, they may gather together, but not by Me."

> So does the *tsaddiq* speak with God. He is attached to the Divine, connecting his words to God. He is referred to an emissary of the Holy One, who goes out to find the divine attributes (*middot*). For example, if someone is unable to pray, [the *tsaddiq*] speaks to him in a humorous way (*divrei sehoq*), arousing love in him. Afterward this person says to himself, "If there is such great pleasure from frivolous things, how much more so is there pleasure [to be derived] from Holy One, who is the Pleasure of all pleasures!" Through this he prays with love and awe.
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> This is the meaning of, "Behold, they may gather together" (*hen gor yagur*)—when he is out of his element (*be-gerut*) and speaking idle words, then "there is nothing devoid of me"—there are some people who believe that the Holy One is not found here. But this is because the brightness is too great, as they said about a light so strong that it overwhelms one's sight.[673] It cannot be perceived because its light is revealed to such a degree that the mind cannot grasp it... In truth, He created them, even if the fact that He is embodied [within them] is not clear... This is [the true meaning of] "nothing is devoid of Me"—no thing exists without Me.[674]

The *tsaddiq* maintains his connection to God even as he speaks with ordinary people. This does not seem to be a scenario of last resort, but rather an ideal that the *tsaddiq* must sometimes actively pursue. He leaves the intimate safety of his personal attachment to the Divine, venturing into the earthly realm in order to reveal the hidden divine *middot*, presumably a reference to the holy sparks. In making this point the Maggid underscores the similarity between God's immanence in all language as well as in the earthly realm. The Divine dwells within every word, just as God's sacred energy is embodied within all elements of the corporeal realm.

The *tsaddiq*'s internal contemplation when speaking to ordinary people is invisible to outside observers, and even his own students may be astonished by his engagement in seemingly banal conversations. But his mundane language is deceptive,

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[673] See *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #97-98 pp. 183-185; #106 p. 191.

[674] MDL #40, p. 60-1, with parallels in OT #306, *pesuqim*, pp. 355-356; and OHE, fol. 16b.

for they too contain the divine light. In fact, the illumination of the *tsaddiq*'s words is so intense that it is beyond the threshold of the people around him, and for this reason they cannot recognize it.

A *tsaddiq*'s connection to the Divine can transform ordinary speech into holy language. But there is a tension in the Maggid's teachings, for in some sermons he ascribes more importance to the letters of explicitly religious language:

> The letters of Torah and prayer, through which we achieve the service of God, arrive at their source and enjoy great pleasure. Words about other things are still [composed of] letters just like these, but the combination is different. The idea (*sekhel*) attached to them is debased. The husks dwell upon it, and the letters themselves are jealous of the letters of Torah. They are the lower waters that cry, "[we too long to stand before the King.]"[675]
>
> When the inspired and wise person hears them, he raises them up from the brokenness as well. He gazes upon the holy permutation within them, determining from which attribute (*middah*) it derives. He connects to God through this attribute, lifting up the letters and bringing divinity (*elohut*) into them.[676]

Words are vessels with a great potential for holiness, but in some cases they are debased by the ideas that are expressed through them. Contemplation of holy matters infuses language with a sacred quality, whereas banal or illicit thoughts fill the letters with improper energy. The *tsaddiq* who hears such words has an obligation to lift them up their original divine source in one of the *sefirot* and transform them into a holy combination of letters.

These teachings from the Maggid recall several aspects of the BeSHT's thought. In addition to the emphasis on serving God with joy, they also bring to mind the legends

[675] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 5, fol. 19b.

[676] MDL #130, p. 223, with parallels in OT #62, *va-yehi*, p. 85; and OHE, fol. 32a.

in which the BeSHT shocks the Maggid by first greeting him with bizarre and mundane stories instead of inspiring homilies. The legends make it clear that the BeSHT's tales are in fact deep spiritual lessons, but their external packaging is surprisingly banal. The sermons quoted above may represent the Maggid's interpretation of his teacher's strategy. The notion that ordinary conversations should be transformed into sacred speech may also reflect the Maggid's understanding of the "descent of the *tsaddiq*" into the mundane world.[677] The goal of this journey, which is sometimes undertaken willingly and at other times involuntarily, is to raise up fallen sparks.[678] The descent of the *tsaddiq* was a central concern for many early Hasidic thinkers, including R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye and a significant number of the Maggid's disciples.[679]

Other homilies from the Maggid emphasize the great danger in the *tsaddiq*'s attempt to attach himself to people on a lower spiritual rung. He advises that the *tsaddiq* must remember to connect only to the holy sparks hidden within them, thus preventing himself from becoming ensnared by the "husks" that surround them.[680] The Maggid's sermons display a similar ambivalence toward the dangerous project of engaging with the physical world. The holy sparks must be redeemed from corporeality, but the descent required to collect them can jeopardize the *tsaddiq*'s connection to the Divine.

[677] This process is described as *gerut* in the previous sermon.

[678] See LY #213, fol. 63b; #253, fol. 77b.

[679] See Dresner, *The Zaddik*, esp. pp.148-190; Green, 'Around the Maggid's Table', esp. pp. 76-106.

[680] *Dibrat Shelomoh, be-ha'alotekha*, p. 312.

SERVING GOD IN A WORLD FULL OF LETTERS

The Maggid extends the notion that God should be served through all language beyond the *tsaddiq*'s quest to raise up ordinary conversations. Because the Divine formed the world by means of language, and indeed through the letters of Torah itself, the Maggid asserts that an element of the original sacred Word has remained within the earthly realm. Invoking a phrase from earlier kabbalistic sources, the Maggid often describes this phenomenon as "the power of the Maker within the made."[681] The creative power of God's language remains a part of the physical world. This divine immanence is sometimes described as holy sparks, but the Maggid often refers to it as the sacred letters.[682]

The Maggid's relationship to serving God through the sacred letters found in the physical world is quite complicated.[683] Many of his teachings stress that serving God through physical deeds, such as business, eating and drinking, is an important part of religious devotion.[684] He claims that the Jews were sent to Egypt in order to raise up the

[681] For example, see MDL #90, pp.155-157; idem #6, p. 19; OT #11a, p. 12; LY #241, fol. 70a. See Idel, 'Your Word', pp. 223-225; and Hillel Zeitlin's discussion of this theme in 'The Fundaments of Hasidism', *Be-Fardes ha-Hasidut veha-Kabbalah*, pp. 18-19; translated by Arthur Green in *Hasidic Spirituality for a New Era*, pp. 81-82.

[682] In addition to the sources cited below, see OHE, fol. 24b. Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 3, pp. 1464-1465, identifies the uplifting of the letters as a particularly Hasidic rereading of Lurianic kabbalah. On the origins and evolution of the concept of raising up holy sparks, see Moshe Idel, 'The *Tsadik* and His Soul's Sparks: From Kabbalah to Hasidism', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 103 (2013), pp. 196-240; Louis Jacobs, 'The Uplifting of Sparks in Later Jewish Mysticism', *Jewish Spirituality: From the Sixteenth-Century Revival to the Present*, ed. A. Green, New York 1987, pp. 99-126.

[683] Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem debated Hasidism's complicated relationship with the material world for many years. Buber underscored the Hasidic masters' positive attitude to physicality, while Scholem emphasized texts that articulate the movement's more other-worldly, even ascetic, impulse. See Martin Buber, *Hasidism and Modern Man*, trans. and ed. Maurice Friedman, New York 1958, esp. pp. 126-181; idem, *The Origin and Meaning of Hasidism*; Scholem, 'Buber's Interpretation of Hasidism', pp. 228-50. For a nuanced analysis of this controversy and an insightful new reading of the Hasidic sources, see Brody, 'Open to Me the Gates of Righteousness', pp. 3-44.

[684] OT #247, *tehillim*, p. 300. Kauffman, *In All Your Ways*, p. 463, notes that the Maggid, who generally does not cite the BeSHT, does refer to him on precisely the point of serving God through the physical.

fallen sparks trapped there, which he interprets as a precedent for serving God through the earthly realm.[685] The Maggid explains that the words of Torah spoken at the table uplift all of the physical activities.[686] Indeed, he says that the holy letters trapped in food long to be eaten by the *tsaddiq*,[687] and in one teaching he even refers to liberating the sacred energy in food as a way of studying Torah.[688]

But the Maggid is wary of the dangers that accompany serving God through the physical world, just as he is cautious about the *tsaddiq*'s role in uplifting banal conversations. Some of his teachings emphasize that a *tsaddiq* should only eat enough to sustain himself,[689] and claim that eating in a gross and coarse manner is a cardinal sin.[690] The true essence of food is the divine vitality within it, and therefore when eating one must look past its physical shell and consider only that godly energy.[691] Ascetic disciplines such as fasting and other ways of withdrawing from the pleasures of the world also have an important place in the Maggid's teachings.

A careful reading of these traditions, however, reveals a point of ambiguity: is there really a tension between asceticism and the raising of the corporeal, or is asceticism just an exercise designed to erase lust for the external aspects of a physical thing. In fact, a significant number of Maggid's sermons claim that the mystic does not necessarily becomes alienated from God by engaging with the corporeal world. Rather, his misguided lust for the physical objects and lack of focus on the divine energy within it

[685] MDL #70, pp. 118-120.

[686] MDL #31, p. 50.

[687] *Ve-Tsivah ha-Kohen*, p. 84.

[688] See below, pp. 458-459.

[689] OT # 455, *aggadot*, p. 467.

[690] OT #460, *aggadot*, p. 473.

[691] OT #206, *tehillim*, pp. 272-273.

creates a rift between him and God.[692] The following teaching from R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil offers a summary of his master's approach to the earthly realm:

> My master had often referred to this as "profane matters conducted in a purely holy manner."[693] Even acts that appear to be profane should be carried out in a pure and holy way, since there is Torah in everything. In eating, for example, how much Torah and many paths [of service] are to be found, [beginning with] washing one's hands. So too in matters of business. My master said that the lifeblood of these things lies in the Torah and laws that are to be found within them. God and Torah are one, so that everything has some relationship to Torah, even the lowliest creature.[694]

All physical deeds are an opportunity to serve God, says the Maggid, because the corporeal world is filled with Torah. He gives a rather conservative explanation for this phenomenon by claiming that one constantly serves the Divine by conducting himself in accordance with Jewish law, giving the examples of ritual hand washing before partaking of bread and the rules governing commerce. Yet the Maggid makes it clear that the power of Torah dwells within *all* creation, and, since Scripture is itself a linguistic expression of the Divine, there is an element of God in all things as well.[695]

The Maggid's ambivalence regarding the physical world is visible in a sermon that describes two different types of *tsaddiqim*. One kind of *tsaddiq* is adored by the

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[692] OT #155, *devarim*, p. 206; OT #392, *aggadot*, p. 416.

[693] b. Hagigah 18b, 19b. This Talmudic phrase refers to individuals who have accepted the stringency of eating ordinary food (*hullin*), which may normally be eaten in a state of ritual impurity, only while they are ritually pure, thus treating it like the sanctified foods consumed in the Temple. See also *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot tumat okhlin* 16:12, where Maimonides identifies these individuals as *hasidim rishonim* ("earlier pietists") and *perushim* ("ascetics"). Horowitz, *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *sha'ar ha-otiyyot* 9:25, cites a Lurianic custom of adopting this pietistic practice during the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

[694] *Me'or 'Einayim*, *be-shalah*, p. 170.

[695] However, in this case we might do well to consider whether or not R. Menahem Nahum's own spiritual proclivities colored his understanding of the Maggid's words. R. Menahem Nahum's teachings generally advocate a positive, holistic approach to engaging with the corporeal world through physical actions, very much in keeping with the BeSHT's religious sensibility and with far less tension than that of the Maggid.

Divine because of his positive engagement with the physical world. The other, however, is simply beloved by God because of his very essence:

> There are two sorts of love. A father may love the actions of his wise child, taking pride in his offspring's clever deeds or the wise words the child speaks. The other sort of parental love is more essential; anything the child says finds favor with the parent, because of this love.
>
> Now God loves us [with both sorts of love]. The first occurs when the *tsaddiq* performs good deeds in a very wise way, raising up the holy sparks that are found in *domem*, *tsome'ah*, *hayyah* and *medabber* [i.e., all levels of existence]. God loves such deeds greatly. Such a person is binding the external worlds to God, since God is present in all his actions. This process will only be completed when the Messiah arrives. Of that time Scripture says: "The whole earth will be filled with knowledge of Y-H-V-H" (Is. 11:9). Even cattle and wild beasts will know God, and then "they will cause no evil [or destruction in all My holy mountain]."
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> The second sort of love occurs when the *tsaddiq's* very essence is attached to God. God loves that *tsaddiq* greatly, even without the clever deeds of the first one. This *tsaddiq* goes about in perfect innocence, always joined to Y-H-V-H. This arouses God's love, and is called raising up the inward worlds, since the *tsaddiq* is the innermost part of the world.
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> That is why Joseph said "and the land" (*ve-et ha-arets*). The particle '*et*' consists of *aleph* and *tav*, thus including all the letters. Since everything was created through the letters, they are now bound up with the physical world. These letters constitute divine speech, holy sparks. "Have commerce" can also mean to turn them around[696] and make them "roll" upward.[697]

The first type of *tsaddiq* earns God's affection by raising up the sacred letters trapped in the earthly realm. He returns these aspects of the divine Word to their original source in heaven, thus accomplishing part of the cosmic *tiqqun* that will eventually culminate in the

[696] The Maggid is reading *tisharu* ("have commerce") in the Aramaic sense of "to turn around" or "to turn away from." For example, Targum Onqelos renders the word *va-yisov* ("and [Joseph] turned away," Gen. 42:24) as *ve-istahar*.

[697] MDL #68, pp. 114-115, with parallels in OT #46, p. 64; and OHE, fol. 41a; based on our translation in *Speaking Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 148-149.

advent of the Messiah. The second kind of *tsaddiq*, by contrast, is attached to God even without lifting up these letters from the earthly realm. This *tsaddiq* is described as the inner soul of the worlds, and simple inner closeness to the Divine is unconnected to being involved with the corporeal.

The Maggid has outlined an interesting comparison between these two mystical types without clearly determining which of them is greater. Are we meant to interpret the first *tsaddiq* as someone who uplifts the earthly realm *in addition* to the inner worlds? Or is the second type of *tsaddiq*, graced with an innate connection to God, able to accomplish a mode of service that the first cannot? He has no need to engage with the physical world, for perhaps his natural bond with the Divine is rooted in a more internal, contemplative region. Yet despite the attractive simplicity of the second kind of *tsaddiq*, the Maggid claims that only the deeds of the first type can restore the fallen letters. This *tsaddiq* engages with corporeality and lifts up the letters of Torah from the physical realm, thus bringing the world one step closer to redemption.

R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir, another of the Maggid's disciples, records a sermon by his master on the subject of uplifting the letters from the physical world with a great deal more tension than the tradition cited above.[698] In this homily, the Maggid emphasizes that one should receive no pleasure from performing the commandments or serving God through the physical world:

> I heard the Maggid explain the idea that there is an upper Garden of Eden and lower Garden of Eden... there are pleasures of a higher level, such as Torah, prayer, and performing the commandments, and there are pleasures of a lower level, like eating, drinking and other physical

[698] I hope to devote a future study to exploring the distinction between the Maggid's different students on this issue, among the many others upon which they seem to have disagreed.

> actions. One who has the wisdom of God within him will be disgusted by the pleasures found in physicality, and will connect only to the good hidden and embodied within them. This is called lower Garden of Eden. He chooses only the letters of Torah that animate them, as Scripture says, "And they saw '*et*' God, and they ate and they drank (Ex. 24:11). '*Et*' refers to the letters of the alphabet [from *aleph* to *tav*]...[699]

Involvement with physicality does not necessarily have a negative impact upon one's spiritual life, but here the Maggid describes it as a lower order of religious service. Hedonistic ulterior motivations and self-gratification present great dangers, for these can occlude the mystic's vision of the letters that dwell within food and drink. In order to uplift this fallen divine language, it is critical for one's eyes to be trained upon this divine energy rather than on the physical shell that surrounds it.[700]

The Maggid refers to serving God through the corporeal world as "uplifting the letters." It is interesting to consider whether or not he is simply using the letters as another metaphor for divine vitality, entirely synonymous with the notion of the sparks. Or, alternatively, perhaps the Maggid is using the image of the letters to articulate a different type of religious experience. In one tradition found in a work by his student, the Maggid seems to suggest that one actually *sees* the letters manifest in the physical world,[701] but other teachings are more ambiguous. R. Solomon of Lutsk offers the longest and most insightful descriptions of raising up the letters, which he attributes directly to the Maggid:

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[699] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *va-yera*, p. 28. Elsewhere, however, R. Ze'ev Wolf invokes this same teaching from the Maggid in a more moderate way, explaining that serving God through food and drink is a necessary part of bringing about redemption; *Or ha-Me'ir*, *pesah*, pp. 228b-229a.

[700] See LY #265, fol. 83a, in which the Maggid compares this dichotomy to an a fortiori argument (*kal ve-homer*): if *tsaddiqim* can uplift the physical world (*homriyut*), then how much more so can they uplift the letters of prayer and Torah study, which are easier (*kal*) to uplift.

[701] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *ve-zot ha-berakhah*, p. 320.

> It may seem that this world is visible to the eyes, and the spiritual world and its pleasures cannot be seen.... But the physicality of each thing is only a vessel and a boundary that defines its appearance, taste and smell. The spirit [inside it] is the vitality of the Creator, drawn into and bounded by this physical thing. It is the letters and the holy words of the Divine, for these letters are spiritual, sweet and full of wondrous taste and smell...
>
> I have come to explain this idea, setting out this notion with greater [clarity]: How is it that the letters and words are spiritual and exalted in all types of colors, smells and tastes? [I will explain it] according to what I understood and received from my teacher [the Maggid], which is only a drop of the ocean; these words cannot hope to describe it.[702] Even to bring them into language and articulate them is exceedingly difficult, as it says in the Zohar, "these [divine secrets] could not be spoken."[703] This requires great diligence in serving the sages and great scholars of Israel, listening to their truthful words. From them one may understand and be enlightened, learning to remove each thing from its physicality and look only upon its spiritual essence. The vitality and illumination of the blessed Creator should be before your eyes always. You will see nothing but Him, as it is written, "I have placed Y-H-V-H before me always" (Ps. 16:8), and "there is none other than Him" (Deut. 4:35)...

The divine Word is the spiritual energy of all created things, and these letters imbue physical objects such as food or drink with taste, smell and even their appearance. Sensitivity to divine immanence is the Maggid's interpretation of what it means to have God's name before one at all times. In describing one may cultivate his awareness of this fact, R. Solomon makes another important point: the ability to serve God through the physical world cannot be absorbed by reading books. In fact, it cannot even be fully explained in words, and therefore must be absorbed from a living teacher.[704] Only

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[702] See below, pp. 387-388.

[703] Zohar 1:195a.

[704] On the importance of learning from living masters and plumbing the depths of their knowledge (*shimmush talmidei ha-hakhamim*), see b. Sotah 22a. Cf. the list of surprising and occasionally ribald tales

watching a master perform his deeds with great focus and attachment will attune the disciple to this new way of looking at the world. R. Solomon continues:

> The words of the Holy One inhere in all things, as it is written, "the heavens were made by the word of Y-H-V-H" (Ps. 33:6). They are the names of each thing, like "bread" (*lehem*) and "water" (*mayyim*), and so forth. This is the vitality and the taste, and the smell, and the appearance of each word (*dibbur*). The vitality is drawn forth according to the letters and combinations of words of each thing.... Each thing is created and emanated from the blessed One's vitality, and therefore everything must be uplifted to its Source by means of eating and drinking, through the deeds of God's holy people with great attachment to the holy Creator. Even impure things and forbidden foods, and all prohibited things, which are dark and lacking, have a little vitality. These are uplifted through keeping the negative commandments...
>
> Everything is the illumination, divinity and vitality of the blessed Creator... as the Zohar says, "it is liken the silkworm whose garment is both a part of it and upon it".[705] All the actions and deeds of a person, and his words, are hewn from the illumination of His blessed light and vitality; everything is within Him and from Him....[706]

In R. Solomon's teaching we find a clear statement of radical Hasidic panentheism described in linguistic terms. Everything in the earthly realm, from physical objects to human language, is a manifestation of God's language. While the particular letters imbued within all elements of the world are not themselves visible, they are expressed through the appearance, smell, and taste of each thing. One's sensual perception and experience of the physical world leads one to an awareness of the letters within, and this type of engagement is an integral part of returning the letters to their source in God.

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about disciples learning from their teachers' conduct in b. Berakhot 62a. More broadly, see Susan Handelman, *Make Yourself a Teacher: Rabbinic Tales of Mentors and Disciples*, Seattle 2011.

[705] Zohar 1:15a; cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 21:5; *Pardes Rimmonim* 4:9, 16:3, 20:3; *Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-kellalim*, 1.; ibid 13:4, 41:3.

[706] *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *be-huqqotai*, pp. 292-294. This passage covers many of the same themes as R. Solomon's second introduction to MDL, but here they are developed more explicitly and at greater length.

It is interesting to note that R. Solomon's homily frames the process of reuniting of the holy letters with their origin as one that was not necessitated by the intra-divine fracture of the "breaking of the cosmic vessels" (*shevirat ha-kelim*). The need to redeem God's Word from the earthly realm is a direct result of Creation, for the Hebrew letters were the instruments through which God formed the corporeal. This point raises thus a fundamental question: if the letters constitute each thing, how can they be returned to God without annihilating it and thereby essentially undoing the project of Creation? R. Solomon does not give us an explicit answer to this quandary, which returns us to the heart of the scholarly debate between Scholem and Buber regarding Hasidism's approach to the physical world.[707]

A significant number of the Maggid's homilies make an explicit connection between uplifting ordinary conversations and serving God through the physical world. In one such sermon, we read:

> The ultimate goal of service is to raise up the holy sparks that have fallen into brokenness. [This includes] all words and thoughts, which are all letters. If they come from idle chatter, they are letters of brokenness. Everything must be lifted up to its root. This is why someone who has an idle conversation transgresses a positive commandment,[708] and he must take action immediately in order to raise it to its source. This is the meaning of, "Even the ordinary conversations of the sages require study" [i.e., a idle speech must be followed by a positive action].[709]

[707] See above, p. 683.

[708] b. Yoma 19b.

[709] b. Sukkah 21b.

> And this is the meaning of, "The land will be full of the awareness of '*et*' Y-H-V-H" (Isa. 11:9). '*Et*' represents the letters from *aleph* to *tav*. These are the letters of speech and thought. "Awareness" (*de'ah*) refers to connection.[710]

The overarching principle that guides one's religious service is the notion that all language must be raised to its source in God. The world is filled with the divine letters, described in this homily in Lurianic terms as sparks trapped as a result of *shevirat ha-kelim*. The Maggid is calling his listeners to realize this fact and ensure that all of their words are uttered with attunement. The mystic's awareness (*da'at*) of the sacred language in the earthly realm, forges a connection between the letters of the physical world and their divine root.[711] Anyone, even a scholar, who speaks idly must immediately strive to rectify his mistake by retroactively uplifting his words. This is the "study" demanded of a sage who forgets himself and chatters frivolously.

Idle conversations hinder the ultimate goal of redeeming language from its exile. Empty speech forces even more letters into the realm of fracture, and one who commits such a transgression must immediately make amends. The Maggid's citation of the Talmudic maxim, "even the ordinary conversations of the sages require study," is surprising in this context. It seems unlikely that he means to suggest that a scholar's mundane conversations are like idle speech in the sense of contributing to the exile of language, though this reading is indeed possible. If so, the "study" they require is none other than the positive action that must follow all forms of debased speech. Elsewhere the

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[710] OT# 97, *yitro*, pp. 135-136, with parallels in MDL #87, p. 152; and OHE, fol. 45a.

[711] In classical Kabbalah *da'at* is often counted as one of the central *sefirot*, which, like *tif'eret*, functions as bridge between the *sefirot* above (*keter*, *hokhmah*, *binah*) and those below it (*hesed*, *gevurah*, *tif'eret*). Furthermore, the Hasidic masters interpret *da'at* in light of "and Adam knew (*yada'*) his wife Eve" (Gen. 4:1), understanding it as referring to a type of mystical awareness that create an intimate bond with the Divine.

Maggid invokes the same Talmudic tradition as proof that even ordinary language, when spoken by the correct type of person, may be filled with divine energy.[712] Perhaps he is using it in this sense here as well, demonstrating the subtle difference between empty chatter (*sihah beteilah*) and mundane conversations (*sihat hullin*) that must be raised up.

Some traditions from the Maggid take the notion of serving God through the letters of the physical world in a very different direction. The Maggid explains that miracles are possible precisely because language is so deeply related to the physical world. Indeed, words have the power to change physical reality.[713] A *tsaddiq* works miracles by raising a certain permutation of the letters to its source in the *sefirah binah*, the contemplative realm of infinite potential, from which he then draws forth a new combination.[714] However, some of the Maggid's teachings suggest that one must even go beyond words in order to accomplish miracles:

> The life-force of all things comes from the World of Speech, meaning the letters. Now the letters long to connect to their source. It is their vitality. But when some change is required, then the letters of speech are lifted up beyond the attributes (*middot*). [The one praying] falls silent and cannot speak until the transformation has been accomplished. Then song may be recited once more.[715]

Some miracles require the *tsaddiq* to do more than rearrange a certain permutation of letters. Transformation of this scale can only be accomplished by raising the letters of

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[712] OT #317, *pesuqim*, p. 365.

[713] On the role of language in magic, see Marcel Mauss, *A General Theory of Magic*, London and New York 2001, pp. 71-75; Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, esp. pp. 19- 23, 59, 76; S. J. Tambiah, 'The Magical Power of Words', *Man* 3.2 (1968), pp. 175-208; Benjamin Ray, '"Performative Utterances" in African Rituals', *History of Religions* (1973), pp. 16-35; and more recently, Simon Dein, 'The Power of Words: Healing Narratives Among Lubavitcher Hasidim', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 16.1 (2002), pp. 41-63.

[714] See *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *be-shalah*, p. 152, where the author emphasizes that the Maggid spoke about the power of the *tsaddiq* to work miracles on many different occasions.

[715] MDL #118, p. 192.

speech back to their source. We might expect this to be a reference to *binah*, but this homily implies that the letters of speech must be raised up to an even higher realm, perhaps either *hokhmah* or *keter*.[716] It may be that the experience of returning the letters to this pre-linguistic world is so powerful that contemplative is stunned into silence. He returns to words and language only after the necessary change has been effected, perhaps because the transformation of a divinely-established linguistic formation requires that the worshiper mobilize the energy found in a region beyond language.

Working miracles by transforming combinations of letters reflects the Maggid's belief that each element of the physical world (the realm of *yesh*) is a particular manifestation of the infinite potential of the divine Naught (*ayin*). A *tsaddiq* can transform one object into something by returning it to its holy source.[717] The *tsaddiq* can also accomplish miracles because his thoughts and words have the power to arouse God:

> Sometimes when one connects [to] the thoughts of his fellow above [i.e., in the shared World of Thought], he can modify them in any way that he wishes. One should never speak of anything bad, as it is written, "[sinfulness dictates your speech,] so choose wise language." (Job 15:5). When one talks about miracles and goodness, he arouses goodness above. When he speaks of the opposite, heaven forefend, the opposite is aroused.
>
> Sometimes he can raise up [and impact his own] soul through the words he speaks. For example, if he is imprisoned, let him speak about the four who must give thanks [after being delivered from danger].[718] When a certain limb is ailing, he should speak about its correlate in the *sefirot* above.[719]

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[716] Indeed, earlier in this sermon the Maggid discusses the temporary ascent of the mystic to the silent realm *keter*, followed by the return to the structures of language.

[717] See, for example, MDL #30, p. 49.

[718] b. Berakhot 54b.

[719] MDL #31, p. 49-50; cf. KST #299a, p. 172. See SLA, p. 35, for a different sermon that claims that connecting oneself to the Torah brings about healing because its text is our sole access point for divine *hokhmah*.

The *tsaddiq*'s sacred speech transforms the physical world around him, and because of this he must be careful about what he says. Earthly illnesses are a physical manifestation of a deeper spiritual malaise, perhaps due to a disjuncture between the different *sefirot* or the arousal of some negative force. For this reason these ailments can be healed through carefully considered words and contemplation.[720]

Homilies about the possibility of miracles and transforming the physical world through language are found throughout the body of teachings attributed to the Maggid. However, sermons on this subject are relatively rare, and, as noted above, performing wonders was not the central element of the Maggid's legacy.[721] None of his sermons, or the stories about his life, espouse anything close to the princely style adopted by some later Hasidic leaders.[722] The Maggid describes *tsaddiqim* as living in straitened material circumstances. In fact, the closer they draw to God and to the Torah, the less they petition the Divine for their own personal and physical desires.[723]

The Maggid has expanded the concept of sacred language to include all conversations, provided that they are accompanied by the correct contemplative thoughts. He also refers to serving God through the physical realm as uplifting the divine letters.

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[720] This sermon continues by underscoring that the *tsaddiq*'s performance of the commandments also has the power to bring about redemption from sickness and suffering. See also the tradition quoted in *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 2, *va-ethanan*, p. 282, regarding the *tsaddiq*'s ability to transform a negative decree into something good by means of speech.

[721] The image of the Maggid as a worker of miracles is more prominent in the work of R. Solomon of Lutsk, who testifies to witnessing R. Dov Baer performing wonders on several occasions. He also claims to have received a tradition from the Maggid that these miracles must be accompanied by "great reliance, perfect faith, and connection to the blessed One." However, R. Solomon then explains that simply telling the story of a *tsaddiq* accomplishing wondrous feat can also arouses that same miracle. See *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *megillat esther*, p. 243; and more broadly, Cooper, 'But I Will Tell of Their Deeds', pp. 127-163.

[722] R. Barukh of Mezhbizh, R. Israel of Ruzhin, and the *rebbes* of some branches of the Chernobil dynasty were known for their regal opulence.

[723] SLA, p. 35.

Let us pause for a moment in order to reflect upon the implications of this development. Many of the Maggid's teachings emphasize one cannot always remain in a constant state of intense and overwhelming communion with the Divine. This consistency would be neither psychologically sustainable nor even desirable. It is precisely those subtle fluctuations of the spiritual life, drawing near to the Divine and then retreating farther away, which bring great pleasure to both man and God.

However, the Maggid's sermons do articulate a spiritual path in which one can indeed maintain an intimate connection with God at all times, albeit to greater and lesser degrees of intensity. This goal is possible because we are continuously immersed in language. All words may be raised up to God, which includes the sacred letters within the physical world. Indeed, as we shall see, the structures of the mind are also governed by the "letters of thought" (*otiyyot ha-mahshavah*). These letters come from the language of Torah, the text of which is yet another garment for the Divine. When one contemplates the letters, or even uses them in constructing his thoughts, God becomes embodied in his mind.[724]

The fact that the Maggid very rarely invokes the term *leshon ha-qodesh* in his discussion of sacred speech, combined with fact that God's immanence is described as divine letters, calls for a redefinition of the classical divisions between holy and profane.[725] As is clear in the teaching from R. Solomon of Lutsk, the holy letters inhere even within prohibited foods and other physical things that are forbidden by Jewish law. Of course, the uniqueness of Hebrew is implied by the Maggid's theology of language. Divine letters are found in the impure realms, but nowhere does he suggest that non-

[724] OT #167, *'eqev*, pp. 217-218.

[725] See also MDL #146, p. 247.

Hebrew letters animate things. And if the "letters of thought" are those of the Torah, then presumably the Maggid is referring to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. But it is difficult to imagine that the Maggid would restrict this contemplative power to those who were thinking only in *leshon ha-qodesh*, which had ceased to be a spoken language many generations before his time.

The Maggid lived in a bilingual culture in which a sacred, liturgical and literary language existed alongside a popular Jewish vernacular.[726] But perhaps his expansive definition of sacred speech was in part enabled by the fact that the letters of Yiddish, the Maggid's vernacular and that of all the early Hasidic masters, are the same as those of the Hebrew alphabet. Indeed, the relationship between Yiddish and Hebrew bilingualism is quite complicated. Yiddish has always had a significant element of Hebrew and Aramaic terms (*loshn qoydesh*), and this percentage was even higher in the learned register of Yiddish spoken by the educated and rabbinic class. Furthermore, "Hebrew" education in Eastern Europe generally entailed memorizing each word, sentence, or verse along with its Yiddish *taytsh*, or translation, reinforcing the mutual interdependence of these two

[726] On the higher number of Hebrew terms incorporated into the higher register of Yiddish spoken by the learned elites, see Max Weinreich, *History of the Yiddish Language*, ed. P. Glasser, trans. Shlomo Noble with Joshua A. Fishman, New Haven and London 2008, vol. 1, pp. 175-246, esp. 229-231. For studies of the complexities of Hebrew/Yiddish bilingualism in Eastern Europe, see ibid, pp. 247-314; Benjamin Harshav, *The Meaning of Yiddish*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1990, esp. pp. 51-60; Lewis Glinert, 'Hebrew-Yiddish Diglossia: Type and Stereotype, Implications of the Language of Ganzfried's *Kitzur*', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 67 (1987), pp. 39-56; Shaul Stampfer, "What Did "Knowing Hebrew" Mean in Eastern Europe?', *Hebrew in Ashkenaz: A Language in Exile*, ed. L. Glinert, New York 1993, pp. 129-140; Chava Turniansky, 'Yiddish and the Transmission of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 15 (2008), pp. 5-18; idem, 'Between Hebrew and Yiddish in Bilingual Ashkenazi Poetry', *Early Modern Yiddish Poetry*, ed. S. Berger, Amsterdam 2009, pp. 47-61; Stampfer, *Families, Rabbis, and Education*, pp. 145-210, esp. 150-152. On the relationship between Yiddish and Hebrew in modern Hasidic communities, see Simeon D. Baumel, *Sacred Speakers: Language and Culture Among the Haredim in Israel*, New York 2006; Solomon Poll, 'The Sacred-Secular Conflict in the Use of Hebrew and Yiddish Among the Ultra-Orthodox Jews of Jerusalem', *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 1980.24 (1980), pp. 109-126; Ayala Fader, 'Reclaiming Sacred Sparks: Linguistic Syncretism and Gendered Language Shift Among Hasidic Jews in New York', *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 17.1 (2007), pp. 1-22.

deeply Jewish languages. But we should note that there is nothing explicit in the Maggid's sermons to suggest that his broader understanding of sacred language is limited to any particular Jewish vernacular. The Maggid's point about the sanctity of language is much greater, for *all* human speech is animated by the divine Word.

WRITTEN AND SPOKEN LANGUAGE

Scholars have noted that the teachings of the Hasidic masters often privilege the spoken word over written texts.[727] This characterization holds true for the Maggid's homilies as well, since the majority of his sermons examine the nature of verbal language. The Maggid refers to the World of Speech countless times, but never suggests that a divine quality called the "World of Writing" might become embodied in a mystic. Such a statement would not have been without precedent. There have been many interesting cases of automatic writing in Judaism, some of which might have been known to the Maggid.[728] Furthermore, some classical mystical texts do ascribe great significance to writing as an act of cosmic *tiqqun*.[729] Although the Maggid never seems to draw upon these traditions, the importance of written language is by no means ignored in his teachings.[730] The visionary element to the Maggid's descriptions of mystical experiences

[727] See above, pp. 40-51.

[728] For a comprehensive study of this phenomenon, see Amos Goldreich, *Automatic Writing in Zoharic Literature and Modernism*, Los Angeles 2010 [Hebrew]. See also Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 103; R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, 'Mystical and Magical Contemplation: The Kabbalists in Sixteenth-Century Safed', *History of Religions* 1 (1961), p. 15; Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, p. 69; Shahar Arzy, 'Speaking With One's Self: Autoscopic Phenomena in Writings from the Ecstatic Kabbalah', *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 12.11 (2005), pp. 4-29.

[729] See *'Emeq ha-Melekh*, 16:37, p. 867, 870; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 278.

[730] Scholem, 'Devekut', p. 217, claims that the Maggid saw writing down Kabbalistic mysteries as a way of attaining *devequt*. He does not offer a source for this assertion, nor is one supplied by the editors of the recent Hebrew version of this essay; see Scholem, *Latest Phase*, p. 249.

should not be overlooked, and in some cases this includes visions of certain words and the shapes of the letters.[731]

A number of the Maggid's sermons describe the contemplative process through which one penetrate into the heart of his words, whether they are uttered in prayer, in study, or in ordinary conversation. While the auditory element is central to this type of meditation, several of his homilies introduce a powerful visual component as well. Unless one views the letters as abstract phonemes, this tendency toward visualization seems quite natural. Let us choose a few salient examples from the Maggid's teachings:

> One must place all of his thought into the power of the words that he is speaking, until he sees the lights of the words sparking against one another (*mitnotsetsim zeh be-zeh*). In them several lights are born. This is the meaning of, "A light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright of heart" (Ps. 97:11). The lights of the letters are divine chambers into which the [world of] Emanation is drawn.[732] He must divest his soul from the physical body, so that his soul can be clothed in the thoughts that he is speaking.[733]

Here the Maggid describes the letters as vessels holding a quality of divine energy that is experienced in the form of light. The effect of this imagery is almost synesthetic, for he is clearly referring to imagining the light within the letters of spoken, not written, words.[734] The contemplative attention of the speaker grants him a glimpse of the creative friction between the divine lights hidden within the letters. Like a flint struck against a rock in

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Many early Hasidic teachings, including a few from the Maggid, refer to writing a Torah scroll as a holy act. I have been unable to locate any passages in which they describe writing down Hasidic sermons as a sacred deed, as opposed to great amount of reflection about speaking them.

[731] See Pedaya 'Outlines for a Religious Typology', pp. 55-70. See also *Kuzari* IV:25.

[732] According to MDL, ed. Kahn, #52, p. 14a, which is clearly preferable to Schatz-Uffenheimer.

[733] MDL #29, p. 47, with a parallel in OHE, fol. 46a-b. On withdrawing from the corporeal, see above, pp. 191-204.

[734] See *Liqqutei Moharan* I:65.

order to kindle a fire, new illumination is formed as the letters and words come into contact with one another. This visualization combines both oral and written aspects of language together, for the words spoken aloud hold a visual image within them.

Here we should also recall a remarkable passage found in *Darkhei Tsedeq*, a collection of early Hasidic *hanhagot* that includes material from the Maggid. This short teaching describes a practice in which one must imagine the shapes of the letters even as he is speaking them aloud:

> One can contemplate the letters that he is physically speaking, drawing them in his mind as they are written in Hebrew script (*ketav ashurit*). Through thinking of the shape of the holy letters in this way, the letters are uplifted. This was also revealed by the teacher [the Maggid] of my master [R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk], may his light continue to shine. This [contemplation] takes much practice. For example, when one says, "give me" (*gib mir*) to his friend, he should imagine the [words] גיב מיר before him in Hebrew script.[735]

This *hanhagah* offers a concrete description of a fascinating meditative technique. As one is speaking a word aloud, he should imagine the forms of the Hebrew letters within his mind at the very same time, thus blending the oral and written forms of language. However, this teaching also confirms that the Maggid extends his contemplative approach to language beyond Hebrew; the example of spoken language is actually a phrase in Yiddish.

[735] *Darkei Tsedeq*, #19 p. 4, amended according to the 1810 printing. On the provenance of the different *hanhagot* in *Darkei Tsedeq*, see Gries, *Conduct Literature*, esp. pp. 314-316.

The Maggid's teachings frequently ascribe rich symbolic meaning to the shapes of the letters, using their forms to articulate a broader theological point.[736] These homilies are complemented by a passage found in the writings of R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev:

> God created the world through the Torah; the world was created with twenty-two letters.[737] The shapes of the letters have significance, as is mentioned in *Sefer ha-Temunah*[738] and the Lurianic writings. The holy luminary the Ba'al Shem Tov revealed the [meaning of] the shapes of the letters. So I heard from my master, the holy luminary R. Dov Berish, that there are reasons for the shape of the letters, which are supernal lights. *Yod* represents *tsimtsum* [i.e. the primordial withdrawal of God's light], the letter *vav* is expansion, the letter *shin* refers to the three columns [of the *sefirot*], and the letter *aleph* has a point above and a point below.
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> Now although there is no up or down in the worlds above, in the realm of the mind and the angels, nor is there any boundary that would allow us to refer to "spreading out," my teacher [the Maggid] said that when the worlds and the supernal lights clothe themselves in the human body and take on corporeal garb, the lights of the mind are visible in a concrete form like the image of the letters (*ke-dimayyon ha-otiyyot*). The focusing (*tsimtsum*) of the wisdom [of a teacher] in the way that it is contracted into the mind of a student is like the shape of the *yod*, and the *vav* is the image of spreading out [in the disciple's mind], and so forth for all of them. Thus I have received from my teacher.[739]

The language used by God in the creation of the world included the written forms of the Hebrew letters as well.[740] The shapes of these same letters are also reflected in the intellectual and spiritual processes of the human mind. The Maggid has internalized the

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[736] For example, see MDL #60, pp. 89-96. On the history of interpreting the shapes of the Hebrew letters in kabbalistic literature, Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 46-56, 70.

[737] See below, chapter 3.

[738] See above, n. 565, n. 751.

[739] *Qedushat Levi*, *qedushah sheniyah*, pp. 517-518.

[740] Cf. *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 1:3, in which the author claims that the significance of the shapes of the letters used in Creation will only be revealed in the messianic future.

symbols of written language, employing them to describe the workings of the individual psyche. But as in other elements of the Maggid's theology, the association of kabbalistic symbols with psychic processes does not negate or supersede their meaning in other contexts. In this case, the visual encounter with the letters may still be an important element of a mystical experience, even if their shapes are also interpreted as alluding to greater cosmic dynamics.

Elsewhere the Maggid uses the act of writing a Hebrew letter as a metaphor for all human deeds:

> "And with the hand of each person it is sealed."[741] We must understand how this can be. The matter is as follows: the vitality of a person is spread throughout his inner essence (*penimiyyuto*). When he does something, whether making any movement, walking, or speaking, he focuses all of his vitality into that action. It surrounds him and is a boundary for him.
>
> This is just like writing. One draws a boundary and surrounds [the space within] with his black ink, until a little bit of white is visible inside of the ink. The shape of the letter appears according to the boundary of the ink surrounding the white of the paper.[742] Therefore, from each movement and every deed there is an engraving in the inner vitality and essence of a person. This is [the meaning of], "And their sins will be engraved in their essence" (cf. Ezek. 32:27).[743]

The inner life-force that dwells within a person is diffuse and unbounded, which the Maggid compares to the expanse of white on a blank piece of paper. He compares human

[741] From the Rosh Hashanah liturgy, based on Job 37:7.

[742] The fact that the Maggid uses the word *niyyar* ("paper") instead of *qelaf* ("parchment") suggests that he is referring to writing something other than a Torah scroll. However, there is an old custom for important individuals to purchase or be given the honor of filling in the final letters of a Torah scroll as it is being completed, thus fulfilling the commandment for each person to write a Torah. Perhaps the Maggid offered this particular teaching on such an occasion. For a summary of the different treatments of this custom, see Gavriel Zinner, *Nit'ei Gavri'el: Ketivat ve-Hakhnasat Sefer Torah*, Jerusalem 1998, ch. 13, pp. 118-127.

[743] MDL #201, p. 326. Cf. *Liqqutei Moharan* I:4 for a remarkably similar teaching Ezek. 32:27 regarding how the letters of sin become impressed upon one's soul, corrupting his facility for language and therefore requiring verbal confession.

deeds to the act of drawing a letter, for tracing its form in black ink creates a negative white space within its boundaries.[744] This region existed previously, but only becomes recognizable and distinct as a result of the form of the letter drawn around it. The same is true for all human deeds as well, whether they are transgressive or meritorious. Words and other types of actions create delimited channels for one's vitality, like the black lines of the letter hold the white space within them. Actions thus delimit one's inner life-force by directing it into a distinct vessel, but, like the letters on a page, they also provide it with expression.

A hagiographic collection of Hasidic tales includes a fascinating story about a disciple asking the Maggid to teach the student the kabbalistic "intentions" (*kavvanot*) for writing the holy names in Torah scrolls.[745] This story, while it may not reflect a historical event, will prove conceptually instructive on many levels:

> Our teacher the great Maggid of Mezritch told R. David the Scribe of Hanipoli that he wanted him to learn the work of holy writing [i.e., to write Torah scrolls and other religious texts].[746] R. David requested that he be given the intentions for the holy names. The Maggid replied, "What you have asked is very difficult, but nevertheless, since I want you to learn the work of holy writing, I will fulfill your wish." The Maggid commanded his holy student R. Solomon of Lutsk to teach him the intentions of writing the holy names. R. Solomon walked with him in the fields and taught him. From the time that he learned how to write the holy names, R. David wrote the religious texts

[744] See Moshe Idel, 'White Letters: From R. Levi Isaac of Berdichev's Views to Postmodern Hermeneutics', *Modern Judaism* 26 (2006), pp. 169-192.

[745] Beginning with the German Pietists, there are a vast number of works about the mystical significance of the letters of the Torah scroll and how each of them must be written, especially the sacred name Y-H-V-H. See, for example, *Sefer ha-Shem*, Jerusalem 2004; Jacob Hayyim Sofer, *Qol Ya'aqov*, Jerusalem 1904; *Kovets Sifrei Stam*, Jerusalem 1981; *Sefer ve-Yada'ta et ha-Shem*, Jerusalem 2007. See also *Shulhan 'Arukh*, *yoreh de'ah*, 276:2, and the commentators ad loc.

[746] Very little is known about R. David Sofer of Hanipoli. See Isaac Alfasi, *Sefer ha-Admorim*, Tel Aviv 1961, p. 39.

[such as Torah scrolls, *tefillin* and *mezuzot*] (*stam*). His writing was quite beloved in the eyes of the Maggid's students....

Once R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady tarried with the Maggid for a long time after Sukkot. It was his custom to wait for his master to call him and give him leave to return home in peace. One time he waited for a long time after the holiday, but his master did not call him to give him a farewell blessing, forcing him to wait. His master finally called him, and said that in the worlds above there is a great accusation (*qitrug*) about why the opinions of the legal scholars (*posqim*) and the Kabbalists regarding how the shapes of the holy letters should be written are not the same. Someone must take the time to examine diligently the words of the scholars and the Kabbalists in order to reconcile the shapes of the letters so that they are the same for both camps. This will annul the ferment [above].

Rabbi [Shne'ur Zalman] devoted himself to this holy task for several days, and afterward he brought forth from potential into being a shape for each of the letters that satisfied both of the opinions. He brought them to his holy master [the Maggid] and showed him the shape for each of the letters that satisfies both of the camps. The Maggid thanked him for this, saying that in this moment it was decreed in heaven that the shapes of the letters must be like this, and that the ferment had been annulled. The next day the Maggid gave his student the Rabbi of Liady a farewell blessing, and he went on his way.

He traveled to Hanipoli, arriving at night after everyone was asleep. He saw that there was a candle burning in one of the houses, and he went there in order to lodge. That was the home of R. David Sofer. When the Rabbi [of Liady] came to the house, he found R. David sitting and writing a Torah scroll, and did not wish to interrupt him. He walked into the house without a word, until he arrived at the place he was writing. [R. Shne'ur Zalman] saw him writing holy letters the same as those he had designed himself on the day before, after expending tremendous effort. He was astonished, since R. David had not been in Mezritch when his holy master was told about the shapes of the letters. He waited as R. David finished his writing, and then R. David saw him in his house and rejoiced, receiving him with great love and affection. The Rabbi [of Liady] asked him how he had learned about this new way of writing. R. David told him, "I do not know, but

> yesterday R. Zushya called to me and said that in heaven it had been decreed that the letters be written in a way that satisfied the opinion of both the scholars and the Kabbalists. R. Zushya drew each and every letter in all of its detail for me. I am writing just as he showed me." The Rabbi [of Liady] was astonished by the great sanctity of R. Zushya. From that time on this way of writing the letters, which satisfies both of the opinions, spread out throughout the world.[747]

This story is one of the few tales about the Maggid's circle that includes R. Solomon of Lutsk, who played a central role in editing and publishing the Maggid's teachings. Here R. Solomon possesses some rare kabbalistic knowledge regarding the sacred matters that a scribe must have in mind when writing the divine names in religious texts. He is charged with transmitting these secrets, perhaps given to him by the Maggid himself, to another of his disciples.[748]

The next section of the story, however, focuses on the mystical significance of the physical shapes of the Hebrew letters. The Maggid senses that the heavens are in a state of unrest, and he is greatly disturbed by the disconnect between the description of the letters in legal sources and that given by the mystics. He therefore commissions his brilliant disciple R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady to find a way of reconciling the two systems.[749] R. Shne'ur Zalman is successful, and his solution pleases the Maggid and restores harmony to the divine realm. However, we learn that his innovative answer to the contradiction between the two styles of writing the Hebrew letters was anticipated by this mysterious R. David. The new shapes of the letters were revealed to the latter by R.

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[747] *Qahal Hasidim ha-Hadash*, p. 11b-d. Cf. *Shulhan 'Arukh ha-Rav*, Brooklyn 2008, vol. 1, #35 pp. 136-145. See also Moshe Hallamish, *Studies in Kabbalah and Prayer*, Beer-Sheva 2012, p. 379 [Hebrew].

[748] This tale is also important because it traces a legal innovation, namely an innovative way of writing the Hebrew letters, back to several prominent members of the Maggid's circle. It should be noted that the Maggid himself provided only the impetus for the innovation, whereas his disciples develop the actual solution.

[749] In this way the story draws an interesting tension between the traditions of Kabbalah and *halakhah*. See below, pp. 421-445.

Zushya, a figure well known in Hasidic hagiography for his charismatic talents rather than scholarly acumen.[750] R. Shne'ur Zalman's inspiration, by contrast, came to him only after expending great intellectual effort.

Homilies and stories like those cited above suggest that the Maggid ascribed great significance to some forms of written language in addition to spoken words. In another sermon the Maggid invokes the Written Torah as a symbol for the World of Thought (*'olam ha-mahshavah*), a realm that is more abstract, dynamic, and bearing greater potential than that of the spoken word (*dibbur*) and the Oral Torah.[751] However, this particular association may have more to do with the limited, finite nature of the Written Torah versus the ever-expanding corpus of the Oral Torah than it does with thought as opposed to writing. But we noted earlier that the Maggid seems to have understood the importance of having his own sermons written down, since he reportedly asked R. Solomon of Lutsk to transcribe them for future generations.

Of course, the act of writing down sermons and homilies is obviously quite different than writing a Torah scroll. And the Maggid does not refer to the power of writing in the context of amulets, a characteristic technique of classical *ba'alei shem*.[752] But the Maggid does not explicitly restrict his remarks about the power of written language to Torah scrolls and other ritual texts, for the shapes of the Hebrew letters have great significance. On this subject the Maggid's commitment to the exclusiveness of

[750] It is possible that R. Shne'ur Zalman's solution was not really anticipated, for the script may have been revealed to R. Zushya only after the former's decision was accepted in Heaven

[751] See OT #335, *tehilim*, p. 292.

[752] *Qedushat Levi*, *rosh ha-shanah*, pp. 418-419, explains that written words can be more powerful than spoken ones, because they protect the message from heavenly adversaries. On the spiritual and cosmological dimensions of writing, see also *Liqqutei Moharan* I:61; *Benei Yissakhar*, *sivan* #4.

Hebrew seems far more pronounced, for nowhere in the corpus of his teachings does one find a reference to the inherent meaning of written forms of other languages.

Anatomy of a Speech Act: The Elements of Language

Let us now begin to examine in greater detail the Maggid's presentation of the various elements of language. This task will require us to piece together ideas treated quite unsystematically throughout the Maggid's sermons. In doing so we will chart a course of analysis that begins with the most basic, concrete and physical properties of language and then move toward its more abstract and cognitive dimensions.

Letters are the fundamental building blocks of language, called the "stones" (*avanim*) from which all words are constructed.[753] These are the twenty-two consonants of the Hebrew alphabet, though of course the Maggid's opinion regarding the uniqueness of Hebrew, at least on the oral level, is quite complicated. These letters are described with great frequency in his teachings as "vessels" (*kelim*).[754] Brought together into patterns and combinations, they hold the semantic meaning and wisdom that is imbued within them by the speaker. But the function of letters as receptacles extends far beyond this as well. The letters are vessels for holding light, divine vitality, and even the divine Presence itself. Of course, the word *ot* ("letter") refers to both a phonetic sound and a written sign. As noted above, the Maggid refers to the letters primarily as an aural

[753] MDL #60, p. 94. See *Sefer Yetsirah* 4:12; *Pardes Rimmonim* 30:1.

[754] See LY #118, fol. 25b.

phenomenon, but his focus on the power of language is by no means exclusively applied to the spoken word.[755]

Yet consonant letters remain totally inaccessible, even lifeless, without the *te'amim* ("cantillation notes") and *nequdot* ("vowel points").[756] The *te'amim* represent a system of punctuation and musical notation that guides the reader, at times radically changing how a verse is read.[757] But the Maggid interprets the *te'amim* more broadly, referring to them as an aspect of language that comes from the *sefirah hokhmah*. This association of the *te'amim* with *hokhmah* allows the Maggid to use them to represent the meaning hidden within a letter or word.[758] Invoking the tripartite homonym of *ta'am* as "taste" and "reason" in addition to "meaning", he refers to the *te'amim* as the very essence and root of language.[759] This homiletical interpretation of the term, however, seems to leave behind the actual notation system.

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[755] It is worth noting that the Maggid's teachings on language share an important element in common with the phenomenon described by Michael J. Reddy in his article 'The Conduit Metaphor: A Case of Frame Conflict in our Language About Language', *Metaphor and Thought* 2 (1979), pp. 164-201.Taking English as a case study, Reddy demonstrated that the ways in which we think about language are formed by the semantics of our native language itself. English describes communication as an act in which meaning is projected into words, which must then be unpacked and recovered by the listener. This linguistic fact informs the way English-speakers think about the notion of language more broadly. Reddy sees the conduit metaphor as a source of miscommunication and interpersonal strife, the frustrating result when the speaker and listener disagree as to the meaning of a word or phrase. But in the teachings of the Maggid, this metaphor is used to describe language's greatest potential: words are a vessel in which we communicate ideas that exist beyond the boundaries of spoken words.

[756] See *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #83, pp. 171-172; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 63-65, traces the idea that "vowels of the Torah within the consonants are comparable to the soul of life in the body of man," which also appears in the Bahir, to R. Judah ha-Levi, *Kuzari* 4:3. See also Zohar 1:4a, 12b, 15b; *Pardes Rimmonim* 29:5; *Ets Hayyim* 5:1-5, 8:1. See Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, pp. 3, 7-8, 24, 42; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Biblical Accentuation in a Mystical Key: Kabbalistic Interpretations of the *Te'amim*', *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy* 11 (1988-1989), pp. 1-16; and part two in *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy* 12 (1989-1990), pp. 1-13. See also Annett Martini, 'Seven Mystical Poems on the Hebrew Vowels as Interpreted by Yosef Giqatilla and Mordekhay Dato', *European Journal of Jewish Studies* 5.2 (2011), pp. 205-218.

[757] LY #238, p. 69a, with a parallel in OT #449, *aggadot*, p. 463.

[758] MDL #130, p. 223.

[759] MDL #87, pp. 150-151; ibid, #100, p. 176-177.

The *nequdot* also provide the letters with vitality. They show the reader how to parse and pronounce otherwise ambiguous words.[760] Like the *te'amim*, the Maggid often describes the *nequdot* as representing ideas and semantic "points" held within the words.[761] Of course an individual *nequdah*, like an individual letter, has no semantic content. The *nequdot* also embody an aspect of *gevurah*, the divine attribute associated with strength as well as restraint; *nequdot* limit the ways in which a word may be understood.[762] In some teachings the Maggid draws a clear distinction between the *te'amim* and *nequdot*, explaining that the *te'amim* are *hokhmah* and the *nequdot* are *binah*, respectively corresponding to the *yod* and the first *heh* of Y-H-V-H.[763] But in other homilies the *te'amim* and *nequdot* appear interchangeably.[764] Together these two aspects of language control the letters, for both of them give words meaning and guide the manner in which they may be interpreted.[765] In fact, in several teachings the Maggid describes the *te'amim* as bringing salvation to the letters, delivering them from their inanimate state.[766]

All letters are formed by means of one of the "five places of articulation" (*hamishah motsa'ot ha-peh*), the different physical regions of speech: throat, lips, teeth,

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[760] MDL #189, pp. 292-293

[761] MDL #130, p. 223; #189, pp. 292-3; #192, p. 302.

[762] MDL #158, p. 256.

[763] MDL #158, p. 256.

[764] MDL #189, p. 292.

[765] LY #132, fol. 38b-39a. See *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 18, fol. 34b; MDL #158, p. 256.

[766] Abraham Kahn suggests that the Maggid is using the letters as a symbol for *shekhinah* and *tif'eret/ze'ir anpin*, which long to be redeemed and united with *hokhmah* and *binah*, or the *te'amim* and *nekudot*; MDL, ed. Kahn, #180, fol. 61a-b n. 187.

tongue, and palate.[767] Once pronounced, the letters are combined with one another in order to form words. The result of this process is generally referred to as *dibbur*, or the realm of articulated speech. At times the Maggid uses *dibbur* to describe humanity's capacity for spoken language, invested within them by the Divine, but the term may also refer to specific words and speech acts (*dibburim*). In classical Kabbalah, *dibbur* is associated with the final *sefirah malkhut* or *shekinah*.[768] The five positions of the mouth are identified with the second *heh* of Y-H-V-H,[769] the letter of the divine name that has long been associated with *shekhinah*.[770] This *sefirah* is both the conduit through which the divine Presence is manifest in the world, as well as the initial access point through which the contemplative begins his journey through the *sefirot* to the *Ein Sof*.

Dibbur is animated by *qol* ("voice"), or the most basic form of vocalized sound.[771] *Qol* is primarily characterized by potential, for this type of voice is abstract and unformed in comparison to the articulated speech of *dibbur*.[772] But it is a physical sound that cannot yet be understood by another person. *Qol* must be shaped into letters and words before it can convey meaning:

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[767] See *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:6. LY #264, fol. 81b-82a, gives only four true places of articulation, explaining that the fifth is the nearly-silent *aleph* which is present in all articulated words.

[768] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah aheret*, fol. 17a; *Pardes Rimmonim* 23:7. This association is already suggested by the rabbinic locution *'al pi* or *mi-pi ha-dibbur*; b. Hullin 5a; *Tanhuma*, ed. Buber, naso #22.

[769] The letter *heh* has a numerical value of five.

[770] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol. 2a, 6b.

[771] See Zohar 1:74a. On the term *qol* in earlier Kabbalah, see Mopsik, 'Pensée, Voix et Parole dans le Zohar', pp. 385-414; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'God, the Demiurge and the Intellect: On the Usage of the Word "Kol" in Abraham Ibn Ezra', *Revue des Etudes Juives* 149.1-3 (1990), pp. 77-111. See also Yadin, '*Kol* as Hypostasis', pp. 601-626; Jakob J. Petuchowski, '*Qol Adonai*: A Study in Rabbinic Theology', *Studies in Modern Theology and Prayer*, ed. E.R. Petuchowski and A.M. Petuchowski, Philadelphia 1998, pp. 37-45.

[772] As we will see in our discussion of prayer, *qol* and its relationship to *dibbur* play a crucial rule in that area of divine service as well. See below, pp. 498-500.

> *Qol* is simply a voice. *Dibbur* reveals, for *dibbur* gives the detail and provides explanations for the general [and abstract]. Now if, for example, *qol* were not joined to *dibbur*, the *dibbur* would never become audible. But if there was no *dibbur*, [the *qol*] would remain impossible to understand.[773]

Qol and *dibbur* depend upon one another in several ways. *Dibbur* can express nothing without *qol*, for the latter is the physical energy that allows *dibbur* to become voiced. The Maggid describes the process through which *qol* becomes pronounced as words as *tsimtsum* ("focusing").[774] Elsewhere we find it referred to as *haqiqah*, or "hewing," words out of the raw and unarticulated *qol*.[775] But *qol* requires *dibbur* as well, for its hidden potential can only be realized as it is broken down into letters and shaped into words by the five places of articulation.

In classical Kabbalah, *qol* represents the *sefirah tif'eret*, as well as the *vav* of the name Y-H-V-H.[776] Thus joining *qol* and *dibbur* accomplishes an act of unification on several levels, within the realm of the divine as well as within the speaker himself. Bringing together *qol* and *dibbur* unites the letters *vav* and *heh* of the sacred name, and joins *tif'eret* and *shekhinah*, the masculine and feminine elements of the Godhead, in a state of sacred communion.[777] For this reason the Maggid often emphasizes the importance of uniting *qol* and *dibbur*, and underscores the great dangers of trying to separate between these two regions.[778]

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[773] LY #241, fol. 71b-72a. Cf. JER NLI MS HEB 8°5198, fol. 35a.

[774] MDL #62, p. 102.

[775] LY #271, fol. 89b. See also *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:6; Zohar 2:66b.

[776] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 21, fol. 48a. Cf. LY #269, fol. 88a.

[777] LY #131, fol. 37a; OT #386, *aggadot*, p. 411; MDL #59, p. 88.

[778] *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *va-yetse*, p. 144.

Together *qol* and *dibbur* comprise the physical aspects of speech, and both are sustained and nourished by the deeper cognitive elements of language.[779] In fact, the spoken word and the various processes of intellection are intimately linked in the Maggid's theology. Much of the divine service incumbent upon the *tsaddiq* involves properly aligning these two realms. The *tsaddiq* is called upon to ensure that his thoughts are trained upon nothing but the words and letters that he articulating, thus connecting the physical elements of his speech (*qol* and *dibbur*) with the contemplative realm of his mind. As we shall see, this type of alignment allows the *tsaddiq* to raise up his language and return it to its source in God.

But these teachings gives rise to several related questions of great importance. First, how are thoughts translated into spoken language? Does an idea first appear without any words, which are only necessary when one wishes to convey it to another person? Or are ideas themselves defined by the structures of language? And, by extension, do all processes of cognition take place by means of words, or are some aspects of intellection and contemplation beyond language? These questions, familiar to any student of the philosophy of language, will be the subject of our attention shortly.

The pair of *dibbur* and *qol* is complemented by a second dyad found throughout the Maggid's teachings: *'olam ha-dibbur* ("the World of Speech") and *'olam ha-mahshavah* ("the World of Thought").[780] *'Olam ha-dibbur*, which refers to the entire

[779] MDL #93, p. 161; OT #92, *be-shalah*, p. 128.

[780] For an overview of these concepts, see Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 204-214. For some possible precedents for the Maggid's phrase *'olam ha-dibbur*, which is quite rare in Jewish literature, see Kuzari IV:25; *Zohar Hadash*, *yitro*, fol. 34a; Rabbenu Bahye's comments to Ex. 25:9; *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *ta'anit*, *ner mitsvah*; ibid, *parashat terumah*, *or torah*. Idel, 'Models of Understanding Prayer', p. 43 n. 111, notes that '*olam ha-dibbur* and *'olam ha-mahshavah* do not appear in the teachings of the BeSHT, and represent an important part of the Maggid's development of his master's thought. See also *Liqqutei Moharan* I:178.

realm of spoken language, is associated with *shekhinah*. But in this case, instead of longing for a connection to *qol*, *'olam ha-dibbur* must be unified with *'olam mahshavah*, which represents the *sefirah binah*. These two worlds are intimately related, for language exists in the form of letters even within the abstract realm of *binah*, although they are not necessarily expressed in concrete form. The Maggid underscores with great frequency that there can be no speech acts without thought.[781] In part he means this as a description of the fact that spoken language generally expresses an idea that first emerged through cognition. However, the Maggid also intends it to be a prescriptive instruction: the mystic must constantly seek to unite the World of Speech and the World of Thought, thereby establishing a connection between *shekhinah* and *binah*.[782]

The unification of *'olam ha-dibbur* and *'olam ha-mahshavah* is different than that of *qol* and *dibbur*, both in terms of kabbalistic symbolism and phenomenology. Connecting *qol* and *dibbur* brings together masculine and feminine elements of the Divine, linking the letters *vav* and *heh* of the name Y-H-V-H. The speaker is called upon to unite his spoken words with the physical sensation of the sound as it is reverberating within him, being intensely mindful of both of these elements of his language. By contrast, *binah* and *shekhinah* are both symbols for the divine feminine.[783] *Binah* is the divine mother, the source of the lower seven *sefirot*, and *shekhinah* the feminine divine Presence that has been exiled within the fractured world. *Shekhinah* must be repaired so

[781] For example, see MDL #50, p. 70-71.

[782] MDL #34, p. 53.

[783] See Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 358-359; idem, '*Tiqqun ha-Shekhinah*: Redemption and the Overcoming of Gender Dimorphism in the Messianic Kabbalah of Moses Hayyim Luzzatto', *History of Religions* 36 (1997), pp. 289-332; and see also Nitsa Kann, 'Yichud Rachel and Leah: Same-Sex Kabbalistic/Poetic Hermeneutics', *Women in Judaism: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 8.2 (2012), 23 pp., unpaginated.

that its bond with *binah* can be restored, creating a balance between these two feminine elements. This union also brings together the first *heh* (*binah*) with the lower *heh* of the sacred name Y-H-V-H. The two realms of *'olam ha-dibbur* and *'olam ha-mahshavah* become linked when the oral elements of spoken language are aligned with the realm of cognition and contemplation within the speaker's mind.[784]

Let us begin to explore the relationship between thought and language in greater depth.[785] The Maggid often refers to the "letters of thought" (*otiyyot ha-mahshavah*), which first appear in the *sefirah binah*. Of course, cognition and intellection are purely internal processes, which the Maggid describes as taking place within the "heart."[786] Although spoken language is associated with the lower *sefirot*, the letters themselves are already present in some form in the higher realm of thought. In one of the Maggid's sermons, we read:

> It is known that all twenty-two letters and the five places of articulation exist in thought, which is the root of all the letters. One cannot speak anything aloud without thinking of it first. If he does bring forth a word without any thought, it will lack understanding, wisdom and intelligence. Thus thought is the root of all the worlds, which were revealed through speech.[787]

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[784] The Maggid often invokes the kabbalistic symbols associated with the biblical characters of Rachel and Leah in his descriptions of the bond between cognition and speech. Leah represents *binah*, the letters of thought and *'olam ha-mahshavah* (see Zohar 2:126b). Rachel, on the other hand, is associated with *malkhut*, the letters of speech *'olam ha-dibbur*. The two must be united together; see MDL #59, p. 88; and *Orah le-Hayyim*, *va-yetse*, p. 150.

[785] This question of whether all cognition takes place by means of language, or if there are some processes of intellection that happen beyond the structures of words, has been the subject of scientific and philosophical debate for a very long time. For two different positions, see Jerry A. Fodor, *The Language of Thought*, Cambridge, Mass. 1975; John R. Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science*, Cambridge, Mass. 1984. See also Dan I. Slobin, 'From "Thought and Language" to "Thinking for Speaking"', *Rethinking Linguistic Relativity* 17 (1996), pp. 70-96. See also Steven T. Katz, 'Language, Epistemology and Mysticism', pp. 22-74; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 289.

[786] See Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects', pp. 171-173.

[787] LY # 264, fol. 80b-81a, with parallels in OT #203, *tehilim*, p. 266; and OHE, fol. 74a.

The Maggid believes that the letters are somehow present within the mind in a recognizable way, although they do not become fully disclosed until they are expressed in the medium of language. The Maggid claims that the five places of articulation are also included as potential in thought. This is quite strange, given that this is essentially a phonological concept. However, the broader point that spoken words simply manifest the linguistic formations that are already present in the mind appears in the Maggid's teachings with great frequency:

> This is a great principle: every word, before it is stirred from thought by the five positions of the mouth, must exist in his thought beforehand. It is truly hidden there, since one can only speak the words that were there in his mind first. Everything that a person thinks in his mind is also by means of the combinations of letters[788]

The mind holds the seeds of spoken language in the form of the letters, and indeed, articulated words are simply the concrete expression of something that has already arisen in thought.[789]

The structures of the mind, and the letters it holds, drive all spoken language by imbuing it with both energy and meaning.[790] Of course, in rare instances a person may speak about one thing while his thoughts are totally devoted to something else. However, the Maggid suggests that even in this case the matter of which he is speaking must be hidden deep within his mind, for otherwise it would simply be impossible for him to articulate it.[791] In a few teachings the Maggid goes so far as to describe the letters of

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[788] LY #221, fol. 65b-66a; cf. OT #146, *balaq*, p. 198, with a parallel in OHE, fol. 37a.

[789] See also MDL #50, p. 71.

[790] OT #245, *tehilim*, p. 299

[791] OHE, fol. 62a. Although the Maggid does not invoke *qadmut ha-sekhel* in this context, this teaching may also allude to what psychologists refer to as the unconscious; see below.

thought as their own type of speech (*dibbur*), but he immediately distinguishes it from articulated oral language.[792]

Binah, the realm of active thought, is described as the "parent" of *qol* and *dibbur*,[793] the source from which all articulated speech flows forth.[794] As noted above, the Maggid often describes the quest to unite the World of Speech and the World of Thought (*malkhut* and *binah*, or the two *heh*'s of the name Y-H-V-H) as a crucial element of religious service. The fact that both *binah* and *malkhut* are defined by language, albeit of very different kinds, is precisely what allows this bond to take place.[795] Indeed, it is these letters of thought that allow the more ethereal, spiritual world of *binah* to connect to the more concrete realm of spoken words, which in many respects is more similar to physical action than it is to thought.[796]

But if thought takes place in letters, how does the realm of the mind differ from spoken language? The Maggid often reiterates that the mind is far more dynamic and powerful than articulated words. Something that would take five hundred years to accomplish in the physical world can be accomplished in a single moment within the mind.[797] He claims that although one may intellectually grasp an idea in a very short period of time, it may then take many hours to find the correct verbal formulation. Thus

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[792] MDL #171, pp. 269-270. In one very interesting teaching the Maggid describes Leah as a symbol for the letters of "inner speech" (*dibbur penimi*), while Rachel represents the letters of external speech, which are connected to deeds; see KTVQ, fol. 21b. Maimonides describes inner speech, which seems to precede external language. See Israel Efros, *Maimonides' Treatise on Logic*, New York 1938, p. 61; Josef Stern, 'Maimonides' Epistemology', *The Cambridge Companion to Maimonides*, ed. K. Seeskin, Cambridge 2005, pp. 125-126. See Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy: The History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, Dordrecht 2001, p. 624.

[793] MDL #59, p. 88-89.

[794] See the Maggid's description in LY #271, fol. 89b.

[795] See MDL #47, p. 69

[796] OT #464, *aggadot*, p. 475

[797] MDL #135, p. 236.

thought is governed by a very different rubric of time, at least relative to the realm of spoken words.[798] But thoughts possess a type of creative power similar to that of articulated language; negative thoughts can form angels of destruction, even if they are never translated into physical actions.[799] Permanent *devequt* can only be achieved by keeping one's mind constantly trained upon God, and never being distracted by lust and the temptations of this world.[800]

The Maggid also describes *binah* as the seat of mystical contemplation. The mind creates a dwelling place for God, for the divine Presence is drawn into the structures of one's thoughts.[801] This happens when one thinks of something positive, but it is just as true if he contemplates negative and destructive things.[802] Invoking a notion found in the teachings of the BeSHT, the Maggid explains that one is truly present in the place upon which his mind is focused.[803] Thus it is possible for a person's body to be in one location and for his faculties of contemplation and consciousness to be trained somewhere else entirely.[804]

The Maggid often refers to the importance of lifting up all words, thoughts and emotions in the mind and returning them to their source in the *sefirah binah*.[805] For example, if one experiences a thought of pride (*tif'eret*), which the Maggid often refers to as a "world." The same is true of a thought of love (*ahavah* or *hesed*), even if it is only

[798] OT #245, *tehilim*, p. 298.

[799] MDL #151-152, pp. 250-251.

[800] MDL #49, p. 70.

[801] MDL #1, pp. 11-12.

[802] See MDL #28, p. 46; MDL #62, p. 99.

[803] MDL #28, p. 46; MDL #142, p. 240.

[804] See also *Guide* III:51.

[805] MDL #173, p. 273.

one of longing or affection for things of this world. All thoughts must be traced back to their source in *binah*, where no emotions or ideas are expressed in fallen or debased forms.[806] Once returned to *binah* the contemplative may transform his thoughts into something more elevated and ennobled.[807] The letters of thought are limbs of the *shekhinah*, holy sparks that have fallen into the "husks" (*qelippot*) formed during the cosmic "shattering of the vessels" (*shevirat ha-kelim*). These letters must be uplifted and repaired through the process of contemplation.[808] We will have more to say about the process of uplifting errant thoughts in *binah*, related to the common Hasidic notion of "sweetening the harsh judgments" (*hamtaqat ha-dinim*), in our discussion of the Maggid's teachings about prayer.

Thus far our discussion has focused primarily on the nature of language in *binah*. While it is a region of the mind characterized by dynamism, flexibility, and contemplative power, *binah* is still governed by the letters of thought and is thus restricted by the structures of language. But in the Maggid's teachings there lies an even more fertile realm of abstract cognition beyond *binah*. He refers to this region as *hokhmah*, the source of the energy that flows into *binah, qol* and *dibbur*.[809] Indeed, all of the various intellectual processes that eventually lead to articulated speech begin in *hokhmah*,[810] but the contemplative journey moves in the opposite direction as well. After one moves through *dibbur* and *qol* and has arrived in *binah*, he may then reach even

[806] MDL #50, p. 72.

[807] MDL #25, pp. 40-41

[808] MDL #29, p. 49.

[809] See MDL #56, p. 83; MDL #59, p. 88.

[810] See MDL #60, p. 95

further into the depths of *hokhmah*.[811] However, we shall see that the nature of words and letters is much more ambiguous in this realm, and it is in his discussions of *hokhmah* that the Maggid's relationship to language is most complicated.

THE BOUNDARIES OF LANGUAGE

The Maggid was a deeply introspective mystical theologian. He held a positive view of the divine origins of language, and, as we shall see, he believed in the possibility of communicating subtle spiritual teachings through the medium of words. The processes of cognition and intellection are accomplished through letters, and connecting the various elements of language—whether *qol* with *dibbur*, or *'olam ha-dibbur* with *'olam ha-mahshavah*—is a central part of the mystic quest. However, the Maggid also seems to have been aware of the power of contemplative silence, and on more than one occasion he describes religious experiences that happen outside of the framework of language.[812] In one particularly striking formulation, he refers to reaching a place "above the letters, in which everything is spirit."[813]

The letters of thought first appear in *binah*, where active intellection takes place. *Hokhmah*, however, represents a deeper and more abstract region of cognition and

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[811] MDL #28, p. 46.

[812] Ambivalence toward language and an embrace of silence is a well-documented phenomenon in a great many religious traditions. For a few seminal and illustrative studies, see Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, Chapel Hill 1975, pp. 172, 255, 307, 407-408; James A. Jaksa and Ernest L. Stech, 'Communication to Enhance Silence: The Trappist Experience', *Journal of Communication* 28 (1978), pp. 14-18; Peter Ehrenhaus, 'Silence and Symbolic Expression', *Communications Monographs* 55.1 (1988), pp. 41-57; Fred Rieman, 'On Linguistic Skepticism in Wittgenstein and Kung-sun Lung', *Philosophy East and West*, 27 (1977), pp. 183-193; George Steiner, *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman*, New York 1977. Within the Jewish context, see Andrew Vogel Ettin, *Speaking Silences: Stillness and Voice in Modern Thought and Jewish Tradition*, Charlottesville 1994; S. Daniel Breslauer, 'Silence and Language in Hasidism: Martin Buber's View', *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 9 (1991), pp. 16-28; Goshen-Gottstein, 'Speech, Silence, Song', pp. 143-187.

[813] OT #197, *shir ha-shirim*, pp. 256-257.

contemplation. The power and potential of *hokhmah* animate and inhere within the letters of thought, but *hokhmah* is not bound to their structures.[814] This suggests that *hokhmah* may be embodied in language, but in its purest and most abstract form it cannot ever be articulated through words.[815] In *hokhmah* all things exist in total unity, without any differentiation and distinction, and thus specific combinations of letters are only discernible as they enter *binah*.[816]

In a number of sermons the Maggid refers to a region of the mind that he calls *qadmut ha-sekhel*, or the pre-intellect.[817] *Qadmut ha-sekhel* (alt. *qidmat ha-sekhel*) is described as a bubbling fountain of inspiration, a rushing river from which ideas constantly flow forth.[818] The creative new interpretations of Torah that emerge from *qadmut ha-sekhel* represent one of the lower rungs of prophecy.[819] However, this same dynamism means that *qadmut ha-sekhel* is beyond the understanding of even one's

[814] OT #61, *va-yehi*, pp. 84-85; and cf. MDL #59, 87-89.

[815] MDL #131, p. 226; MDL #97, p. 171.

[816] MDL #116, p. 189.

[817] Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects', p. 166, identifies *qadmut ha-sekhel* as one of the Maggid's most original ideas, and a prime example of the manner in which the Maggid blends the language of the *sefirot* together with descriptions of spiritual processes of intellection and the inner workings of the human psyche He argues that the Maggid's understanding of *qadmut ha-sekhel* bears obvious similarity to theories of the unconscious found in psychoanalytic literature. However, instead of a wild and chaotic realm of sexual impulse, for the Maggid *qadmut ha-sekhel* is world of infinite divine potential. As Hurwitz notes, in this way the Maggid's description of the pre-intellect is similar to that of Jung, for whom the depths of the human psyche represented a dynamic font of new ideas. See also Sherry Salman, 'The Creative Psyche: Jung's Major Contributions', *Cambridge Companion to Jung*, Cambridge and New York 2008, pp. 57-76; Margolin, *Inner Religion*, pp. 280-283 In addition to the sources cited by Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects', pp. 149-240, *qadmut ha-sekhel* also appears in *Hayyim va-Hesed*, *tehilim*, p. 115; *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *hannukah*, p. 41. However, it is interesting to note that at least one of the Maggid's disciples understood *qadmut ha-sekhel* as associated with *binah*; for such a tradition in the Maggid's name, see *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *va-yiggash*, p. 184.

[818] See MDL #94, p. 162; Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects', pp. 176-178.

[819] *Or ha-Me'ir, qorah*, pp. 109-110; cf. ibid, *rosh ha-shanah*, p. 257. See Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects', pp. 229-239.

conscious self.[820] And the realm of *qadmut ha-sekhel* can only be reached by divesting oneself of all attachment to the physical world, to such a great degree that he loses all awareness of the self

A few of the Maggid's teachings on *qadmut ha-sekhel* will shed particular light on our discussion of language. In one sermon we read:

> *Hokhmah* is also called a garment and a [limited] attributed(*middah*) of the *Ein Sof*... The difference between *hokhmah* and the other attributes (*middot*) is that since they are bound by time, they cannot receive and give at the same moment. This is not true of *hokhmah*, which is the primeval matter (*homer ha-rishon*) that [continuously] loses its form and dons [another one]. It never stays the same. Without any cessation, it is constantly giving [energy] to what is below it and receives from that which is above it, like the instantaneous blink of an eye. This cannot be grasped (*ein yekholim la-'amod 'alav*).
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> For example, the letters of thought [i.e., *binah*] flow without interruption from *qadmut ha-sekhel*, meaning *hokhmah*. Different letters stream forth from *qadmut ha-sekhel* at each moment, as it is stripped [of their form] and passes them on to [the realm of] thought. [*Qadmut ha-sekhel*] is then embodied in other [letters], giving them to thought [as well]. [*Hokhmah*] itself cannot be grasped.[821]

The Maggid associates *qadmut ha-sekhel* with *hokhmah*, a region of the mind that is characterized by constant motion and dynamic change.[822] *Qadmut ha-sekhel* is a reservoir from which the individual letters of thought flow into *binah* and join together, but *hokhmah*'s own energy remain in a static form for even a moment. Yet it would be too simplistic to say that *hokhmah* is completely beyond language. *Qadmut ha-sekhel* has letters as well, even though they are constantly being rearranged. *Hokhmah* thus functions

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[820] MDL #93, p. 161; Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects', pp. 175-176.

[821] OT #43, *va-yetse*, p. 57, with a parallel in OHE, fol. 45a-b. See Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects', pp. 196-198.

[822] This teaching is a good example of the way in which the Maggid uses the vocabulary of the *sefirot* to describe the processes of the human mind as well as those of the Godhead.

as an intermediary stage between a truly super-linguistic realm, perhaps the *sefirah keter,* and the relatively concrete world of *binah*.[823]

This teaching reveals an interesting subtlety in the Maggid's theology of language. The letters themselves seem to exist in some form in *qadmut ha-sekhel*, but *hokhmah* is also described as a concentrated and undifferentiated form of energy that only takes on real structure as it enters *binah*. *Qadmut ha-sekhel* is the origin of the letters, and the Maggid refers to them as an ever-changing linguistic "garment" for the vitality of *hokhmah*. The dynamic realm of *qadmut ha-sekhel* is thus the reservoir of unformed potential for all specific language, and it is the source from which the energy that animates words and letters flows into *binah* and *qol*, eventually becoming articulated through *dibbur*.[824]

Identifying *qadmut ha-sekhel* as an essentially pre-linguistic realm of human consciousness that cannot be understood, but may perhaps be experienced, leads us to question the role of silence in the Maggid's spiritual path. A small but significant number of his homilies underscore the tremendous value of quiet in cultivating the contemplative life.[825] In some cases this quiet is simply a reaction to the ineffability of the divine Presence. How can one possibly speak, the Maggid asks, when he has a direct encounter with the God that both surrounds and fills all the worlds?[826] Several of his homilies explore the ways in which silence can allow one to reach an even higher realm than that achieved in mystical contemplation of the letters:

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[823] See MDL #77, p. 132.

[824] According to R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, however, there are letters even in *qadmut ha-sekhel*; see *Torah Or*, *megillat esther*, p. 91b; cf. *Liqqutei Torah*, *be-huqqotai*, p. 46b; *va-yiqra*, 54a

[825] In addition to the sources quoted below, see LY #173, p. 56a; and ST, p. 61a.

[826] OT #382, *pesuqim*, pp. 408-409.

> "Silence is a fence for wisdom..."[827] "A fence for wisdom" means a boundary. When one is silent, he does not arrive at *hokhmah* or *binah*, for he arrives at a level that is even higher than *hokhmah*. He receives something that is above him. When he is giving, he cannot receive, since that which is busy giving forth cannot absorb at the same time.[828] This is the meaning of "silence is a fence for wisdom." When the mind rises above, it ascends farther and farther to his very root, and the mind is strengthened...[829]

Silence is necessary for creating the proper contemplative space, for someone who is busy talking cannot absorb new energy and inspiration from the deeper realms of his own mind the same time.[830] A similar passage preserved in a different collection of the Maggid's teachings explicitly says that meditative silence is even greater than uttering words of Torah.[831] Of course, simply refraining from speaking is different than transcending language internally; in teachings such as these the Maggid describes silence as a means to an end, not an independent spiritual goal.

Thus it would seem that some of the Maggid's homilies portray language, even holy speech, as conflicting with the ultimate goal of contemplative meditation. R. Ze'ev Wolf recalls a tradition from his teacher that confirms this point:

> "Extol Y-H-V-H with me" (Ps. 34:4). His [King David's] attribute was *malkhut*, the World of Speech. The Maggid used to say that whenever a person is consumed with bringing forth a word, his mind is not free to think about anything, since that which is busy giving forth cannot absorb. King David alluded to this, teaching the holy people Israel to "extol Y-H-V-H," referring to the World of Thought—make it great and expand it. But through what means can you expand the

[827] m. Avot 3:13

[828] b. Hullin 8b

[829] OT #478, *aggadot*, p. 481, with a parallel in OHE, fol. 33b.

[830] LY #190, p. 58a, includes a variant of this teaching in which the Maggid says that silence allows one to arrive at *hokhmah*, also called *mahshavah*.

[831] TSVHR #133, p. 25a.

> World of Thought? "With me," meaning with my [i.e., King David's] attribute. I represent the World of Speech as it is when one refrains from speaking out loud. By means of this [internalizing of speech], the World of Thought is expanded and empowered.[832]

This teaching does not describe speech and thought as being in seamless continuity with one another, as they appear to be in many of the Maggid's homilies. Rather, this sermon makes the claim that one who is engrossed in speaking cannot truly connect to the depths of his own mind, because the focus of his efforts is trained elsewhere. The Maggid suggests that in order to expand and develop the World of Thought, one must direct his faculty for speech *inward* and thereby unite *malkhut* with *binah* within his own mind. The result is a meditative journey in which no linguistic energy is expended externally.[833]

These homilies are complemented by an interesting tradition from another of the Maggid's students:

> We received [the following] from our teacher and master [the Maggid]: Sometimes the *tsaddiq* is connected to the upper worlds in his mind, and cannot open his mouth to share a teaching (*halakhah*) with them, descending from his level to them. Therefore, they must prepare the way and open the channel [of communication] with things like their questions.[834]

There are times in which a *tsaddiq*'s contemplative rapture is so great that he cannot speak to the people who surround him, even his disciples. However, the words of his

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[832] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *ruth*, p. 37; cf. OHE, fol. 5a. The phrase "that which is busy giving forth cannot absorb" (based on b. Hullin 8b) is quoted several other times in *Or ha-Me'ir* without connection to the Maggid. However, it is interesting to note that in the next paragraph, R. Ze'ev Wolf exclaims that he does not agree with this view, and argues that one cannot simply live in the World of Thought alone. I hope to devote a future study to the philosophy of language and ambivalence toward silence in this work.

[833] See Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'Contemplative Prayer', pp. 221-222.

[834] See *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *liqqutim*, p. 219. He cites a tradition from his unnamed *Admor*, which could also refer to R. Israel's other teacher, namely R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk. However, R. Israel refers to the Maggid as the *Admor* elsewhere in this book, and frequently cites R. Elimelekh by name, so there is no reason to doubt that this passage refers to the Maggid himself. See *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *noah*, p. 8.

students can break through his web of silence. They draw their teacher out of his silent meditation by stimulating him and forcing him to engage with their questions.

Perhaps there is an autobiographical element reflected in this teaching as well. Might this citation, which describes a spiritual master who is totally engrossed in his own meditation, reveal the Maggid's ambivalence about his own call to become a public leader and teacher? He was employed as a *maggid*, the official preacher for several communities, and dozens of close students gathered around R. Dov Baer in Mezritch. Evidence suggests that he sent out disciples to bring people to study with him, implying that the Maggid was actively involved in developing this inner circle of disciples. But the Maggid was an intensely introspective mystic, even after having met the more ecstatic and extroverted BeSHT, and the pressures of his role as a teacher must surely have conflicted with some of his religious instincts.[835]

Being compelled to speak to others distracts the contemplative from the task of uniting his own inner worlds; directing his language outward interferes with the process of returning *dibbur* to its origin in *binah*.[836] Yet the Maggid underscores the value of silence and solitude for another reason as well: some experiences of religious life necessarily take place outside of the framework of language. Let us examine a remarkable teaching that both describes how one should meditate and provides a visual aid:

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[835] See Pedaya, 'Outlines for a Religious Typology', pp. 25-73; and idem, 'Two Types of Ecstatic Experience in Hasidism', pp. 73-108.

[836] See also LY #13, fol. 3a. Employing solitude and solitary meditation as a mystical practices has a long history in Jewish mysticism; see Moshe Idel, '*Hitbodedut* as Concentration in Ecstatic Kabbalah', *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. Arthur Green, New York 1986, pp. 405-438; Paul Fenton, 'Solitary Meditation in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism in the Light of a Recent Archeological Discovery', *Medieval Encounters* 1.2 (1995), pp. 271-296; Gitit Holzman, 'Seclusion, Knowledge and Conjunction in the Thought of R. Moshe Narboni', *Kabbalah* 7 (2002), pp. 111-173 [Hebrew].

> When one is connecting himself [to the Divine], he should begin from the World of Action (*'olam ha-'asiyyah*). He should then ascend in his mind higher and higher, and then higher still, until he arrives at the world of the angels and *ofanim*, and then at the world of Creation (*'olam ha-beriyyah*), until he feels in his mind (*yargish be-mahshavto*) that in his thought he has ascended all the way to the World of Emanation (*'olam ha-atsilut*). This is what the Zohar calls thought without any deed.[837]
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> He must be careful not to fall from his exalted thought in the highest worlds and descend below. He should resolve to remain above in his thoughts with all of his might, as it is written, "Be not like a senseless horse or mule whose movement must be curbed by bit and bridle" (Ps. 32:9).[838] He must make a barrier, so as not to fall. When he is connected to such a great degree, he will be strong no matter what comes up in his thoughts, for he is connected to the blessed One and knows that He is the source of all.
>
> In his mind he must resolve that in his thoughts he will ascend on high to the worlds above. Just as a person walks from room to room, so should he walk through the worlds above in his mind. Nobody can be in the house with him when he wishes to connect, since even the chirping birds can nullify it. So too can the thought of another nullify it.[839]

This meditative exercise includes some very interesting visual elements. Of course, there is no direct visionary encounter with an image of the Divine, and indeed there is nothing of this sort anywhere in the Maggid's corpus. But the fact that this teaching makes no mention of letters or language of any kind is quite remarkable. *Mahshavah* usually refers to *binah*, but here it simply seems to refer to one's contemplative faculty more broadly.

The Maggid's description of *histaklut*, a type of contemplation with a strong visual connotation of gazing, will offer another perceptive on his understanding of the

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[837] Zohar 2:226b.

[838] I.e., the mystic must not be like the horse whose movements can be directed against its will.

[839] LY #175, fol. 56a-56b. For another remarkable passage with a visualization technique of moving through the four worlds, see OT #224, *tehilim*, 283-284.

limits of language.[840] In the Maggid's sermons *histaklut* often refers to the mystical power in gazing upon physical objects with the correct contemplative intentions, for this connects that object to its root in the Divine.[841] Looking at something can even bring forth change from the primeval Will and transform the object, since *histaklut* links it directly to *hokhmah*.[842] The opposite is true as well, for gazing at something unfitting will cause great damage, similar to that caused by wasting time reserved for Torah study or eating something forbidden.[843] Of course, *histaklut* is not only about changing the physical world. In one teaching, the Maggid says that looking at the world can invoke an immediate experience of *hokhmah*, in which one's self-awareness totally melts away.[844]

Some of the Maggid's homilies describe the letters of thought as vessels for *histaklut*.[845] However, in another sermon he explicitly contrasts the techniques of letter permutation and contemplation with mystical gazing:

> The world was created in the six days of action, through the word of the blessed One, meaning the letters of Torah. Everything was created from Nothing (*ayin*). But the power of the Maker, which sustains everything, was not yet in the made [and therefore Creation was still incomplete]... When the mixed multitude made the [Golden] Calf, the world would have returned to waste and chaos if [Israel] had not constructed the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle sustained the world after it was made, since it corresponded to the world, as it says in the Zohar, "the covers correspond to the

[840] See also *Guide* II:6.

[841] The Maggid's longest, most fully developed teaching on contemplation is MDL #73, pp. 124-127. See also OT #318, *pesuqim*, p. 366.

[842] MDL #83, pp. 144-146. The Maggid is clearly making use of the homonym *'ayin* ("eye" or "appearance") and *ayin*.

[843] *Tif'eret 'Uziel*, *havayot abaye ve-rava*, p. 193; OT #460, *aggadot*, p. 473. See also OT #206, *tehilim*, pp. 272-274; cf. SLA pp, p. 107-108; and MDL #207, pp. 331-333.

[844] ST, p. 82a.

[845] MDL #59, p. 88.

> firmament."[846] This is the meaning of, "to contemplate the works, doing them" (*la-hashov mahshavot*, *la-'asot*; Ex. 31:4). We have said that Bezalel knew how to combine the letters by which heaven and earth were created.[847] In each thing he made for the Tabernacle he thought about those letters. For example, when he made the covers he thought of the letters with which the heavens were created, and so too with all others.
>
> But only Moses could raise up the Tabernacle, as it says, "see and make it in the pattern that you have seen on the mountain" (Ex 25:40). This means that through looking at this Tabernacle above, from the power of the imprint it leaves in you, you will give vitality to the lower one as you raise it up. For gazing is the lowest level of *hokhmah*.[848] [This type of contemplation can even] create vessels, as it is said, "through gazing the blessed Holy One created the world."[849] [850]

The world was created out of the letters of Torah and divine speech, but it was still unstable until after the Tabernacle was constructed. Since the Tabernacle is a microcosm of the world, only Bezalel, the archetypal practitioner of letter combinations, could erect its structure. However, the Maggid draws a distinction between Bezalel and Moses. The former creates via language, whereas Moses imbues the Tabernacle with life-force through his mystical contemplation alone. *Histaklut* opens a channel for the flow of *hokhmah* into the physical world, the source of which is beyond language. Combining the

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[846] The notion that the Tabernacle is a microcosm of the world is a common one. See Zohar 2:127a, 164b, 213a, 232a, and see below, p. 258-260.

[847] b. Berakhot 55a. See also Zohar 2:152a, 234b, for a passage in which *shekhinah* was created by a flow of letters. Her counterpart, the earthly Tabernacle, was created by words as well. However, Bezalel could not finish the work of erecting the Tabernacle because he was limited to language.

[848] *Ets Hayyim* 4:3.

[849] Cf. Zohar 2:161a.

[850] MDL #90, pp. 156-157; cf. OHE, fol. 36a, for a slightly different version of this homily. In that sermon Moses attains a vision on the mountain through his level of *da'at* ("knowledge"), for "with *da'at* chambers are filled" (Prov. 24:4). The Maggid alludes to Moses's association with the *sefirah da'at*, but also with the vision that takes place within the mind. As noted in the introduction, this coupling of kabbalistic and psychological interpretation is typical of Hasidic teachings. Cf. MDL #21, pp. 34-35; #33, p. 53.

letters and raising them up to the World of Thought, on the other hand, creates a connection between the physical and *binah*.

THE POWER OF WORDS

We have seen that the realm of *hokhmah*, or *qadmut ha-sekhel*, is in some ways beyond language. Some of the Maggid's homilies describe a contemplative realm that transcends even the letters of thought. However, the Maggid frequently underscores the enormous power and positive dimensions of language. The ultimate goal of religious service is not the retreat from all language into the silent, pre-linguistic realms of the mind, but rather the return to the world of letters and words once more, this time bearing new inspiration and illumination.[851] And human beings, like God, affect the world primarily through the medium of language. In one teaching we read:

> The *mussaf* prayer on Shabbat includes *keter*.[852] We raise the World of Speech up to the World of Thought. There the illumination is so great that no distinctions are visible. But according to this, no vitality would remain in this lower world. This world exists because of a divine need,[853] for there can be no king without a people. Therefore we immediately recite, "Where is the place of His glory." "Where" (*ayeh*) refers to the three initial *sefirot*, where there are no divisions. Then we

[851] This element, crucial to understanding the Maggid's theology in all of its complexity, was greatly underemphasized by Schatz-Uffenheimer.

[852] See *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-shabbat*, #20.

[853] LY #224, p. 66b. See also MDL #118, p.192. The notion that the commandments are performed to fulfill a divine need is a central to Jewish mysticism; see the comments of Nahmanides and Rabbenu Bahye on Ex. 29:46; hundreds of instances throughout Me'ir ibn Gabbai's '*Avodat ha-Qodesh*, such as I:18, 28, and II:1; and *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *sha'ar ha-gadol*; trans. in Krassen, *Isaiah Horowitz*, pp. 298-351. See also Rabbenu Bahye's formulation of *shekhinah be-yisra'el tsorekh gavohah* in his comments to Ex. 13:8. More broadly, see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Mystical Rationalization of the Commandments in *Sefer ha-Rimmon'*, *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1988), pp. 223-235; Morris M. Faierstein, 'God's Need for the Commandments in Medieval Kabbalah', *Jewish Customs of Kabbalistic Origin: Their History and Practice*, Boston 2013, pp. 97-114; Arthur Green, 'Abraham Joshua Heschel: Recasting Hasidism for Moderns', *Modern Judaism* 29 (2009), pp. 73-76.

> say, "From His place may He turn in compassion," to bestow his goodness here, since there can be no king without a people.[854]

There is a great risk involved in returning *shekhinah* to *binah*, because silence that allows one to reach the highest rungs also leaves the lower world devoid of energy. Since the world was created in order to fulfill a divine need, it cannot simply be abandoned or even permanently transcended.[855] Silence is the arch of a process that begins with returning language to God, raising up all the letters through the various worlds, and then continues with drawing them back down so that the energy may be revealed through words and actions.[856] They must be raised up, only to be drawn down again, because the original sacred energy with which they were imbued is in need of renewal. This process is described as "restoring" the letters to their divine source.

We have noted that for the Maggid the various stages of language refer to the letter of Y-H-V-H. This means that God's most sacred name is the source of all language, but it also suggests that the process of drawing thoughts into speech also completes the divine name:

> It is known that the four worlds are the Root of Thought (*shoresh ha-mahshavah*), Thought [itself] (*mahshavah*), *qol* and *dibbur*. And it is known that the blessed One fills all the worlds, and surrounds all the worlds; no place is devoid of Him. Therefore one can speak all words, even those that are not words of Torah, since it is known that these [seemingly mundane] utterances are [also] the World of Speech. However, a person who pays no mind to this, thinking that God is above in heaven and he is on earth, is not permitted to speak many words, because he cannot restore them...

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[854] MDL #118, pp. 191-192, with parallels in OT #90, *be-shalah*, p. 126; and OHE, fol. 50b.

[855] *Keter* is often associated with silence; *Liqqutei Torah*, *balaq*, p. 69a.

[856] This point is made at great length in the sermon recorded by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev in ST, pp. 60a-b.

> this is the meaning of the verse, "For God is in heaven and you are on earth; that is why your words should be few" (Eccl. 5:1)—if you think that this is true, you should speak but a little.[857]

There are four realms of language and cognition: *qadmut ha-sekhel*, *mahshavah*, *qol*, and *dibbur*. These are associated with the four primary *sefirot* in the Maggid's theological system, namely *hokhmah*, *binah*, *tif'eret*, and *shekhinah*/*malkhut*. They also refer to the four letters of the name Y-H-V-H. This correspondence between the parts of speech and God's sacred name imbues language and contemplation with tremendous power.

Human speech is an embodiment of the divine Word, and it aligns the *sefirot* and allows energy and vitality to flow all the way from *hokhmah* into *malkhut*. One who does not realize this that language is animated by the divine power, however, should remain quiet. If one believes that God is purely transcendent and has no relationship to human words, his words will only create more separation between the *sefirot* and cast more letters into the fallen "husks." For such a person, silence is the best option. But for those who have cultivated a deeper awareness, language is a way of uniting the element of God that dwells within the human psyche with the transcendent Divine beyond.

In dozens of sermons the Maggid reminds us that language is also a necessary tool for communication. In one such teaching, he uses the difference in spelling between the two names of Sarai and Sarah to suggest that it is not enough for one to spend all of one's time engrossed in contemplation:

> I heard the Maggid explain the [sages'] statement, "Sarai will not give birth; Sarah will give birth."[858] Sarai refers to a person who gazes (*mistakel*) upon *hokhmah*, alluded to by the letter *yod*. He cannot beget others [by] revealing the hidden aspect of Wisdom [to them]. [But] Sarah,

[857] MDL #146, p. 247.

[858] *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:10

> [representing] one who contemplates (*mistakel*) the five places of articulation and speaks, can give birth.[859]

Sarai's name is spelled with a *yod*, which refers to *hokhmah*, suggesting that she is focused only upon connecting to the realms beyond language. In Sarah's name, however, the *yod* has been transformed into a *heh*, which alludes to *dibbur*, or the second *heh* of Y-H-V-H. Sarah is able to share her wisdom with others, thus metaphorically "giving birth" to both students and new ideas. The Maggid's own sermons frequently refer to this same point: thought and intellect cannot be revealed except through articulated speech.[860]

Language is a divine gift, but it demands great responsibility as well. Connecting the different elements of speech and thought unites the *sefirot* and transforms both the divine realms as well as the one who is speaking:

> One should consider that the World of Speech that speaks through him is such a great world. All the worlds were created with it, as it is taught, "'when they were created' (*be-hibaram*, Gen. 2:4)—with the five positions of the mouth" (*be-heh baram*).[861] Through this he can think of the grandeur (*tif'arto*) of God. All the vitality of the worlds is from speech, and speech is the world of awe. As it were, *shekhinah* focuses herself and dwells in the words of his mouth, as it is taught in Sefer Yetsirah, "[the letters] have been imbued within the mouth."[862] If this is true of speech, how much more so is it the case for the World of Thought, and the other sublime lights that have no limit and cannot be grasped (*ein sof ve-heqer*). As one begins to think, he should say in his heart that the World of Speech has been contracted into the mind and dwells[863] within the aspects of

[859] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *va-yera*, p. 25.

[860] See KTVQ, fol. 48b.

[861] Based on *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:2.

[862] *Sefer Yetsirah* 2:6. This brief quote, which in its original context refers to the five positions of articulation, is often invoked in the works of the Maggid's disciples as proof that the divine faculty for language has been imbued within man; see *Sefer ha-Tanya, sha'ar ha-yihud ve'ha-emunah*, ch. 11; *Torah Or*, *mi-qets*, 42b; ibid, *mishpatim*, p. 78a.

[863] According to MDL #152, ed. Kahn, fol. 48a.

> *hokhmah* and *binah*. It is fitting to have awe before such a great world, and not pray for one's physical needs. He should consider that he is an aspect of God above (*heleq elohah mima'al*)...[864] This is what it means to pray with no ulterior motivation (*lishmah*)—for the sake (*le-shem*) of speech [i.e. *heh*], since speech desires to connect to thought. When one thinks with love and awe, voice (*qol*) and speech delight in one another. *Hokhmah* watches this and derives pleasure like a father who derives pleasure from his child. Thought yearns to come into the voice, so that it may also come into speech.[865]

Human thought and speech are embodiments of the divine *sefirot*, and linking them together unites the parts of the Godhead. *Shekhinah*, or *malkhut/dibbur*, yearns to connect to her masculine counterpart of *tif'eret* (*qol*), and together they can then unite with *mahshavah* (*binah*). *Hokhmah*, referred to as the proverbial "father" of the *sefirot*, gazes upon them and delights in the entire process. This mode of unification can only be accomplished through the medium of human speech.

But this passage is not simply a kabbalistic guide to uniting the *sefirot*, as it describes a powerful religious experience as well. The contemplative approach to language begins with the awareness that one's speech is divine, imbued within humanity from the earliest moments of Creation. This leads him to consider God's splendor, and then to realize that if the immanent divine Presence is found in all spoken words, it must also be true that one's intellectual and contemplative faculties are God's attributes embodied within man. This consciousness precipitates an overwhelming sense of wonder, but the awe does not render the contemplative speechless. Indeed, awareness that he is an

[864] Here the Maggid discusses the meaning of prayer for the sake of *shekhinah*, a subject that we shall take up at greater length in chapter 6.

[865] MDL #105, p. 183-184.

element of the Divine changes one's relationship to speech, but it does not force him into silence.

Human beings have an obligation to engage with language, but the Maggid also suggests that God shares a similar responsibility. Several of his teachings describe the fact that God may only be served through His word, which refers to Torah, prayer, the physical world, and indeed all human language:

> It is known that speech is called the attribute of *malkhut*. The reason for this is that the servants of the king can only obey his speech, since they cannot apprehend his thought, and [his] speech [in turn] listens to [his] thought. In the Zohar it is taught regarding the small *aleph* of the word *va-yiqra* ("and He called," Lev. 1:1): "when the king is on his throne, he is called the 'great' king. When he descends to the servants, he is called a 'small' king."[866] This alludes to what we know, that there are letters of thought. They are "great," because they rule over the letters of speech.
>
> The king himself has no need for speech, but for the sake of the recipients [of his beneficence], it was necessary for him to contract himself into a voice (*qol*), and then into speech. Nevertheless, everything is utter oneness, and all is the king alone, only the vessels are differentiated. All of this is because the receivers cannot apprehend the king's thought. And his voice could still not be understood, until he focused himself into speech. The letters of the king's thought are called supernal.... "When he is on his throne" means in his thought. "When he descends" refers to speech, so that his servants might apprehend him, then "he is called the 'small' king."
>
> But if the king had a wise servant who could understand the king's thought, certainly [this servant] would need to obey his thought. This is all the more true [for him], for we see that the king's speech becomes the thought of the servant, who is constantly thinking about how to fulfill the letters of the king's command—how much more [must this happen with the king's] thought![867]

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[866] Zohar 1:239a. I have translated this according to the original passage in the Zohar. MDL reads *kad malka be-qestira* ("fort" or "armor") *dileih*, but the Zohar reads *metal le-malka de-hava yativ be-kurseih ve-kitra de-malkhuta aleih*.

[867] MDL #60, pp. 89-90, with parallels in OT #424, *aggadot*, pp. 438-439; and OHE, fol. 29a-b.

This teaching claims that God is also compelled to speak, in this case for the sake of humanity. Sacred divine energy is translated from thought into voice and speech, or *hokhmah*/*binah* into *tif'eret* and *malkhut*, which represent stages of self-limitation that allow for concrete expression through language in a way that may be perceived by people.[868]

Yet even after the king's thought is contracted into the vessels of language, the Maggid reiterates that "everything is utter oneness; all is the king alone." Letters and words can only hold a finite amount of divine wisdom, thereby mediating the revelation and preventing it from overwhelming the receiver. But the distinction between the different vessels is primarily a matter of appearance, since everything remains one even after the moment of divine self-limitation. This is true in the cosmos and the realm of the *sefirot*, but the Maggid applies it to the individual's mind and speech as well. Elsewhere the Maggid also describes human language as a unique opportunity to overcome *tsimtsum*. Words, even though they appear to be separate down below, unite the speaker with the infinite Divine when they are raised up to God.[869]

The conclusion of this teaching is quite interesting. Who is the wise servant who has access to the realm of divine thought? Is this the *tsaddiq*, whose contemplation leads him to the awareness that his own thoughts are an embodiment of the World of Thought, or *binah*? But perhaps the Maggid is describing a different type of religious leader or contemplative mystic. On this note, we should mention a more conservative formulation of this idea recorded in the Maggid's name by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev: human beings

[868] See also *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *ruth*, p. 39, for a teaching from the Maggid that describes all of God's names as gifts that allow human beings to engage with and even know the Divine, for without them people would be forced into silence.

[869] MDL #170, p. 267.

do not have permission to enter into the mind of the king, and therefore they must listen to and serve him according to the word.[870]

Language has the power both to reveal and conceal at the same moment. However, it is precisely through words that attenuate the infinite Divine that someone who is attentive and attuned can arrive at the unity that undergirds them:

> Thought takes place in the heart alone. Afterward, when one wishes to reveal it by means of *qol* and *dibbur*, it [passes through] several different vessels: the five wings of the lungs, organs of articulation, and the windpipe. Then as speech becomes deed, the separation seems even greater. But the inspired person makes no distinctions, even in the world below, since he sees that the entire structure and all the life-force of this world below comes from the world above. Were it not for the world above, the world below would be nothing at all. Thus he connects to the world above, and just as everything is unified there, certainly it is so [down below] as well.
>
> He pays no mind to the vessels that appear to be separated, for this is the perspective (lit. "aspect) of the receivers. Speech itself is utter oneness. Through this he unites the world above with the world below, and can rise up from level to level to the very source of them all. There everything is utter unity.[871]

The inspired person (*ish ha-nilbav*) is someone who can sense the divine *mahshavah* that lies beyond the letters. He is not deterred by initial perceptions of multiplicity in language.[872] In fact, just the contrary is true. The multiplicity, whether manifest in the physical world around him or in speech, actually reveals and embodies the worlds above

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[870] *Qedushat Levi*, *parashat parah*, p. 258.

[871] MDL #62, pp. 101-102. Versions of this teaching also appear with minor variations in OT #69, *shemot*, pp. 95; OHE, fol. 23a.

[872] In a few teachings the Maggid uses the term *ish ha-nilbav* to refer to a person who sees the unity behind multiplicity and thereby raise up his own thoughts, the things that he hears, and the sparks around him. See MDL #74, p. 129; MDL #75, p. 110. It is used in a similar way by R. Ze'ev Wolf throughout his work *Or ha-Me'ir*. It is interesting to think about the relationship of *ish ha-nilbav* to the *tsaddiq*. The two terms may simply be interchangeable, but it is also possible that the "inspired person" represents a level of divine awareness that is somehow more accessible. See Lorberbaum, 'Attain the Attribute of "*Ayyin*"', n. 1.

it. This type of consciousness unifies the worlds of speech and thought, and brings together the physical and the spiritual.

Conclusion

We have seen that the Maggid embraces language in all of its verbal, written, and cognitive forms as one of the greatest gifts humanity has been given. This capacity defines mankind as such, but it also represents an aspect of the divine that has been imbued within the individual. The gift of words may be easily abused, either through holding empty, vapid conversations or through believing that one's capacity for language is purely mundane and disconnected from the Divine. Yet even fallen forms of language may be redeemed. Through his contemplative efforts, the *tsaddiq* can raise up all letters and return them to their source in God.

The Maggid refers to a realm of creativity and inspiration that lies beyond words. It is into this region that the mystic journeys in his contemplative prayer, tracing spoken words back to their roots in the mind, and then beyond. Yet this realm is restricted by its ineffable silence, for flashes of insight have no expression until they are brought into language. Indeed, says the Maggid, the processes of cognition and intellection that lead to speech must also take place within the boundaries of words, since language governs the structures of the mind as well. A similar transformation characterizes all acts of divine revelation, including the Creation, which originated in a pre-verbal inner divine realm and was then accomplished through the pathways of language. It is to this theme that we shall now turn our attention.

Chapter 3: Letters, Creation and Divine Thought

Introduction

The next four chapters will be devoted to exploring questions of language as they relate to specific themes in the Maggid's homilies. His sermons blend cosmology and theosophy with specific directives regarding the personal spiritual life. Few, if any, of the Maggid's homilies may be described as abstract discourses on purely theological issues. His teachings about Creation and Revelation often describe the ways in which these processes are paralleled by, or, more often embodied within, the inner life of the individual mystic. To illustrate this point, the Maggid often employs parables and examples that are drawn from the realm of human experience. The majority of his parables, many of which are about a parent and child, refer to loving relationships between people. This desire to ground the implications of theology in religious devotion is one of the defining characteristics of Hasidic teachings.

Background

The mythic account of Creation through divine language is implied by the narrative of Genesis 1, in which God speaks the cosmos into existence through a series of utterances.[873] This notion is echoed by later books of Scripture, including the psalmist's words, "By the word of the Y-H-V-H the heavens were made, by the breath (*ruah*) of His mouth, all their host" (Ps. 33:6), and "Forever, O Y-H-V-H, Your word stands firm in

[873] See Jonathan Yovel, 'The Creation of Language and Language Without Time: Metaphysics and Metapragmatics in Genesis 1', *Biblical Interpretation* 20 (2012), pp. 205-225; Naomi Janowitz, 'Re-creating Genesis: the Metapragmatics of Divine Speech', *Reflexive Language: Reported Speech and Metapragmatics*, ed. J.A. Lucy, Cambridge, UK 1993, pp. 393-405. See also Gerhard F. Hasel, 'The Significance of the Cosmology in Genesis I in Relation to Ancient Near Eastern Parallels', *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 10.1 (1972), pp. 1-20.

heaven" (Ps. 119:89).[874] Indeed, the idea that the Divine created the world through words is a common theme in the literature of the ancient Near East, and it was particularly so in many Jewish writings from Late Antiquity.[875] The Bible never refers to the role of specific letters or divine names in Creation, nor does it make a claim about the Hebrew language in particular, but passages such as these are the scriptural foundations for many later mystical reinterpretations of Genesis.[876]

Rabbinic literature includes a small but significant number of traditions about God forming the world through language.[877] These teachings may be roughly organized

[874] See James Luther Mays, 'The Place of the Torah-Psalms in the Psalter', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987), pp. 3-12; idem, '"Maker of Heaven and Earth": Creation in the Psalms', *God Who Creates: Essays in Honor of W. Towner*, ed. W.P. Brown and S.D. McBride, Grand Rapids 2000, pp. 75-86.

[875] Naomi Janowitz and Tzahi Weiss have demonstrated that early Jewish teachings on the power of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are not a unique phenomenon, and should been seen in the broader cultural context of the ancient and Late Antique Near East; see Naomi Janowitz, *Icons of Power*; and Tzahi Weiss, '"Letters by which Heaven and Earth were Created": A Conceptual Examination of Attitudes toward Alphabetical Letters as Independent Units in Jewish and Culturally Affiliated Sources of Late Antiquity: Midrash, Mysticism and Magic," Ph.D. dissertation, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2008 [Hebrew], esp. pp. 29-62; idem, 'On the Matter of Language: the Creation of the World from Letters and Jacques Lacan's Perception of Letters as Real', *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 17 (2009), pp. 101-115. See also Stanley J. Tambiah, *Culture, Thought, and Social Action: An Anthropological Perspective*, Cambridge, Mass. 1985, pp. 17-59; Rubin, 'The Language of Creation or the Primordial Language', p. 308; Catherine Chalier, *Les Lettres de la Création: L'alphabet Hébraïque*, Paris 2006. For a dated by still relevant comparative study of the letters in different mystical traditions, see Franz Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie,* Leipzig 1925. Interestingly, some of these texts underscore the inherent differences between divine speech and human language; see Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, pp. 395-396.

[876] Weiss, 'Letters by which Heaven and Earth were Created', pp. 41-43.

[877] Idel, 'Reification of Language', pp. 45-47. For a classic study of Creation in rabbinic literature, see Alexander Altmann, 'A Note on the Rabbinic Doctrine of Creation', *Journal of Jewish Studies* (1956), pp. 195-206. See also ibid, 'Gnostic Themes in Rabbinic Cosmology', *Essays in Honour of J.H. Hertz*, ed. I. Epstein, E. Levin and C. Roth, London 1942, pp. 19-32; Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 184-213; Philip S. Alexander, 'In the Beginning: Rabbinic and Patristic Exegesis of Genesis 1:1', *The Exegetical Encounter between Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity*, ed. E. Grypeou and H. Spurling, Leiden 2009, pp. 1-29; Dina Stein, 'Rabbinic Interpretation', *Reading Genesis: Ten Methods*, ed. R. Hendel, New York and Cambridge 2010, pp. 119-135; Reimund Leicht, 'Major Trends in Rabbinic Cosmology', *Hekhalot Literature in Context: Between Byzantium and Babylonia*, ed. R. Boustan, M. Himmelfarb and P. Schäfer, Tübingen 2013, pp. 245-278. However, it should be noted that the role of divine speech or the Hebrew letters in God's formation of the world was not the subject of any sustained interpretation in Talmudic or early midrashic literature. Of course, Creation itself is a common subject of inquiry in rabbinic literature, and the sages were forced to grapple with the lack of a clear, systematic creation narrative in Scripture. In some cases they incorporated Persian, Greek or Gnostic ideas in their interpretations of Genesis, and in others they sought to prove them wrong; see Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 184-185. On the debate regarding the extent to which rabbinic teachings on *ma'aseh bereshit* should be considered a precursor to later Jewish

into three broad categories. The first includes texts that describe God forming the world by means of letters or words. An early passage claims that the world was created through ten divine utterances,[878] and rabbinic works occasionally refer to God as "the One who spoke and the world came into being."[879] A later tradition preserved in the name of Rav explains that Bezalel fashioned the Tabernacle by means of the twenty-two Hebrew letters through which the world was created.[880] This passage is more significant than the others, in which the focus is more on God issuing an order than on the linguistic character of the divine utterance.

A few passages in rabbinic literature suggest that God formed the world through a sacred divine name.[881] One midrashic tradition explains that the world was formed by the letters *yod* and *heh*, the first two letters of Y-H-V-H.[882] Rabbinic literature mentions a secret forty-two letter name of God, as well as names of twelve and seventy-two

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Mysticism, and indeed the quest simply to define this elliptical subject, see Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 208-211; Alon Goshen Gottstein, 'Is *Ma'aseh Bereshit* Part of Ancient Jewish Mysticism?', *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1995), pp. 185-201; Yair Furstenberg, 'The Rabbinic Ban on *Ma'aseh Bereshit*: Sources, Contexts and Concerns', *Jewish and Christian Cosmogony in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. Jenott and S.K. Gribetz, Tübingen 2013, pp. 39-63.

[878] m. Avot records 5:1 claims that the world was created in ten utterances, but does not identify them. The Talmudic sages struggled to reconcile this tradition with the fact that the root *amar* appears only nine times in the first parts of the Creation story; see b. Rosh Hashanah 32b; b. Megillah 21b. Cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:1, ed. Theodor-Albeck, p. 151.

[879] *Sifrei*, *'eqev* #49.

[880] b. Berakhot 55a. For references to God's creative word that were incorporated into benedictions and liturgy, see b. Sanhedrin 42b and b. Berakhot 59a.

[881] While the Hebrew Bible affords great sanctity to the divine names, and Y-H-V-H in particular, no claims are made regarding their creative capacity; Scholem, 'Name of God', 68-72; Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, pp. 33-34. More broadly, see Jarl E. Fossum, *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism*, Tübingen 1985.

[882] This passage reinterprets Ps. 33:6 as "with the *name* of Y-H-V-H the heavens were created," rereading the verse "for in Y-H, Y-H-V-H, you have an everlasting Rock (*tsur 'olamim*, Isa. 26:4)," as "with [the name] Y-H, Y-H-V-H formed the worlds" (*tsiyyer 'olamim*). See *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:10, ed. Albeck, pp. 107–109; see Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology*, Cambridge and London 1998, pp. 14-18. Cf. y. Hagigah 2:1 and b. Menahot 29b, which seem to rework the same traditions found in the passage in *Bereshit Rabbah*. In the Talmudic sources the world was created with the letter *heh*, while the World to Come was fashioned with *yod*.

letters,[883] which became central to many later kabbalistic interpretations of Creation. However, these mysterious divine names are not explicitly recorded, nor does the rabbinic material ascribe them a role in God's formation of the world.[884]

A second category of rabbinic texts includes passages that refer to the creative power of language with no explicit connection to God forming the universe through words. The Talmud refers to Rabbah as fashioning a humanoid, and two other sages creating a young calf, after studying a work called *Sefer Yetsirah*.[885] This particular book is not necessarily identical to the classical text of early Jewish mysticism bearing the same name,[886] but traditions such as these suggest that later Jewish works were building upon preexisting attitudes about the creative power of language and letters.[887]

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[883] R. Avin says that Israel were redeemed from Egypt by means of the seventy-two letter name; see *Bereshit Rabbah* 44:18, ed. Theodor-Albeck p. 441-442.

[884] b. Qiddushin 71a. See Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 130-131, 197. The sages do offer many conceptual and etymological explanations for the meanings of various divine names; see, inter alia, *Bereshit Rabbah* 5:7, ed. Theodor-Albeck, p. 37; 46:3, p. 460.

[885] b. Sanhedrin 65b. RaSHI connects the stories of Rabbah and the two sages to the tradition about Bezalel in b. Berakhot 55a, explaining that the quasi-magical activities of the former were accomplished by means of letter permutations. See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 31; idem, 'The Idea of the Golem', *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim, New York 1996, pp. 158-204; Moshe Idel, *Golem: Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid*, Albany 1990.

[886] Cf. b. Sanhedrin 67b, in which the mysterious work studied by the two sages is called *Hilkhot Yetsirah* ("Laws of Creation"). Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, p. 67, 70, argues for an early dating of *Sefer Yetsirah* and suggests that the sages of the Talmud were already aware of it.

[887] Urbach, *The Sages*, p. 213, argued that rabbinic statements about creation through language should not be compared to Philo's notion of the divine logos, since the divine word "was not hypostatized and no independent existence was attributed to it" in rabbinic texts. He makes the same claim about the impossibility of identifying the *memra* of the Targum literature with the *logos*, and argues that even Rav's tradition regarding the work of Bezalel does not make an explicit claim that heaven and earth were themselves created by the technique of letter permutation; see his *The Sages*, p. 197. Urbach's position seems rather difficult to support, given that it seems to contradict the plain sense meaning of the passage in b. Berakhot. In fact, many elements of these rabbinic texts do share things in common with both the *logos* of Early Christianity and *memra* theology of the Targum literature. Léopold Sabourin, 'The MEMRA of God in the Targums', *Biblical Theology Bulletin: A Journal of Bible and Theology* 6 (1976), pp. 79-85; and, for a different perspective, Daniel Boyarin, 'The Gospel of the Memra: Jewish Binitarianism and the Prologue to John', *The Harvard Theological Review* 94.3 (2001), pp. 243-284. Philo developed a highly philosophical understanding of the *logos* in Creation. Although Philo's writings had little direct influence on later Jewish thinkers, his ideas are an important part of the Western philosophical tradition. See Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy*, Cambridge 1947, vol. 1, pp. 230-240, 338;

Finally, the third category of rabbinic traditions is composed of texts that portray God creating the world through Torah itself.[888] Indeed, the classical midrash *Bereshit Rabbah* opens with a tradition in which God formed the world by gazing into Scripture.[889] The Mishnah preserves the following teaching in the name of Rabbi 'Akiva: "Beloved is Israel, for they have been given a precious tool; a deeper love is revealed to them in that they were given the precious tool of the world's creation."[890] Of course, these traditions build on Proverbs 8:22-30 by identifying Torah as Proverbs' wisdom (*hokhmah*), and it is unclear that this was necessarily connected to the Torah's linguistic makeup. But these teachings and the way they were later interpreted represent a strand of thinking in which the Torah, and perhaps the language of Scripture more broadly, holds great creative power.

The opening section of *Sefer Yetsirah* describes the formation of the universe by means of the "thirty-two pathways of wisdom," referring to the ten *sefirot* and the twenty-two consonant letters of the Hebrew alphabet. God created the world through combining these letters with one another, thus demonstrating that the Hebrew letters are the foundations of the world as well as the basic elements of language.[891] *Sefer Yetsirah* devotes very little explicit attention to personal mystical experience, though in some

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David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria*, Cincinnati 1985; and more broadly, David G. Robertson, 'Mind and Language in Philo', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 67 (2006), pp. 423-441.

[888] On this theme, see Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 198-202; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 31-34, 40-53, 377-380. See also Barbara Holdrege, *Veda and Torah: Transcending the Textuality of Scripture*, Albany 1996, pp. 131-223.

[889] *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1.

[890] m. Avot 3:14. See also *Sifrei Devarim* #48, ed. L. Finkelstein, New York 2001, p. 114 for a similar tradition in the name of R. El'azer son of R. Tsadoq.

[891] Scholem, 'Name of God', pp. 70-76; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 27-32. Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, p. 105-107, suggests that the immanent presence of language in *Sefer Yetsirah* is quite similar to Philo's doctrine of the logos.

versions the biblical figure of Abraham appears in the work's conclusion. Through his contemplation Abraham attains the divine wisdom required to create by means of the Hebrew letters, suggesting that *Sefer Yetsirah* reveals the secrets of Creation so that human beings might emulate and invoke them. Some scholars have argued that the idea that human beings can also employ the inherent creative capacities of language is one of the central tenets of this work.[892]

Certain *heikhalot* texts refer to God forming the world by means of divine names, and some mention letter permutation as a technique for inspiring mystical ascents. But neither of these themes may rightly be described as central concerns of *heikhalot* literature.[893] The writings of the early Provencal and Spanish Kabbalists, however, devoted a great deal of attention to exploring the linguistic aspects of Creation. These mystics produced a huge number of commentaries to the first chapters of Genesis, many of which interpret the biblical narratives as a description of the emanation of the *sefirot*.[894] The names of God are associated with different *sefirot* and are also ascribed a particularly important place in this mystical remapping of Creation.[895]

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[892] Liebes, *Ars Poetica*, pp. 57, 64-66, 73-75. For a different perspective, see Peter Hayman, 'Was God a Magician? Sefer Yesira and Jewish Magic', *Journal of Jewish Studies* 40 (1989), pp. 233-234. This magical element of *Sefer Yetsirah* was developed in later traditions of the Golem, an inanimate being formed from the earth and imbued with life through the letters of the divine name. See above, n. 885.

[893] Gershom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1965, pp. 78-79; Peter Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism*, trans. Aubrey Pomerance, Albany 1992, pp. 133, 135; Janowitz, *Poetics of Ascent*, pp. 25, 85, 87; Weiss, 'Letters by which Heaven and Earth were Created', pp. 171-179.

[894] Daniel Abrams, 'Some Phenomenological Considerations on the "Account of Creation" in Jewish Mystical literature', *Kabbalah* 10 (2004), pp. 7-19. The rabbinic tradition of God's Creation by means of gazing into Torah is cited less frequently in these early kabbalistic works, but it does appear. See, for example, the end of R. Isaac the Blind's commentary to *Sefer Yetsirah* ch. 2.

[895] Indeed, these Kabbalists authored a significant number of treatises explaining and interpreting the various divine names and their relationship to the emanated *sefirot*. See Porat, *The Works of Iyyun*, pp. 128-146, 153-155, 188-203. The Bahir offers details regarding the seventy-two and twelve letter names of God; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 99-102.

Commentaries to *Sefer Yetsirah* had emerged as an independent genre in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, signaling the incorporation of this enigmatic work and its understanding of language into the mystical canon.[896] *Sefer Yetsirah* gives specific divine names a less prominent role in the Creation story than the Hebrew letters more broadly. But the commentaries to *Sefer Yetsirah* authored by Kabbalists like R. Isaac the Blind weave together letter mysticism with focused speculation upon the various divine names. The notion that God created the world through the Hebrew alphabet, and through the letters of Scripture in particular, was a cornerstone of the works of Abulafia and Gikatilla.[897]

The *Bahir* and the writings from the circle of R. Isaac the Blind were the first to describe divine "Thought" (*mahshavah*) as a crucial phase of emanation.[898] Some early kabbalistic works refer to *mahshavah* as the first true *sefirah*, and while others consider it the second emanated power.[899] Many of these texts describe human and divine Thought as being intimately linked, and this *sefirah* came to serve as the focal point of mediation. These early Kabbalists argued that the realm of *keter*, which lies beyond *mahshavah*, cannot truly be described or understood, and for this reason Thought must be the locus of mystical contemplation.[900]

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[896] See above, pp. 147-148.

[897] Perhaps more than any of the other early Kabbalists, Abulafia and Gikatilla explored the implications of these sacred creation myths for human language; see Idel, *Language, Torah and Hermeneutics*, esp. pp. 22-55, 109, 174.

[898] For example, see *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #53 p. 149; ibid, 60 p. 153.

[899] See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 126-123, 270-289; idem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 93-94; Yehuda Liebes, 'The Pool, the Daughter and the "Male" in the Book Bahir', *Kabbalah* 21 (2010), pp. 131-138 [Hebrew].

[900] See Sendor, 'Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah', pp. 328, 343-344; Fishbane, 'Speech of Being, the Voice of God', pp. 501-502.

Eitan Fishbane has recently highlighted an important theological shift in the writings of many of these early Kabbalists.[901] He argues that their works do not describe God's words as hypostatic entities separate from the Divine, a position found in many pre-kabbalistic texts. Rather, Fishbane suggests that, "the auto-emanation of the divine Being is... the vocalization of a silent cosmic reality. God does not just speak the word of Creation. God *is* the word of Creation."[902] That is, the early Kabbalists describe the emanation by means of the letters and words of divine speech as a manifestation of the Godhead within a delimited structure. God is embodied within the speech through which the world was created, much as the Divine is expressed through the framework of the *sefirot*.

The story of Creation, the emergence of the *sefirot*, and the names of God are central concerns of the Zohar and later *Tiqqunei Zohar*.[903] Several passages refer to the rabbinic legend of God forming the cosmos through Torah, reinterpreting this ancient myth through the symbolic associations of the *sefirot*.[904] Descriptions of the Creation through the Hebrew letters more broadly also abound in Zoharic literature.[905] According to one account, the world was "engraved and established" (*itgelif ve-itqayyam*) by means

[901] Fishbane, 'Speech of Being, the Voice of God', pp. 491-492.

[902] Fishbane, 'Speech of Being, the Voice of God', p. 492.

[903] On Creation in the Zohar, see Isaiah Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar: An Anthology of Texts*, trans. David Goldstein, Oxford 1989, vol. 2, pp. 549-560. He notes that the Zohar, like the earlier works of Provencal and Spanish Kabbalah, is more concerned with detailing the emanation of the *sefirot* than the actual formation of the material world. However, the Zohar portrays the physical realm as directly linked to the Godhead, either contained within or attached to it like a ladder, and descriptions of the emergence of the *sefirot* also refer to the corporal world.

[904] See Zohar 1:47b, 134a. The Zohar correlates the Written Torah with *tif'eret,* which emerged from *hokhmah*, the abstract realm associated with the Torah that predated the world; see Zohar 3:160a. See below, chapter 4.

[905] For example, see Zohar 1:204a.

of the letters of a forty-two letter divine name.[906] This same passage refers to *shekhinah* as having been formed by a stream of letters issuing forth from the *sefirot* of *keter*, *hokhmah*, *binah* and *hesed*.

One of the most elaborate stories in the Zohar literature about the formation of the world through letters appears in the work's introduction.[907] Drawing upon earlier midrashic traditions, this passage claims that the Hebrew letters preexisted Creation by two thousand years.[908] God contemplated them and delighted in them long before using them to form the world, but eventually the letters came before Him in reverse order and each pleaded to be used in the work of creation. Only the *aleph*, the quietest of all the letters, is too timid to enter before the Divine. God selected the *bet*, the first letter *bereshit* ("in the beginning"), as the instrument through which He would form the cosmos, but awarded the silent *aleph* with the gift of being the "head of all the letters" (*reish le-khol atvan*).

The teachings of both Moses Cordovero and Isaac Luria refer to the emergence of the Hebrew letters as a specific stage in the process of emanation.[909] The importance of

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[906] Zohar 2:234a-234b. See also Zohar 2:180b, which refers to the "forty-two letters by which the world was created."

[907] Zohar 1:2b-3b. On this story, see Michal Oron, 'The Narrative of the Letters and its Source: A Study of a Zoharic Midrash on the Letters of the Alphabet', *Studies in Jewish Mysticism, Philosophy and Ethical Literature Presented to Isaiah Tishby on his Seventy-fifth Birthday*, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 97-110 [Hebrew]. In the nineteenth century this important story was translated into Ladino and used as the introduction to the popular *Leqqet ha-Zohar*, Belgrado 1859; see Avihay Abohav, 'The First Article About the Hebrew Letters in the Book *Léquet haŹóhar*', *Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos* 55 (2006), pp. 7-29 [Spanish].

[908] Oron, 'Narrative of the Letters', pp. 99-100, argues that the Zohar's narrative is building upon two early medieval midrashim, namely *Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Akiva* and *Midrash 'Asseret ha-Dibbrot*, both of which share the same literary framing. See also Joseph Dan, '*Ottiyyot de-Rabbi Akiva* and its Concept of Language', *Da'at* 55 (2005), pp. 5-30 [Hebrew]. *Otiyyot de-Rabbi 'Akiva* was published in Shklov 1785, Koretz 1785, and Zolkeva 1790, and it is interesting to note that it was printed together with the first edition of the *No'am Elimelekh*, Lemberg 1788. There is no way to prove that this work influenced the Maggid, but we cannot rule out the possibility.

[909] *Pardes Rimmonim* 3:5; *Ets Hayyim* 5:1-6.

the letters is underscored in particular in the traditions recorded in the works of R. Israel Sarug[910] and R. Naftali Bakhrakh.[911] However, the writings of the Safed mystics rarely invoke the myth of God creating the cosmos through gazing into the Torah; this idea seems to have been less pivotal in their interpretation of the Genesis narrative.[912] Cordovero and Luria devote far more attention to the specific role of the divine names of seventy-two, sixty-three, fifty-two and forty-five letters in the various stages of emanation. Each of these divine names interfaces with the others, and together they form the intricate and complex theosophical matrix that undergirds the devotional system of *kavvanot* and *yihudim*.

The Letters and the Ten Utterances

The notion that God used the letters of Hebrew alphabet to create the world is a fundamental element of the Maggid's theology. In several of his homilies, however, he explores a question left open in some of earlier traditions: were the letters co-eternal with the Divine, or were they created at some stage as well? The Maggid emphasizes that the Hebrew alphabet was indeed formed by God, but the letters originated in the very earliest moments of emanation. The letters emerged within the realm of divine Thought, appearing long before God's first speech acts:

> [The Sages taught:] "In the beginning" (Gen. 1:1) was also an utterance.[913] But this explanation is difficult, since Scripture should then have written, "and He said." I heard an explanation for

[910] Shatil, 'The Kabbalah of R. Israel Sarug', pp. 158-187.

[911] *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 1:2, pp. 117-118; ibid, 1:3-4, pp. 120-122.

[912] Presumably, for this reason the myth of creation through Scripture has a less prominent place works such as *Hesed le-Abraham or 'Emeq ha-Melekh*.

[913] b. Megillah 21b; b. Rosh ha-Shanah 32a, based on m. Avot 5:1.

> this:[914] It is known from the kabbalistic books that the letters were emanated in very beginning, after which the Holy One used them to create all of the worlds. This is the mystery of, "In the beginning God created '*et*' [the heavens and the earth]," referring to all the letters from *aleph* to *tav*. Thus the letters were the first act of Creation, emanated in Thought alone and without any articulation. Speech (*amirah*) is composed of the letters [as they are articulated] through the five openings of the mouth. But the letters had not yet been emanated, for they emerged in Thought alone and without any speech. Thus it was impossible to write, "and He said," since this [first act of creation] was accomplished without words. For this reason the Aramaic translation[915] renders the verse as "with *hokhmah* [God created the heavens and the earth]."[916]

The initial word of the Torah refers to a type of divine utterance, but this one is significantly different than the following nine creative speech acts. This first utterance happened within the realm of God's Thought (*mahshavah*), the region of the Godhead in which the Hebrew alphabet were first emanated. Only after they emerged in Thought could God use these letters to form each element of the cosmos.

The Maggid is describing Creation as a two-stage process defined by different forms of language. The first phase is that of the more abstract letters of thought, which the Maggid generally associates with the *sefirah binah*. This symbolic identification is less certain in our case, however, and he seems to refer to the emergence of the letters in *hokhmah*.[917] This would establish the roots of language in the very first stage of Creation

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[914] The original transcriber may be speaking in the first person, citing an explanation he learned from the Maggid, or R. Dov Baer may be referring to a tradition he received from someone else.

[915] See Targum Yerushalmi to Gen. 1:1.

[916] LY #235, fol. 68b, with parallels in OT #3, *bereshit*, p. 6; OHE, fol. 64b. Cf. OHE, fol. 29a See also the tradition recorded in *Benei Yissakhar*, vol. 2, *ma'amarei tishrei* #2, pp. 203. The author concludes with *'ayyen sham bi-devarav* ("look here in his own words"), suggesting that he is working from a written text of the Maggid's teachings and not an oral tradition.

[917] It is possible that *bet* of *be-hokhmah* should be interpreted as one of instrument rather than location. If this is true, the phrase should be rendered "by means of Wisdom" instead of "in Wisdom," and would confirm the origin of the letters in *binah* rather than *hokhmah*.

after the emergence of the unknowable *keter*. In either case, the letters of God's Thought are the basis for articulated divine words, a second and more concrete category of language. In this later phase, God combined the letters with one another and thereby formed the series of divine utterances through which He created the world.

Other sermons locate the origins of language at an even earlier stage in the process of Creation. These homilies focus on the importance of the "primeval Will" (*ratson ha-qadmon* or *ratson ha-qadum*) in God's formation of the cosmos. The Maggid explains that the Torah cannot describe this phase of Creation as true speech because it was too sublime. It is at once both full of infinite potential and totally inexpressible, and only a lesser manifestation of the divine Wisdom could be revealed through words:

> The Sages taught: "The world was created by ten divine speech acts; 'In the beginning' is also a divine utterance." In the creation story, Scripture says: "'*et*' the heavens and '*et*' the earth"—the particle '*et*' includes the rest of their kind (*toldoteihem*) [i.e., that which heaven and earth brought forth].[918] The Sages taught that all of the acts of creation are alluded to in the first speech act, and afterward each one was spelled out in all of its particulars.[919]
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> The matter is thus: It is known that before the worlds were brought into being, it first arose in God's mind to create them. This cannot even be called a speech act, since it took place within the [divine] Mind.[920] All of the worlds were included in it—that is, in the primeval Will—in abstract form, as were all the different levels [of existence]. Afterward, they were drawn forth into specification.
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> "In the beginning" (*bereshit*) is also related to the word for speech, as in the verse "[you have not denied...] the request of his lips (*areshet sefatav*)" (Ps. 21:3). However, this is a translation (*targum*). It refers to the primeval Will from which everything was drawn, and therefore it is in

[918] See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:14, paraphrased by RaSHI on Gen. 1:14.

[919] For a similar formulation, see Zohar 1:256b. See also Zohar 1:16b.

[920] This is an example of the Maggid using the word *lev* to refer to the mind and the seat of intellection, a common convention in medieval Hebrew.

> translation. This type of exalted level cannot be revealed except through a translation, which is the "back side" (*ahorayyim*) or *malkhut* of the world that is above it. This is the same of all levels. This is why the Aramaic translation [renders "In the beginning"] as "with Wisdom" (*be-hokhmata*).[921]

The initial emanation of the divine Will included the potential for all of the later utterances. Each of the works of Creation, formed through divine speech, emerged from the reservoir of this first emanation. But does this initial stage, the root of all subsequent language, represent *keter* or *hokhmah*? The answer is not entirely clear. *Ratson* is almost always associated with *keter* in early Kabbalah, but the conclusion of this passage suggests that the Maggid associates it with *hokhmah*. The ambiguity is striking and worth noting, for he often moves between terms such as *ratson* or *mahshavah* in a rather fluid manner. The instability of his symbolic language is one attribute of the Maggid's sermons that makes his teachings particularly difficult to interpret.[922]

An additional element of the Maggid's homily remains somewhat puzzling. The word *areshet* seems to be pure biblical Hebrew, although it is a *hapax legomenon*, so presumably the Maggid does not mean that it is a literal translation of *dibbur*.[923] Schatz-Uffenheimer argued that in this case the Maggid is using the term *targum* to describe the physical world as a translation of the spiritual world. This explanation seems correct, but I suspect it is only part of the Maggid's broader exegetical point. He is also claiming that *areshet*, and the related word *bereshit*, allude to the capability of language to bring wordless potential into concrete and specific articulation. Translation refers to a process

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[921] MDL #97, p. 172, with parallels in OT #436, *aggadot*, pp. 453-444; and OHE, fol. 48b.

[922] There does not seem to be any more stability if one differentiates among the various transmitters of his teachings, for the Maggid's symbolic language often shifts even within a single work like MDL.

[923] See Avi Sheveka, 'A Trace of the Tradition of Diplomatic Correspondence in Royal Psalms', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 50.2 (2005), pp. 297-320.

through which higher stages of emanation are adapted and communicated to lower levels. In this case, it is the necessary linguistic medium through which the infinite potential included in the first "speech act" of Creation could become fully manifest.[924]

Our interpretation of this sermon is complemented, and to some degree complicated, by a loose parallel found in another collection of the Maggid's homilies. This teaching is about the construction of the Tabernacle but, as we shall see, the theme of Creation is immediately foregrounded as well:

> "You shall command the Children of Israel to bring to you pure olive oil..." (Ex. 27:2). The Sages taught that Bezalel, who constructed the Tabernacle, knew how to combine those letters by which heaven and earth had been created.[925] The tabernacle was the life of all the worlds. This can be understood by analogy to the soul. It is the life of the body, even though in itself it has no form. We describe [this vitality] in bodily terms, speaking of the life-energy that animates the arm or the leg. So Bezalel, in making the Tabernacle as the site of this universal life-force, had to understand how to bring life into the worlds, as well as the letters through which the worlds were created. Everything in the worlds was represented in the Tabernacle.[926]
>
> We are taught: "the world was created by ten divine speech acts." The Talmud notes, however, that "God said" appears only nine times in the opening chapter of Genesis. It replies that "In the beginning" is also a divine utterance. But why doesn't the Torah use "God said" in this first case? Because this act of divine speech is beyond our grasp; only its lower manifestations can be known. This represents [an aspect of] translation, for the translation of "speech" (*dibbur*) is *areshet*. This primal utterance is the raw material (*hyle*) out of which all further speech was to emerge. [I.e. all divine speech acts are a "translation" of God's original unformed utterance.]

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[924] *Areshet* is associated with the word *bereshit* by Rabbenu Bahye in his comments to Gen. 1:2, but I have been unable to locate an earlier source. The same wordplay between *areshet* and *bereshit* is found in the work by one of the Maggid's students, though he offers a very different interpretation; see *'Avodat Yisra'el, avot*, p. 279.

[925] b. Berakhot 55a. See also Zohar 2:152a.

[926] See Rabbenu Bahye to Ex. 38:21; *Tanhuma*, *peqqudei* #2.

> The same must be true with regard to the Tabernacle. [Parallel to the primal utterance] is the *menorah*, which even Moses had difficulty in grasping; it could not be shaped by any human, but formed itself. The *menorah* bore witness to the fact that God's presence now dwelt in Israel's midst. This is the "oil"; the illumination dwells upon it [i.e. Israel] like the fire upon the [surface of the] oil. The rest of the utterances are the "olive," with the oil contained within them.
>
> That is why this chapter does not open with "God spoke to Moses" or even "God said." This "olive oil" is beyond our grasp. Even "saying," which would imply thought,[927] is not appropriate here.[928]

The description of the Tabernacle as a microcosm of the physical universe is relatively common in Jewish literature.[929] The Talmudic sages drew a specific connection between the Creation through language and the construction of the Tabernacle,[930] and later Kabbalists associated the different elements in the structure of the Tabernacle with various *sefirot*.[931] The Maggid's contribution, however, is found in the way he employs these symbols to describe the emergence of language from the infinite expanse of divine silence.

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[927] SLA emends this to "which would imply speech," but the footnotes indicate that there is a second variant that matches the above.

[928] OT #102, *tetsaveh*, pp. 142-143, with parallels in OHE, fol. 7a; and SLA, p. 102. Translation based on *Speaking Torah*, vol. 1 pp. 222-223.

[929] In addition to the cited sources above, see Zohar 2:59b, 127a, 149a. See also Arthur Green, 'Sabbath as Temple: Some Thoughts on Space and Time in Judaism', *Go and Study: Essays and Studies in Honor of Alfred Jospe*, ed. R. Jospe, S.Z. Fishman, Washington D.C. 1980, pp. 295-298; Shimon Bakon, 'Creation, Tabernacle, and Sabbath', *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 25.2 (1997), pp. 79-85; Bernd Janowski, 'Tempel und Schöpfung: Schöpfungstheologische Aspekte der priesterschriftlichen Heiligtumskonzeption', *Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie* 5 (1990), pp. 37-69; Janowitz, *Icons of Power*, pp. 56-57. Frank H. Gorman, Jr., 'Priestly Rituals of Founding: Time, Space, and Status', *History and Interpretation: Essays in Honor of John H. Hayes*, ed. M.P. Graham, et al, Sheffield 1993, pp. 47-64; Eric E. Elnes, 'Creation and Tabernacle: the Priestly Writer's "Environmentalism"', *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 16 (1994), pp. 144-155; Daniel C. Timmer, *Creation, Tabernacle, and Sabbath: The Sabbath Frame of Exodus 31: 12-17; 35: 1-3 in Exegetical and Theological Perspective*, Göttingen 2009.

[930] b. Berakhot 55a.

[931] See *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #116 p. 201. See Zohar 2:129b; ibid, 2:220b-221a.

The menorah corresponds to *keter* or *hokhmah*, either of which may be referred to as first of the ten utterances of Creation. It represents a stage of emanation that remains so far beyond language that it cannot be understood by the human mind. This initial phase is a veritable pool of dynamic potential simply awaiting revelation, but without specific and finite vessels the illumination of God's first utterance would overwhelm everything before it. The first stage of *keter* or *hokhmah* is thus imperceptible because of its brilliance. This is true of the shimmering potential of God's initial speech act, which is too expansive and intense to be grasped by the human mind. Therefore it must be contracted through the medium of language.

All subsequent divine words emerged from the first creative utterance, just as light pours forth from the menorah when the oil's hidden potential is set ablaze. God's language, associated symbolically with the *sefirot*, is a delimiting framework that mitigates the intensity of the divine light. This reduction, however, is precisely what allows for the light to become revealed. A parallel version of this teaching explains that Bezalel was selected to construct the Tabernacle because he understood how "to contemplate the works, doing them" (*la-hashov mahshavot*, *la-'asot*; Ex. 31:4).[932] The Maggid interprets this as referring to Bezalel's ability to draw forth the correct thoughts and letter combinations from the *sekhel qadum*, or the precognitive realm that may be associated with either *hokhmah* or *keter*.

The initial divine utterance and the primal *sefirot* require a limited medium through which they can be expressed. According to this teaching, these finite vessels come in many forms: the Tabernacle, the physical world, the *sefirot*, and language. Each

[932] LY #125, fol. 31b-32a.

of these represents a manner in which infinite divine potential is embodied in something more concrete. In this context, the Maggid is highlighting the importance of "translation" as a way of mediating between the infinite, pre-linguistic realms and the concrete realms of the physical world and of language.

These sermons explore the order of Creation, but they also explain the origins of language itself. Nine of the ten utterances in the opening chapter of Genesis represent divine speech, but they come after a preliminary act in which God created the potential for all the letters. This first emanation is the foundation of all language, both human and divine. The letters emerged first within the deepest realms of God's Mind, and only then could the Divine use them to translate Thought into the creative spoken word. This same dynamic, says the Maggid, holds true for human cognition. Ideas begin in *hokhmah*, the pre-linguistic realm of the mind, but they receive structure and definition in *binah*, where they are embodied in the "letters of thought." Only then may an idea be contracted into words and articulated aloud.[933]

Let us move from the image of the Tabernacle to a different creation metaphor employed by the Maggid. Forming the world demanded that God contract the ever-expansive flow of *hokhmah*, investing and expressing it through the lower *sefirot*. In order to accomplish this, however, *hokhmah* needed to be diminished to such a degree that the cosmos could withstand its brilliance. To illustrate this process, the Maggid offers the following parable about a father instructing his child:

> The child receives from the father's wisdom. His understanding comes from his parent's words, since [otherwise] the father's wisdom is too great and hidden. The child can grasp something

[933] For another sermon discussing the origins of language and the Creation, see OT #181, *nitsavim*, p. 238-239.

> because his father has contracted his wisdom, lessening it and embodying it in words according to the child's [level of] understanding. When the child truly devotes his mind to [contemplating] the words, he receives [the wisdom within them], since there everything is utter oneness. This is the meaning of, "The opening of Your words gives light" (Ps. 119:130),[934]—*hokhmah* shines forth from within the word, and through this it can illuminate another person and a student can understand it. This brings great pleasure to the father.[935]

The analogy of the father's wisdom to the *sefirah hokhmah* is crucial to understanding the point of this teaching: God contracted the divine Wisdom in order for the world to endure it, just as a parent must focus and restrict an idea so that it may be grasped by a child. In both cases this transformation happens by embodying *hokhmah* in language. God contracted the ineffable divine Wisdom into the ten (or in another sense, nine) utterances of Creation, which represent the specific *sefirot* as well as the cosmos in its entirety.[936] The Maggid returns to this same parable of a parent and a child in order to describe Revelation and the nature of Torah as well, for Scripture too represents an embodiment of the divine Presence through language.

The second, more devotional aspect of the Maggid's parable should not escape our attention. The child may grasp his father's infinite wisdom by contemplating his words and focusing upon their true content. This means that although the parent's language diminishes his original idea, the restriction of his wisdom into words is not an insurmountable hurdle. Far from preventing the child from attaining his father's thought, language actually grants him a way of understanding his parent's idea.

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[934] See b. Berakhot 22a.

[935] OT #60, *va-yehi*, p. 82.

[936] See also OT #92, *be-shalah*, p. 128. This homily, which describes the words of a teacher as vessels into which the letters of thought must be placed in order for another person to understand them, invokes the very same passage from b. Berakhot cited above.

But the Maggid is using the image of the father and the child to explain the presence of God's *hokhmah* in the physical world. He is calling upon mankind, represented by the child, to access this divine Wisdom through contemplating the earthly realm. Finite vessels, whether they are a teacher's words or physical reality, provide a medium through which one may access the expansive and ineffable *hokhmah*.

The tenet of divine immanence was of central importance to early Hasidic masters. These thinkers often describe God's presence in the physical realm by invoking the notion that the world was created through language. Clearly inspired by the theology of the BeSHT, many of the Maggid's sermons emphasize that God's creative speech acts did not simply disappear from the world once it was formed.[937] These initial divine utterances have remained in the earthly realm as the eternal sacred energy that animates and nourishes it:

> "Praise Y-H-V-H from the heavens" (Ps. 148:1). [We should interpret this] in light of, "Forever, O Y-H-V-H, Your Word stands in the firmament" (Ps. 119:89), and "by the word of Y-H-V-H the heavens were made" (Ps. 33:6). God created the worlds with speech, and the power of the Maker is in the made.[938] The power of [divine] speech is in the heavens, and through the power of this speech they endure and are sustained. This is the meaning of, "Your Word stands in the firmament"—[God's] speech stands in heaven. "Praise '*et*' Y-H-V-H" refers to all the letters from *aleph* to *tav*. The letters [are articulated] through the five positions of the mouth, which is the *heh* of "the heavens" (*ha-shamayyim*).[939]
>
> You too should "praise" [God] with speech acts made up of the twenty-two letters and five positions [of the mouth]. The principle is that this [human] speech sustains the world, like the

[937] Moshe Idel has argued convincingly that the Maggid's understanding of the immanence of the divine Word was influenced by the BeSHT, and in particular his interpretation of Ps. 33:6; see Idel, 'Your Word', pp. 219-286.

[938] See above, pp. 191 n. 681.

[939] The numerical value of *heh*, the definite article of *ha-shammayim*, is five.

> power [of God's word] in the heavens. "Y-H-V-H" [refers to] the Holy One's speech. "From the heavens" means with the power [of] of the heavens, through which the world is sustained. The enlightened one will understand.[940]

The original divine utterances are still part of the physical realm, for they constantly give energy to the corporeal world and allow it to endure. God's word is the divine "power" that exists within all creations. But the Maggid's sermon connects this notion of divine immanence to the nature of all language, since human words are also formed as the twenty-two Hebrew letters are projected through the five positions of the mouth. The essential affinity between human and divine language allows mankind to draw forth God's linguistic power from the physical realm, for mystical prayer must engage the sacred element of language that dwells infused within the earthly realm.

The teaching printed at the end of most editions of MDL draws an even more explicit connection between the divine word of Creation, human language and the importance of Israel's speech:

> It is known that all the worlds were brought into being through permutations of the letters, as it is written, "by the word of Y-H-V-H the heavens were made" (Ps. 33:6). These utterances have remained in the worlds from the time they were created, illuminating them and imbuing them with life-force, in keeping with the deeper meaning of, "as long as there is heaven over earth" (Deut. 11:21).[941] This is the meaning of "Forever, O Y-H-V-H, Your word stands in heaven" (Ps. 119:89).
>
> The prayers of Israel draw new energy and vitality into the [divine] letters, permutations and the utterances within all the worlds. They are forever renewing these utterances with new life-force and illumination. This is the meaning of [Israel's] song, and perhaps this was the reason for

[940] MDL #44, p. 66, with parallels in OT #233, *tehilim*, p. 290; and OHE, fol. 11a.

[941] The Maggid reads this verse as teaching that the physical world will endure as long as it is sustained by heaven, i.e. divine word within the corporeal realm.

> establishing the daily custom of reciting *Pereq Shirah* after each prayer service.[942] The enlightened will understand.[943]

As was clear in the previous sermon, the Maggid emphasizes that the original utterances through which God created the world have continued to illuminate and sustain the earthly realm. However, in this teaching we learn that Israel plays a crucial role in renewing the cosmos through their sacred language as well. The words of their supplications, here described as a kind of prayerful song, infuse the divine utterances with new energy and thus revitalize all the works of Creation.

The Maggid suggests that this may be the reason that they should read *Pereq Shirah*. This ancient text describes a song constantly intoned by all elements of the cosmos, both living and inanimate. Reciting it as a part of the daily liturgy thus represents a devotional act that breathes new life into the physical world. Of course, the Maggid does not restrict this power to *Pereq Shirah* alone, for all prayers spoken with contemplative focus and attunement renew the cosmos and fill it with energy.

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[942] The introduction to this ancient work of uncertain origin records a statement by R. Eliezer the Great, promising that one who recites it each day will inherit the World to Come. Malachi Beit-Arie argued that while *Pereq Shirah* became well known and was first incorporated in the liturgy as the works of the German Pietists spread between the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries, its popularity rose along in conjunction with the dissemination of Safed Kabbalah in the seventeenth century. The BeSHT knew of *Pereq Shirah*, and legends describe his approach to the work as being more ecstatic and experiential than esoteric. See Malachi Beit-Arie, 'Perek Shira: Introductions and Critical Edition', Ph.D. Dissertation, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1966, vol. 1 p. 12-17, 24-35 [Hebrew]; Idel, 'Your Word', p. 236 n. 74; Ben-Amos and Mintz, 'In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov', pp. 242-245.

For another teaching attributed to the Maggid that refers to *Pereq Shirah*, see SLA, p. 28. That homily describes every element (*pereq*) of the world as being interconnected, for each rung receives divine vitality as it descends through them. The world as a whole is thus a complete structure, and the *tsaddiq* can all the layers by increasing the flow of divine energy. On reciting *Pereq Shirah* in the works of the Maggid's students, see *Yisamah Lev*, *ketubot*, pp. 578-579; *Qedushat Levi*, *qedusha sheniyah*, p. 521; *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *qedoshim*, p. 307; ibid, vol. 2, *qorah*, p. 106. The author of the seventeenth-century legal work *Eliyahu Rabbah* also extols the practice; see the comment printed together with the *Shulhan 'Arukh*, *orah hayyim* #1.

[943] MDL #209, p. 335. This teaching is framed as an explanation to MDL #39. However, the latter sermon addresses the importance of earnest and heartfelt prayer, and we will analyze it in a later chapter.

The notion that God's Word is still present in the corporeal realm is the basis of a contemplative exercise outlined in one of the Maggid's teachings. Within a much longer homily about the mystical dimensions of prayer, we read:

> The intent [one should have] in speaking words of prayer and study is to raise them up to their [divine] source. The creation of the world began with the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, for the Zohar describes God's creation through Torah. Similarly, life-sustaining energy flows into all creatures by means of those letters. One's task [in prayer] is to reverse this process, causing words and letters to flow back upward into their source. This is the process: he must link word to [God's] Word, voice to Voice, breath to Breath, thought to Thought. These are the four letters Y-H-V-H. If one does this, all his words fly upward to their Source. This brings his words into the divine Presence, causing God to look at them.[944]

One who prays or studies has the opportunity, and indeed the obligation, to attach his words to the sacred utterances of Creation. The Maggid's description of how this connection is to be established, however, seems to be rather different than the unifications we noted in the previous chapter. There we suggested that the quest to connect *qol* with *dibbur* (*tif'eret* and *malkhut*) demands that one unify the two of the most basic physical sensations of speech, and that connecting *'olam ha-dibbur* with *'olam ha-mahshavah* (*malkhut* and *binah*) requires one to align his spoken words with sacred thoughts.

But in the present homily, the Maggid explains that one must bind the words of his prayer (*dibbur*) to the sacred utterance of Creation. The same is true of each stage of articulation, including sound of his voice (*qol*), his breath (*hevel*), and his thought. All must be connected to their divine counterpart, thereby unifying the four letters of the name Y-H-V-H. Words spoken in this manner "enter the presence of God," which the

[944] OT #105, *ki tissa*, p. 145, with a parallel in LY #131, fol. 37a.

Maggid interprets as a metaphor for opening the channels through which blessing and vitality flow into the world.

This description suggests that accessing the divine aspect of language requires much more than acknowledging that one's ability to speak is a gift from God. The worshiper must actively connect each of his linguistic faculties to its divine counterpart, starting with articulated words and progressing to thoughts. These four stages also correspond to the four letters of the divine name Y-H-V-H. Here too we see the fluidity of the Maggid's symbolic associations. *Dibbur* and *qol* parallel the second *heh* and the *vav*, or *malkhut* and *tif'eret* respectively. "Breath" (*hevel*) must therefore refer to *binah*, and *mahshavah* corresponds to *hokhmah*, the first *heh* and *yod* of Y-H-V-H.[945]

Some of the Maggid's teachings explore the origins of language without reference to the ten divine utterances of Creation, but the theological vision developed in those sermons is largely consistent with what we have seen above. In one homily, the Maggid claims that the original divine Thought should be considered a type of a speech because it holds the potential for all later linguistic structures. Although God's first *mahshavah* was too unformed to be "understood," or concretely manifest, it was the source of all divine words.[946] This initial thought was followed by three levels of *tsimtsum*, or diminution, that enabled God's language to become embodied in mankind's capacity of speech.

ISRAEL AROSE IN THOUGHT

The Maggid often connects his understanding of the role of language in Creation to his interpretation of the rabbinic teaching that "Israel arose in thought" before the

[945] See *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 22, fol. 63b; ibid, *tiqqun* 69, fol. 105b.

[946] See OHE, fol. 4b-5a, with a parallel in SLA, pp. 89-90.

world was formed. This idea first appears in the midrash, where it may suggest that God created the world for the sake of the Jewish people.[947] The works of classical Kabbalah reinterpret the phrase "Israel arose in thought" in light of the *sefirot*, for in mystical literature the divine Thought (*hokhmah* or *binah*) and the Jewish people (*kenesset yisra'el*, or *malkhut*) have relatively well-established symbolic associations.[948]

The Maggid interprets "Israel arose in thought" as a statement of cosmology, a description of the order of Creation, and an illustration of the special love between God and the Jewish people.[949] His sermons often refer to the pleasure the *tsaddiqim* bring to God as arising in the divine Mind long before these individuals were actually created.[950] Indeed, the initial divine thought that led to the *tsimtsum*, the withdrawal and diminution God's light, was an expression of His love for Israel.[951]

However, in many of his homilies the Maggid reads "Israel arose in thought" as a specific reference to the unique meditative faculty possessed by the Jewish people. Israel has an innate connection to the *sefirah hokhmah*, and this natural bond with divine Wisdom grants them the ability to ascend by means of their contemplative thought. Furthermore, God created the world through *hokhmah*, and Israel can lift up and

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[947] See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:4, where Israel appears in a list of six things that pre-existed the worlds, some of which were created and some of which simply "arose in thought to be created. Cf. *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* 36:4, paraphrased by RaSHI in his comments to Gen. 1:1. See *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:4, for" See also Michael D. Swartz, *The Signifying Creator: Non-Textual Sources of Meaning in Ancient Judaism,* New York 2012, pp. 13-32.

[948] See Zohar 1:24a; 2:20a; and 2:119a-b (R.M.); *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 40, fol. 80a. In the writings of Moses Cordovero, the "thought" of this phrase is associated with the *sefirah hokhmah*; see *Pardes Rimmonim*, 6:9, 7:2, 23:10.

[949] MDL #55, p. 78. See also LY #249, fol. 76b-77a; MDL #62, p. 99-100; OHE, fol. 4b-5a; and cf. SLA pp. 89-90.

[950] See OT #304, *pesuqim*, pp. 353-354; *Orah le-Hayyim*, *noah*, p. 70.

[951] MDL #1, pp. 9-10.

transform the physical realm through the power of their mind.[952] *Hokhmah* is associated with the letter *yod*, and meditation on the *yod* itself is a key element of a number of different contemplative exercises.[953]

The Maggid often connects "Israel arose in thought" to the concept of God's primeval Thought (*mahshavah*), the initial phase of Creation from which all subsequent emanations proceeded. Although the Jewish people appears much later in history, the Maggid reiterates that something may be "last in deed, yet first in thought" (*sof ma'aseh be-mahshavah tehilah*).[954] God's first *mahshavah* held the potential for the entire project of Creation, just as an artisan's preliminary plan includes all parts of his work long before it comes to fruition.[955] The Maggid explains this dynamic with a metaphor directly relevant to our subject: just as spoken words are the culmination of an extended process of intellection, Israel manifests an aspect of God's Thought that emerged in the very first moments of creation:

> Israel arose in thought to be created first. Even though man appeared last in the works of Creation, he was first in thought, as it says, "You have formed me before and after" (Ps. 139:5). It is known that all twenty-two letters and the five positions of the mouth exist in thought, which is the root of all the letters. One cannot speak something out loud without thinking of it first. If he does bring

[952] This point is made clear Maggid's reinterpretation of God's reply to Moses in b. Menahot 29b. When confronted by Moses protestation of the martyrdom of R. 'Akiva, God commands, "Silence, for so it has arisen in my mind (*shtoq, kakh 'alah be-mahshavah*)!." The Maggid reads the perfect *'alah* as the imperative *'aleh*, understanding Moses' response as, "Be quiet, and raise everything up within the mind." See MDL #41, p. 63.

[953] See MDL #22, p. 36. In this the Maggid follows in the footsteps of many of the classical Kabbalists, including R. Isaac the Blind and R. Isaac of Acre. See Sendor, 'Emergence of Provençal Kabbalah', pp. 186-187; Pedaya, *Name and Temple*, pp. 71-6; Eitan P. Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn: The Inner World of a Medieval Kabbalist*, Stanford 2009, pp. 72, 238-9, 240 n. 168.

[954] See S.M. Stern, '"The First in Thought is the Last in Action": The History of a Saying Attributed to Aristotle', *Journal of Semitic Studies* 7 (1962), pp. 235-252; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 208, 401 n. 41. See also *Pardes Rimmonim* 3:1, 3:5, 15:1, where it refers to the expression of *keter* through *malkhut*; and *Sefer Yetsirah* 1:6.

[955] See OT #11a, *bereshit*, pp. 11-12.

> forth a word without thought, [his speech] will be incomprehensible, lacking wisdom and intelligence.[956] So too is [God's] Thought the root of all the worlds, which were revealed through speech.
>
> For example, take someone who is writing letters. Before he outlines the shape of the letter [itself], he begins with a *yod*, the tiny point and smallest of all the letters. And even before writing the letter, he scores its shape. This engraving is called thought, like a thought that comes before a letter or word is spoken. As the thought is combined with the letter and the word, the letter and word become recognizable.[957]

Israel arose in God's mind before the world was formed, just as an idea first appears in the intellect before it is translated into written or spoken words. They were present in the earliest stages of divine cognition, which later became expressed in the sacred speech of Creation. Indeed, the cosmos is a concrete, linguistic manifestation of the primal divine Thought. It is no surprise that this excerpt comes from a sermon addressing the ways in which Israel's special capacity for language empowers them to arouse the worlds above and below. Their prayers awaken and illuminate the divine utterances in the earthly realm, but the Maggid is also describing Israel as the thought at the heart of the language of Creation.

This particular interpretation of "last in deed, yet first in thought" sheds some light on a theme noted above. Israel appeared in the first divine Thought, the initial phase of emanation that included the potential for the elements of language that would later emerge in the process of Creation. Like Israel, the letters used by God to form the world "arose" in the first stage of emanation:

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[956] OT adds "as explained at length above," and OHE "as we have already explained at great length."

[957] LY # 264, fol. 80b-81a, with parallels in OT #203, *tehilim*, p. 266; and OHE, fol. 74b.

> The seal of the blessed Holy One is truth (*emet*).[958] [We must understand this] in accord with, "I am the first and I am the last; there is none but me" (Isa. 44:6). *Aleph* is the first of the letters, *tav* is the last, and *mem* is the intermediary that spans between them. The Zohar teaches that [the Holy One] has three worlds.[959] The explanation is thus: the Holy One created the world with the Torah, meaning its letters. [Within the letters] there are three levels: ones, tens, and hundreds.[960] The *aleph* of *emet* is from the ones, the *mem* from the tens, and the *tav* from the hundreds. All three of these are included in each of the others.
>
> Of course, all are included within the *aleph*. They emerged from it, and it is their origin. The final [letter also] includes them all, for the last in deed was the first in thought. Thus the final thought is present in all of them, and it includes of all of them. They are not complete until the very end.[961]

The Maggid interprets the verse from Isaiah as teaching that the divine Will is equally manifest in all aspects and phases of Creation. God's Will appears first as an abstract thought, but it is then expressed through the stages of emanation and the physical world. The word "truth" (*emet*) illustrates the unfolding of the Divine in linguistic terms. Its three letters, namely *aleph*, *mem* and *tav*, represent the entire alphabet as well as the full spectrum of Creation. The Maggid also identifies these letters with specific *sefirot*. The first *aleph* is the most unformed and abstract of the three, and is associated with either *keter* or *hokhmah*. *Mem*, which negotiates between the first and last stages of Creation, is considerably more concrete, and may represent the *sefirah binah*.[962] *Tav* is the final and

[958] See b. Shabbat 55a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 81:2.

[959] See Zohar 3:159a. The first of these worlds is too exalted to be grasped at all; the second is that through which Holy One (*kudsha berikh hu*) may be known; the third, the world of the angels, is also the realm of division (*peruda*) in which God is known and yet unknown.

[960] An allusion to the numerical values associated with each of the Hebrew letters. The connection between these numbers and the three worlds reference above is not clear.

[961] MDL #81, p. 140, with parallels in OT #326, *pesuqim*, p. 371-372; OHE, fol. 74b; and ST, p. 83.

[962] See Zohar 2:127a-b; *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #57-58 pp. 151-153.

most tangible expression of the initial divine Thought, and so must be associated with *malkhut* and *shekhinah*.[963]

One of the Maggid's homilies describes the emergence of the letters and the creation of the Jewish people as a single act. We read:

> Israel are truly one with the blessed God. It is taught that before Creation, He and His name were one in *keter*... and Israel was not yet a part of the world. Afterward, after it arose in His good Will [to create the world], this Will moved from level to level, until the letters came into speech. Through this [process] Israel was created, just as they are today. There is no separation between them and their Maker. Even their corporeal [aspects] were brought into being and fashioned from the letters. Before the world was created, these letters existed with His name in *keter*.[964]

The Jewish people were created directly by divine speech. This is true of their physical form, which is composed of God's letters, but it presumably explains their unique capacity for sacred language as well.[965] It also explains Israel's intimate and enduring connection to God. Nothing can sever their bond to the Divine, for every part of their being is an embodiment of the sacred word. It is interesting that this homily refers to the potential letters as being included in *keter*, not *hokhmah*, suggesting that language is rooted in what is often described as a totally pre-linguistic stage of emanation.

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[963] Similar themes are treated at great length in a homily recorded in MDL #122, pp. 199-200. There we see that the three worlds are actually four, but *atsilut* is not included because it is too abstract. It represents *hokhmah*, whereas *beriah* is *binah*. The different types of letters are also aligned more precisely with the different worlds: ones represent *'asiyah*, tens are *yetsirah*, and hundreds are *beriah*. This means that the order in the previous teaching has been reversed. In this case the physical world is represented by the *aleph* because of its diminished intensity. The tens and the hundreds are more abstract, which is to say closer to the Divine.

[964] OHE, fol. 33b.

[965] This teaching provides further proof that the Maggid restricts his understanding of sacred speech to Jews alone, here extending this notion by suggesting that the physical form of non-Jews was created by some other means that God's language.

The Maggid also interprets the idea that "Israel arose in thought" as a reference to an image of the Jewish people that is permanently engraved in the mind of God.[966] For the Maggid, however, the likeness of Israel hewn into God's Thought signals more than an eternal bond between them; their image transforms over time as Israel changes and matures:

> [Consider a] parable about a father who loves his son. Because of his great love for his child, the image of the son as he stands before him is engraved in the father[']s mind]. When the child is young, his image in the father's mind is still immature. But as he grows up, so too does the image in his father's mind.
>
> It is known that Israel arose first in the [divine] Mind. This means that they are permanently engraved within the supernal Thought, just like the [image of the] child is hewn into his father's mind. When the child improves his deeds so that they please his father, [that new image] is engraved into his father's mind. And the opposite is true... thus scripture says for the good, "Y-H-V-H will raise h/His face to you" (Num. 6:26), meaning their own faces as they are hewn into His thought.[967]

The image of Israel, described in the analogy as the beloved child of God, is engraved upon the divine Mind. However, in this case it is unclear if the Maggid is using the term *mahshavah* in reference to *keter*, *hokhmah* or *binah*. This divine Thought was the first act of Creation, which suggests that it should be associated with *keter* or *hokhmah*. But the idea that the *mahshavah* includes specific images or pictures seems more in keeping with the Maggid's explanation of *binah*, the *sefirah* and cognitive realm in which particular details and individual letters first appear.

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[966] This notion has considerable precedent in kabbalistic literature. See, inter alia, *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 22, fol. 65b. On the history and development of this idea, see Elliot R. Wolfson, 'The Image of Jacob Engraved Upon the Throne: Further Reflection on the Esoteric Doctrine of the German Pietists', *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics*, Albany 1995, pp. 1-62.

[967] MDL #164, p. 263, with a parallel in OT #402, *aggadot*, pp. 424-425.

The image of the Jewish people contained in God's mind is quite dynamic, for it constantly changes in response to their actions. But the Maggid extends this notion in the opposite direction as well, for it also affects the ways in which Israel imagine God. The dynamic likeness of Israel in God's Thought actually defines the image through which the Divine appears to them as well. This homily begins by citing a rabbinic teaching that God appeared to the Israelites as a young man at the Sea of Reeds, and as a wizened old man on Mt. Sinai.[968] The Maggid's explanation of this seeming change in the divine form attributes it to the Israelite's evolving maturity; the Jewish people see the face of God as a projection of their own image as it exists within the divine Thought.

The intimate connection between the workings of God's Mind and human cognition is underscored by the first sermon printed in MDL. This homily begins with a familiar interpretation of "Israel arose in thought," namely that God created the world because He foresaw the great pleasure He would receive from their deeds. However, as the sermon develops the Maggid offers a subtle, but strikingly different interpretation of this phrase:

> The sages taught that Israel arose in thought. The earliest desire (*qedimat ha-ratson*) was that Israel be righteous in each and every generation.... The Holy One delights in the deeds of the righteous, and [therefore] contracted Himself [and allowed for Creation]. This withdrawal [or focusing] is called *hokhmah*, for *hokhmah* emerges from Nothing (*ayin*), as it is written, "*hokhmah* comes forth from *ayin*" (Job 28:12). This contraction was for [the sake of] Israel, performed out of [God's] love...
>
> One must make all of his thoughts and intention into a throne for the Holy One. When one thinks of His love, this causes God to dwell in the world of love. The same is true when one thinks of

[968] See below, pp. 364-366.

> awe—it causes Him to dwell in the world of awe. One must never cease thinking about God for even a single moment...
>
> This is the meaning of, "The eyes of Y-H-V-H are upon the righteous" (Ps. 34:16). When a child does some childish act, he draws his father's attention to those [seemingly trivial] deeds. *Tsaddiqim* can do the same thing, as it were, by causing God's Mind to dwell wherever they are thinking. When they contemplate love, they bring the blessed Holy One into the world of love. This is the meaning of the Zohar's comment on [the verse] "the King bound up in tresses" (Song. 7:6)—the tresses of the [*tsaddiq*'s] mind.[969]
>
> This is the explanation of, "God concentrated (*tsimtsem*) His *shekhinah* to rest between the two staves of the ark."[970] They are the two lungs, or *shekhinah*.[971] God dwells wherever [the righteous one] is thinking. "Eyes" refers to the mind; the Mind [of God] is in the hands of the righteous. But how do they attain this rung? Only by considering themselves as mere dust, thinking that they can do nothing without the power of God. Anything they do is really being performed by God....[972]

This homily ascribes a remarkable degree of power to the contemplative abilities of the *tsaddiqim*. Here the Maggid makes a claim beyond that of Israel's vision of God being a reflection of their own likeness within the divine Mind. The thrust of this sermon is prescriptive: when a *tsaddiq* contemplates a certain *sefirah*, God's Presence is drawn into that particular realm. God allows this *tsimtsum*, an act of simultaneous diminishment and focusing, because of His tremendous love for the Jewish people.

The Maggid is arguing that *tsimtsum*, the process through which the infinite *Ein Sof* is contracted into limited vessels, is more than a historical stage in Creation; *tsimtsum*

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[969] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 6, fol. 21a.

[970] *Tanhuma*, *va-yaqhel* #7.

[971] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 21, fol. 49b. *Shekhinah* is sometimes associated with the lungs when the *sefirot* are mapped onto the human structure and the divine anthropos.

[972] MDL #1, p. 9-12. Based on our translation in *Speaking Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 136-137.

is also constantly taking place within the minds of the *tsaddiqim*.[973] Their cognition has the power to draw the divine Presence into the finite structure of the *sefirot*, which exist within the human mind as well as the Godhead. The Maggid's psychological interpretation of *tsimtsum* through the contemplative efforts of the *tsaddiqim* does not entirely supersede its importance as a stage in the order of Creation.[974] This explanation does, however, return us to a fundamental question that is intimately related to our analysis of the Maggid's understanding of language: do the divine processes of the Godhead mirror those of human mind, with each one embodying a similar dynamic of revelation through language? Or does the human intellection and speech actually represent a manifestation of this process as it is simultaneously taking place within the Divine? This homily lends itself to the latter interpretation. *Tsimtsum*, focus and concentration of the divine Presence, happens through the contemplation of human mystics.

The Maggid's sermons frequently emphasize the power of the human mind, which originates in the initial moment of Creation. In several homilies we see that the Jewish people may return anything to its source in *hokhmah* because they are so deeply rooted in the world of divine Thought.[975] However, it would be amiss to claim that the Maggid extends this ability to all of humanity. Only Israel arose in the divine Mind, and

[973] Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 207, writes: "*zimzum* is not a single, one-time event within the divine world, but an immanent law of thought. God is held captive by the law of human thought in the sense that, if a person does not think, there is no significance to Divine thought."

[974] Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 329-330, 383, has argued that the Maggid's understanding of *tsimtsum* was deeply influenced by that of Cordovero, whose usage of the term included both its psychological and theological connotations.

[975] MDL #94, p. 162-163.

according to the Maggid it seems that this contemplative faculty, like the power of language more broadly, is something given to Jews alone.[976]

CREATION THROUGH *YOD*

The letter *yod* has long been an important kabbalistic symbol in the context of Creation and language. The early Kabbalists often associate *yod*, the first letter of the sacred name Y-H-V-H, with the *sefirah hokhmah*. This very early stage of emanation is described as a "point" of divine Wisdom holding the potential for all aspects of Creation before they unfold.[977] Many of these classical mystical sources refer to the uppermost tip (*qots*) of the *yod* as alluding to the *sefirah keter*, an even more abstract phrase of Creation that is classically understood as lying beyond linguistic reference.[978]

The Maggid's sermons frequently invoke these ancient associations, but often do so with subtle shifts in meaning. He explains that *yod* is the smallest of letters because it alludes to divine Wisdom, signifying a realm that can neither be understood nor expressed in words.[979] It represents the infinite potential that appeared in the very first moments of Creation, as well as the divine *hokhmah* that continuously flows through the

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[976] MDL #64, p. 105. On the question of Jewish particularism and sacred language, see above, pp. 179-183.

[977] See Zohar 1:15a, 21a; 2:179b-180a; 3:10b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol. 5a. Describing the theology of the 'Iyyun work *Ma'ayan ha- Hokhmah*, Scholem wrote: "The Name of God... is the unity of movement of language branching out from the primordial root.... *Yod* is represented as the 'bubbling source' of the movement of language, which after differentiation and ramification in the Infinite returns again to its center and origin"; see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 332. See also Wolfson, 'Letter Symbolism and Merkavah Imagery in the Zohar', pp. 203-205; idem, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 282.

[978] See *Sha'arei Orah,* ch. 5, p. 182; Moshe Idel, 'Kabbalistic Prayer in Provence', *Tarbiz* 62 (1993), pp. 278-279 [Hebrew]; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 282-283; Bernard Septimus, 'Isaac de Castellon: Poet, Kabbalist, Communal Combatant', *Jewish History* (2008), pp. 53-80. For an interesting parallel in a first-century Gnostic text describing the point of the letter *iota* as representing a divinity that is both "monad and decad," see Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 239-240. The term "the tip of the *yod*" already appears in rabbinic literature, without any kabbalistic significance; see b. Menahot 29a; *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:10; ibid, 12:10.

[979] See MDL #83, p. 144.

earthly realm, the human mind, and all language. Thus the *yod* also refers to the abstract stages of cognition, human as well as divine, and it is the ultimate source of all language. The *yod* is the most basic shape from which all other letters are drawn, and *hokhmah* is the pre-articulate the realm out of which all speech emerges.

Yet the Maggid notes that the kabbalistic description of Creation through the *yod* conflicts with a famous rabbinic midrash. A tradition in the Talmud claims that God formed the present world with the letter *heh*, and the World to Come (*'olam ha-bah*) with the letter *yod*.[980] The Maggid explains this contradiction as follows:

> It is written, "You made them all with wisdom (*hokhmah*)" (Ps. 104:24). The Zohar teaches that everything was created through Thought, which is the letter *yod*, called *hokhmah* and *mahshavah*. Thus this world must have been created with the letter *yod* as well!...
>
> Everything was created with *yod*, which represents the ten utterances,[981] but the *yod*, which is *mahshavah*, is described as contemplative [or conceptual] (*'iyyunit*). This is like an artisan who makes some sort of vessel. He puts all of his thought and contemplative energy into the form and shape of that vessel. Now the power of the maker is in the made, and therefore the power of his contemplative mind is present within the form and the shape of the vessel. Before the vessel was made, the thought [of it] was sealed and hidden... but after he makes the vessel, [the artisan's] thought is revealed and the power of thought is contained within [the object]. Thus the vessel initially existed within thought, but afterward the thought is contained in the vessel....
>
> The *yod* is divided and becomes two *heh*s [of the name Y-H-V-H], an upper *heh* and a lower *heh*.[982] But the letter *yod* is not totally uprooted [when it is split], since everything was created by the ten utterances. This world, which was created with a *heh*, was first concealed within [God's] Thought. It was like the vessel that was initially hidden within the mind of the artisan. So too the

[980] b. Menahot 29b.

[981] The numerical value of *yod* is ten.

[982] The numerical value of *heh* is five.

> *heh*, which is speech (*dibbur*) and the five positions of the mouth, was hidden within the *yod*. Then as the vessel, meaning this world, "was created with the *heh*" (*be-heh baram*, Gen. 2:4)... the lower *heh* was revealed. This is speech, as is known. Yet the power of the *yod* remains within it.[983]

The Maggid confirms that God formed the earthly realm with the letter *yod*, which alludes to the ten creative utterances as well as *hokhmah* and *mahshavah*. However, the initial burst of divine Thought was intense and unformed. Like an artists' concept that must someday be embodied in a physical work, God's *mahshavah* required a more concrete medium in order to achieve definition and expression. Therefore, the *yod* was translated into two of the letter *heh*. The first of these represents *binah*, the realm of structured cognition, and the second corresponds to *malkhut*, the region of articulated language.

The process through which God's initial Thought is expressed has several linguistic dimensions, and indeed Creation represents a multi-stage transition from infinite—but silent—potential into well-defined speech. The energy of *hokhmah* first transitions into *binah*, where it is expressed through the letters of thought (*otiyyot ha-mahshavah*). But the divine Wisdom must be further translated before it can become manifest as the physical world, and therefore it is projected into *dibbur* or *malkhut*.

Yet the Maggid is careful to underscore the enduring connection between the original divine Thought and its vessels of expression. By analogy, the potential wisdom of an artist's initial design is revealed through the physical object he creates; his wisdom continues to animate the creation even after it was formed. This principle holds true in the creation of the cosmos as well. The power of the initial divine *mahshavah* never recedes

[983] LY #241 fol. 70a-70b, with parallels in OT #24, *va-yera*, pp. 32-33; and OHE, fol. 72a.

from the earthly realm, and limited physical world diminishes the intensity of *hokhmah* while also allowing it to become expressed.

Several of the Maggid's sermons trace the relationship between Creation, the names of God, and the various stages of human cognition and language. In order to illustrate this important aspect of his theology, let us carefully examine a selection from one of his longest teachings on the subject:

> The letter *yod* is called the "point in the palace" from which the world was created,[984] for "You made everything with wisdom" (Ps. 104:24). All existence came into being from *yod*.... All of the worlds came into existence by means of the four letters of Y-H-V-H; there is nothing in the world that did not come into being (*nithaveh*) by it. His name [Y-H-V-H] refers to this.
>
> The twenty-two letters and all words were brought into being by it as well, as the verse says, "with the fullness of Your name, You have empowered Your word" (Ps. 138:2).[985] That is, the name Y-H-V-H must be embodied within each word and utterance, for this [sacred name] brought it into being. The Holy One had to focus the light of Y-H-V-H into every word and utterance. This makes it seems as if the utterance is greater, and thus "with the fullness of Your name, You have empowered Your word."

The Zohar interprets the diacritic within the *bet* of the word *bereshit* ("in the beginning") as a *yod*, the initial "point" of creative *hokhmah* that is surrounded by *binah*. The other letters of the divine name Y-H-V-H proceed from the first *yod*, as do each of the four worlds. Indeed, all twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet were drawn forth from the primordial *yod*. Thus the formation of the worlds and the emergence of language out of the sacred name Y-H-V-H were parallel, and perhaps even simultaneous, processes. The

[984] Zohar 1:15b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol. 12b; ibid, *tiqqun* 5, fol. 19a.

[985] I have translated the verse as the Maggid interprets it. NJPS renders the verse, "because You have exalted Your name, Your word, above all," noting that its meaning is ambiguous.

creative energy of the first divine Thought, symbolized by the original letter *yod*, dwells within the physical world as well as inside each word and utterance.

It was necessary for God to reduce the divine *hokhmah* before language and the worlds could be brought into being, but this seeming diminution actually magnifies the divine presence by granting it expression through the physical realm. The Maggid's sermon then illustrates another aspect of this transformation in greater detail:

> Let us explain, making this accessible to the mind, how the name Y-H-V-H must be within every word. The letter *yod* is *hokhmah*, and it is [God's] Thought (*mahshavah*). But Thought must be empowered by a still higher intellect (*sekhel 'elyon yoter*), as we have mentioned in previous teachings. In order to make this comprehensible, let us say that it is known that thought is contemplative (*'iyyunit*) [and fluid] by nature. A person thinks constantly, and his thoughts roam over different places; one thinks about whatever he sees.... One is never devoid of thoughts, for his mind constantly skips and darts from thought to thought. This is the mind's nature. If a person wants to think about one single thing, he must focus (*le-tsamtsem*) his mind in an act of great concentration, not thinking about anything else.

The realm of cognition is associated with *binah* in many of the Maggid's sermons, but the correspondence between *mahshavah* and *hokhmah* is quite clear in this homily. *Mahshavah* is defined by its irrepressible dynamism and constant motion, for the Maggid claims that one's mind never truly falls silent. Contemplation of a single object or idea therefore requires that a person reign in his naturally effervescent intellect, restraining it and focusing it into more defined structures. But *keter*, an unstructured region of the mind that is beyond deliberate cognition, represents a higher realm of intellection that sustains even *hokhmah*.

This identification of the first stages of Creation with *keter* and *hokhmah* is confirmed later in the homily:

> The supreme Emanator (*ha-ma'atsil ha-'elyon*) ordered the emanation as follows. First the highest Intellect (*ha-sekhel ha-'elyon*), which focuses the thought, was emanated. This refers to the tip of the *yod*. From there it came into the general *mahshavah*... which is the *yod* itself. This is the mental energy (*mohin*), as is known, which is a thought as it occurs to someone in its general form.
>
> Nevertheless, after he considers the idea for a while and focuses his thought, he can consider it in terms of specific letters. But this [type of cognition] is called specific only in relation to the Thought and the Intellect. In regard to the specific forms of the letters (*tsiyyurei ha-otiyyot*) it is still pure potential, without any real manifestation. The forms [of the letters] are completed in the first *heh*, which is *binah*....
>
> The beginning of the revelation of the letters, which are the five (*heh*) positions of the mouth, [already] happens in Thought. This is the meaning of "as they were created" (Gen. 2:4, *be-heh baram*) [reading it as "they were created with *heh*" (*be-heh bera'am*)][986]— some [aspect] of the *heh* was revealed even at the very beginning of Creation, which is *hokhmah* and *yod*. But the shapes of the letters were only revealed in the first *heh* itself... Then the voice, which is the *vav*, emerges from the first *heh* and expands through the windpipe and its six rings. It then enters the lungs, which contain the five lobes that are adjacent heart...[987]
>
> The heart understands and combines the letters, as it says, "the word of Y-H-V-H is refined (*tserufah*)" (Ps. 18:31). This refers to a combination (*tseruf*) of the letters that results from the five positions of the mouth. This is the meaning of *tserufah—tseruf heh*. [The letters] arrive at the mouth, where the four letters [or stages] of Y-H-V-H are finished and revealed. The word is completed; His first thought may be seen through the word. Thus the word is called *malkhut*.[988]

This homily offers one of the Maggid's fullest descriptions of the three intertwined processes we have been tracking throughout this chapter: the creation of the world, the

[986] b. Menahot 29b.

[987] See b. Hullin 47a.

[988] MDL #192, pp. 301-304, with a parallel in OT #179b, *ki tavo*, pp. 232-234.

unfolding of language from the name of Y-H-V-H, and the stages of human cognition and verbal articulation. All of these begin with the emergence of the *sefirah keter*, the primal emanation that can only be alluded to with the tip of the *yod*. *Keter* is elusive, imponderable and ineffable; nothing that transpires therein can be understood or expressed.

This phase is followed by *hokhmah*, associated with the letter the *yod* itself. The energy of *keter* flows into *hokhmah*, where intellection begins to take place in a recognizable form. However, in this realm cognition is still indistinct and rather fluid, because it lacks the specific features of the particular letters. These emerge only in the next stage, *binah*, represented by the first *heh* of Y-H-V-H. *Binah* is a region of contemplation and intellection of a very different order; in it ideas are first embodied and shaped by means of the letters of thought. In *binah* the forms of specific letters, indeed the roots of all later language, are revealed in full for the first time.

Ideas are drawn out of *binah* through *qol*, which corresponds to the *vav* of Y-H-V-H and the *sefirah tif'eret*.[989] This stage marks the beginning of an idea being revealed in relatively concrete terms. In the human analogy, *qol* is a voiced sound without any articulated words, a necessary physical element of language production. The thought finally moves on to the five positions of the mouth, thus attaining full expression through verbal articulation (*dibbur*). This is the final stage of emanation, the moment in which the *sefirot* have finally emerged and the cosmos is are created through the divine Word.

The Maggid's description of the various stages of emanation and cognition in the previous sermon seems well-ordered and stable, although there is some inconsistency in

[989] The letter *vav* is also associated with *ze'ir anpin*, or the cluster of six *sefirot* that surround *malkhut*.

his use of the term *mahshavah*. But some of the Maggid's other sermons invoke the *yod* not in reference to conscious thought, but as an allusion to the deeper realm known as *qadmut ha-sekhel*, or the pre-cognizant mind.[990] The Maggid suggests that this region is the purest form of *hokhmah*, an endless font of creative potential from which the physical world and language emerge:

> We must understand why the Torah mentions gold before silver [in Ex. 25:3].[991] Doesn't water come before fire?[992] We can say that this refers to a general [type of] gold that includes seven different types.[993] The letters of "gold" (*zahav*) represent seven (*zayyin*) days that emerged from the five (*heh*) positions of the mouth; this means that they came from speech.[994] [The letter] *bet* includes all the words of Torah, since Scripture begins with a *bet*. All subsequent letters of Torah must have been included in the first *bet*.
>
> The first letter is the general principle (*kelal*) of what one wishes to say later on. The details are all rooted in this idea as well, but they are in the pre-cognizant mind (*qadmut ha-sekhel*), the hylic *yod*.[995] We ourselves see this happen when something suddenly occurs to a person. He thinks

[990] See above, pp. 228-231.

[991] Gold is often associated with *gevurah*, whereas silver generally refers to *hesed*. See *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #93 p. 179; Zohar 2:138b-139a. The order of the verse is thus the reverse of the typical schema of the *sefirot*.

[992] Water is generally associated with *hesed*, whereas fire is associated with *gevurah*.

[993] See b. Yoma 44b, and cf. Zohar 2:147a-148a, where gold represents *binah*, which encompasses the next seven *sefirot* before they emerge.

[994] This refers to the seven days of Creation, but also the emergence of the seven *sefirot* from *hesed* to *malkhut*. As mentioned above, the emanation of the *sefirot* and the formation of the physical world are intertwined processes.

[995] See Lorberbaum, 'Attain the Attribute of *'Ayyin*', pp. 202-207. *Hyle* ("matter"), a term adopted from Aristotelian philosophy, has a very long history in Jewish philosophy and Kabbalah. It is mentioned by Nahmanides in the introduction to his commentary on the Torah as an initial sublime matter created by God from which all other creations were formed. On the background of this term and its reverberations in earlier Jewish thought, see John M. Dillon, 'Solomon Ibn Gabirol's Doctrine of Intelligible Matter', *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L.E. Goodman, Albany 1992, pp. 43-60; Moshe Idel, 'Jewish Kabbalah and Platonism in the Middle Ages and Renaissance', *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought*, ed. L. E. Goodman, Albany 1992, p. 328. See also Heinz Happ, *Hyle: Studien zum aristotelischen Materie-Begriff*, Berlin and New York, 1971. *Me'or 'Einayim*, *bereshit*, p. 22 refers to *hokhmah* as the primordial matter that contained all twenty-two letters later used in Creation; cf. ibid, *liqqutim*, p. 439. However, *Qedushat Levi*, *va-yetse*, p. 74, uses hyle to describe everything being contained in the divine will before it happens, and humans only bring it out of potential and into manifestation.

> about it afterward in his mind, [considering] a number of things that were hidden from him. This idea that occurred to him was drawn from the pre-cognizant mind.
>
> So it is with the *bet* of *bereshit* ("in the beginning"). It includes the potential for all the words that follow. Therefore the *bet* has a diacritic, referred to by the Zohar as the "point within the palace."[996] The *bet* is called a "palace" because it includes all the letters, but they exist there as *hyle*. The point within it alludes to the hylic *yod*, the unformed Wisdom (*golem hokhmah*). This unformed potential (*golem*) corresponds to the large *mem*,[997] a sealed *mem* of [the verse] "for the abundance of the kingdom" (Isa. 9:6).[998] This is the gold that includes seven types, and is therefore mentioned before silver.[999]

This sermon illustrates the parallels between the Creation through the divine Word, the emergence of Torah, and the pathways of human cognition that lead to speech. Each of these processes of revelation follows a similar pattern in which potential energy, or inspiration, is drawn forth from a realm that is beyond conscious thought or language. Pure *hokhmah* is unformed and lacks in any distinct shape. It is formed through *binah*, the structure through which it begins to achieve articulation. Then it is drawn through the seven *sefirot* of *hesed* to *malkhut*, the final stage of expression.

The Maggid has described Creation as a series of stages through which divine Wisdom was incrementally translated through the structures of language. In the next chapter we will see that his portrayal of Revelation is quite similar, for the events of Mt. Sinai represent a moment in which God's *hokhmah* entered words and was embodied as Scripture. The Maggid illustrates this point by explaining that human cognition happens

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[996] See Zohar 1:15b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol. 12b; ibid, *tiqqun* 5, fol. 19a.

[997] The final letter *mem* (ם), enclosed on all sides, is often associated with *binah*; see Zohar 2:127a- b.

[998] This verse strangely includes a final *mem* in the middle of the word "to increase" (*le-marbeh*). See Zohar 1:34b. According to *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 5, fol. 18a, the letter *bet* of *bereshit* was originally a final *mem*, but was then opened into a *bet* as the letter *vav* emerged forth. See also *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 29, p. 83a; cf. b. Sanhedrin 94a.

[999] MDL #180, pp. 280-281. See Hurwitz, 'Psychological Aspects', p. 180.

in the same way: the first flash of inspiration is the potential for an idea, but the initial insight cannot be understood or articulated. A person can only grasp this thought after considering and contemplating it, slowly bringing it into the framework of language in his mind. Then the insight may be described in words and eventually communicated verbally.

But the careful reader will have noticed that the symbolic associations in this homily conflict with those generally found in the Maggid's teachings. Here the seven lower *sefirot*, called the "seven days," are said to come from *dibbur* and the five positions of the mouth. Yet the latter two elements are associated with *shekhinah* and *malkhut*, the very last of the *sefirot*, which cannot rightly be described as the origin of the seven *sefirot*. The Maggid often refers to *binah* as home to the letters of thought and the origin of concrete language, but in this case he seems to associate *dibbur* with *binah* and thus the first *heh* of Y-H-V-H. Some kabbalistic traditions correlate *binah* with *dibbur*, but this association is relatively rare.[1000] This inconsistency, similar to the ambiguity in the Maggid's use of *mahshavah*, is important and worth noting. R. Dov Baer was not a systematic philosopher, and attempts to interpret his homilies as being completely consistent obscure the flexibility of his symbolic language.

CREATION BY MEANS OF TORAH

The Maggid frequently refers to the midrashic tradition of God creating the world through the Torah.[1001] In several homilies he explains the importance of this myth for understanding Revelation and the origins of Scripture, themes that will occupy us in the

[1000] See Zohar 2:119b (R.M.); *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *derushei ha-pesah* #11.

[1001] For an important example in addition to those discussed in detail below, see MDL #193, pp. 306-310.

upcoming chapter. But the Maggid often explores the impact of this notion on his interpretation of the Creation narrative itself. In some cases, he simply cites God gazing into the Torah as proof that the world was indeed formed through the letters of the Hebrew alphabet.[1002] And the idea that God created the world through Torah is one of the conceptual foundations for his understanding of how God may be served through physical deeds. He claims that the letters of Scripture animate the corporeal world, for "the Maker and the made are totally one, and are not separate at all. Were it not for this power of the Maker that is in the made, there would be nothing at all."[1003] Of course, studying Torah brings new energy to the letters of Scripture found in the works of Creation, but engaging with the physical world also uplifts these letters and returns them to their divine source.[1004]

Several of the Maggid's homilies offer a sophisticated and detailed explanation of how the world was formed by means of Scripture:

> God created the world through the Torah. Before the worlds were formed, there was nothing other than the infinite light of *Ein Sof*. The worlds could not [yet] come into existence, since they would have been unable to bear the light of *Ein Sof*. Those [who would] receive [the divine light] needed it to be diminished. But the lower worlds were unable to receive [the light] even after the initial reduction, since its illumination was still too great. There needed to be a total of four reductions (*tsimtsumim*) [of the divine light]. These are the four worlds of which we know: Emanation (*atsilut*), Creation (*beriyyah*), Formation (*yetsirah*) and Action (*'asiyyah*), until this world came to be. All of this was accomplished by means of Torah, with which the world was created.

[1002] MDL #134, p. 234.

[1003] MDL #122, p. 200. See above, p. 191 n. 681.

[1004] MDL #63, p. 103

> There were four [stages] of diminishment (*tsimtsumim*) before [the Torah] came into speech,[1005] since the illumination and wisdom (*sekhel*) were still too great after the first act of contraction. Speech could not withstand it, and therefore all of them were necessary.[1006]

The Torah that preexisted Creation was too expansive and brilliant for it to be embodied in language, and therefore it was beyond the grasp of all finite beings. In fact, this primordial Scripture was so great that a single act of withdrawal, a contraction of light of God's wisdom, could not sufficiently reduce it into a form that could be understood by those who were to receive it. This could only be accomplished through a series of *tsimtsumim*, each of which reduced the light of the primordial Torah and paved the way for it to enter a linguistic configuration.

But the Maggid is making a broader point as well. He identifies the *tsimtsum* of the preexistent Torah's illumination with the reduction of the divine light of *Ein Sof* that happened during Creation. That is, the diminishment of the primordial Torah represents the simultaneous translation of God's infinite Wisdom into the letters, words and stories of Scripture, just as the emanation of the *sefirot* and the physical worlds required a series of reductions in divine light. These two momentous events, the creation of the world and the revelation of Torah, allow limited beings to engage with an embodiment of infinite divine Wisdom.

This sermon, however, leaves an important ambiguity unresolved. Was Creation a divine act parallel to the contraction of Torah into language, or was the physical realm actually created *by means* of a preexistent Scripture? The Maggid's sermon implies the first, but the rabbinic tradition he is interpreting clearly suggests the latter. But perhaps

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[1005] The Maggid later identifies these four stages of contraction as *hokhmah*, *binah*, *tif'eret*, and *malkhut*.

[1006] MDL #122, p. 202.

there is a third way of reading his comparison of these two sacred processes: the formation of the world and the emergence of Torah may reflect the same divine act as viewed from two different perspectives. From one angle, the embodiment of *hokhmah* into finite vessels is manifest as the physical world. From a different perspective, however, the same divine translation resulted in Scripture being drawn forth from the infinite expanse of divine Wisdom and infused into a garment of letters and words.

The Torah is an embodiment of divine Wisdom that God focuses into the defined structures and limitations of language. This sacred book, the textual expression of endless *hokhmah*, was the only fitting tool through which God could accomplish creation. One of the Maggid's teachings refers to the Divine gazing into Scripture literally, likening God to a person who peers into an actual text:

> [The realm of] thought (*mahshavah*) is like a book. [Just as] one says what he has seen in a book, so too does he say what he sees[1007] in his thought. It seems to me that I heard[1008] this explanation of [the sages' teaching,] "God looked into the Torah and created the world." The Torah emerged from *hokhmah*, meaning that whatever He saw in His thought, as it were, if He desired it, it was created.[1009]

In this short teaching the Maggid employs personal terminology, an analogy taken from human experience, to illustrate a theological point about the details of Creation. A person must conceive of something in his mind before he can articulate it through language. In order to find the correct words for expressing his idea, he must gaze into the depths of his

[1007] Heb. *ro'eh*, according to OHE, p. 38d. Schatz-Uffenheimer and the first edition of MDL both read "wants" (*rotseh*), but this must be an error.

[1008] The student transcribing the teaching seems to be speaking in the first person.

[1009] MDL #28, p. 46-47, with a parallel in OHE, fol. 38b.

intellect. Speaking is thus likened to reading from a book; to articulate a thought out loud is to recite the words that are inscribed upon one's mind.

This model, argues the Maggid, is a fitting description of the manner in which God created the cosmos. The physical works of creation were formed by means of the sacred word, and thus represent an articulation of the linguistic pattern engraved upon the divine Mind. God gazed upon the "text" of His thought in order to speak Creation into being. In this context the Maggid identifies the divine Thought as the Torah. God looked into Scripture, which is a textual fabric held together by the structures of language. Of course, the linguistic form of Torah is not synonymous with the *hokhmah* from which it emerged. The Scripture composed of words, stories and laws, presumably associated with the *sefirah binah*, is a crystallization of God's Wisdom.

We should note that Israel's special capacity for sacred language, while imbued within them from the beginning of Creation, should not be interpreted as a natural phenomenon. The Maggid emphasizes that their capacity for holy speech is a divine gift, a position that is in keeping with his positive embrace of language. In this vein he reinterprets a midrashic teaching about God placing an extra *heh* in Abram's name, transforming him into Abraham. This *heh*, argues the Maggid, represents the five positions of the mouth and thus a new capacity for language:

> [Abraham] was given the five positions of the mouth. This is the essence of what sustains the world (*'iqar kiyyum ha-'olam*), and the most important element of divine service: raising up the words and the letters to [their source in the] holy realm.
>
> This the meaning of what is written, "He imparted the power of His deeds to His people" (Ps. 111:6). "The power of His deeds" refers to [divine] speech, through which the world was created, as it is written, "with the word of Y-H-V-H the heavens were made" (Ps. 33:6). The Holy One

> created the world with the twenty-two letters of the Torah. He conveyed (*higid*) this same power to His people, meaning that He drew it down for them.[1010] This refers to the letter *heh* [given to Abraham], which represents the five positions of the mouth, so that they too would have the power to uplift the words.[1011]

Abraham was infused with a special linguistic capacity when God changed his name. The additional letter *heh* granted him, and all of his descendants, an immutable ability to return the divine Word of the physical world to its holy source. Indeed, this act of uplifting the letters of Creation is the very essence of religious service. This homily thus reinforces the connection between the cosmological or theological elements of the Maggid's thought and his devotional goals. Israel's words sustain the cosmos, and their intrinsic and unique facility returning sacred language to its holy origin is the ultimate goal of the project of Creation.

CONCLUSION

The notion that God formed the world through speech, and, more specifically, through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, is central to the Maggid's linguistic theology. His interpretation of the Genesis narrative is also a mystical explanation of the origins of language. Creation began with the emanation of *keter*, a stage that is totally beyond description and can therefore only be alluded to by the tip of the letter *yod*. This phase was followed by the emergence of *hokhmah*. This divine Wisdom was so sublime and ethereal that it can only be referenced by the letter *yod*, the

[1010] The Hebrew root NaGaD is often read in Hasidic and Kabbalistic books in light of its Aramaic meaning of "to pull" or "to draw forth"; see also b. Shabbat 87a; *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 2, *derush le-shabbat ha-gadol*, p. 606.

[1011] LY #282, fol. 101a, with a parallel in OT #30, *hayye sarah*, p. 40. For a different version of this sermon, see MDL #63, pp. 103-104.

first [point-like] letter of God's most sacred and ineffable name. Language originates in *hokhmah*, which includes the potential for all letters and words. This original burst of divine energy took on a more specific form in the realm of divine Thought, or *binah*, and was continuously translated through the *sefirot* until it reached *malkhut*, the final stage of Creation and the ten (or nine) divine utterances which represent the emergence of spoken language.

The same twenty-two Hebrew letters through which God formed the world are the kernel of all human language as well. Perhaps the Maggid conceives of these letters as a universal set of phonemes, but he may instead consider Hebrew the metaphysical root of all other languages. The stages of human cognition and articulation mirror the emergence of the *sefirot* and the divine name in Creation. Ideas originate in the ineffable and incomprehensible realms of *keter* and then *hokhmah*, either of which might be identifiable with the Maggid's term *qadmut ha-sekhel*. As one continues to contemplate and focus his mind upon a single creative inspiration, he brings the idea into *binah* and surrounds it in a linguistic garment composed of the letters of thought. Only after becoming invested in these letters can he articulate his thought via the medium of spoken words.

Letters and words, like physical world, focus and reduce infinite potential so that it may be expressed through limited structures. The Maggid generally refers to Creation as an expression of God's kindness, describing the initial act of divine self-contraction as an act undertaken out of love. The unrestrained illumination of *Ein Sof* would have hopelessly overwhelmed any created beings, so it was necessary for God to diminish that expanse of divine light. However, the attenuation of God's light is neither permanent nor

entirely insurmountable. One may attune his contemplative sense and thereby learn to see in all elements of the physical world the divine Word that sustains them and gives them life. The same is true in the realm of interpersonal communication: a thoughtful and attuned listener may recover the deepest, even infinite significance of an idea that has been constricted into words.

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Chapter 4: The Nature of Torah and Revelation

4.1 Nature of Torah

Background

Classical rabbinic literature preserves a number of traditions that describe the Torah as more than a divinely-revealed text composed of laws and narratives.[1012] Various rabbinic teachings claim that the Torah predated the world, or that God used Scripture to create the world.[1013] Torah itself is often personified in rabbinic literature,[1014] and many texts from Late Antiquity associate Scripture with the *sophia* of Proverbs and Job.[1015] These conceptions of Torah are related to the ways in which the rabbinic sages

[1012] Philo may have understood Scripture as akin (or even identical) to the *logos*. See Wolfson, *Philo*, vol. 1 pp. 115-143; Yitzhak Baer, 'On the Problem of Eschatological Doctrine During the Period of the Second Temple', *Zion* 23, 24 (1958-59), pp. 3-34, 141-165, esp. p. 143 [Hebrew].

[1013] *Bereshit Rabbah* 1:1; ibid 8:2. Cf. b. 'Eruvin 13a; *Midrash Tehillim*, ps. 3; and *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, ch. 3, which suggest that the Torah has magical properties that may have been hidden from mankind to prevent their misuse. See also Michael Fishbane, 'The Garments of Torah—Or, to What May Scripture be Compared?', *The Garments of Torah: Essays in Biblical Hermeneutics*, Bloomington 1989, pp. 33-48; Gabriele Boccaccini, 'The Preexistence of the Torah: A Commonplace in Second Temple Judaism, or a Later Rabbinic Development?', *Henoch* 17 (1995), pp. 329-350; Azzan Yadin, *Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash,* Philadelphia 2004.

[1014] Barbara A. Holdrege, 'The Bride of Israel: The Ontological Status of Scripture in the Rabbinic and Kabbalistic Traditions', *Rethinking Scripture: Essays from a Comparative Perspective*, ed. M. Levering, Albany 1989, pp. 236-239. See also the late midrash *Ruth Zuta*, ed. Buber, 1:1.

[1015] Wilfred L. Knox, 'The Divine Wisdom', *The Journal of Theological Studies* 151 (1937), pp. 230-237; Ralph Marcus, 'On Biblical Hypostases of Wisdom', *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1950), pp. 157-171; R. B. Y. Scott, 'Wisdom in Creation: The 'āmôn of Proverbs VIII 30', *Vetus Testamentum* 10 (1960), pp. 213-223; Bernd Ulrich Schipper, 'When Wisdom is Not Enough!: The Discourse on Wisdom and Torah and the Composition of the Book of Proverbs', *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of Torah in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. B.U. Schipper and D.A. Teeter, Leider 2013, pp. 55-79; and Markus Witte, 'Job in Conversation with the Torah', *Wisdom and Torah: The Reception of Torah in the Wisdom Literature of the Second Temple Period*, ed. B.U. Schipper and D.A. Teeter, Leider 2013, pp. 81-100.

interpreted the Bible, and it is likely that some of these rabbinic reflections on the nature of Torah were linked to emerging notions of a canonized Scripture.[1016]

Jewish mystics have long devoted themselves to exploring the nature of Torah.[1017] Interpreting specific scriptural verses was not among the foremost concerns of the *heikhalot* and *merkavah* literature,[1018] but recent scholarship has demonstrated that many of these works are themselves a mystical expansion of key passages of the Hebrew Bible.[1019] The later German Pietists conceived of Scripture as a manifestation of the names of God and an embodiment of the divine glory (*kavod*). [1020] Yet some of their writings refer to a difference between the Torah and God's Will (*retson ha-bore*), distinguishing between obligatory commitments and supererogatory demands for piety

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[1016] Halbertal, *People of the Book*, esp. pp. 38-39. On rabbinic hermeneutics, see above, n. 516.

[1017] For a foundational study of this subject, see Gershom Scholem, 'The Meaning of the Torah in Jewish Mysticism', *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim, New York 1996, pp. 32-86. In this article Scholem identified three often-overlapping ways in which early Jewish mystics conceived of the nature of Torah: 1) as God's name(s); 2) as living organism; 3) a text whose words hold infinite meaning. Scholem's research was furthered by Moshe Idel in his *Absorbing Perspectives*, esp. 26-136; and idem, 'Infinities of Torah in Kabbalah', *Midrash and Literature*, ed. G. H. Hartman and S. Budick, New Haven 1986, pp. 141-157; and the work of Elliot R. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 190-260, 513-545. Scholem, 'Meaning of the Torah', p. 35 posed the question about whether or not mystical conceptions of Scripture may represent a point of commonality between Christian and Islamic theologians, and wonders if there is any historical connection. On the Qur'an, see A. S. Tritton, 'The Speech of God', *Studia Islamica* No. 36 (1972), pp. 5-22; Yves Marquet, 'Coran et création: Traduction et commentaire de deux extraits des Iḫwān al-ṣafā'', *Arabica* 11 (1964), pp. 279-285; J. R. T. M. Peters, *God's Created Speech: A Study in the Speculative Theology of the Mu'tazilî Qâdî l-Qudât Abûl-Hasan 'Abd al-Jabbâr bn Ahmad al-Hamadânî,* Leiden 1976. For a fascinating comparison between Jewish and Hindu conceptions of sacred writ, see Holdrege*, Veda and Torah*, esp. pp. 131-223.

[1018] Scholem, *Majors Trends*, p. 45, emphasized the experiential aspects of *merkavah* mysticism over and above any exegetical elements.

[1019] These include Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot (Ezek. 1) and Isaiah's description of the heavenly throne room (Isa. 6). See Moshe Idel, 'The Concept of Torah in *Heikhalot* Literature and its Metamorphoses in Kabbalah', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 1 (1981), pp. 23-84 [Hebrew]; idem, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 144-145, 173-178; Nathaniel Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination: Gnosticism, Mandaeism and Merkabah Mysticism*, Leiden and New York 1995, pp. 56-67.

[1020] See Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, pp. 124; Wolfson, 'Torah Study in German Pietism', esp. p. 49; Fishman, 'The Rhineland Pietists' Sacralization of Oral Torah', pp. 9-16; and the studies collected in Colette Sirat, et al, *La Conception du Livre chez les Piétistes Ashkenazes au Moyen Age*, Genève 1996, pp. 48-53, 109-121. We will explore the Pietists' approach to Torah study at length in the upcoming chapter. On the *kavod* more broadly, see Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, pp. 104-106.

only alluded to in Scripture. This notion suggests that in some sense the text of the Torah is an incomplete revelation of the divine Will.[1021] The works of the Pietists are complemented by the Bahir, which describes Torah as an incarnation of divine wisdom and perhaps even a hypostatic power.[1022]

Nahmanides' commentary to the Torah was an important stage in the development of mystical conceptions of Scripture.[1023] He includes a significant number of explicit kabbalistic references, and although his allusions are generally fragmentary and cryptic, Nahmanides brought these mystical traditions into the spotlight for the first time by citing them in his commentary to the Torah. Furthermore, in his introduction Nahmanides refers to the rabbinic teachings about the pre-existence of Torah, but he also reveals that he possessed a tradition (*qabbalah shel emet*) that the Torah is entirely composed of the names of God. These are formed by breaking down the divisions between the words of Scripture and recombining them in new ways.[1024] For this reason, says Nahmanides, a Torah scroll that includes misspelled words, or even lacks a single

[1021] Soloveitchik, 'Three Themes in the *Sefer Hasidim*', pp. 312-325.

[1022] Wolfson, 'Conceptions of Wisdom in *Sefer ha-Bahir*', pp. 147-176.

[1023] See Pedaya, *Nahmanides*, pp. 120-205 [Hebrew]; Moshe Halbertal, *By Way of Truth: Nahmanides and the Creation of Tradition*, Jerusalem 2006, pp. 315-318, 331-333 [Hebrew]; idem, *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and its Philosophical Implications*, trans. Jackie Feldman, Princeton 2007, pp. 83-92.

[1024] Scholem 'Meaning of the Torah', pp. 37-44, argues that while it is based on rabbinic traditions of name magic and the belief that the Torah must have the correct number of letters lest the world be destroyed (cf. b. 'Eruvin 13a), the notion that the Torah is the name of God was first articulated by Geronese Kabbalists such as Nahmanides, R. Ezra ben Solomon and his younger contemporary R. Azriel. However, others have argued that similar ideas are already found in the works of the German Pietists; see Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, p. 124; Idel, 'The Concept of Torah', p. 54; idem, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 321. Elsewhere Nahmanides cites a tradition from the work *Shimmushei Torah* teaching that Scripture includes many divine names, but not that it is entirely composed of God's names. See *Kitvei Ramban*, ed. C.D. Chavel, Jerusalem 1961, vol. 2, pp. 167-168.

necessary letter is rendered totally unfitting for ritual use. It is interesting to note, however, that Nahmanides' own commentary never engages in that sort of exegesis.[1025]

The Zohar describes Scripture as overflowing with secrets, for each of its letters holds an untold number of new interpretations.[1026] The Zohar's authors refer to Torah as the name of God,[1027] but they also describe the relationship between the Scripture and its divine Giver in more intimate terms: one passage declares that the Torah and the blessed Holy One are identical.[1028] The Zohar also connects the different elements of Torah to the symbolic matrix of the *sefirot*: the Written Torah is associated with *tif'eret*, the Oral Torah with *malkhut*, and the preexistent Torah with *hokhmah*.[1029] These conceptions are reflected in the Zohar's well-developed conception of Scripture's inner and outer layers of meaning.[1030] An oft-cited passage refers to the Torah as having taken on a narrative

[1025] Cf. b. 'Eruvin 13a. The writings of Abulafia and Gikatilla frequently describe the Torah as an explanation of the name of God. Gikatilla refers to Scripture as a veritable textual fabric, a document woven together from different divine appellatives, all of which refer to and explain the sacred Tetragrammaton. This understanding of the divine nature of Torah was one of the assumptions behind their exegetical practice of breaking down the verses into the letters and interpreting the smallest semantic units of Scripture individually. See Scholem, 'Meaning of the Torah', p. 42; Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, pp. 29-124; and Morlok, *Gikatilla's Hermeneutics*, pp. 172-208.

[1026] See Zohar 3:149a-149b. See also, inter alia, 2:95a, 98b; 3:79b. On the nature of Torah and study in the Zohar, see Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 3, pp. 1077-1121; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, esp. pp. 155-228; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Beautiful Maiden Without Eyes: *Peshat* and *Sod* in Zoharic Hermeneutics', *The Midrashic Imagination: Jewish Exegesis, Thought, and History*, ed. M. Fishbane, Albany 1993, pp. 155-203. See also Boaz Huss, 'NiSAN—The Wife of the Infinite: The Mystical Hermeneutics of Rabbi Isaac of Acre', *Kabbalah* 5 (2000), pp. 155-181.

[1027] Zohar 3:71; cf. 2:124a.

[1028] Zohar 2:60a. See Scholem, 'Meaning of Torah', pp. 44-45, and the other early kabbalistic sources mentioned in his footnotes.

[1029] See also *Perush ha-Aggadot le-Rabbi 'Azriel*, ed. I. Tishby, Jerusalem 1945, pp. 2-3, 77, 81-82.

[1030] Daniel Abrams, '"Text" in a Zoharic Parable: A Chapter in the History of Kabbalistic Textuality', *Kabbalah* 25 (2001), pp.7-54.

"garb" when it came into the world.[1031] That is, the stories and indeed the current text of the Torah are simply a garment for the deeper truths that lie within.[1032]

The mystics of Safed also described the Torah as having infinite layers of meaning.[1033] Their writings reveal an awareness that the present form of Scripture is not identical to the Torah that existed before the creation of the world, and they reflected on whether or not it would be possible to reconstruct this primordial text, which they referred to as the *Torah de-atsilut*.[1034] This notion was further developed in the literature of the Sabbatean movement, whose thinkers devoted a great deal of energy toward describing the nature of the Torah as it would be revealed in the age of redemption.[1035] But non-Sabbatean texts of Safed Kabbalah from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries also explored the relationship between the current form of Scripture and the preexistent Torah.[1036]

[1031] Zohar 3:152a.

[1032] The Zohar's approach to biblical exegesis is part of a raging debate in medieval Jewish thought over the extent to which the Torah should be interpreted non-literally; see Warren Zev Harvey, 'On Maimonides' Allegorical Readings of Scripture', *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*, ed. J. Whitman, Leiden 2000, pp. 181-188; Frank Talmage, 'Apples of Gold: The Inner Meaning of Sacred Texts in Medieval Judaism', *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green, New York 1986, pp. 313-355; James A. Diamond, 'Concepts of Scripture in Maimonides', *Jewish Concepts of Scripture: A Comparative Introduction*, ed. B.D. Sommer, New York 2012, pp. 123-138. See also Harry Austryn Wolfson, 'The Veracity of Scripture in Philo, Halevi, Maimonides, and Spinoza', Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume: On the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday, New York 1950, pp. 603-630. See also David Weiss Halivni, *Peshat and Derash: Plain and Applied Meaning in Rabbinic Exegesis*, New York 1991.

[1033] Scholem, 'Meaning of the Torah', pp. 64-65. We should note that the while Lurianic Kabbalah offered a great many esoteric interpretations of Scriptural verses, the mythological elements of the biblical stories was particularly important for Isaac Luria. For an original study of Luria's hermeneutical approach to Scripture, see Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash*; and see also Liebes, 'Myth vs. Symbol in the Zohar and in Lurianic Kabbalah', p. 212-242.

[1034] Scholem, 'Meaning of the Torah', pp. 71-74

[1035] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah, 1626-1676*, Princeton 1973, pp. 11-12, 51-52 319-324; Yehuda Liebes, *On Sabbateaism and its Kabbalah: Collected Essays*, Jerusalem 1995, pp. 100, 164 [Hebrew].

[1036] *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 1:4, p. 127; *Hesed le-Avraham* 2:10, p. 80.

A broader trend that characterizes the different mystical conceptions of Torah requires further note. The writings of the medieval Kabbalists portray Scripture as a linguistic embodiment of an invisible Deity.[1037] These mystics no longer conceived of God as being overtly visible in the physical world, nor did their spiritual path entail an ascent on high culminating in a visionary encounter with God. Medieval mystical literature, from the works of German Pietists to the writings of Safed mystics, describes the text of the Torah as one of the most important mediums through which the gap between the human and divine realms may be bridged.

THE TORAH OF CREATION

The notion that Torah predated the world, and indeed that God created the world through Scripture, are crucial elements of the Maggid's theology. In a previous chapter we noted the importance of these ideas for the devotional life, since the notion that all physical reality contains an element of the Torah offers a justification for serving God through the corporeal realm.[1038] Let us now investigate the Maggid's understanding of the nature of Torah itself. If Scripture preceded the world and was the instrument of Creation, what does this imply about the nature of Scripture? Was the text of the Pentateuch as we have it included in the primordial Torah, or was the preexistent Scripture totally beyond language? Finally, does the Maggid mean to suggest that Torah

[1037] Scholem, 'Meaning of the Torah', pp. 41-42; Moshe Idel, 'Torah: Between Presence and Representation of the Divine in Jewish Mysticism', *Representation in Religion: Studies in Honor of Moshe Barasch*, ed. J. Assmann and A. I. Baumgarten, Leiden 2001, pp. 197-235; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Iconicity of the Text: Reification of Torah and the Idolatrous Impulse of Zoharic Kabbalah', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 11 (2004), pp. 215-242.

[1038] See *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot de'ot* 3:3, for a very different explanation of serving God through the corporeal.

was truly co-eternal with the Divine, or was Scripture, like language, created at some point before the cosmos was formed?[1039]

The Maggid frequently emphasizes that the preexistent Torah was infinite and undifferentiated:

> "Open up my eyes, that I may see [the wonders of Your Torah] (Ps. 119:18). It is taught that the Holy One created the world through the Torah. Not only this world, but all the worlds were created through the letters of Torah. It is impossible to say that each part of the world was formed from a particular part of the Torah. The Torah is preexistent (*qedumah*). It is above time and totally unified (*ahdut pashut*) [i.e. a simple, noncomposite unity]. It has no parts. According to this, it necessarily follows that each section of the Torah includes the entire Torah; all the worlds contain it all as well. It appears only in particularized form, but everything is hidden within it. We see nothing except this world, but we have a tradition that there are worlds without end. So too with each commandment—we see only the action, but everything is hidden within it...
>
> "Open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your Torah" (Ps. 119:18) refers to those wondrous worlds hidden *within* Your Torah. This is [the explanation of], "the Holy One created the world with the Torah"— with the Torah, just as we have it, but it has become emboided in all the worlds according to [that particular world]. [Scripture] itself does not change.[1040]

The Torah that predated the world was undifferentiated, unlimited and lacking in all details. Given this description, it seems as if the Maggid has in mind a Scripture without any specific words. He does, however, refer to God forming the world through the letters of Torah, suggesting that even the primordial Scripture included some sort of a linguistic structure. These letters of the preexistent Torah may be analogous to the letters of thought

[1039] Although a midrash claims that the Torah was created two thousand years before the world, the Maggid seems to have interpreted other rabbinic traditions as implying that Scripture was indeed coeternal. For example, see the formulation in OT #245, *tehilim*, p. 285: "the Holy One is preexistent (*qadmon*), and the Torah was preexistent (*muqdemet*)."

[1040] MDL #134, p. 234, with parallels in OT #80, *va-era*, p. 112; OHE, fol. 57a-b.

(*binah*) employed in cognition both human and divine. Or, more likely, they may be associated with the infinite potential of *hokhmah*, the reservoir from which language emerged.

Invoking the Zoharic tradition, the Maggid explains that the primordial Torah assumed an appropriate form as it entered our world. But he does not specify if that moment of translation took place during Creation or at Mt. Sinai. This ambiguity is noteworthy, for it reflects something that the Maggid makes explicit in several other teachings: Creation and Revelation were both processes through which God's infinite Wisdom became expressed in the particulars of language.

The Maggid draws a striking analogy between the inner unity of Torah and the divine energy that joins all aspects of the created world. Although only the physical realm and all of its distinctions are immediately visible, there are an infinite number of worlds nested within them. The same principle extends to the commandments, the sacred deeds dictated by the Torah. The commandments may appear to be specific actions with very clear dimensions, but each of them can lead to *devequt* with the infinite Divine. The Maggid underscores that a similar unity remains in each element of Scripture even after the Torah became invested in its present form. Scripture's translation into specific laws and stories occludes this fact to the casual reader, but the careful student will be able to pierce through the text by means of his contemplative study, thus arriving at the innate divine unity within its words.

The Maggid's comparison between the unity of the physical worlds and that of the Torah is more than a simple comparison. There are an infinite number of worlds precisely because God created the earthly realm through the boundless Torah, or as the

Maggid often teaches, by means of the *sefirah hokhmah*.[1041] However, as noted above, it is not always clear if the Maggid believes that the Torah emerged from *hokhmah*, or if the primordial Scripture and *hokhmah* are in fact synonymous.

What can the notion that God formed the world through the preexistent Torah teach us about the nature of Scripture? In one homily the Maggid offers an interesting description of the Divine gazing into the Torah much as a human reader might peer into a text:

> [The realm of] Thought is like a book.[1042] [Just as] one says what he has seen in a book, so too does he speak that which he desires in his thoughts. It seems to me that I heard this explanation of [the sages' teaching,] "God looked into the Torah and created the world." The Torah emerged from Wisdom (*hokhmah*), meaning that He desired to create what He saw in His Thought.[1043]

The Torah originated in the *sefirah hokhmah*, which appears to be a reference to the divine Mind or Thought. Yet this passage does not make it clear if Scripture was emanated forth from *hokhmah*, and would therefore be associated with *binah*, or if the Torah is a manifestation of divine Wisdom and thus should be associated with *hokhmah* itself. This Zoharic tradition of the Torah emerging from *hokhmah* is often cited by the Maggid's teachings, but this specific point remains unresolved throughout his sermons.[1044]

Claiming that the primordial Scripture emanated from one of the highest *sefirot* demonstrates that the Torah used to form the world was something far greater than it is in

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[1041] See LY #122, fol. 28a-b.

[1042] See MDL #34, p. 53. Cf. ST, p. 62b-63a. This teaching is attributed to the BeSHT, though it is much more in keeping with the style and theology of the Maggid.

[1043] MDL #28, p. 46-47. Cf. Scholem MS RS 28, fol. 164a.

[1044] This tension is already present in the Zohar. Some passages, such as Zohar 2:85a, may be read as suggesting that Torah is *hokhmah*, whereas others make it clear that Torah clearly proceeded forth from *hokhmah*; see Zohar 2:121a. See also SLA pp. 8, 35, 135.

its present form. But why did God need to contract or diminish the preexistent Scripture? The answer, argues the Maggid, is that such a Torah could never be comprehended by a finite being. God was compelled to withdraw the infinite light of *Ein Sof* in order to generate an empty space in which to create the worlds, and it was similarly necessary for the illumination of the Torah to be moderated so that it could be grasped:

> The Torah is called a "folded scroll" (*megillah 'afa*; Zech. 5:1-2),[1045] greater than all of the worlds. God needed to contract the Torah so that its light could shine in the worlds. Now, all things have both matter and form. Even the Torah has matter (*homer*) and form (*tsurah*).[1046] The matter is the letters and the form is the vowels. They are the life-force of the letters, since a vowel [point] has the same shape as the *yod*, which is *hokhmah*, and "*hokhmah* gives life [to her husband," i.e. matter] (Eccl. 7:12), and "You made them all [i.e. the worlds and the letters] with *hokhmah*" (Ps. 104:24)... If the Torah had tended to one of the extremes, such as loving-kindness (*hesed*), it would have continued to spread out like the attribute of kindness and love, and could never have been received. Therefore God needed to contract it, [through] the attribute of awe (*yirah*), called *tsimtsum*.[1047]

Tsimtsum, the contraction of the undifferentiated light of *Ein Sof* in order to make space for the world, was a crucial moment in the process of Creation. This homily reveals that the same dynamic characterized the emergence of the present form of Scripture from the preexistent Torah. The primordial Scripture was so expansive and intense that it would have overwhelmed anyone who wanted to engage with it, so God diminished it by

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[1045] This verse is interpreted by the Talmudic sages as referring to Torah; see b. 'Eruvin 21a, where this verse is used to derive that the size of the world is but a tiny fraction of Scripture; and RaSHI's commentary ad loc. Cf. MaHarSHA's interpretation ad loc, in which he reads the passage as referring to PaRDeS, or the four different ways of interpreting the Torah; and his comments to b. Niddah 69b, in which he interprets this notion as referring to many different facets of Torah. Cf. *Sefer Hashem*, ed. A. Eisenbach, Jerusalem 2004 p. 29; *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit, massekhet shevu'ot, torah or*, #123-124.

[1046] Elsewhere the Maggid describes the letters as matter and their shapes as the "form"; see MDL #66, p. 108. The terms *homer* and *tsurah* are relatively uncommon in the Maggid's sermons, and appear much more frequently in the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye.

[1047] MDL #189, pp. 292, with a parallel in OT #114, *qedoshim*, pp. 157-158.

contracting it into specific words. This suggests that the primordial Torah lacked any particular linguistic framework, even one as elemental as letters. We will return to this question of whether or not the preexistent Scripture included language as we continue to explore the formation of Torah, from the deeds of the patriarchs to its revelation on Mt. Sinai.

TORAH AND THE NAME OF GOD

The Maggid frequently refers to the Torah as an expression of the sacred divine names. Yet for him, unlike his medieval kabbalistic forbearers, this understanding of Scripture does not mean that the Bible constitutes a single, extended name of God, nor does it imply that the Torah is a textual composite that fuses together different divine appellatives. Instead, the Maggid presents a syllogism grounded in the divine nature of all language: the Torah in its current form is expressed in words, and the name Y-H-V-H is present in all language, and therefore the sacred divine name must be included throughout the Torah:

> "The Tree of Life in the midst of the garden" (Gen. 2:9). The Tree of Life is the holy name Y-H-V-H, as is known.[1048] "The midst of the garden" means that this name is embodied within the fifty-three[1049] portions of the Torah. Earlier we have taught that this name is clothed within all of speech.[1050] It has endless masks and degrees of hiding. It is expressed first within the five points of articulation, then successively within letters, combinations of letters, words, and narrations. The Zohar says that one who has eyes [referring to the mind's eye] looks at the inner nature of things;

[1048] In classical Kabbalah the name Y-H-V-H is often associated with *tif'eret*, the Written Torah, and the Tree of Life. See Zohar 1:27a; 2:117a; 3:271a (R.M.); *Sha'arei Orah*, ch. 5, pp. 252-256.

[1049] The numerical value of *GaN*, or "garden," is fifty-three.

[1050] See MDL #192, pp. 300-306; LY #264, fol. 81a.

> one who lacks such eyes sees only the royal garments. [1051] This is especially true of seemingly profane narratives.[1052]

We have noted that the Maggid's teachings refer to Y-H-V-H as the root of all language. This name is hidden in all words and speech acts, giving them life and infusing them with divine energy. In this homily the Maggid applies the principle to the text of Scripture as well. The sacred name Y-H-V-H is embodied within each word of the Torah, and therefore none of its stories can be truly mundane. Apprehending this fact is not beyond the ken of the student of Torah, for the properly-attuned student is mindful of the inner nature of Scripture that is manifest through its words and letters.

We will explore the Maggid's understanding of the seemingly ordinary biblical narratives at great length below, but we should note that elsewhere he suggests that all of these stories express, or perhaps contain, divine names as well. The Maggid's conception of Torah as the name(s) of God does not mean that the interpreter should atomize its text into tiny symbolic units alluding to specific *sefirot*. He teaches that the biblical tales themselves embody the divine appellatives:

> The secret [meaning] of the Torah is that it is the name of God, referring to the ten names that cannot be erased.[1053] They are the ten *sefirot*, the ten Intellects.[1054] All the ten *sefirot* are the Torah

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[1051] See Zohar 3:152a.

[1052] MDL #195, p. 313-314, with OT #22, *va-yera*, p. 29. Based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol.1, pp. 105-105.

[1053] See b. Shevu'ot 35a-b. See *Sha'arei Orah*, ch. 5, pp. 218-220; *'Emeq ha-Melekh*, 1:4, p. 126-127.

[1054] Here we see the Maggid juxtaposing terminology of kabbalah and philosophy side by side. See also OT, p. 48a. The same association of the ten *sefirot* with the ten Intellects is quoted frequently in the works of his students; see, inter alia, *Hesed le-Avraham*, *haqdamah*, p. 15; *Me'or 'Einayim*, *va-era*, p. 160; *va-ethanan*, p. 324; *re'eh*, 351. See also *Liqqutei Torah*, *be-shalah*, fol. 46a, where Maimonides is cited explicitly. Cf. *Peri ha-Arets*, *va-yiggash*, p. 36. I hope to devote a future study to exploring the influence of medieval philosophy on R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk. On the ten intellects in Jewish philosophy, see Stern, 'Maimonides' Epistemology', p. 109; Amira Eran, 'Al-Ghazali and Maimonides on the World to Come and Spiritual Pleasures', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 8 (2001), p. 139. Of course, the move toward interpreting the ten Intellects of Aristotelian metaphysics in light of Kabbalah happened long before the Maggid; see Idel, *Language, Torah, and Hermeneutics*, pp. 31-33, 38-41, 165-166; Esti Eisenmann,

> in its entirety. How so? For example, a matter of love written in the Torah is the *sefirah hesed*, and a story about awe is the *sefirah gevurah*, and so forth for all of the *sefirot*. Thus the entire Torah is names of the Holy One, meaning His *sefirot*, and the ten names that cannot be erased are themselves in the Torah [i.e., they are embodied by Scripture's narratives].[1055]

Ambiguities in the text make it possible to read this passage as a claim that each of the *sefirot* contains the entirety of Torah. However, it seems more likely that the Maggid is suggesting that the Bible includes a wide variety of stories, and when taken together these tales express the ten *sefirot*. Far from calling for the reader to abandon the plain-sense meaning of the Torah, this sermon refers to the stories as an embodiment of the *sefirot*. Instead of reducing the Torah into letters in an attempt to uncover the divine names hidden within, the Maggid interprets the Torah's stories as an articulation of God's different qualities: stories about love refer to the *sefirah hesed*, whereas tales of anger and fear express *gevurah*, and so forth for the other *sefirot*.

The Maggid's position on this is not entirely consistent. His biblical exegesis, like that of the BeSHT, often separates the words of Torah into independent units of letters and smaller words and disassociates them from their plain-sense meaning.[1056] But this is not the only sermon in which he describes an interpretive approach that includes reading the biblical narratives somewhat more literally. Another homily attributed to the Maggid suggests that the hidden profundities of the Torah, and indeed the divine names, are expressed precisely through the plain-sense meaning of the text:

'*Ahabah ba-Ta'anugim*: A Fourteenth-Century Maimonidean Encyclopedia', *Traditions of Maimonideanism*, ed. C. Fraenkel, Leiden and Boston 2009, p. 220.

[1055] MDL #168, p. 266. Cf. OHE, fol. 3b, for a different teaching about the ten names that cannot be erased.

[1056] This approach also recalls certain classical midrashim, and the hermeneutical project of Abulafia and Gikatilla. See above, pp. 157-158.

> Now all the prophets viewed God through a dim speculum that does not shine, while Moses saw Him through a shining speculum.[1057] This means that he apprehended the essence of the Divine more than any of the other prophets, and therefore the Torah was given in its general form (*bi-khelalut*) [i.e. in language] through him.
>
> There is no division in God's essence, since it is infinite, undifferentiated Oneness (*ein sof ahdut pashut*). The entire Torah is the name of the blessed Holy One, referring to the ten divine names that we have which cannot be erased.[1058] They are appellations (*kinnu'im*) of the blessed Holy One. For example, the name *el* is *hesed*, which is love; *elohim* is awe, the attribute of *gevurah*, and so forth for all of them. But the essence of Divinity and the life-force of [all] the names and the attributes is called Y-H-V-H.[1059]
>
> The entire Torah speaks of the names of God. For example, one part speaks about the attribute of love—how to love the blessed Creator, recounting how the patriarchs loved Him and walked with Him always, suffering injustices for this love. It recounts several events that might seem like they [the patriarchs] were doing things for their own benefit. Yet, in addition to deeper secrets [within their deeds], the plain-sense [meaning of the verses] tells us this in order to demonstrate that they did everything out of love for the Creator... all of this is included in the name of *el*.[1060]

The Maggid underscores that the literal meanings of the stories hold inspirational lessons for the spiritual and devotional life. However, he reiterates that the stories themselves are the names of God and the various divine attributes expressed in narrative form.[1061] Here the parallel between Creation and Revelation is quite explicit, for both are described as acts in which God focused infinite divine essence into the matrix of the *sefirot*. Moses

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[1057] b. Yevamot 59b. See Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Theories of the Glory and Visionary Experience in Pre-Kabbalistic Sources', *Through a Speculum That Shines; Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, Princeton 1994, pp. 147-148, 151.

[1058] See above.

[1059] Cf. *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol. 17b.

[1060] MDL #132, pp. 227-228, with parallels in OT #248, *tehilim*, pp. 301-302; and OHE, fol. 56b-57a.

[1061] Cf. MDL #196, p. 315, which describes all stories in the Torah as an expression of either *hesed* or *gevurah*.

was uniquely suited to the task of giving the Torah because he was able to perceive God's most abstract and undifferentiated form even before it was diminished into concrete language.[1062]

The notion that the entire Torah is composed of the names of God, like all elements of the Maggid's theology, has repercussions for devotional practice. The identification of all Scripture with the divine names adds a new dimension to the study of Torah.[1063] Another sermon compares reading the sacred text to a dialogue between man and God, through which the one who is studying calls to the Divine by name:

> Here is another expression of [divine] compassion. When a child calls his father by his name, or even when a villager calls him by the description of "king," as is fitting for him, it arouses his compassion. So too, as it were, the blessed Holy One focused (*tsimtsem*) Himself into the Torah. In addition to the constant compassion that He bestows upon Israel because of His pain at their great suffering, they arouse extra compassion when they read Torah. [This is true] even of a "villager," meaning someone who reads the Torah with great awe and love [but] without understanding its inner dimensions (*penimiyyut*).
>
> The Holy One and Torah are one, and the entire Torah is names of God. Someone who is called by his name sets aside all his affairs and turns to the person who called to him, answering his question because he is bound by his name. So too, as it were, did God focus Himself into the Torah. We draw Him down when we read the Torah, arousing compassion and loving-kindness. He and His name are united and one.[1064]

[1062] On Moses' unique role as lawgiver and transmitter of the Torah, see below, pp. 336-338, 347-362.

[1063] The comments of MaHaRSHA on b. Berakhot 21a suggest that a blessing must be recited before reading the Torah because Scripture *is* the names of God.

[1064] LY #46, fol. 9a, with parallels in OT #98, *yitro*, p. 138; and OHE, fol. 45a. The different versions of this convoluted teaching are all quite different from one another. See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 156. See also OHE, fol. 14b and SLA p. 133, for a version of this teaching described by Idel as even more magical. See also *Liqqutei Torah*, *massa'ei*, fol. 95b. Similar teachings are recorded in the name of the BeSHT as well. Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 155-60, and 533 n. 98, traces versions of this idea in the later Hasidic literature, and in particular that of the Habad school.

This teaching makes a devotional, and perhaps even theurgic, element of Torah study highly accessible. Even someone with no knowledge of kabbalistic wisdom receives an additional measure of divine mercy when he reads Scripture with enthusiasm and passion. The Maggid is not suggesting that God's mercy is arrested by intoning magical formulae or secret divine names that have been mined from the biblical text. Divine compassion is inspired through reading, or perhaps better, *reciting* the words of Torah with great fervor. This teaching comes rather close to transforming study into an act of prayer. The intellectual content of the biblical text and, in contrast to what we saw above, the plain-sense meaning of the Torah's words, are much less important than the simple act of reading Scripture. We might have expected the Maggid to emphasize that the one studying must cultivate the proper inner intention, but here he seems to attribute great power to reciting the words and letters of Torah.

The Maggid also extends the sacred nature of names in the Torah to the human names included in the Torah:[1065]

> "These are the names of the children of Israel that came to Egypt" (Ex 1:1)... The Zohar teaches that the entire Torah is names of the blessed Holy One. Even the names of people are holy names above. For example, the combination of letters [that make up the name] "Reuben" is a holy name above. Reuben down below is called by this combination [of letters] because the source of his soul (*shoresh nishmato*) comes from this combination above. So it is with all of the names, even those of the "uncircumcised" such as Esau and Pharaoh. Above they are holy, as is written in the preceding homilies.

[1065] See *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 14:114, p. 693, where the author explains that all names in the Torah include a vast array of holy secrets, even those of the non-Jewish nations.

> Perhaps we can say that this is the meaning of the verse, "these are the names of the Children of Israel" (Ex. 1:1). Do not say that this is just a story of things that happened, describing how they came to Egypt.[1066]

The names of all people in the Torah are sacred because they correspond to holy names in the heavenly realm above. These names came down into the physical world, a journey likened to the Israelites' descent into Egypt, and were applied to each of the biblical characters in accordance with the source of each person's soul in the divine superstructure. In the earthly realm these names appear to be mundane combinations of letters, but, says the Maggid, they are actually holy in the divine world.

This teaching suggests that this same rule holds true for *all* human names, not just those of biblical characters. However, in another teaching the Maggid is more circumspect. He teaches that everything, including the names of the gentiles like Esau and Amalek, exists in pure holiness above. The names of Israel remain sacred even in the lower world, but these other figures descended through the *sefirot* of judgment and impurity on their way into the earthly realm. Therefore, while their essence may be holy, their physical embodiment is not:

> The names of Israel are all rooted in the appearances of the name Y-H-V-H written in the Torah scroll. Adam was the aim of Creation; in the beginning Israel, called "beginning," arose in Thought. Therefore the full [divine] name was written for a full world only after Adam was created,[1067] since the goal of creation had been accomplished.
>
> This is like one who writes an entire Torah scroll without the names Y-H-V-H, writing them in only after he finished the letters and words of the entire scroll. The same is true of the creation of the world. It was not fitting for the name Y-H-V-H to be mentioned at first, since the aim of

[1066] LY #272, pp. 90a-b, with a parallel in OT #65, *shemot*, p. 90.

[1067] See *Bereshit Rabbah* 13:3.

> creation had not been finished in its entirety, and the world was not yet full. But after Adam was created and the world filled, then the complete name was written. Thus all names of Israel are rooted in the very name Y-H-V-H.[1068]

The names of the Israelites are rooted in the most sacred name of God. They were the ultimate goal of Creation, and only after their predecessor Adam was formed could the Tetragrammaton appear in its entirety. As is true in a great many of his sermons, the Maggid is building upon a theme already present in the midrash, combining it with his conception of Y-H-V-H as the source of all language. In this teaching the Maggid's particularism is quite clear, since the Israelites are singled out from among the other nations. If the Torah scroll in the Maggid's sermon is to be taken as a metonymy for the world as a whole, then the names of the Jewish people are like the names of God within Scripture. The names of all other nations are simply the ordinary letters that constitute the remainder of the biblical text.

TORAH AND GOD ARE ONE

In many homilies the Maggid goes beyond the tradition that Scripture is the name of God. Drawing upon an idea found in the Zohar, the Maggid frequently identifies the Torah with the blessed Holy One.[1069] In one such sermon, we read:

[1068] MDL #196, p. 316. Cf. *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 1:4, p. 127, for a tradition attributed to Nahmanides in which the names of all Jews are somehow referenced in the Torah. The Maggid's focus on the exclusive holiness of the Jewish people is striking, but not surprising. However, it is interesting to note that the Maggid reads the creation of Adam as the birth of the first Jew. Somewhat strange, given that the legend of "Israel arose first in thought" is about proving that the Jews are the most important part of creation even though they are found nowhere in the creation narrative.

[1069] This idea appears throughout the Zohar in various different formulations; see *Zohar* 1:24a; 2:60a, 90b. See Idel, 'The Concept of the Torah', p. 67; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Beautiful Maiden', pp. 167-168. The Maggid's disciples often use variations of the phrase "the blessed Holy One, Torah and Israel are all one," but this is found only very rarely in the Maggid's sermons; see OHE, fol. 14b; *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *pesah*, p. 244. On the origins and evolution of this formulation, see Isaiah Tishby's classic study 'The Holy One, blessed be He, Torah, and Israel are All One: The Source of this Aphorism in Ramhal's Commentary to the

> It is taught that the Torah and the blessed Holy One are one. This means that the essence of His divinity can only be withstood through the Torah. God created the world by means of Torah, meaning the letters, saying, "'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Gen. 1:3). This was an act of contraction (*tsimtsum*) for God, who focused (*tsimtsem*) Himself into the letters and created the world.
>
> Now a person is not entirely separate from the letters that he speaks; his physical body is distinct, but not his life-force. So it is with the blessed One, Who is not separate from the letters [of Torah]. Nobody can withstand His Divinity except through them. This is the meaning of "He and His causes [i.e., a medium that attenuates God's intensity] are one"[1070].[1071]

The notion that God focused the infinite divine light into the letters of Torah appears frequently in the Maggid's teachings.[1072] Here he provides a clear reason for this contraction: the divine essence can only be accessed through Scripture, because without the vessel of the letters the light would be far too intense. The linguistic structures of Torah are a filter necessary to prevent the world from being overwhelmed by the overabundance of God's light. The words of the Bible are thus like a partial veil, which conceals the enormity of the divine essence while at the same time allowing for human

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Idra Rabba', *Kirjat Sepher* 50 (1974-1975) pp. 480-492, where the author traces the phrase to the writings of R. Moses Hayyim Luzzatto (d. 1746). In the Maggid's teachings, see MDL #12, p. 26; #24, p. 40; #86, pp. 149-150; #93, pp. 160-161; #97, p. 171; #122, p. 202; #173, p. 272; and the various parallels.

[1070] *Tiqqunei Zohar, haqdamah*, p. 3b. In its original context the phrase suggests that God and the *sefirot* of the world of *atsilut* ("Emanation") are still fully united, which is not the case with the subsequent worlds. See Cordovero's discussion of this passage in *Pardes Rimmonim* 16:2. See also *Ets Hayyim* 42:5, 47:2. Yet neither Cordovero nor Luria associates the phrase with Torah. R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir offers a parable in order to understand this process of emanation: When one first has a thought of inspiration, his hands and feet hasten to make it happen of their own accord. This decreases with every moment after the inspiration. This is the goal, to have a connection between the mind and body so automatic that the actions happen on their own. See *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *shavu'ot*, p. 18; ibid, vol. 2, *ruth*, p. 42. See also *Sefer ha-Tanya*, *iggeret ha-qodesh*, ch. 26 p. 144a, in which God is fully united with the divine word which is expressed in the Oral Torah, representing the *sefirah malkhut* of *atsilut*. Cf. ibid, ch. 20.

[1071] MDL #132, p. 227, with parallels in OT #248, *tehilim*, pp. 300-301; and OHE, fol. 57a-57b.

[1072] See also MDL #126, p. 217; OT #162, *'eqev*, pp. 212-213. Cf. MDL #173, p. 272. See also *No'am Elimelekh*, vol. 1, *va-yera*, p. 40; translated in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 1, p. 103-104, for a student who quotes this tradition in the name of the Maggid.

beings to engage with and perceive that light through the intermediary frameworks of words.[1073]

The identification of God with the Torah returns us to the striking theological problem mentioned above: how can the infinite God be compared to the limited number of words and verses of Scripture? The Maggid answers that while the words of Torah are filled with the divine energy, its text does not express the true fullness of the Divine:

> Torah and the blessed Holy One are one. We can object: the blessed One is infinite (*ein sof*), but the Torah is finite! The prophet saw that the Torah [only preceded the world] by two thousand years, as is taught in the Talmud.[1074] But the matter may be understood, since it is known that the power of the Maker is in the made.[1075] For example, when a person says some wise word (*devar hokhmah*) or does something wise, then his power is within the vessel that he created, or in the word that he has spoken. The wise person who performed the [first] action can always speak more or do other wise things. So too the Torah is *hokhmah*, and it is from the blessed One. His power is in the Torah as the power of the Maker within the made. This power is truly infinite.[1076]

The Maggid argues that the preexistent Torah, like *hokhmah*, refers to the infinite well of divine energy that animates the physical realm. The words of Scripture, despite their capacity to mediate between the Divine and the temporal world, still compose a limited text. God is immanently manifest within the language of Scripture because these words provide concrete vessels for the vast and unformed potential of divine energy, but the Bible itself does not restrict the infinite number of potential ways that the divine essence could be expressed.

[1073] See Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, esp. pp. 8, 31-59.

[1074] See *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:2; Cf. b. Avodah Zarah 9a.

[1075] See above, p. 191 n. 681.

[1076] MDL #56, p. 83.

Here the Maggid has qualified the identification of the Torah with the Divine.[1077] Scripture is a linguistic structure associated with one of the highest *sefirot*. It is noteworthy that in this case he identifies Torah with the *sefirah hokhmah*, though elsewhere the Maggid describes Scripture as having emerged from *hokhmah*. Indeed, divine energy fills and sustains Torah, just as the name Y-H-V-H animates all language and the sacred creative word remains within the physical world. But Scripture is still a finite collection of words, and of course cannot be equated with the abstract and limitless *Ein Sof*.

The Maggid often explores the impact of the essential connection between Torah and God upon performing the commandments. The different parts of Scripture, and indeed the various elements of the physical world, may appear to be totally distinct. However, we learn:

> The sages have taught that the Torah and blessed Holy One are one. Just as God has no division, so too does the Torah lack any divisions. Every part of a commandment includes all six hundred and thirteen [commandments]. The reason for this is that the power of the Maker is in the made, and everything is absolute unity. Only bodies [i.e. external forms] are distinct. There are many separate created things, but the power of the Maker within them is united and without any distinction.[1078]
>
> When one performs a commandment with fiery passion and desire, and his will is to do the blessed Holy One's Will, they (i.e. his thought and his deeds) rise up to the primeval Will. There all of the six hundred and thirteen commandments and all of the letters of the Torah are totally

[1077] The original passage in the Zohar is also much less audacious than it would appear at first blush. The Written Torah is associated with the *sefirah tif'eret*, to which the name "the blessed Holy One" (*kudsha berikh hu*) also corresponds. Hence, extending the logic of this symbol cluster, the Written Torah and the blessed Holy One may be identified with one another.

[1078] It is interesting to consider whether or not this point is consistent with the Maggid's teaching that things are differentiated by the particular configuration of supernal letters that constitutes them. See above, pp. 181-182.

> united, for the holy books teach that what lies beyond *hokhmah* cannot be depicted, even with the "tip" of [the letter] *yod*.[1079]

This passage comes from a long sermon about the power of the commandments to bind the one who performs them with God. The Torah and everything described within it, including its precepts, may appear to be composed of separate parts, but its words are united by the same *hokhmah* that lies within all created things.

Performing the commandments with enthusiasm and devotion allows the mystic to transcend the distinctions of the physical world. He accesses the divine power within them and rises up to the "primeval Will," a reference to the *sefirah keter*. The Maggid describes this region as a place in which one's perception of division melts away. The mystic enters a realm that can only be alluded to with the most sublime of all symbols: the tip of the letter *yod*.

The Maggid is suggesting that one ascends to the *sefirah keter* through fulfilling the commandments with the correct passion. Performing sacred deeds allows the mystic to become connected to the Divine precisely because God and the Torah are essentially linked. The two are united by the same quality of "holiness and spiritual energy" (*qedushah ahat ve-ruhaniyyut ehad*). However, the Maggid also claims that the opposite can be true as well. Fulfilling a commandment without the necessary contemplative intention leads to separation, creating a "husk" around the commandment and disrupting its connection to God.[1080]

[1079] MDL #97, p. 171, with a parallel in OHE fol. 48b. Cf. *Peri ha-Arets*, *noah*, pp. 14-16.

[1080] See MDL #12, p. 26.

MUNDANE NARRATIVES AND THE FORMATION OF THE TORAH

We have seen that the Maggid describes the Torah as a linguistic expression of the boundless Divine. Scripture holds untold secrets and endless layers of meaning, and its words are a garment for the sacred name Y-H-V-H. But given this lofty origin and inner essence of divine energy, why does the Torah have so many seemingly banal and occasionally profane narratives?[1081] The Maggid asks this question explicitly on a number of occasions, and sometimes answers by offering a deeper understanding of the verse or story in question.[1082] This approach is characteristic of Jewish mystical literature, including the Zohar, but in a significant number of homilies the Maggid offers a more programmatic and sophisticated explanation.[1083]

The Maggid suggests that the stories of the Torah are happening constantly, in the present as well as the past. These tales are continuously taking place *within* each person, who is a microcosm of the divine.[1084] The Torah is timeless not only due to the eternal relevance of its words, but because its narratives are constantly unfolding in different

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[1081] Ambivalence about non-legal or narrative sections of the Torah is already found in rabbinic literature. See b. Hullin 60b; and RaSHI's citation of the midrash in his comment on Gen. 1:1. See also Ivan Marcus, 'Rashi's Historiosophy in the Introductions to his Bible Commentaries', *Revue des Etudes Juives* 157 (1998), esp. 50-52.

[1082] For example, see LY #288, fol. 108a.

[1083] Many Kabbalists before the Maggid asked the same question. R. Naftali Bakhrakh recalls a brief autobiographical story, recounting that in his youth he was astonished by the banality of many of the narratives. He asked a great many sages of his day about this disturbing fact but received no satisfying answers. The young Bakhrakh was comforted only after reading the works of Lurianic Kabbalah, which opened his eyes to the mysteries of Torah, and then directed him to study Zohar. He concludes this anecdote by explaining that the scriptural narratives are but a garment for the *halakhah*. These legal elements of Torah, he explains, are in turn a garment for the soul of Torah—Kabbalah. See *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 6:47, pp. 241-244.

[1084] The notion that a person is a "microcosm" (*'olam qatan*) of the divine is found several times in the Maggid's teachings; see LY #285, fol. 106b; LY #129, fol. 35a. On the history of this phrase, see Idel, *New Perspectives*, p. 119-121, 150, 180, and 330 n. 37; Alexander Altmann 'The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and Judaism', *Biblical and Other Studies,* ed. A. Altmann, Cambridge, Mass. 1963, pp. 196-232. See also *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 70, fol. 130b.

settings.[1085] Anything described in the Torah happens within the realm of human experience as well. And, as we shall see, the opposite is true as well.[1086]

But the idea of a primordial Torah raises an even more basic question: if Scripture was preexistent, how can there be any specific narratives in the Torah, whether banal or sacred, if these stories happened a great many years after Creation? One explanation of these stories lies in the fact that the text of Scripture as we have it is not identical to the Torah that preexisted Creation. We read:

> "A new teaching (*Torah*) will go forth from Me."[1087] It is known that the blessed Holy One created the world with Torah. Skin, meat, sinews and bones exist in the world [i.e., the formative components of a living organism], and therefore all of these must be in the Torah. All that is in something that was made, must be in its maker—the power of the Maker is within the made. The Torah is a complete structure, [including] skin, flesh, sinews and bones.[1088] Skin is the "husks" of Torah [i.e., the narratives.][1089] Flesh, as in [the sages' teaching,] "one who expends himself over the Torah will taste the taste of meat;"[1090] sinews (*gidin*), as in "'and he spoke (*va-yaged*) words' (Ex. 19:9) that were as tough as sinews;"[1091] and bones (*atsamot*), [meaning that] the Torah itself (*Torah atsmah*) has not yet been revealed.
>
> The entire Torah is collected from [the actions of] righteous persons, from Adam to Noah, the patriarchs and Moses, upon whose deeds the *shekhinah* rested. This is the full Torah (*Torah shelemah*). But the illumination of its essence will not be revealed until the arrival of our righteous

[1085] R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye offers a similar notion in his interpretation of Ex. 13:17, where he describes man as a microcosm that holds within him the entire story of Exodus; see *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *be-shalah*, p. 377.

[1086] See MDL #193, pp. 206-208.

[1087] From *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* 13:3, based on Isa. 51:4.

[1088] For passages in the Zohar that use similar imagery in describing the Torah, see Zohar 1:134b; *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 21 fol. 50b.

[1089] LY explicitly refers to the plain-sense meaning of Torah as its "skin."

[1090] Cf. b. 'Eruvin 21b; b. Pesahim 49b.

[1091] Based on b. Shabbat 87a.

> redeemer (may it be quickly, in our days!); then we will understand the illumination. This is [the meaning of] "a new Torah... from Me"—from its [i.e. Torah's] essence.
>
> This is what Ezekiel prophesized in his vision of the future Temple. [God asked him,] "Will these bones be given new life?" (Ez. 37:3), and he said "O [Y-H-V-H] God, you know." If the connection comes from You, then the essence [of Torah] will be understood and grasped.
>
> The secret is why the Torah's essence cannot be truly attained in the present. Why is this so? Now the Torah is only that which is taken from people, some of the Torah was taken from Laban, meaning his stories, and some was taken from Balaam, and some from the stories of the other people that are written in the Torah. But in the future the blessed Holy One will be connected to Torah, and then we will understand its essence. This is the meaning of "[Torah] will go forth from Me," and not as it is now, when the Torah is just stories.[1092]

The Torah is an organic body composed of different layers, the deepest essence of which will only be revealed in the future. The Maggid is not arguing that an entirely new Scripture will emerge in the messianic age, but rather that humanity will achieve a new level of apprehending the divine Presence through the biblical text itself.[1093] The passage also implies something quite radical, not often adduced in the Maggid's other teachings:

[1092] Two versions of this teaching have been preserved. MDL #5, pp. 17-18 is rather short and terse. LY #250, fol. 76b-77a and OT #315, *pesuqim*, pp. 363-364, provide a richer and more intricate account. Schatz-Uffenheimer notes that the second half of the sermon in MDL does not seem to be a thematic continuation of the first. For these reasons I have elected to translate the version in LY and OT. See also ST, p. 59; and SLA, p. 132.

[1093] A version of this teaching appears in the name of R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev in *Imrei Tsaddiqim*, fol. 5b. On the basis of this text Scholem, 'Meaning of Torah', pp. 81-84, argued for an antinomian reading of this passage from the Maggid. However, Moshe Idel has conclusively shown that these texts may be radical, but they do not necessarily advocate antinomianism; see Moshe Idel, 'White Letters', esp. pp. 183-187. Here the Maggid is simply underscoring that new dimensions of the Torah will be revealed in the future, a notion is found elsewhere in the Maggid's teachings; see MDL #132, pp. 228-229. See also the far more conservative interpretation of the verse given by R. Levi Isaac in *Qedushat Levi*, *liqqutim*, p. 439, where he suggests that the "new Torah" is the minority opinions of the School of Shammai. While their views are not accepted as the legal norm, they have been preserved as an integral part of the Oral Torah and will be rehabilitated in the future. R. Tsevi Elimelekh Shapira of Dinov (d. 1841) understands the "new Torah" in the midrashic reading of Isaiah as referring to new ideas that emerge from careful study even in the present time. When one learns Torah, even the simple meaning of its laws, one brings forth new elements from scripture's unfathomable depth of its meaning. Indeed, he argues that the *halakhah* enables one to tap into the deeper levels of Scripture. See *Benei Yissakhar*, *ma'amarei hodesh sivan* 5:7.

at the present time God and Torah are to some degree disconnected from one another. Elsewhere we have seen that the Maggid identifies a close and largely positive affinity between Torah and the Divine. Scripture does not truly limit God's essence, but it is a linguistic medium through which the divine Presence is manifest in the earthly realm. Yet in this passage we see that the connection between God and the Torah has been ruptured; only in the future will this bond be restored.

This teaching argues that at present the true depths of Torah cannot be understood because its narrative garb was shaped through acts of people. This fascinating idea requires further examination, for we must ask to what extent the Maggid is suggesting that the Torah itself was shaped by the deeds of mankind. In one teaching the Maggid claims that every part of Scripture, including the narrative sections describing the actions of biblical characters, become ways in which the blessed Holy One is clothed.[1094] This means that even sins can become a divine garment. Therefore, the Maggid warns, one must pay close attention to everything that he does, for every thought and action is transformed into a representation of the Divine.

Another sermon explains that even the patriarchs' seemingly mundane or profane deeds were included in the Torah because they were performed with great *devequt*:

> Even the intercourse of the patriarchs is [part of the] complete Torah (*Torah shelemah*).[1095] Indeed, it is written in the Torah! The Torah scroll is invalid if "and he [Jacob] came unto Rachel as well..." (Gen 29:30) or "and Jacob loved Rachel" (Gen. 29:18) is missing. [The patriarchs] did everything with great attachment to the blessed One, Who delighted in them, and from this Torah was created. The Torah and the blessed Holy One are one...[1096]

[1094] MDL #55, p. 79.

[1095] This phrase may also be rendered "wholly Torah."

[1096] MDL #24, pp. 39-40, with parallels in OT #134, *be-ha'alotekha*, pp. 182-183; and OHE, fol. 10b.

Attaining *devequt* is one of the foremost goals of the Maggid's spiritual path, and here we see that Scripture was formed from the patriarchs' deeds because they performed all of their actions with such great attachment to the Divine.[1097] This passage is excerpted from one of the Maggid's most important sermons, in which he describes God and mankind as two "half-forms" that complete one another.[1098] By this he means that human actions bring God delight, but they also have a hand in completing the divine structure. For this reason the deeds of the patriarchs, performed with contemplative focus and total devotion, were transformed into the linguistic garment of Scripture.

This passage also sheds some light on the Maggid's relationship to the corporeal world. Human deeds, physical and coarse as they may be, are worthy of becoming a garment for the Torah when performed with great attachment. He does not extend this notion beyond the biblical characters, but the precedent is nonetheless striking and indicative of his understanding of human deeds and their great power.

Some traditions from the Maggid broaden the notion that stories were included in the Torah because of human actions beyond the deeds of the patriarchs:

> "And [Laban] pursued him a distance of seven days" (Gen. 31:23). I heard from the Maggid that our father Jacob left a blessing behind him, [meaning] some letters of the Torah, which had not yet been taken out of Laban.[1099] Laban pursued Jacob for this reason, giving him the letters that remained with him. These letters thus added a section (*parashah*) to the Torah.[1100]

[1097] This stands in tension with the teaching cited above, in which even sins (presumably done without *devequt*, become part of Scripture.

[1098] On this teaching, see below, pp. 495-497, and Appendix 1.

[1099] The Maggid is assuming that Jacob was indentured to Laban in order to redeem the fallen sparks, or letters, in his possession.

[1100] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *va-yetse*, p. 53. R. Ze'ev Wolf quotes the same idea in the teaching immediately following this passage as well. OHE, fol. 3a preserves a slightly different version of this homily, in which Jacob derives spiritual lessons—referred to as Torah—for himself even from Laban's gruffest and most crass speech.

In some cases the text of Scripture was assembled from the deeds of the biblical characters. If this is true of Laban, there is no reason to assume that it was not equally true for all the other figures in the Bible. This implies that human beings had some sort of a role in shaping the current text of the Torah.

A number of the Maggid's sermons approach the relationship between the text of the Torah and human deeds from a different perspective. Several of his homilies suggest that the historical events described in the Bible took place in the physical world precisely because it was necessary for them to be included in Scripture:

> The secret meaning of, "In order that I may display these My signs among them" (Ex 10:1) [is as follows]. The blessed Holy One wanted to take all the sparks out of the brokenness [i.e. the husks] in Egypt. This is the notion of clarifying the sparks, meaning all of the idle speech of Egypt and Pharaoh, which are letters, for what is the difference between the letters of idle chatter and the letters of Torah!? The difference is that the letters of idle speech are in captivity [in the "husks"]. The blessed Holy One wanted to redeem them, bringing these words and letters into the Torah and recombining them in a holy way [i.e as a new permutation]. In this way they were purified [and removed from the husks]. This is one secret of the stories of the Torah, in addition to all of the other secrets in each and every letter. These are without end or number, for the Torah and the Holy One are one.
>
> Let us return to the first matter. If He had not visited these three plagues upon the Egyptians, several stories would have been missing and would not have been written in the Torah,[1101] and the sparks would not all have been clarified. This is what is alluded to in the verse, "that I may display these My signs (*otot*)," meaning the letters (*otiyyot*) of captivity,[1102] and I must clarify them

[1101] Locusts, darkness, and the death of the firstborn children, the final three plagues of Ex. 10-12:36.

[1102] Cf. *Me'or 'Einayim*, *bo*, pp. 162-163.

However, these texts do not explain that this story then became a part of the Torah because it needed to be recorded.

> through the Torah. Therefore it was necessary to send three more plagues upon them, in order to enter them as letters combined together in the Torah.[1103]

The Maggid is reworking an older kabbalistic notion that the Israelites were sent down to Egypt in order to collect and redeem the divine sparks trapped in Egypt.[1104] These sparks, described here as the letters of idle speech, needed to be restored to their rightful place in Torah. Thus it seems that certain historical events occurred in order to complete Scripture, for some of its stories are woven together from letters that were lifted out of the "husks."

This teaching differs from the previous homily in a significant way. God is the active agent in this teaching, and it is divine wonders, not the deeds of man, which redeem the fallen letters and give the Torah its garment. Yet even so, we see that there is no such thing as a profane or extraneous narrative. In part this reflects the fact that the text of Torah is itself holy, but here we see a second dimension: actions in the physical world create the linguistic garment into which the infinite divine wisdom is contracted. This is true of divine wonders and miracles but also of human deeds, provided that they are performed with utmost devotion and attachment to God.[1105]

Although the fullest nature of Torah cannot be revealed until the future, the Maggid suggests that irregularities in the Scripture's textual garment reveal some element of the divine energy it holds. In some cases there is a disagreement between the way a word is read aloud and the way it is written in the Torah scroll, called the *qeri* and

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[1103] LY #251, fol. 77a; with parallels in OT #81, *bo*, pp. 115-156; and OHE, fol. 62a-b.

[1104] See *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar hag ha-matsot*, ch. 1.

[1105] This interesting idea deserves much deeper treatment, and I hope to return to it in the near future. For disciples of the Maggid who struggled with the question of profane/mundane narratives in the Torah, see *Me'or 'Einayim*, vol. 1, *va-yetse*, p. 93; *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, pp. 11-12.

ketiv.[1106] One midrashic tradition goes even farther than the divide between the *qeri* and *ketiv*, however, and claims that some of the words in the Torah scroll of the early sage Rabbi Meir were different than the standard text.[1107] This variance, and its apparent acceptance by the sages, has puzzled both traditional and modern commentators.[1108]

The Maggid explains that the disparate readings of the *qeri* and *ketiv* represent two different aspects of the Torah as well as human cognition: "*ketiv* is the letters of Thought, which are hewn in writing, and *qeri* is speech."[1109] He uses this idea to explain the exceptional case of Rabbi Meir's scroll:

[1106] The divergence is already noted in the Talmud. See b. Makkot 7b; Megillah 25b; Sukkah 6a; and Sanhedrin 4a, where the sages disagree about whether a law should be based on the *qeri* or the *ketiv*. R. David Kimhi, in the introduction to his commentary to the book of Joshua, argues that people forgot the precise text of the Bible because of the exigencies of the Babylonian exile. See David W. Halivni, 'Aspects of Classical Jewish Hermeneutics', *Holy Scriptures in Judaism, Christianity and Islam: Hermeneutics, Values and Society*, ed. H. M. Vroom and J. D. Gort, Amsterdam and Atlanta 1997, pp. 88-90. On the historical and philological development of *qeri-ketiv*, see Robert Gordis, *The Biblical Text in the Making: A Study of the Kethib-Qere*, New York 1971; Emanuel Tov, 'The Ketiv-Qere Variations in Light of the Manuscript Finds in the Judean Desert', *Text, Theology & Translation: Essays in Honour of Jan de Waard*, ed. S. Crisp and M. Jinbachian, London 2004, pp. 199-207; Michael Graves, 'The Origins of Ketiv-Qere Readings', *TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism* (2003); Philippe Cassuto, '"Qeré-Ketiv" et Linéarité du Texte Biblique aux Vues des Méthodes Informatiques', *Masoretic Studies* 7 (1992), pp. 15-31.

[1107] The most famous of these, which we will see below, is that "garments of skin" (*kotnot 'or*, Gen. 3:21) was written as "garments of light" (*kotnot or*) in R. Meir's scroll; see *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:12. Related to an old tradition that Adam was first clothed only in light, and after the sin this light was divested and the primeval couple were dressed in garments of skin. See Zohar 1:36b. However, this is not the only variant reading of biblical verses in R. Meir's scroll that has been recorded in rabbinic literature; see also *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:5 (Gen. 1:31); and y. Ta'anit 1:1 (Isa. 21:11).

[1108] A novel understanding is suggested by the sixteenth-century scholar R. Issachar Baer Bremen Ashkenazi, who claims that R. Meir made emendations and notes in the margins of his Torah scroll, some of which have come down to us embedded in the rabbinic tradition; see his commentary in *Matnot Kehunah* to *Bereshit Rabbah* 9:5. This formulation is mirrored by R. Baruch Epstein in his notes in *Torah Temimah* to Gen. 3:21. Saul Lieberman argued that R. Meir's scroll was related to the *vulgata*, or popular versions of the Torah scroll circulating in late antique Palestine. See his *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs and Manners of Palestine in the I Century B.C.E.-IV Century C.E.*, New York 1950, pp. 24-25. For a different perspective, see John Van Seeters, *The Edited Bible: The Curious History of the "Editor" in Biblical Criticism*, Winona Lake, Ind. 2006, pp. 73-76; and Emanuel Tov, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible*, Minneapolis 2012, pp. 112-114, who suggests that R. Meir's version of the Bible was quite similar to the renowned Severus Scroll. See also *She'elot u-Teshuvot Divrei Yatsiv*, *yoreh de'ah* #173.

[1109] MDL #174, p. 274. The relationship between the *qeri* and *ketiv* appears in many places in the teachings of R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady; see *Sefer ha-Tanya*, *iggeret ha-qodesh* #19, p. 128a:

> [The words] *kotnot 'or* ("garments of skin") were written as *kotnot or* ("garments of light") in the Torah scroll of Rabbi Meir. We read it as an *aleph*, even though it is not written so. This is like [the word] *yishgalenah* ("will cohabit with her," Deut. 28:30), which we pronounce as *yishkavenah* ("will lie down with her"). This is because once something is articulated in speech, it is subject to embarrassment (*bushah*). Writing happens within the heart, as in "write them upon the tablets of your heart" (Prov. 3:3). When something remains in *binah*, there is no embarrassment. Therefore it is written *yishgalenah*. But there are divisions [i.e. it enters the concrete realm of multiplicity] when it is spoken, and it is subject to embarrassment.
>
> In R. Meir's scroll "garments of light" was written with an *aleph*, since he illuminated the eyes of the sages in *halakhah*,[1110] which is *hokhmah*. All of the *middot* (i.e. *sefirot*) have a beginning, middle, and an end, and *hokhmah* is the beginning. Therefore "garments of light" was written with an *aleph* in his Torah scroll. Even his "garment," his external form (*levush*), was light as well.[1111]

In this teaching the written language of the Torah represents *binah*, an intermediate stage of linguistic cognition that takes place long before an idea is fully expressed in audible words. There is no reason for strange words, or even seemingly inappropriate ones, to be prevented from being *written* in the Torah. However, they must be altered if they are to be spoken and recited publicly.

Such was not the case for Rabbi Meir, in whose scroll there was no disconnect between the written and recited forms of the word. The letters of his Torah were illuminated by *hokhmah* directly, and thus there was no distinction between the outer garment (*levush*) and the inner meaning.[1112] But later in the homily the Maggid extends his point to include contemporary readers of Scripture as well, since most people do not pronounce the guttural *'ayin* and therefore read the word *'or* as *or* as if it were spelled

[1110] See b. 'Eruvin 13b.

[1111] OHE, fol. 33b. Cf. LY #226, fol. 67a, with a parallel in OT #5, *bereshit*, p. 7.

[1112] See also LY #247, fol. 76a.

with an *aleph*. Those who do so follow in the footsteps of R. Meir, for they too are reading from a Torah in which the *hokhmah* infused within it shines directly through its letters.[1113]

[1113] The Maggid seems to besuggesting that the whole text of R. Meir's Torah was different, which would stand in opposition to the Talmudic tradition.

4.2 Revelation

Background

Let us now turn from the Maggid's understanding of Torah to exploring his teachings on the event of Revelation itself. Our examination of this subject may be divided into two intertwined lines of investigation. The first will address how the Maggid describes Revelation in light of his understanding of the preexistent nature of Scripture. If the Torah is an embodiment of God's infinite wisdom, composed of different divine names, and even to some degree identified with God, by what means was Torah first brought into the structures of language? Second, we will examine the Maggid's description of the experience of Revelation. Was the encounter between man and the God on Mt. Sinai defined by the medium of language, or did some elements of Revelation transcend words entirely? As we shall see, the Maggid's answers to these questions hinge upon his understanding of the relationship between the divine Word, human language and the boundaries of intellection.

Scriptural accounts of Revelation are fraught with ambiguity,[1114] and the claims regarding what was revealed on Mt. Sinai are rather vague. It is not clear to whom the Divine was speaking; in some passages God appears to address the entire Jewish people,

[1114] On Revelation in the Bible, see George W. Savran, *Encountering the Divine: Theophany in Biblical Narrative*, London and New York 2005; Aryeh Toeg, *Lawgiving at Sinai*, Jerusalem 1977 [Hebrew]; Steven D. Fraade, 'Hearing and Seeing at Sinai: Interpretive Trajectories', *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. G. J. Brooke, H. Najman and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, Leiden and Boston 2008, pp. 247-268; Baruch J. Schwartz, 'The Priestly Account of the Theophany and Lawgiving at Sinai', *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran*, ed. M. V. Fox et al, Winona Lake, Ind. 1996, pp. 103-134; idem, 'What Really Happened at Mount Sinai? Four Biblical Answers to One Question', *Bible Review* 12.5 (1997), pp. 20- 46; Jacob Licht, 'The Revelation of God's Presence at Sinai', *Studies in the Bible and Ancient Near East Presented to Samuel Loewenstamm*, ed. Y. Avishur and J. Blau, Jerusalem 1978, vol. 1, pp. 251-267 [Hebrew]; Benjamin D. Sommer , 'Revelation at Sinai in the Hebrew Bible and in Jewish Theology', *The Journal of Religion* 79.3 (1999), pp. 422-451.

whereas in others it seems that He is speaking to Moses alone. Exodus 19-24 does not outline a single cohesive narrative about the events of Revelation, and there are notable tensions and contradictions between this account and the second description offered in Deuteronomy 4-5. Some sources describe the theophany of Sinai as a primarily linguistic encounter with God, with only fire and clouds accompanying the pronouncement of the Ten Commandments. Other texts suggest that at least some of the Israelites, or perhaps Moses alone, experienced some sort of a vision of the Divine.

These biblical ambiguities continue to reverberate in rabbinic literature, which includes a wide variety of different descriptions of the content and the experience of Revelation.[1115] Some rabbinic traditions seem to assume that the entire Pentateuch was delivered on Sinai, but others suggest that only parts of it were initially revealed, and that the rest was given over time.[1116] Rabbinic literature also records some discussion regarding which elements of the Oral Torah were given at Sinai as well. Given the centrality of the Oral Torah to the rabbinic project and thus the unfolding of later Judaism, this latter question is of great significance.[1117]

[1115] Abraham Joshua Heschel devoted the second volume of his *Theology of Ancient Judaism*, New York and London 1962, and Jerusalem 1990 [Hebrew], to demonstrating great wealth and diversity of rabbinic teachings on Revelation. See the translation *Heavenly Torah as Refracted Through the Generations*, trans. Gordon Tucker with L. Levin, New York 2005, esp. pp. 538-640. See also Amram Tropper, 'A Tale of Two Sinais: On the Reception of the Torah according to bShab 88a', *Rabbinic Traditions between Palestine and Babylonia*, ed. R. Nikolsky and T. Ilan, Leiden and Boston 2014, pp. 147-157.

[1116] See b. Gittin 60a. See Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 538-551.

[1117] See m. Avot 1:1; b. Megillah 19b; *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* 22:1; Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 658-679; Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 286-314; Zussman, '*Torah she-be'al Peh*', pp. 209-384; Cana Werman, 'Oral Torah vs. Written Torah(s): Competing Claims to Authority', *Rabbinic Perspectives: Rabbinic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. S.D. Fraade, A. Shemesh and R.A. Clements, Leiden 2006, pp. 157-197; Martin S. Jaffee, 'Oral Transmission of Knowledge as Rabbinic Sacrament: An Overlooked Aspect of Discipleship in Oral Torah', *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, ed. H. Kreisel, Beer Sheva 2006, pp. 65-79.

A number of interesting rabbinic traditions explore the nature of the divine language that was spoken at Sinai. Some of these describe each of God's utterances as splitting into the seventy languages of the world,[1118] and others, seeking to reconcile the disparate accounts of the Ten Commandments in Exodus and Deuteronomy, assert that the Divine can speak more than one word at once.[1119] Other rabbinic traditions focus on the experience at Mt. Sinai, describing the Israelites as having been so overwhelmed by the divine Word that they expired and had to be resurrected.[1120] Some rabbinic account distinguish between the experience of Moses and that of the rest of the people, claiming that Israel could only withstand hearing the first and the second commandment from God directly.[1121] Building upon the strangely phrased verse, "And all the people saw the voices (*ro'im et ha-qolot*)" (Ex. 20:15), one well-known early rabbinic tradition even describes the theophany as a synesthetic moment in which the people heard visual language, and saw that which was aural.[1122]

Medieval Jewish philosophers grappled with these various rabbinic traditions about Revelation, reinterpreting them in light of Aristotelian philosophy, Neo-Platonism and contemporary Islamic thought. These thinkers grappled with the theological challenges posed by the question of how an unmovable Deity could reveal His will to the Israelites through language, but they were also responding to Islamic thinkers claiming

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[1118] b. Shabbat 88b; Yadin, 'Hammer on the Rock', pp. 14-17. Cf. b. Sanhedrin 34a.

[1119] *Mekhilta* to Ex. 15:11, 20:8; *Mekhilta Bahodesh* 7, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 229; Yadin, 'Hammer on the Rock', pp. 8-14.

[1120] See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 5:6; b. Shabbat 88b. See also Lieve M. Teugels, 'Holiness and Mysticism at Sinai According to the Mekhilta de Rabbi Ishmael', *Sanctity of Time and Space in Tradition and Modernity*, ed. A. Houtman, M.J.H.M Poorthuis and J. Schwartz, Leiden 1998, pp. 113-133, where the author suggests that some Tannaitic midrashim actually argue against very early Jewish mystical interpretations of the Bible.

[1121] b. Makkot 24a; *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:2.

[1122] See the famous comments by R. Ishmael and R. 'Akiva in *Mekhilta*, Ex. 20:15.

that the Jews had warped the Scripture given to them at the original Mosaic revelation.[1123] Saadya Gaon argued that Revelation was accomplished by means of a "created word" (*dibbur nivra*), an utterance willed into existence by God that was audible to human ears, although only Moses was able to hear it.[1124]

Judah Halevi also described the Sinaitic revelation as a type of divine speech created by God in order to bridge the gap between man and the Divine.[1125] However, unlike Saadya, Halevi emphasized the impact of the collective experience of standing at Sinai, which included both aural and visual elements, and was less concerned with unpacking the metaphysics of the created word.[1126] Maimonides, by contrast, singled out Moses' place in the events of Revelation, for it was only he who attained true knowledge of the divine message.[1127] The rest of the people heard only the thunder and witnessed the lightning. For Maimonides, unlike Saadya and Halevi, Moses' perception of the content of God's message took place within his own mind, and the divine Word was not a created entity of its own.[1128]

[1123] For medieval philosophers, their interpretations of Revelation are intertwined with their understandings of the phenomenon of prophecy more broadly.

[1124] See Alexander Altmann, 'Saadya's Theory of Revelation: its Origin and Background', *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism*, London 1969, pp. 140-160.

[1125] Kuzari I:89. See Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, pp. 144-145.

[1126] Lobel, *Between Mysticism and Philosophy*, p. 36. Of course, Halevi famously underscored the importance of the revelation of the Torah to the entire community of Israel as a cornerstone of Jewish faith, and described it as one of strongest proofs for the eternal validity of the Jewish covenant. See *Kuzari* I:87-91. See also ibid I:9; I:79.; Yohanan Silman, 'Intellect, Revelation, "Rational Being" and Prophet in the *Kuzari* of Yehuda Halevi', *Revelation, Faith, Reason: A Collection of Papers*, ed. M. Hallamish and M. Schwrcz, Ramat-Gan 1976, pp. 44-53 [Hebrew]; Dov Schwartz, 'L'indétermination du sens: révélation, raison et écriture ésotérique dans le *Kuzari*', *Torah et Science* ed. G. Freudenthal, J.P. Rothschild, G. Dahan, Paris 2001, pp. 71-90.

[1127] However, it remains unclear whether or in what sense Maimonides thought Moses' prophecy was linguistic.

[1128] See *Guide* II:33; and I:54. But cf. *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot yesodei ha-torah*, 8:1-2, in which Israel hears God speaking to Moses, telling him, "Moses, Moses, go tell them such and such." Some question remains regarding whether or not Moses' prophecy represents a communion with the Active Intellect; see Shoey

Medieval kabbalistic texts often interpret the voices (*qolot*) of God found in the biblical accounts of Revelation as references to the *sefirot*.[1129] As suggested by the strange wording of Ex. 20:15, these "voices" were seen as well as heard, suggesting that the Revelation on Sinai was a moment of intense encounter between Israel and God's emanated powers that had both visual and auditory elements.[1130] The words of the Decalogue split into many different voices, which then transformed into the seventy languages of the world and were illuminated with light.[1131] The most concrete of these *sefirot* is associated with *shekhinah*, or the attribute of divine speech, a vision of which was revealed to Israel on Sinai.[1132]

Other passages in the Zohar describe Revelation as a moment in which Israel grasped the most profound secrets of divine wisdom.[1133] These include the way in which

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Raz, '"In Unceasing Light": The Riddle of Mosaic Prophecy in Maimonides' Thought', *Moses the Man—Master of the Prophets: In the Light of Interpretation throughout the Ages*, ed. M. Hallamish, H. Kasher and H. Ben-Pazi, Ramat-Gan 2010, pp. 221-250 [Hebrew]. In the *Guide* Maimonides also refers to Revelation as one of the great "mysteries of Torah," underscoring that it was a singular event in the history of the Jewish people. See also Alfred Ivry, 'Revelation, Reason and Authority in Maimonides' *Guide of the Perplexed*', *Reason and Revelation as Authority in Judaism*, ed. N. M. Samuelson, Melrose Park, Penn. 1981, pp. 17-33; Eliezer Goldman, 'Rationality and Revelation in Maimonides' Thought', *Maimonides and Philosophy: Papers Presented at the Sixth Jerusalem Philosophical Encounter, May 1985*, ed. S. Pines and Y. Yovel, Dordrecht 1986, pp. 15-23; Lawrence Kaplan 'I Sleep, but My Heart Waketh: Maimonides' Conception of Human Perfection', *The Thought of Moses Maimonides*, ed. I. Robinson, L. Kaplan and J. Bauer, Lewiston, Maine 1991, pp. 137-145, and idem, 'Maimonides and Soloveitchik on the Knowledge and Imitation of God', *Moses Maimonides (1138-1204): His Religious, Scientific, and Philosophical Wirkungsgeschichte in Different Cultural Contexts*, eds. G. Hasselhoff and O. Fraise, Würzburg 2004, pp. 491-523; Howard Kreisel, *Maimonides' Political Thought*, Albany 1999, p. 15.

[1129] See Ex. 19:20, 20:15, 22; Deut. 4:36; 5:12, 19. The association of these *qolot* with the *sefirot* is already visible in the *Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #28-32 pp. 133-137, though the precise correlations between the different voices and the various emanated powers is less clear. Cf. b. Sanhedrin 88a; Tanhuma, *shemot* #25. On descriptions of Revelation in medieval Kabbalah, see Wolfson, 'Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience', pp. 345-355. See also Karl-Erich Grözinger, 'Die Gegenwart des Sinai: Erzählungen und kabbalistische Lehrstücke zur Vergegenwärtigung der Sinaioffenbarung', *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 16 (1988), pp. 143-183.

[1130] See *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #31 p. 135; Zohar 2:194a.

[1131] Zohar 2:146a.

[1132] See Nahmanides' comments to Ex. 19:20.

[1133] See Zohar 2:82a; Zohar Hadash, fol. 77a.

all six hundred and thirteen commandments, and hence the entirety of Torah, are included within the Decalogue.[1134] Israel, or at least the elect among them, encountered the "soul" of Torah at Sinai, though in the future they will attain an even higher understanding of the inner essence of Scripture.[1135] A few Zoharic teachings even assert that the entire Israelite people attained the highest level of prophecy on Mt. Sinai, on par with that of Moses and therefore surpassed the visions of all later prophets.[1136] A number of parallel passages in the Zohar, building on an ambiguity in Exodus 19:19, claim that *shekhinah* itself spoke from Moses' throat. This becomes a very important precedent for Hasidic descriptions of the *tsaddiq*'s teachings as a type of divine revelation.[1137]

One further kabbalistic notion deserves further mention because of its importance for later Hasidic theology. Medieval Kabbalists described the Revelation as a moment in which divine wisdom, or *hokhmah*, was transposed into the structures of language. However, several Kabbalists describe this pattern of translation as a continuous process rather than a single historical event.[1138] While the divine Writ was given by God in its fullness at Mt. Sinai and cannot ever be altered or superseded, divine Wisdom itself is constantly pouring forth through the Oral Torah. This notion builds upon some earlier

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[1134] Zohar 2:93b-94a. Cf. 2:156b.

[1135] Zohar 3:152a. See Wolfson, 'Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience', p. 379.

[1136] See Zohar 2:82b.

[1137] The verse reads, "Moses spoke and God answered him with a voice (*qol*)." *Qol* may be translated as "thunder," but in b. Berakhot 45a is already interpreted as the "voice" of Moses. See Zohar 3:7a, 265a, and especially 232a (R.M). For a fuller history of this notion and its post-biblical and rabbinic precedents, see the sources collected in Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 530-531; and Green, 'Hasidic Homily', pp. 261-262 n. 21.

[1138] This idea is found in the sixteenth-century Kabbalist Me'ir ibn Gabbai's *'Avodat ha-Qodesh*, I:21-22; III: 20-24. A similar conception of Revelation appears in Isaiah Horowitz's *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, through which it attained an even wider readership. See the texts cited in Gershom Scholem, 'Revelation and Tradition as Religious Categories in Judaism', *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality*, New York 1971, pp. 300-303; and Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, pp. 671-672.

rabbinic conceptions of the evolution of the Oral Torah, but it represents a significant theological development.

It is interesting to note that on the whole Revelation occupies a less central place in the works of the medieval Kabbalists than does the story of Creation. The authors of the Zohar interpret the events of Sinai as a model for powerful auditory and visual experiences of the Divine, and in particular for their conceptions of sacred study as a mystical praxis. But their works do not subject Revelation to the same sustained and detailed investigation as the emergence of the *sefirot* and the emanation of the different worlds. This trend continues in the works of the Safed Kabbalists as well, who devoted a much greater portion of their theosophical efforts to exploring the nature of Creation.[1139]

A Second Creation

With this background in mind, let us turn to the teachings of the Maggid on Revelation. Several of his homilies draw an explicit connection between Creation and Revelation, for both represent processes by which the divine thought was transformed into a type of language. We read:

> "He uttered, and it was; He commanded, and it endured" (Ps. 33:9). It is taught in the midrash:[1140] "The pillars of heaven tremble, [astounded at His blast]" (Job 26:11)—the Creation of the world lacked strength and endurance until the Torah was given. The reason for this is that the world was created by ten utterances (*ma'amarot*),[1141] as it is written, "and He said" (*va-yomer*, Gen. 1:3 et

[1139] For example, *Pardes Rimmonim* 23:8 describes Revelation as a unification between *tif'eret* and *malkhut*, which is relived each year on the holiday of Shavuot, but otherwise the work devotes rather little time to explaining the events of Mt. Sinai.

[1140] See b. Shabbat 88a, where this theme appears but the vers from Job is not quoted; and for a somewhat later source, see *Shemot Rabbah* 29:9.

[1141] m. Avot 5:1.

> al). [This type of] speech (*amirah*) takes place within the heart,[1142] still within the deeper realm of thought (*sod ha-mahshavah*). But after the Torah was given, [the world] was brought into the mystery of speech (*sod ha-dibbur*), as it is written, "And God spoke (*va-yedabber*) all of these words..." (Ex. 20:1).
>
> The world was strengthened once the Ten Commandments (*dibbrot*), corresponding to the ten utterances [of Creation], were given. All was thus completed in thought and speech. This is the meaning of "I will rejoice upon Your utterance" (Ps. 119:162)—the first "I" of the Ten Commandments rests upon "Your utterance," the ten [speech acts] of Creation. This brings about great joy in all of the worlds, as they are strengthened through the mystery of speech as well. This is meaning of, "He uttered and it was," meaning that the ten utterances brought everything into being. "He commanded" refers to the Ten Commandments. "And it endured" means that everything was strengthened.[1143]

God's initial formation of the worlds through divine speech was sublime, fleeting and ultimately unstable, much like the dynamic activity of the human mind in which ideas are born and then totally transformed only moments later. Revelation transformed these original divine utterances/thoughts into a much more concrete and stable form of language. The Decalogue unveiled at Sinai thus corresponds to the ten speech acts through which the world was formed, but the affinity between them is much deeper than a simple numerical association. The divine words of Creation were not fulfilled in all of their potential until Revelation, for it was only on Mt. Sinai that divine thought was truly drawn into language.

[1142] Nahmanides on Gen. 1:3 explains that the word *amirah* refers to the divine "desire" (*hefets*) or "thought" (*mahshavah*), instructing the reader that God simply willed the world into existence without any sort of effort. Cf. *Guide*, I:65. The word *amirah* is also associated with internal desire in Zohar 3:17b.

[1143] MDL #202 p. 327. This idea is also cited by a number of the Maggid's students in the name of their master; see *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *yitro*, p. 168; *Liqqkutei Torah*, *huqqat*, fol. 57c-57d; *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *sukkot*, p.195.

Thus the Maggid, like many of his kabbalistic forbearers, describes Revelation as an act in which God translated the primordial, preexistent Torah and clothed it in the text of the Pentateuch. A teaching from the Maggid preserved in *Me'or 'Einayim* offers some reflections on this process:

> I heard my teacher [the Maggid] interpret the verse, "She made him a basket (*tevat*) of reeds [and she covered it with pitch], placing it in the grass (*suf*) at the banks of the river" (Ex. 2:3) in this way. The Torah was originally in the World of Thought. When the world's patriarchs studied it, they grasped it as it was in the World of Thought, as we have said elsewhere. It was through Moses, who represents awareness (*da'at*), that Torah was drawn into speech, the final of the seven "days of building."[1144] Thus the Torah frequently says: "God spoke to Moses" or "God spoke all these words" (Ex. 20:1). This means that he [Moses] drew the primordial Torah into speech and it became dressed in material garb.
>
> This is, "She made him a *teivah* [meaning both "basket" and "word"]. The words of Torah became that "basket" of speech. *Gomeh* or "reeds" can be derived from *gemi'ah*, which means "drawing forth," drawing forth the pleasure within Torah, which comes from *hesed*, by means of speech, as in "The teaching (*torah*) of compassion (*hesed*) is upon her tongue" (Prov. 21:36). "She covered it with pitch" (*hemar*) means that she dressed it in corporeal (*homer*) garb. "Placing it in the grass" (*suf*) means that she drew it into the end (*suf/sof*), the final one of the cosmic rungs, that of speech. "At the banks (*sefat*) refers to the lips, also the place of speech. "River" refers to that ancient cosmic flow, originating in thought, but being drawn into speech at the hour when the Torah was given.
>
> Therefore everyone should become accustomed to contemplating the Root of our thought and to raising it up to its Source. Even if one is not a *tsaddiq*—meaning that he cannot recall the blessed Creator as thoughts come to him, since he does not have that worthy habit of mind—still, he should study God's Torah at such times [of lower spiritual attainment]. Then he will begin to

[1144] The "seven days of building" refer to the seven *sefirot* from *hesed* to *malkhut*. See, inter alia, Zohar 1:145a.

> cleave to goodness with whatever quality had been aroused [by that thought]. In this way he will repair it. Understand this.[1145]

Before Sinai, the Torah was purely abstract, infinite, and unknowable. God created the world through this preexistent form of Scripture, which was composed of divine names and to some degree identified with God. On Sinai, Moses drew this primordial Torah into its current linguistic form by bringing it into words. However, we should remember that the claim of a primordial Scripture does not necessarily mean that it was totally pre-linguistic, since the Maggid maintains that the "letters of thought" are an essential part of some strata of cognition. R. Dov Baer's depiction of Creation stresses the role of language in establishing the order of the cosmos, and Revelation might then be described as a development within the linguistic realm, moving from the unarticulated to the articulated.

This particular teaching found in *Me'or 'Einayim* has no exact parallel in the published collections of the Maggid's sermons, but similar descriptions of Revelation are found in several of his homilies. Elsewhere we read that the elements in the Torah that predated the world were totally undifferentiated, since it had not yet been expressed in speech. Only after Sinai did Scripture take on a specific narrative garb.[1146] In another, particularly complicated teaching the Maggid explains that while the Torah contains six hundred and thirteen commandments, these are all included within the Decalogue.[1147]

[1145] *Me'or 'Einayim*, vol.1, *shemot*, p. 155. My thanks to Arthur Green for sharing his translation. Though R. Menahem Nahum does not make clear how much of this passage belongs to the Maggid, it is very much in the style of the Maggid and in keeping with his teachings. Cf. ibid, *shemot*, p. 138. See also ibid, vol. 1, v*a-yera*, p. 51, where R. Menahem Nahum teaches that in its most abstract and pristine form, symbolized by the *yod* or *hokhmah*, the Torah is still unintelligible. Therefore the Torah was given through Moses, who articulated it by drawing through the *vav*.

[1146] See MDL #122, p. 201.

[1147] See RaSHI to Ex. 24:12.

Indeed, even the Ten Commandments were uttered in the initial word ("I am," *anokhi*) of the First Commandment.

All other parts of Torah, including the Decalogue and the rest of the six hundred and thirteen commandments, were drawn from that single primary utterance. This mirrors the way human thoughts, which are unformed potential, become articulated through the medium of spoken words. Yet in this case the Maggid reminds us explicitly that thoughts have letters as well: "the combinations of the letters become specific when they are revealed in thought. But when they are still in *hokhmah*, these combinations are all-inclusive and the letters have not yet been revealed. In this realm the combinations are not recognizable, for everything is one."[1148] As we have seen in a great number of the Maggid's teachings, the letters of thought are clearly visible in *binah*, but not in *hokhmah*. If the latter is indeed the origin of Scripture, this suggests that the primordial Torah may have been truly supra-linguistic; Scripture lacked words until Moses gave them to it on Mt. Sinai.

THE PATRIARCHS AND THE COMMANDMENTS

The idea that the Torah predated both Creation and Revelation, found in many of our teachings thus far, highlights an interesting conundrum inherited by the Maggid from rabbinic literature. The Talmudic sages assumed that the patriarchs observed the precepts of the Torah and studied its words with great reverence, but how could they have done so

[1148] MDL #116, pp. 188-189. A greatly expanded version of this teaching appears in R. Menahem Mendel Shneersohn, *Or ha-Torah*, *pinhas*, vol. 4, pp. 1116-1125. The author explains that it is found in the Maggid's *Or Torah*, but also notes that there are those who maintain that this teaching came from a manuscript in the possession of R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady.

if they lived long before it was given?[1149] Many of the early Hasidic masters explored this theme at great length, and the question of spiritual devotion *before* Torah seems to have preoccupied them.[1150]

Hasidic responses to this quandary may generally be grouped into three different categories, all of which are represented in the Maggid's teachings. First, the patriarchs followed the precepts of Torah through the power of their contemplative minds even before it was revealed. Other answers suggest that the patriarchs performed all of their deeds, even those that are seemingly mundane or profane, with such great mystical attachment that they were able to connect themselves to the essence of Torah through those actions. Finally, some Hasidic masters describe the patriarchs as fulfilling the entirety of Torah through a single commandment that had already been prescribed to them by God.[1151]

The Maggid suggests that since the world was created through Scripture, the patriarchs were able to grasp Torah—identified with the divine essence—long before Revelation:

[1149] For a few versions of this tradition, see m. Qiddushin 4:14; b. Yoma 28a. See also *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #132 p. 217; Tanhuma, *be-har* #1. See also the rabbinic traditions about biblical characters studying Torah in the academies of Shem and 'Ever; *Bereshit Rabbah* 63:6; ibid, 84:8. Cf. *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 6:6; Zohar 2:275b; *Zohar Hadash*, *noah*, fol. 38b.

[1150] On the different Hasidic approaches to the notion that the patriarchs kept the precepts of Torah, see Arthur Green, *Devotion and Commandment*, Cincinnati 1989; idem, 'Hasidism: Discovery and Retreat', *The Other Side of God: A Polarity in World Religions*, ed. P.L. Berger, Garden City 1981, pp. 104-130. He argues that the Hasidic masters were inspired by the example of Abraham who served God in a spiritual way alone, without the boundaries of the *halakhah*. Yehuda Gellman has offered an interesting complement to Green's study, suggesting that the Hasidim seized upon the figure of Abraham because he typified their own existential struggles against the *mithnaggedim*. Just like the biblical patriarch, the Hasidic masters were brave and had to abandon security and families in order to follow their theological beliefs; see his 'The Figure of Abraham in Hasidic Literature', *The Harvard Theological Review* 91 (1998), pp. 279-300, esp. pp. 289-291.

[1151] These Hasidic teachings rarely invoke the approach of Nahmanides. In his comments to Gen. 26:5, he claims that Abraham grasped the Torah through a prophetic sense (*ruah ha-qodesh*) and fulfilled it voluntarily. The Hasidic masters seem to be interested in a fulfillment of the precepts of Torah that is achieved mystically without a legal rulebook.

> It is known that Abram the patriarch fulfilled the Torah before it was given. The explanation is such: the blessed Holy One created the world through Torah... There were four [stages] of contraction (*tsimtsumim*) before [the Torah] came into speech, for the illumination and wisdom (*sekhel*) were still too great after the first act of contraction.[1152] Speech could not withstand it, so all of them were necessary.
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> It is known that [the sages interpreted] "when they were created" (*be-hibaram*, Gen. 2:4) as "for Abraham" (*be-avraham*),[1153] meaning that all of this was done out of love. This caused the *tsimtsumim*, for "love pushes aside all flesh."[1154]
>
> Abraham is called "Abraham, My lover" (Isa. 41:8); through his love he earned a great *tsimtsum* (for "as face answers to face [in water, so does one man's heart to another]" Prov. 27:19).[1155] He grasped the essence of divinity (*etsem elohut*) that had been forgotten in the generations before him. The Torah and the Holy One are one, and he apprehended the Torah before it was given—before it entered into language.
>
> But for us, who live in a world that was created through [these stages of] diminution, the Torah was given to us in contracted form as well. Even though "the Torah of Y-H-V-H" (Ps. 19:8) is complete, including all the hidden lights, it is concealed in it, contracted and hidden. Understand this very well.[1156]

Scripture was given in language at Sinai, but Abraham was able to access Torah long before it was articulated in words. His achievement is not linked to fulfilling a particular commandment, however, or even to performing an ordinary deed with great devotion and attachment. Indeed, precisely how he did so is not entirely clear, but the Maggid makes

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[1152] The Maggid later identifies these four stages of contraction as *hokhmah*, *binah*, *tif'eret*, and *malkhut*.

[1153] *Bereshit Rabbah* 12:9.

[1154] See b. Bava Metsi'a 84a. The Maggid often invokes this humorous Talmudic anecdote to explain why *tsimtsum* is an expression of God's love for the world. In the original passage a sage answers that his enormous girth does not prevent him from being intimate with his wife, for "love moves aside all flesh."

[1155] That is, Abraham's love for the Divine inspired God to perform the *tsimtsum*, which the Maggid frequently refers to as an act of divine love and compassion.

[1156] MDL# 122, p. 202, with parallels in OT#200, *shir ha-shirim*, p. 260; and OHE, fol. 52a-b.

no effort to demonstrate that Abraham performed the commandments in any physical sense. It seems that Abraham's contemplation of the world around him and his absolute love for God allowed him to grasp the essence of Torah in the undiminished stage before it was brought into language. It may be assumed that Abraham then fulfilled the precepts of Scripture, but the Maggid's sermon focuses on his unique ability to apprehend the preexistent, pre-linguistic Torah.

Because of this devotion God withdrew some of the intensity of the divine Presence, thus allowing Abraham to grasp God's essence. Yet the Maggid's homily has drawn an important distinction between Abraham's quest and those who live in the post-Sinaitic time. The Torah has now become the sole access point for attaining knowledge of the divine essence, for Revelation too is an act of divine limitation in which the expansive Torah was garbed in words and stories.

Yet the notion that the patriarchs fulfilled the entire Torah through a single commandment is also well represented in the Maggid's sermons. Exploring this idea will illuminate much about his understanding of the nature of religious praxis and its relationship to the infinite Torah. In our case, Abraham was given the commandment of circumcision (Gen. 17), and this one devotional act became an access point for a much greater mode of divine service:

> Abraham fulfilled the entire Torah. We must understand how this is possible. We may explain it as follows: it is a great principle that all six hundred and thirteen commandments are branches of the Torah. Each part of the Torah is a commandment. Now before the Torah was given, he had only the commandment of circumcision. This commandment included the divine vitality of all Torah; all of Scripture was concentrated within it (*derekh tsimtsum*). After the giving of the Torah it spread out through the various branches. Before this, the vitality and all the parts of Torah were

> contracted within it. Therefore, when he understood circumcision, he understood all the branches connected to Torah and intended [to fulfill][1157] all of them.[1158]

This notion that a single commandment includes the entire Torah, indeed all of existence, is fundamental to understanding this passage. Maimonides already suggests that it is possible for one to achieve a place in the world to come by performing a single mitzvah with "as it ought to be done," likely referring to some inner intent and a lack of any thought to temporal reward.[1159] Medieval Kabbalah ascribes great significance to the act of circumcision in particular, which is interpreted as a physical deed that mirrors—and inspires—divine revelation.[1160]

However, the Hasidic version of this idea subtly shifts the focus toward *devequt*, emphasizing that one may indeed arrive at a state of perfect communion with God through performing a single mitzvah with focus, fiery enthusiasm, and contemplative presence.[1161] Each precept is a microcosm of the whole Torah, which is itself a linguistic expression of God's very essence, and therefore a single commandment can lead the mystic to achieve an experience of the infinite Divine. Circumcision fulfilled this role for

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[1157] This phrase may refer to the mystical *kavvanot* ("intentions") accompanying the commandments rather than intent to fulfill the precepts of Scripture.

[1158] OHE, fol. 36a, with a parallel in OT #21, *lekh lekha*, p. 28.

[1159] Maimonides, *Commentary to the Mishnah*, *makkot* 3:17. See also *Tif'eret 'Uziel*, *ki tavo*, p. 121, where this idea is attributed to Maimonides. Cf. *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot lulav* 8:15; Joseph Albo, *Sefer ha-'Iqqarim* 3:27, 29-30. See also Moshe Hallamish, 'The Unification of "Every One": One Commandment and One Letter', *Daat* 71 (2011), pp. 25-52 [Hebrew].

[1160] See Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Circumcision, Vision of God, and Textual Interpretation', *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. L. Fine, New York 1995, pp. 495-524.

[1161] R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye frequently refers to the possibility of arriving at total *devequt* through performing a single commandment. In some cases he cites having heard it from the BeSHT, such as in *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *yitro*, p. 351; but in many other places he describes attaining *devequt* through one commandment without mentioning the BeSHT; see *Ben Porat Yosef*, *haqdamah*, pp. 28-29; ibid, *noah*, pp. 108-109.

Abraham, but after Scripture was delivered on Sinai all of the other commandments serve as "branches" that lead one to perceive the deeper nature of Torah.

These traditions raise an important question: if the Torah was once fully accessible to the patriarchs, why did it need to be revealed at Sinai? The Maggid clearly distinguishes between pre- and post-Sinai, but none of the teachings we have examined thus far explains *why* revelation was necessary. In a homily recorded in a work by one of his disciples, we read:

> God created by means of the Torah. Since the power of the Maker remains evident in the made, Torah is ever present in the world. This has been true since creation: Adam studied Torah, and after him Noah, Shem, and Ever.[1162] However, in the generations of Enosh, the flood, and Babel, evil reached such heights—unlike the wickedness of other generations, in which people were merely drawn by their passions—that the world and Torah were cut off from God. Their spiteful cry of, "What is God that we should worship Him!" (Job 21:15) had a real divisive power to it, separating the cosmic One from the *shekhinah*,[1163] as Scripture says: "A slanderer separates familiar friends" (Prov. 16:28). Then the Torah fell into the evil clutches of Egypt. Thus spoke the holy lips of our teacher the pious R. Dov Baer, and the same is found in the Lurianic writings.[1164]

Torah was a part of the world from the moment of its creation. However, the accessibility of this imprint of the preexistent Scripture within the world diminished as generations passed, and people came to view Scripture and the physical world as separate from their divine origins. The people of Israel were compelled to descend into Egypt in order to redeem the fallen elements of Torah that had become trapped there, a metaphor for attuning oneself to the Scripture found in all aspects of the physical realm.

[1162] See above, n. 1149.

[1163] See *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol. 2b.

[1164] *Me'or 'Einayim*, *mi-qets*, pp. 132-133; based on the translation in Green, *Light of the Eyes*, pp. 266-267. Cf. *Me'or 'Einayim*, *shemot*, p. 138

This teaching thus offers a mystical explanation of the exile and subsequent redemption of the Jewish people from Egypt. However, when read carefully it also implies that the Scripture needed to be given on Mt. Sinai because mankind gradually lost the ability to see Torah in the world around them, and forgot that both Scripture and the corporeal world are indelibly connected to God. Though the Maggid does not make this point explicitly, perhaps we are meant to infer that Revelation, often considered the culmination of the Exodus story, restored Israel's perception of the divine nature of Scripture.[1165]

Other teachings from the Maggid frame the present situation somewhat differently, suggesting that even in the post-Sinaitic world one might be able to access the Torah in its pristine form:

> The following is the meaning of "your commandment is broad beyond measure" (Ps. 119:96), and, "Open my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your Torah" (Ps. 119:18), referring to those wondrous worlds hidden within Your Torah. This is [the explanation of] "the blessed Holy One created the world with the Torah"— with the Torah, just as we have it, but it has been garbed in all the worlds according to what it is. [The Torah] itself does not change.
>
> This is how the patriarchs studied Torah, and how Noah studied Torah. They attained the Torah just as it is, even though at that time it had not been clothed in a garment as we have it. This is like a sheath for the Torah itself.
>
> This is "in the future the blessed Holy One will remove the sun from its sheath."[1166] It will be grasped as it is, without any garment, since right now its illumination cannot be withstood on its own, and not every mind can bear it.[1167] But the *tsaddiqim*, who have removed themselves from

[1165] This might suggest that before Revelation there was some conception of Scripture, but one that was ultimately disconnected from God. We should remember that R. Dov Baer refers to the messianic age as a time in which the link between the Divine and Scripture will be restored.

[1166] b. 'Avodah Zarah 3b.

[1167] See *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 69, fol. 116a

> physicality, can grasp it, each one according to the degree of their removal from corporality. For example, one who is removed from only this world can attain [the Torah] in a higher world, and so forth without limit. To the extent that he attaches himself to the higher world, his understanding will increase and be less limited (*metsumtsam*). But the farther he goes from his Root, the more the Torah will be limited, all the way to this world where everything is truly contracted.[1168]

The patriarchs studied Scripture in its most essential form, before it was clothed in the linguistic garment of narrative and laws it currently occupies. This garb acts as a shield that preserves one from the unbearable illumination of the Torah, since most people cannot withstand this light.

However, two other points about this teaching require some further thought. First, the Maggid has reiterated that the Torah of Creation is in some sense identical to the post-Sinai Scripture. The garment has been changed, but the nature of Torah remains exactly the same. Second, the essential core of Torah may still be accessed by certain righteous individuals that have successfully divested themselves from the physical world. In the future Torah's inner nature will be revealed to all, but even now it is accessible to those who seek it.

Some teachings attributed to the Maggid allow for the possibility that certain rarified people of later generations will emulate the patriarchs' type of contemplative service. We read:

> "Ascend a lofty mountain" (Isa. 40:9). The patriarchs are called mountains.[1169] Now there are three types of love. The first kind is love that comes from deeds. One sees that another has made beautiful vessels, and for this reason he loves him. The second love comes from his beautiful words. The third love is that which comes from his wisdom, for he is a great sage. It is taught that

[1168] MDL #134, p. 234, with parallels in OT #71, *shemot*, p. 97; and OHE, fol. 57b.

[1169] b. Rosh ha-Shanah 11a.

> *binah* is the heart, for with it the heart understands.[1170] But isn't *binah* the *mohin* ("mental energy") found in the three cavities of the skull?[1171] Yet the foundations, the connection between these two beloveds (i.e. *hokhmah* and *binah*), extend down to the chest [of *adam qadmon*, the primeval man], as is known.[1172] Thus *binah* is in the heart, where it receives from the highest level—the primeval mind (*qadimat ha-sekhel*).
>
> The *tsaddiq* makes an impression above with his good deeds, bringing great pleasure to the higher worlds. For example, the patriarch accomplished the same deeds with their wells and their sticks that are performed with *tefillin*. Thus when the patriarchs performed these actions, their primary connection lay in the World of Thought. For example, when one saw a well, he attached himself to the source of living water, the "river that flows from Eden" (Gen. 2:10). Thought is a towering mountain, and deeds are an indicator (*tsiyyun*) pointing toward it. When their contemplation is focused above, they can perform [the divine] Will, and can transform something bad into good. This was true of R. Simeon bar Yohai, who purified the markets of Tiberias.[1173] The markets are the lowest levels, and he raised them up.[1174]

The Maggid has outlined three types of love, each corresponding to one of the different aspects of divine service, namely deeds, words, and thought. All three of these must be included in any truly complete devotional act. A physical action, whether it be performing a commandment or another type of deed, provides the basis for an internal contemplative attachment to the Divine. The Maggid invokes the patriarchs and the Talmudic sage R. Simeon bar Yohai as examples of *tsaddiqim* who can perform this type

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[1170] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *haqdamah aheret*, fol. 17a.

[1171] See Zohar 3:140a.

[1172] See *Ets Hayyim* 14:1-2.

[1173] See Zohar 2:37a; y. Shevi'it 9:1; and b. Shabbat 34a, but this sort of allegorical "purification" is found in neither the Zohar nor the Talmudic precedents.

[1174] MDL #77, pp. 132-133, with parallels in OT #325, *pesuqim*, p. 371; and OHE, fol. 42a. In MDL this passage is nested within a much longer teaching about the need to serve God through the physical world.

of service even now. Through their deeds and their thoughts they unite the *sefirot*, and can even transform the physical world around them.

The question of the Maggid's understanding of the commandments more broadly lies beyond the scope of the current study. However, we should note that as a part of the Torah, the commandments are rooted in the infinite realm above. Just as God contracted the infinite, preexistent Torah into the finite structures of language so that it might be grasped by the limited human mind, so too do we concentrate our energy (both physical and contemplative) by focusing it into a single devotional act.[1175]

THE ROLE OF MOSES

We noted above that some of the Maggid's teachings portray Moses as the one who drew forth the Torah from *hokhmah* and brought it into the realm of speech. In this the Maggid is building upon an image of Moses as the venerated "lawgiver," one that is an ancient part of Jewish tradition.[1176] Deuteronomy makes a claim for the uniqueness of Mosaic prophecy, and later books of the Bible already refer to the Pentateuch as the "Torah of Moses."[1177] Rabbinic literature is filled with passages extolling his singularity, describing his prophetic wisdom and praising him as the lawgiver par excellence.[1178]

[1175] See *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *'eqev*, p. 187. Cf. MDL #134, pp. 234; and OHE, fol. 87b.

[1176] Louis H. Feldman, *Philo's Portrayal of Moses in the Context of Ancient Judaism,* Notre Dame 2007, pp. 258-279; idem, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 82.3/4 (1992), pp. 285-328; idem, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses: Part Two," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 83.1/2 (1992), pp. 7-50; idem, "Josephus' Portrait of Moses: Part Three," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 83.3/4 (1993), pp. 301-330. On the development of the figure of Moses in Jewish literature more broadly, see the recent collection *Moses the Man: Master of Prophets*, ed. M. Hallamish, H. Kasher, and H. Ben Pazi, Ramat-Gan 2010 [Hebrew].

[1177] Malachi 3:22; Ezra 3:2, 7:6,10.

[1178] It is interesting to note that in the rabbinic tradition Moses generally referred to as "Moses our Teacher," rather than Moses "the lawgiver," an appellative more common in the Hellenistic Jewish

These themes were developed further in later Jewish mystical literature, in which Moses is associated with the *sefirah tif'eret*, which represents the Written Torah as well. Moses is also referred to as *ba'al ha-matronita*, the "husband of *shekhinah*" or *malkhut*.[1179] But in some texts, particularly those of the Lurianic tradition, Moses is associated with the higher *sefirah* of *da'at*.[1180]

The Maggid's teachings variously associate Moses with several of the higher *sefirot*, including *da'at*, *binah*[1181] and *hokhmah*.[1182] He had no attachment to the physical world, and in particular he withdrew from having any relationship with his wife; therefore Moses could connect with *ayin*.[1183] Indeed, his divestment from the corporal realm allowed Moses to connect himself to God within his mind at all times,[1184] granting him access to the divine *hokhmah* that unifies and animates all elements of the physical world.[1185] Of course, the Maggid also describes Moses' prophecy as having been unique. Moses bestowed the Jewish people with an expansive, all-encompassing Torah that includes all other parts of the Bible in some form. Other prophets only reveal things already found in this original Scripture, whereas Moses transmitted an entirely new

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literature; see Heinrich Bloch, *Die Quellen des Flavius Josephus in seiner Archdologie*, Leipzig 1879, pp. 139-140.

[1179] On the image of Moses in the capacity of lawgiver in the Zohar, see Wolfson, 'Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience', pp. 378-379, 388; idem, *Circle in the Square*, pp. 3, 8-9, 14-15; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, pp. 75-76, 91-92. In Lurianic Kabbalah, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 99-100, 320, 329-330. On Moses and divine knowledge more broadly, see *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #134 p. 219.

[1180] Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, p. 314-315. *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar hag ha-matsot*, ch. 1. See, more broadly, Moshe Idel, 'The Image of Man above the *Sefirot*: R. David ben Yehuda he-Hasid's Theosophy of Ten Supernal *Sahsahot* and its Reverberations', *Kabbalah* 20 (2009) pp. 181-212.

[1181] MDL #92, p. 160.

[1182] LY #263, fol. 79b, which describes Moses as having attained *da'at*, but wanted to enter Israel in order to achieve an even higher level.

[1183] MDL #177, p. 275.

[1184] OT #23, *va-yera*, pp. 30-3; cf. LY #1, fol. 1a.

[1185] MDL #143, p. 242.

revelation that had never before been heard.[1186] Furthermore, only Moses truly understood the depths of Torah, and therefore had no need for the thirteen principles that guide rabbinic exegesis.[1187] Only the sages who came after him, the masters and developers of the Oral Torah, required such tools.[1188]

The Maggid often reiterates that Moses's great humility enabled him to transmit the Torah. Revelation required God to contract some measure of the divine light, or essence, and invest it within the linguistic structure of Torah. This was a demonstration of great divine humility, and it was Moses' lack of pride that allowed him to apprehend the self-humbling God.[1189] Indeed, Scripture could only have been given by someone who grasped the most intimate and powerful divine name, the one that animates all others and signifies the aspect of God that sustains all existence:

> Our teacher Moses grasped the essence of divinity, which is the vitality of all the names [of God], where there are no distinctions and all is utter oneness. Therefore the Torah in all its breadth (*bi-kelalutah*) was given through him. This was not the case with the other prophets, who grasped the divine attributes and names but not the essence of divinity. A name is something particular. For example, when one sees a person's strength, he is called a hero (*gibbor*). When we see his kindness, he is called a worker of kindness (*gomel hesed*), and so forth for all the others—all refer to him by some particular attribute. So it was with the prophets.
>
> Each of [the other prophets] grasped one particular attribute through which they understood the essence of divinity, and they spoke to the blessed Holy One with this attribute alone. This was not the case with Moses our teacher, who grasped [divinity] through the name Y-H-V-H, the vitality

[1186] OT #103, *tetsaveh*, pp. 143-144, interpreting a statement in b. Ta'anit 9a.

[1187] See Abraham Shoshanah's edition of the *Baraita de-Rabbi Yishma'el*, Jerusalem 2014; Maimonides, *Sefer ha-Mitsvot*, *ha-shoresh ha-sheni*. See also Aviram Ravitsky, 'Aristotelian Logic and Talmudic Methodology: The Commentaries on the 13 Hermeneutic Principles and their Application of Logic', *Judaic Logic*, ed. A. Schumann, Piscataway, New Jersey 2010, pp. 117-143.

[1188] MDL #101, pp. 178-179.

[1189] See OT #394, *aggadot*, pp. 417-418.

> of all the names. Thus the Torah in general and particular, including all that a faithful student would innovate,[1190] was given through him.[1191]

Moses possessed an understanding and an apprehension of God the like of which was achieved by no other prophets. He had access to the divine name Y-H-V-H, the liminal point that bridges between the linguistic structures of Torah and the pre-linguistic fountain of divine energy, and for this reason it was he who could bring the Torah into speech. We have seen that in the Maggid's teachings, as is true in many earlier mystical traditions, Y-H-V-H itself is described as the source of all language. Because Moses was connected to Y-H-V-H and not any of the other subsidiary divine names, he was able to mediate between the infinite preexistent Torah and the Scripture he was to deliver on Sinai.

The Maggid often associated Moses with the *sefirah da'at*, but he also identifies Moses as one of the few individuals who can enter into the *ayin*. We should ask, then, if Moses might have had access to the higher realms of *hokhmah* or *binah* when he was giving the Torah. Indeed, elsewhere he explains that Moses was granted a momentary vision of *hokhmah* on Mt. Sinai, even though he was generally only able to grasp *binah*. In being revealed the Scripture underwent four stages of contraction, from *hokhmah*, *binah*, *tif'eret* and *malkhut*, constituting a translation of the preexistent divine Wisdom into words.[1192] Only Moses, unique among the prophets because of his apprehension of the abstract divine essence, was able to shepherd the Torah through this process.

[1190] See below, pp. 418-419.

[1191] MDL, #132, pp. 228, with parallels in OT #245, pp. 301-302; and OHE, fol. 56b.

[1192] MDL #122, p. 203.

Moses's singularity is defined by his ability to connect to both the pre-linguistic realms of the Divine and the attribute of speech. This means, however, that he was less connected to the physical world. For this reason Moses left the performance of deeds and wonders to the other leaders of his day:

> The Zohar teaches that "had Moses spoken to the rock, there would have been no forgetting [i.e. Torah would never be forgotten]."[1193] The reason is that all the miracles Moses performed were accomplished by speech alone; he did not belong to the realm of action. He was told to lift up his staff (Ex. 14:16), but the Sea was subdued by the word alone. This was not the case with Joshua. Moses represents *da'at*, drawn toward speech. His generation was also called "the generation of awareness" (*dor de'ah*). For this reason they are referred to as *dor ha-midbar* ("generation of the wilderness"), which can mean "the generation of speech" (*medabber*)[1194] Speech is drawn forth from the mind, and thus they received the Torah in speech...
>
> But when the first generation of the wilderness, the "generation of awareness", had died out and a new generation had come, Moses saw that they were people of deeds. They would come to inherit the land, as is known, and therefore he struck the rock. But the blessed Holy One told Moses that the opposite was true! He should have established and raised up this second generation as a generation of speech, following the inheritance of their forefathers. With speech alone water would have come forth from the rock, and they too would have been a generation of awareness. This [mistake] led to forgetting, or a descent from speech into deeds. The sages of the Zohar spoke well, teaching that there would be no forgetfulness if he had not hit the rock.[1195]

[1193] Zohar 1:28b.

[1194] Lit. "the generation of the mouth," from Song. 4:3.

[1195] MDL #84, p. 146-147, with parallels in OT #142, pp. 190-191; and OHE, fol. 44a. For a version of this teaching copied from "the manuscripts" by one of the Maggid's disciples, see *Tsemah ha-Shem Li-Tsevi*, vol. 2, *huqqat*, pp. 556-557, translated in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 2, pp. 43-44. See also MDL #92, p. 160. See Green, 'Around the Maggid's Table', pp. 96-99, for analysis of this teaching and several others from the Maggid's students. Green interprets these texts as referring to a debate in the Maggid's circle regarding how their spiritual path might be broadened from a small group of scholars into a mass movement.

Moses, and indeed his entire generation, possessed a very special combination of *da'at* and *dibbur*, or contemplative awareness and speech. For this reason the Torah was first revealed to them in its linguistic garment. The next generation, however, was attracted to deeds instead of speech. Moses' error, manifest in hitting the rock, represented an effort to satiate the next generation's desire for action. This well-intentioned mistake caused them to lose their sacred capacity for *da'at*.

Yet in a different homily the Maggid claims that Moses' constant state of mystical attachment to God through speech and contemplation almost prevented him from taking part in the redemption of Israel from Egypt.[1196] He and his brother Aaron were totally withdrawn from physical pleasures and lacked any connection to the corporeal world. However, God wished to reveal the very essence of divinity through the events of the Exodus, and for this reason He commanded these two figures to descend from their rung, and connect themselves to the people in order to lead them out of Egypt.

Moses' importance as a master of sacred speech began long before the Israelites arrived at Mt. Sinai. Indeed, the Maggid interprets the entire story of the Exodus as the redemption of language. God charged Moses with going into Egypt to free the fallen, or "exiled," capacity for holy speech that was trapped in Egypt:

> Even though [the patriarchs] reached a high level and were called the "forefathers" (*avot*), "I did not make My name Y-H-V-H known to them" (Ex. 6:3). There is a rung even higher than theirs, which was Moses' level. The Creator truly wanted to raise him up and make him greater than the level of the patriarchs, as it says, "I speak to him mouth to mouth" (Nu. 12:8). Moses refused to go to Pharaoh because he did not want to descend and degrade himself amidst the "husks" of Egypt,

[1196] MDL#133, p. 233.

> which were so very great that they ruled over holy speech (*ha-dibbur ha-qadosh*), as has been explained.
>
> This is the explanation of the letters of "Pharaoh." [His name is] "evil speech" (*peh ra'*), meaning that the [holy] speech was trapped in the evil. Therefore Moses said, "My mouth is heavy" (*kevad peh*, Ex. 4:10)—it is difficult for me to bring forth "the mouth," which is speech, from this exile, and fear that I may be hurt in the process, God forbid. The blessed One made His true attribute known to him, which is the essence of His existence, the mystery of the upper faces (*ha-panim 'elyonim*).[1197] [Moses] saw and understood that he could break the husks of Egypt, and then he went.[1198]

Moses is singled out by God for his ability to redeem the holy sparks, described as fallen elements of divine speech, that have been exiled in Egypt. Completing this task would raise him up to a higher spiritual level even than that of the patriarchs, but it also entailed great danger. It could only be safely accomplished by someone who had attained Moses' level of knowledge of God, thus enabling him to shatter the "husks" that surround the fallen holy words and return them to their divine source. As we shall see momentarily, it was this courageous act of restoring the exiled speech that would enable the Jewish people to receive the Torah on Sinai.

Moses gave the Torah because of his unique capacity for sacred language. However, we should note that in some teachings the Maggid refers to Moses as someone for whom even speech was quite difficult:

> It is written in the Torah that Moses refused to go take the Jewish people out of Egypt. This was not for nothing, for it teaches us something important. In truth he was correct, since [Moses]

[1197] The precise meaning of this phrase is rather obscure. *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-tefillah*, ch. 2, quotes a tradition from Jacob Tsemah that interprets *panim 'elyonim* as a reference to the description of the divine head found in *Idra Rabba*; see Zohar 3:133b. Cf. *Ets Hayyim* 26:3. See *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar hazarat ha-'amidah*, ch. 3, where *panim 'elyonim* refers to the *sefirot* above *ze'ir anpin*.

[1198] KTVQ, fol. 37a-b.

> represents the attribute of love alone, as Scripture says, "from the water I have drawn him" (Ex. 2:10),[1199] referring to love and pleasure. This is [the meaning of] "I am slow of speech" (Ex. 4:10). The mouth focuses (*metsamtsem*) the voice into speech, in order to form articulated words. [Moses] was not of the attribute of focus (*tsimtsum*) [and withdrawal], but rather pleasure [and spreading out]. In this case, however, a revelation of His divinity through [both] love and contraction was necessary. Therefore God said to him, "Surely Aaron, your brother the Levite," meaning the attribute of focus, "will be a mouth for you" (Ex. 4:14). At that time Moses was fit for the priesthood, and Aaron for Levite status,[1200] as our sages have taught.[1201]

Moses was intimately connected to the contemplative realms higher than speech. Indeed, elsewhere the Maggid interprets Moses's proclamation of "I am of uncircumcised lips" (Ex. 6:12) as an admission that he has attained such a high level that he cannot enter into language.[1202] Yet the revelation of the divine presence during the Exodus required a synthesis of both what the Maggid describes in this case as love and awe:[1203] first it was necessary to focus and temper God's unbounded essence, and only then could it be expressed through finite vessels. For this reason Moses, the hero of the contemplative mind but not of speech, could not redeem the Jews alone.

Earlier in this same sermon the Maggid reiterates that a similar process took place as God fashioned the world. Some measure of the preexistent infinite light of the Divine was withdrawn, allowing the Presence to become focused within the physical world. Thus Creation, the Exodus, and the Revelation at Sinai reflect a similar process, and all three are mirrored by the way human thoughts are translated into spoken words.

[1199] Water is a frequent symbol for love, and the *sefirah hesed*.

[1200] b. Zevahim 102a.

[1201] MDL #62, p. 102, with parallels in OT #69, *shemot*, pp. 95-96; and OHE, fol. 23a. See also MDL #133, p. 233.

[1202] See OT #75, *va-era*, p. 106; and cf. ST, p. 50b.

[1203] See Michaelis, 'The Path of Love and Awe', esp. pp. 21-24.

Moses' unique mastery of language and contemplative attachment to God enabled him to bring forth the Torah from the realm of divine Thought into speech. This notion raises the following questions: to what degree Moses actually shaped the textual fabric of Scripture? Was it he who chose the words of the Torah's linguistic garb, were they directly revealed to him by God, or did he simply intuit the correct words through his communion with divine Thought? The Maggid never directly addresses this issue, though as we have seen, he suggests that some of the narrative garment of Torah came from the deeds of the patriarchs. Some scholars have detected a fascinating conception of revelation in later Hasidic texts, which describe the theophany at Sinai as pre-linguistic and without specific content.[1204] If we interpret the Maggid's teachings as suggesting that Moses was the origin of the specific words of Torah, then his description of Revelation seems to anticipate this radical idea as it is found in the later Hasidic works.

In other homilies the Maggid implies that the process through which Torah emerged from divine silence into human language began before Moses. Revelation started when it arose in the divine Mind that the essence of divinity must be revealed. This could only be accomplished through the medium of language, or, more specifically, through the speech acts of Creation and later the revelation of Scripture. We read:

[1204] Naftali of Ropshitz, *Zera' Qodesh*, Jerusalem 1971, vol. 2, *le-hag ha-shavu'ot*, fol. 40a, quotes his teacher R. Menahem Mendel of Premishlan as having said that the Revelation consisted only of the first aleph of *anokhi* ("I), the initial word of the First Commandment. See also ibid, vol. 1, *yitro*, fol 72a, where it is not attributed to R. Menahem Mendel; and Ahron Marcus, *Eine Kulturgeschichtliche Studies*, Pleschen 1901, p. 239, and Gershom Scholem, 'Religious Authority and Mysticism', *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim, London 1996, pp. 30-31, argued that this revelation was totally silent. But see the rejoinders from Sommer, 'Revelation at Sinai', pp. 439-443; Jerome Gellman, 'Wellhausen and the Hasidim', *Modern Judaism* 26.2 (2006), pp. 193-207, who demonstrate that the revelation of the *aleph* of *anokhi* was not silent, although it was indeed without specific content. Sommer correctly notes that the precise teaching quoted by R. Naftali's in the name of his teacher is found nowhere in the collections of R. Menahem Mendel's homilies, but a very likely source may be found in *Menahem Tsiyon*, Benei Brak 2004, *be-shalah*, p. 47.

> God contracted Himself into the aspect of *hokhmah*, called [the letter] *yod*—(as it says, "Y-H-V-H of Hosts" (*tseva'ot*)—the letter (*ot*) is His host (*tsava*), meaning that the revelation of His divinity to Israel, who are His host, happens by means of the letters...)—the *hyle* from which all the letters are made. Everything is included within it and hidden inside. He wished to reveal His divinity, and this revelation was by means of the letters that are separated into groups and combined in different ways. They are all worlds. They are included in the five positions [of the mouth]. Therefore His thought was to reveal the five [positions, for these five positions exist] in thought, since thought too must happen in terms of the five positions. Everything that one thinks is in letters. This is *binah*—understanding a small revelation that happens by means of the five positions [of the mouth]. The letter *heh* is a combination of *dalet* and *vav*, which are the ten utterances [of Creation].[1205] "Utterance" (*ma'amar*) can mean thought, as is known, since at that time it was in thought and still needed to be revealed and to spread farther.
>
> This was the role of Moses, whose name means to draw forth, as in "from the water I have drawn him" (Ex. 2:10), the *vav*, [which represents] spreading out until thought is revealed in speech. This is the last *heh* [of Y-H-V-H]. This [*heh* also] includes *dalet* and *vav*, [alluding to the] Ten Commandments... which are the revelation of His divinity in the lower worlds.
>
> When one achieves awe and comes to know the revelation of divinity, he sees God's sovereignty in all places and there is no place devoid [of him], as our sages said: "The words 'I am Y-H-V-H your God' were heard in all places, in each and every place. Even the stone in the wall cried out and the rafter in the woodwork answered: 'I am Y-H-V-H your God.'"[1206] They grasped His divinity in every place, crying out "I am" and "there is none other." Consider this and ponder it well.[1207]

Revelation began with the first act of divine self-limitation into *hokhmah*, alluded to by the letter *yod* of Y-H-V-H. In this stage God's essence was still unformed and pre-linguistic, only taking on the shape of the letters as it entered the realm of *binah*,

[1205] The combined numerical value of *dalet* (four) and *vav* (six) is ten.

[1206] Based on Habakkuk 2:11. See *Shemot Rabbah* 5:9; b. Zevahim 116a.

[1207] SLA, p. 188.

associated with the first *heh* of God's name. According to the Maggid, this stage represents the formation of the world through the ten divine speech acts. It was through these utterances that God created the world, but the revelation of His essence was still unstable and incomplete, like a thought before it has been expressed in verbal language.

Only Moses, associated with *tif'eret* and the *vav* of Y-H-V-H, finally drew God's essence into language and brought it into speech. This final stage, represented by the final *heh* of God's name, was accomplished through the giving of the Ten Commandments at Sinai. These correspond to the ten utterances through which the world was created, thus completing a cosmic process of revelation that spells out the most sacred divine name.

We should note that the Maggid adds a devotional element to the conclusion of this teaching. The Revelation at Sinai was a moment in which all living beings, and indeed even inanimate creations, were awoken to the presence of God in the physical world. This attunement, however, was not only a historical moment. It is accessible to any spiritual adept who looks upon the world with the awareness that everything that surrounds him reveals the divine Presence.

Some of the Maggid's teachings, like the one we have just examined, treat Creation and Revelation as two stages in a single process of the cosmic unfolding of God's essence. Other homilies draw a more explicit conceptual parallel between the two events, both of which required that God temper the infinite divine light:

> It is known that the ultimate reason (*takhlit*) for the creation of the worlds is that there can be no king without a people. This [divine] Thought caused the *tsimtsum*.
>
> "And Y-H-V-H came down upon Mt. Sinai" (Ex. 19:20). What need was there for any descent? Isn't "the world filled with His glory" (Isa. 6:3)? A parable: a father who wishes to delight in his child must talk to him. Now the intellect (*sekhel*) of the father remains just as great as it was

> before he spoke to his child. It does not change, and the father does not descend from his expansive mind. But this mind is hidden and unseen when he is speaking with his child, the words he exchanges with the small child [express] a smallness of mind (*qatnut ha-sekhel*). This is referred to as contraction (*tsimtsum*) and descent (*horadah*) for the father—[if not for the child], he would have nor reason to contract his intellect and to draw it into these sorts of diminished words. Therefore, when the Holy One wanted to speak to Israel, it is called a descent for Him, as it were. The same is true when it arose in the primeval thought (*mahshavah qedumah*) that there can be no king without a people...[1208]

Elsewhere the Maggid refers to the giving of the Torah on Sinai as an act of divine love. God allowed His ever-expansive mind to become restrained within the structures of language out of his great love for the Jewish people.[1209] Though this type of translation does not change the divine essence, which remains perpetually infinite, it does represent a moment in which God's unbounded potential becomes concretized in finite vessels. However, the Divine's willing self-limitation—both in Creation and in Revelation—fulfills a divine need as well. Without revealing the Torah or forming the worlds, some prospective element of God's identity, here described as kingship, would have remained forever unexpressed.

A small number of the Maggid's teachings reflect upon the two different versions of the Ten Commandments recorded in the Hebrew Bible. Building upon a Talmudic tradition insisting that both sets of Commandments were uttered simultaneously, the Maggid describes this as a model for the relationship between the Oral Torah and the Written Torah:

[1208] OHE, fol. 47b-48a. This appears to be a longer account of the following short conversation between R. Levi Isaac and his teacher the Maggid in ST, p. 59. For a discussion of this passage from a different perspective, see Lederberg, *Gateway to Infinity*, p. 174-175.

[1209] See OT #98, *yitro*, pp. 137-138; cf. SLA, p. 125-126.

"Remember" and "keep" [the Sabbath] were spoken in one utterance.[1210] The Zohar teaches that "remember" is masculine, and "keep" is feminine.[1211]... The general principle is this: the works of Creation were formed in their full stature.[1212] Male and female were created as one.[1213] Afterward the Holy One aligned them and hewed the female so that she could face him.[1214]

The same is true in the case [of the Torah]. The essence of all things is said in the Written Torah, and the Oral Torah explains them, as when [the Sages] removed or added [letters in their exegesis], interpreting and setting things out.[1215] So "keep" must surely have been included in "remember," but it was [only] revealed in Deuteronomy (*mishneh torah*), called "the viceroy of the king" (*mishneh le-melekh*, Esth. 10:3), which is female. This is the meaning of "they were spoken in one utterance." "Remember" included "keep" as well, since the latter receives from the former....

The sages taught, "remember [the Sabbath] upon the wine."[1216] Therefore you must say that "remember" is a higher level than the wine... The wine is the level from which speech proceeds, as in [the Sages' teaching]: "give the young men plenty of strong wine, so that they may say something."[1217] "Remember" is higher, for thought is the essence of speech, as in "the father established (*yasad*) the daughter."[1218]

[1210] b. Rosh ha-Shanah 27a.

[1211] Zohar 2:92a. On the importance of gender imagery in kabbalistic conceptions of Shabbat, see Elliot K. Ginsburg, *The Sabbath in the Classical Kabbalah*, Albany 1989, pp. 101-121.

[1212] I.e. fully completed. See b. Hullin 60a.

[1213] b. Berakhot 61a; Zohar 2:231a.

[1214] See *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:1. The "hewing" (*nesirah*) of the female from the male is a central image in the Lurianic creation myth. See Giller, *Shalom Shar'abi*, pp. 131-146

[1215] See b. Yoma 48a.

[1216] b. Pesahim 106a. Referring to *qiddush*, a benediction recited on the wine each Friday evening and Shabbat day. See Ginsburg, *The Sabbath*, pp. 176-177.

[1217] b. Sanhedrin 38a.

[1218] Zohar 3:256b. *Abba* ("father") is a symbol for *hokhmah*, which gives to *malkhut,* also called *berata* ("daughter").

> Now it is written, "God spoke all of these things, saying" (Ex. 20:1). The Zohar teaches that these were general "things," and needless to say "keep" [was included among them].[1219] Thus they taught that "remember" and "keep" were spoken in one utterance—they were indeed one utterance. The female was included, and therefore not explicitly said... understand this well.[1220]

This rather complicated text explores the intimate relationship between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, classically associated with the *sefirot tif'eret* and *malkhut* respectively. The two different versions of the Ten Commandments, for which "remember" and "keep" are a synecdoche, represent the Written and Oral Torah. The Maggid is suggesting that the initial version of the Decalogue given in Exodus 20 contained all of the elements of the later revelation described in Deuteronomy 5. The details of the latter account were drawn forth and separated from the former, but did not constitute a new revelation.

Thus the Oral Torah in its entirety was included in the Written Torah given at Sinai, albeit in embryonic and potential form. Though it unfolds as time goes on, the Oral Torah is fully rooted in the original revelation, just as spoken words are bound to the thoughts which they concretize and express. In order to illustrate this dynamic from a different perspective, the Maggid reminds us that male and female were originally created as a single being, referring to the plain-sense meaning of the Genesis story, an ancient midrashic theory, and its reinterpretation in the Lurianic creation myth. In order for them to face one another in a loving embrace, it was necessary to separate them into

[1219] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 22, fol. 60b.

[1220] LY #287, fol. 107a-108a, with a parallel in OT #99, *yitro*, pp. 138-140. Cf. #146, p. 247.

two different entities.[1221] Similarly, in order for it to be expressed, the Oral Torah had to be removed from the Written Torah in which its potential had originally been included.

The respective associations of the Written Torah and the Oral Torah with thought and speech are relatively common in the Maggid's teachings. In another homily, we read:

> The world was created with ten utterances (*ma'amarot*).[1222] The word "utterance" (*amirah*) is feminine. Now there is Written Torah, and there is also Oral Torah, which is given to us, as Scripture says, "Truth was cast to the ground" (Daniel 8:12), meaning that it is garbed in physicality. The Written Torah is called "the Torah of grace upon her tongue" (Prov. 31:26),[1223] since it is above speech... When the Torah was given it was given through the Ten Commandants, the general principles of the Written Torah, and the ten utterances [of creation] were strengthened.[1224]

The Written Torah was originally beyond speech, for it existed in the realm of divine Thought, and only through the giving of the Oral Torah was its energy brought into words. By now this notion may seem quite familiar, but the careful reader will note that the Maggid's formation in this particular homily suggests that the Torah revealed to Israel at Sinai was in fact the Oral Torah. The point is made more clearly in another of his teachings:

> Torah came forth from Wisdom.[1225] The matter is thus: there is Written Torah and Oral Torah. Written Torah is called the World of Thought, as in, "write [God's teachings] upon the tablet of your heart" (Prov. 3:3).[1226] The World of Speech is called the Oral Torah, since the mouth is its master, as we have said. Speech is called the World of Revelation, since whatever one says is

[1221] See Nahmanides' comments to Gen. 2:18.

[1222] m. Avot 5:1.

[1223] Cf. SLA, p. 35.

[1224] OT #235, *tehilim*, p. 292, with parallels in OHE, fol. 14a-b; and SLA, p. 132-133. Cf. SLA, p. 184, where Written Torah and Oral Torah are respectively referred to as *qol* and *dibbur*.

[1225] Zohar 2:121a.

[1226] The heart is often associated with thought and cognition. See above, p. 222 and n. 632.

> revealed to others. Thought is called the World of Concealment; nobody knows what someone else is thinking.[1227] Only one who enters to the World of Thought can know another's thoughts, since all the worlds are united in the World of Thought.[1228]

The Torah that was articulated aloud at Mt. Sinai was the Oral Torah, for the Written Torah is forever concealed and unspeakable. This non-literal interpreation of the term Written Torah is rather striking. Indeed, according to the Maggid it represents Torah as it exists in the mind of God. While we may rightly speak of its letters, for thoughts too are constructed from *otiyyot ha-mahshavah*, the Written Torah cannot ever be revealed. It is accessible only to the discerning contemplative who can journey into the World of Thought.

THE EXPERIENCE OF THEOPHANY

The Maggid also describes Revelation as a profound and intimate encounter between God and Israel. The giving of the Torah or the Ten Commandments was a central element of that experience, but the events of Sinai also represented a theophany in the broader sense. Indeed, they are the culmination of a process that began as the Israelites left Egypt:

> It is known that the redemption from Egypt took place through the revelation of His divinity, in His glory and essence (*elohuto, bi-khvodo u-ve'atsmo*). Thus it was such a great miracle that it was [a testimony] to the Creation of the world. This means that during Creation the external aspects of the worlds were revealed by means of revelation of His divinity, in His glory and essence. But the

[1227] Cf. OT #90, *be-shalah*, pp. 125-127. In other kabbalistic traditions the six lower *sefirot* are associated with the World of Revelation, and three upper *sefirot* are the World of Concealment; see R. Joseph Hayyim of Baghdad's *She'elot u-Teshuvot Rav Pe'alim* 1, *sod yesharim* #5, citing a tradition from R. Hayyim Vital.

[1228] SLA, p. 135-137, with a parallel in OHE, fol. 14b.

> intention of the Exodus was to reveal the inner dimensions of the world, meaning the vitality of the worlds—the holy Torah. Therefore was necessary that it happen by means of His divinity.[1229]

In this homily the Maggid outlines the relationship between Creation and Revelation differently than in his other teachings. We have noted that he often refers to them either as parallel processes or subsequent stages in a single unfolding of the divine essence, whereas in the passage above he describes them in terms of interior or exterior. God fashioned the physical structures of the universe during Creation, thus accomplishing an "external" form of revelation. However, unveiling the inner, spiritual dimensions of the physical realm—to wit, the Torah through which everything was created—entailed a much higher degree of revelation.

A well-known passage from the Zohar claims that the divine Word (*dibbur*) was in exile in Egypt.[1230] Invoking this tradition, the Maggid describes Revelation as a step in the process of restoring the Israelites' capacity for sacred language. But *da'at*, or awareness of the Divine, was also in exile along with speech, and it too needed to be redeemed before they could receive the Torah at Sinai.[1231] Thus the Israelites had to mature from the straitened consciousness of Egypt to a higher state of religious awareness. Several of the Maggid's teachings underscore that the exile of the word was not a one-time historical event, and that all types of redemption—including that of the

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[1229] MDL #133, p. 232.

[1230] See Zohar 2:25b. Of course, this draws upon a much older tradition of *shekhinah* accompanying the Jewish people into exile; see *Mekhilta*, *bo*, *mesekhta de-pisha* 14. For the Zohar, *dibbur* represents *shekhinah* (*malkhut*), and *qol* (t*if'eret*) is associated with Moses. Thus the exile did not end with the Exodus, for fully redeemed until Mt. Sinai, at which point voice and speech are united. This notion is quoted with some frequency in the works of the Maggid's students. For example, see *Me'or 'Einayim*, *devarim*, p. 302; *Tsemah ha-Shem Li-Tsevi*, *tetsvah*, p. 307.

[1231] See SLA, p. 41, in which the Maggid describes Hanukkah and Sinai as two different typologies of redemption.

messianic age—are grounded in the redemption of language.[1232] We will turn to this theme in the conclusion of this dissertation.

Building upon an association already well established in the classical midrashim, the Maggid compares the theophany of Sinai with the splitting of the Sea in Exodus 15.[1233] He describes the redemption from Egypt as a journey in which Israel learned how to speak once again. And, as their relationship with language changed, their conception of God evolved:

> The sages taught: "at the Sea [of Reeds] He appeared to them as a young man. On Sinai, He appeared to them as an old man."[1234] This seems impossible, since it is written, "for you saw no image" (Deut. 4:15). We can explain this with a parable about a father who loves his son. Because of his great love for his son, the image of the son as he stands before him is hewn within the father. When the child is young, his image in the father's mind is still little, and when he grows up, so does the image in his father's mind.
>
> It is known that Israel arose first in the [divine] Mind.[1235] This means that they are permanently hewn into the supernal Thought, just like the son is carved into his father's thought. When the child improves his deeds and they find favor in his father's eyes, thus is he hewn into his father's mind. And the opposite is true... thus scripture says for the good, "Y-H-V-H will raise h/His face to you" (Num. 6:26), meaning their own faces as they are hewn into His thought.
>
> The Israelites were like a newborn baby when they left Egypt. When they arrived at the sea, they were like a freshly weaned child.[1236] They had only a small capacity for speech, and were not yet fully mature. This is why they could not recite the song on their own; Moses had to sing first and

[1232] See SLA, pp. 185-186, which describes the slow, unfolding process in which one must leave his own individual exile in order to receive the inner mysteries of Torah.

[1233] On God's revelation at the Sea of Reeds, see Arthur Green, 'The Children in Egypt and the Theophany at the Sea', *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought* 24 (1975), pp. 446-456.

[1234] *Pesiqta Rabbati* 21:6.

[1235] Zohar 1:24a. See above, pp. 268-278.

[1236] In the rabbinic version, the Israelites are described as a young warrior.

> they sang after him.[1237] This is the explanation of why Moses said, "and you should be silent" (Ex. 14:14)—you cannot yet speak maturely, but rather as a young child.
>
> This is the explanation of "at the Sea [of Reeds] He appeared to them as a young man." The image of the Israelites arose in the supernal thought just as they were at that time—as a young man. When they came to Marah, they were sweetened. This is the meaning of the verse, "[they could not drink the waters,] for they were bitter" (*ki marim hem*, Ex. 15:23). The Israelites were still bitter [and immature], but [in Marah] they were sweetened. When they came to Mt. Sinai they had understood how to learn, saying, "we will do and we will understand" (Ex. 24:7). They themselves achieved the supernal wisdom. This is the meaning of "an old man" (*zaqen*), referring to one who has acquired wisdom (*zeh qanah hokhmah*).[1238] "On Sinai He appeared to them as an old man," meaning that their image was hewn into the supernal thought as an old man, just as the son was hewn into the thought of his father according to his maturity and fullness.[1239]

The encounter between Israel and God at Sinai was far more sophisticated than the theophany that accompanied the splitting of the Sea of Reeds. When the Jews left Egypt, they were immature and could not yet speak. As the people matured throughout their journey in the wilderness, their capacity for sacred speech as well as their conception of God transformed and evolved. In crossing the Sea of Reeds they could only mimic the song of Moses, distinguished by his command of language and his singular apprehension of God. However, Israel had matured by the time they reached Sinai. They redeemed their ability to speak, and thus prepared themselves to receive the Torah.[1240]

This homily highlights an interesting issue related to the Maggid's epistemology. He suggests that the image of God that appeared to Israel, both at the Sea of Reeds and

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[1237] See b. Sotah 27b.

[1238] b. Qiddushin 32b.

[1239] MDL #164, pp. 263-264, with a parallel in OT #402, *aggadot*, pp. 424-425. Cf. OT #403, *aggadot*, p. 425; LY #130, fol. 36b-37a; and *Divrei Emet*, *va-ethanan*, fol. 54b.

[1240] See also R. Levi Isaac's interpretation of this rabbinic teaching in *Qedushat Levi*, *yitro*, p. 205.

on Sinai, was entirely a theological projection grounded in their own stage of contemplative development. But the opposite is also true. The theophany at Sinai left an impression within the minds of the Jewish people. It became a part of their collective memory, and served as a reservoir of energy imbued deep within them that may be accessed through their religious service:

> The first utterance of "I am" was a miracle beyond nature. [It was performed] not because of our deeds, since the Torah had not yet been given to us, but because He wanted to show us His divinity. The goal of all the commandments is to be in awe of God and "to cleave to Him" (Deut. 11:22). Perhaps this is why "remember" and "keep" were proclaimed in a single utterance,[1241] as we say, "a memory (*zekher*) of the exodus from Egypt."[1242] The Exodus [was an event] of the sort that is only for memory (*zikaron*), since no thought can grasp His divinity at all. [That essence] is like something far off that cannot be grasped except through memory; for this reason His divinity is called *zekher*. "Keep" (*shamor*) refers to the commandments, which can be more readily understood. The blessed One contracted Himself so that He could appear in the memory of His creatures. This is the only reason for the commandments, and this is [the meaning of] "both 'remember' and 'keep' were said in a single utterance."
>
> At the time of the Exodus we received His divinity because of His beneficent will, for He wished to infuse us with [the knowledge][1243] that He is our God. This is "I am Y-H-V-H your God that brought you [out of Egypt]." But now we receive His divinity through performing the commandments. The holy Torah is called "counsel," as in "I have counsel and resourcefulness" (Prov. 8:14). The holy Zohar[1244] refers to it as sound counsel for receiving His Divinity.[1245]

[1241] See above, p. 359.

[1242] This phrase is often invoked in the Jewish liturgy, including the *qiddush*.

[1243] The printed edition of ST reads "of His type" (*behinato*), but it perhaps it should read "His vitality" (*be-hiyyuto*).

[1244] Zohar 2:82b.

[1245] ST, p. 83.

The exodus from Egypt and the theophany at Mt. Sinai imbued the Jewish people with an internalized memory of redemption and revelation of the divine essence. But these profound moments were so powerful that they were unspeakable. The precepts of the Torah, when performed with awe and devotion, offer later generations a way of accessing that memory of the encounter with God that was infused deeply within them.

One remarkable teaching about the experience of revelation frames the encounter between Israel and God at Mt. Sinai as an intimate, even erotic, moment of communion. However, it is only through the medium of language that this could take place. We read:

> "You have been shown to know [that Y-H-V-H is God, and there is nothing else]" (Deut. 4:35)... the matter [may be understood] by first [interpreting] this teaching from the sages about the giving of the Torah: as each utterance left the mouth of the blessed Holy One, he made it kiss the mouth of each and every person.[1246] But we must make this understandable to the human mind, how can speech be a kiss?...
>
> It is known that there is an aspect of voice (*qol*) and an aspect of speech (*dibbur*). Speech is the external part of voice, which is more interior. When someone speaks to another person, it is possible for his lips to deceive and his mouth to lie to him; his heart may be inconstant.[1247] But if he speaks from the depths of his heart, he will arouse all of his powers into this speech, for the heart is the root of his strength. The dwelling place (*mishkan*) of the aspect of voice is in the heart, as is known, and therefore this sort of speech arouses a great response all on its own even without his intention.[1248] This is the meaning of, "words that emerge from the heart, enter into the heart."[1249] Since he speaks from his heart, the voice emerges and is garbed in the speech, and he differentiates the letters by means of the organs of articulation. This arouses the love in his fellow's heart. It means that he wishes to give his love to his friend, and thereby the corresponding

[1246] Paraphrasing *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1:2.

[1247] Cf. Ps. 78:37.

[1248] The editor notes that a similar teaching appears in "the writings of the BeSHT."

[1249] The origin of this phrase, often quoted in the name of the sages, is unknown.

> love in his friend's heart will be aroused, and greets him with a smiling countenance. This is the meaning of kisses—when they kiss one another, they reveal the love in their hearts. Their kisses bring their loves close to one another, and they become one. This is the idea of the "soul to soul" connection (*hitdavqut ruha be-ruha*) mentioned in the Zohar.[1250]...
>
> But when He came to give [the Torah] to us, for whom His love was hewn into [the divine] Heart from the earliest days of the earth and the [emergence] primordial thought... He spoke to us out of great and eternal love (*ahavah rabbah ve-ahavat 'olam*). The voice that leaves the heart was aroused with great love, and each [divine] utterance was of the type of voice that dwells within the heart. He revealed the secret hidden in His heart to us, which is the fullness of Torah (*shelemut ha-Torah*) and its pleasantness. Our souls departed as He spoke (cf. Song. 5:6),[1251] since the love in the hearts of the Jewish people was aroused to greet the love of the blessed One. "He went and met him at the mountain of God, and he kissed him" (Ex. 4:27)—the two loves cleaved to each other, becoming one.[1252]

Revelation at Sinai was thus a moment of intimate, loving encounter between God and Israel. The Maggid describes this experience in erotic and evocative terms drawn from the rich language of the Song of Songs. These types of images are used in earlier rabbinic Kabbalistic literature to refer to the intense relationship between master and disciple, the members of a spiritual fellowship, and, of course, between God and the Jewish

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[1250] See Zohar 2:124b, reinterpreting Song of Songs 1:2; and cf. Zohar 1:184a; 2:146a-b. The phrase *ruha be-ruha* was important in Lurianic Kabbalah, where it describes the unification between a living mystic and a departed sage; see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 284-285. For more on this phenomenon, see Garb, 'The Cult of the Saints', pp. 203-229. Elsewhere the Maggid uses this phrase in reference to God's attributes of compassion and stern judgment being united into one; MDL #62, p. 102-103. See also OHE, fol. 61a, where it is found in a long and complicated explanation about the different elements of the Godhead. See also *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 1, *bereshit*, p. 84.

[1251] See b. Shabbat 88b.

[1252] ST, pp. 21b-24a. Thus the Maggid explains that God while asked all the nations of the world if they would like to receive the Torah, the offer was in some was insincere. God spoke to them, but not from the Divine heart, and He did not reveal to them that He and the Torah are one.

people.[1253] Israel is so overwhelmed and aroused by this love that their souls break free and reach out for the Divine.

We should not be surprised to see that language is the point of connection that allows for this loving bond between God and Israel. The words of the Ten Commandments, which are filled with love, emerge from the heart of the Divine and inspire a mutual embrace. Though this sermon makes no explicit reference to *hokhmah*, *binah*, or any other *sefirot*, the focal point of the homily is the binary pair of *qol* and *dibbur*. As we have seen, both of these are associated with *sefirot* as well as the physical elements of speech. But in this teaching the symbols have been simplified: *dibbur* represents verbalized, audible speech, and *qol* represents the love that is imbued within it.

This homily suggests that the actual content of Revelation was of secondary importance to the emotive core contained within the Decalogue. The divine *qol* within the Ten Commandments was intended to arouse and ignite the love within the hearts of the listeners, and the words themselves were only a garment for conveying God's love for the people of Israel. The letters, however, provided the vessel through which this otherwise ineffable feeling could be expressed.

[1253] See R. Ezra of Gerona's commentary to Song of Songs 1:2, printed in *Kitvei Ramban*, ed. Chavel, vol. 2, pp. 485; *'Avodat ha-Qodesh* 2:1; Admiel Kosman, 'Breath, Kiss, and Speech as the Source of the Animation of Life: Ancient Foundations of Rabbinic Homilies on the Giving of the Torah as the Kiss of God', *Self, Soul and Body in Religious Experience*, ed. A.I. Baumgarten, J. Assmann, and G.G Stroumsa, Leiden 1998, pp. 96-124; Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, pp. 296-300; Gordon, 'Erotics of Negative Theology', pp. 1-38; Joel Hecker, 'Kissing Kabbalists: Hierarchy, Reciprocity, and Equality', *Studies in Jewish Civilization* 18 (2008), pp. 171-208; Judith Kates, 'Entering the Holy of Holies: Rabbinic Midrash and the Language of Intimacy', *Scrolls of Love*: *Ruth and the Song of Songs*, ed. P.S. Hawkins and L. Cushing Stahlberg, New York 2006, pp. 201-213; Reuven Kimelman, 'Rabbi Yokhanan and Origen on the Song of Songs: A Third-Century Jewish-Christian Disputation', *The Harvard Theological Review* 73 (1980), pp. 567-595; Liebes, '*Zohar* and *Eros*', *pp*. 67-119; Arthur Green, 'Intradivine Romance: The Song of Songs in the *Zohar*', *Scrolls of Love: Ruth and the Song of Songs*, ed. P.S. Hawkins and L. Cushing Stahlberg, New York 2006, pp. 214-227. On the broader question of erotic love, gender imagery, and power dynamics in Jewish mysticism, see the differing evaluations of Idel and Wolfson: Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, New Haven 2005; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Circle in the Square: Studies in the Use of Gender in Kabbalistic Symbolism*, Albany 1995.

Finally, we may close our discussion of the experience of Revelation in the Maggid's teachings with reference to its implications for devotional service. The ideal manner of Torah study, which will concern us in the following chapter, is one in which the grandeur of the moment of Mt. Sinai is recreated. But the Maggid also extends this idea to fulfilling all of the precepts of the Torah:

> Each commandment must be performed with deed, thought, speech [i.e., all three are required from the performer], and pleasure (meaning that one must draw himself into great attachment, until he reaches pleasure). Now when the Torah was given on Mt. Sinai, it was given in speech. As we can see, thought must have been there as well, since speech is drawn from thought. Therefore the Torah was given in speech and thought.
>
> But the deeds are in our hands. When we perform the commandments, we unite physical deeds, which are the world of action (*'olam ha-'asiyyah*), with the speech and thought, the worlds of formation (*yetsirah*) and creation (*beriyyah*).
>
> This is [the meaning of] "on the day of his wedding" (Song. 3:11)—this is the giving of the Torah.[1254] But was there really a wedding? The matter is as we have said, for [at Sinai] there was a true unification. The world of action ascended and united with the world of listening (*'olam ha-shemi'ah*), (which is a vessel for the world of speech, meaning to receive speech together with the action). Through this [process] the world of action is united with the worlds above...[1255]

The triad of thought, speech, and deed is a familiar one, appearing with some frequency in earlier Jewish literature.[1256] Here the Maggid describes Torah as the thought of God as manifested in speech, and together these two elements constitute the Revelation at Sinai.

[1254] b. Ta'anit 26b.

[1255] MDL #134, p. 236, with parallels in OT #80, *va-era*, p. 115; OHE, fol. 26a; and ST, p. 49.

[1256] See Sack, 'The Concept of Thought, Speech, and Action', pp. 221-241. More broadly, see Renford Bambrough and R. F. Holland, 'Thought, Word and Deed', *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volumes* 54, (1980), pp. 105-117, 119-132. See also William G. Kirkwood, 'Truthfulness as a Standard for Speech in Ancient India', *Southern Communication Journal* 54 (1989), pp. 213-234; Vasudha Narayanan, 'Water, Wood, and Wisdom: Ecological Perspectives from the Hindu Traditions', *Daedalus* 130 (2001), p. 183.

However, this unification is incomplete, and so the third aspect of performing the commandments in the physical realm was left to Israel. Therefore performing the commandments is the culmination of a process of unification of thought, speech and deed that began on Sinai. It is interesting to note, however, that this teaching greatly seems to dramatically reduce the requirements of one performing these sacred actions, for it refers to the deeper contemplative aspects of the commandments as being in God's hands.

Conclusion

The Torah is a linguistic expression of God's infinite Wisdom. However, Scripture predated the creation of the world, and in this pristine form it was infinite and undifferentiated, perhaps lacking any clear distinction in words or letters. But this type of an expansive and limitless Torah could never be apprehended by the human mind, so it was necessary for God to constrict it into letters. Indeed, only as Scripture was brought into the physical world did it take on the garb of narratives and laws that it now occupies. Although the Torah is now partitioned into many different words, it is united by a single undivided element of divine *hokhmah* that unites it all. The similarity of this notion to the way that *hokhmah* undergirds all aspects of the physical world is no coincidence, for God created the world through the primordial Torah.

The Maggid often refers to the Torah as a name of God, since Y-H-V-H is the source of all language and is therefore present in every word of Scripture. He also frequently invokes the Zoharic tradition that Torah and God are one, taking it to mean that Scripture is also a textual embodiment of the divine Presence. God's essence is so profound and infinite that it is utterly imperceptible, and therefore it was contracted into

the words of Torah. These letters are the finite vessels through which God's Wisdom and essence are expressed. The discerning student, however, can reach through its current linguistic structure and attain the infinite divine essence that still lies within.

The Torah includes a significant number of ordinary, banal narratives, some of which describe events that took place many years after Creation. The Maggid is puzzled by this fact, given that the primordial Torah had come into existence long before the world was formed. He answers that the some parts of the current linguistic garment of Torah was shaped by the deeds of human beings. Because the patriarchs performed all of their actions with great mystical attachment to the Divine, the stories of their lives became the narrative garb of Scripture. The deepest elements of Torah, those that are hidden in these stories, will only be revealed in the messianic time, but once more the Maggid teaches that the *hokhmah* within these narratives may be grasped even now.

Similarly, the patriarchs were able to perform the commandments even before they were given on Sinai, either through their contemplative minds or by doing ordinary deeds with great *devequt*. It was possible to serve God in this manner because the world was created through Scripture. It was necessary to reveal the Torah at Sinai, however, because as the generations progressed this contemplative ability was lost. Revelation provided humanity with the framework of the commandments and the text of the Torah, two related pathways through which one may reach the Divine. The Maggid suggests that the *tsaddiqim* can still bring great pleasure to God and attain *devequt* through their ordinary deeds, but these are in addition to the precepts of Torah, not instead of them.

It was Moses who drew the Torah into language on Mt. Sinai. He was defined by his great humility and withdrawal from the physical world, and therefore Moses was able

to reach into the deepest regions of divine Wisdom and shepherd the primordial Torah into words. Moses was the only one of the prophets to attain an awareness of God's essence that transcended all words; he achieved an intimate knowledge of the sacred name Y-H-V-H, the source of all language. And Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt and redeemed the fallen "letters" trapped there, thus restoring the exiled divine Word and preparing Israel to receive the Torah on Sinai. However, his same attachment to the pre-linguistic realm made speech very difficult for Moses, for he had attained such a high contemplative level that he had little use for words. Deeds were even more difficult for him, and therefore Moses could only lead the Israelites for a certain amount of time.

Other teachings from the Maggid suggest that the primordial Torah began to enter into language at the time of Creation. He draws an essential parallel between Creation and Revelation, for both represent processes through which God's wisdom became manifest in concrete structures of language. God formed the world through ten creative utterances, and these speech acts remained within the physical world in order to animate and sustain it. On Mt. Sinai, divine Wisdom was translated into the Ten Commandments, a linguistic garb corresponding to the original primal utterances, thus finishing what was begun during Creation. The Maggid also describes this process as the unfolding of the divine name Y-H-V-H, which was accomplished in two stages. In Creation the infinite divine Wisdom was first contracted into *hokhmah* (*yod*), which was then expressed through *binah* (*heh*). The final two stages of *tif'eret* (*vav*) and *malkhut* (*heh*) were revealed on Sinai, as the sacred energy was focused into language. This suggests that the matrix of the *sefirot* was in some sense unstable—or perhaps inchoate—before the Revelation on Sinai.

The Maggid describes the events of Sinai as a remarkable and transformative encounter between God and Israel. Indeed, Revelation was an intimate, even erotic moment of communion with the Divine, and language was the point of connection that allowed for this loving bond between Israel and God. The divine Word had been in exile throughout their time in Egypt, but it was redeemed as the Israelites approached Sinai. This expanded capacity for sacred speech all granted them the ability to receive the Torah in its linguistic form.

The theophany also represented a different stage in Israel's of awareness of the Divine. Their conception of God transformed and evolved as they traveled through the wilderness, and on Sinai they witnessed a revelation of the divine Presence that was in accord their new level of understanding. But the Maggid does not define Revelation as a historical event alone. This theophany on Sinai was impressed upon the minds of the Jewish people, becoming a part of their collective memory. Furthermore, the loving encounter between man and God is reenacted—and indeed relived—through sacred study, for contemplative engagement with Torah allows the scholar to experience Revelation once more.

Chapter 5: Study and the Sacred Text

Introduction

The preceding exploration of the Maggid's teachings about Revelation and the nature of Scripture will be crucial for understanding his approach to religious study. The belief that in its current form the Torah represents a limited and linguistic expression of infinite divine Wisdom that lies beyond words holds implications for the goals and the experience of reading Scripture as a devotional act. In this chapter we will explore how these underlying assumptions about the nature of the Torah and Revelation are expressed in the Maggid's teachings about sacred study.

We will also take up the question of whether the Maggid describes the study of Torah as a unique mode of connecting to God, or if he attributes equal spiritual significance to other religious deeds. We have noted that the Maggid's sermons frequently emphasize the importance of performing the physical commandments, and that to a certain degree he even allows for *'avodah be-gashmiyyut*, the service of God through the corporeal world. But the relationship between the mystical praxis of Torah study and these other modes of divine service requires some further clarification. This question is complicated, however, by the fact that many early Hasidic masters were accused of downplaying the importance of Torah study and deriding the status of scholars. Our discussion will lead us to explore the Maggid's understanding of the origins of new ideas, and his description of the limits of human creativity in interpreting Torah. Finally, we will examine his description of how sublime spiritual ideas may be conveyed to others and investigate the role of parables (*meshalim)* in his sermons.

At this point we must note that there will be some conceptual overlap between the current chapter and our discussion of the Maggid's understanding of prayer in the following chapter. Torah study and worship are both devotional practices intensely focused on words, and the Maggid's teachings often describe the two in nearly synonymous terms. This is no accident, for study and prayer are the two devotional pillars of the Hasidic religious life, and the ultimate goal of each is *devequt*. But there are deeper theological and phenomenological affinities between them as well. The words of both study and prayer represent vessels that hold the divine Presence, and one must enter into them with total presence and absolute contemplative focus. These words provide the linguistic framework for an internal, contemplative journey back to their original Source, thereby forging a connection between the various *sefirot* from *malkhut* to *hokhmah*. However, a few of the Maggid's sermons outline subtle differences between study and worship. We will explore the conflation of and distinction between prayer and Torah study at length in the next chapter, but this is a phenomenon of which the reader must already take note.

RELIGIOUS STUDY AND TORAH LISHMAH

The study of Torah lies at the very heart of the rabbinic project, and the importance of learning in rabbinic culture cannot be overestimated.[1257] But study was not

[1257] Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 286-314, 603-648; Michael Fishbane, 'Spiritual Transformations of Torah in Biblical and Rabbinic Tradition', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 18 (2007), pp. 6-15; Michael L. Satlow, 'Fruit and the Fruit of Fruit: Charity and Piety Among Jews in Late Antique Palestine', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100.2 (2010), pp. 244-277; Étan Levine, 'The Phenomenology of Torah Study', *Review of Rabbinic Judaism* 4.1 (2001), pp. 121-138. See also Adiel Schremer, '"[T]he[y] Did Not Read in the Sealed Book": Qumran Halakhic Revolution and the Emergence of Torah Study in Second Temple Judaism', *Historical Perspectives: From the Hasmoneans to Bar Kokhba in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. D. Goodlblatt, A. Pinnick and D.R. Schwartz, Leiden 2001, pp. 105-126.

simply a matter of cultivating knowledge for the sages of the Mishnah and Talmud.[1258] Numerous traditions suggest that there were erotic elements to this study, and some rabbinic texts suggest a commitment to learning that borders on a mode of asceticism in which sacred study supersedes one's physical relationship with his wife.[1259] There may also have been mystical elements of rabbinic Torah study, both in terms of subject matter and the experience of learning.[1260] Opaque references to "works of the chariot" (*ma'aseh merkavah*) and "works of Creation" (*ma'aseh bereshit*) may indeed refer to the study of esoteric subjects.[1261] Yet some rabbinic texts describe the act of Torah study itself as an illuminated moment of rapture, a phenomenon that one scholar has termed "performative exegesis,"[1262] suggesting that the interpretation of Scripture was understood as an act of communion with the Holy Spirit.

Many rabbinic traditions underscore that the motivations and intentions of the student are of utmost importance. Some of these passages refer to the highest, or perhaps purest, mode of learning as *Torah lishmah*, or study "for its own sake."[1263] The precise definition of this phrase is not spelled out in any of the rabbinic material, and the parameters of *Torah lishmah* continued to be the subject of debate in medieval Jewish

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[1258] More broadly, see Robert Goldenberg, 'Law and Spirit in Talmudic Religion', *Jewish Spirituality: From the Bible Through the Middle Ages*, ed. A. Green, New York 1986, pp. 232-252.

[1259] Daniel Boyarin, *Carnal Israel: Reading Sex in Talmudic Culture*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1995, esp. pp. 134-166; Biale, *Eros and the Jews*, pp. 33-59; Michael L. Satlow, '"And on the Earth You Shall Sleep": *Talmud Torah* and Rabbinic Asceticism', *The Journal of Religion* 83.2 (2003), pp. 204-225.

[1260] See Ira Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism,* Berlin and New York 1982, esp. pp. 38, 48-50, 93-94.

[1261] Urbach, *The Sages*, pp. 184-213; Goshen Gottstein, 'Is *Ma'aseh Bereshit* Part of Ancient Jewish Mysticism', pp. 185-201; Furstenberg, 'The Rabbinic Ban on *Ma'aseh Bereshit*, pp. 39-63. See also Michael D. Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism: An Analysis of Ma'aseh Merkavah*, Tübingen 1992; Yehuda Liebes, 'The Account of the Chariot and the Account of Creation as Mystical Teachings in Philo of Alexandria', *Kabbalah* 19 (2009), pp. 323-335 [Hebrew].

[1262] Polen, 'Derashah as Performative Exegesis', pp. 123-153.

[1263] For a few examples, see b. Pesahim 50b; Berakhot 17a.

mystical and philosophical thought.[1264] In the Middle Ages *Torah lishmah* was often invoked as the ideal approach to sacred study, and although there is great variety in its definition, most texts agree that it refers to a type of study that is undertaken neither for the sake of reward, either in this world or the next, nor to exhibit and demonstrate the powers of one's intellect.[1265]

Norman Lamm has suggested that the various medieval approaches to *Torah lishmah* may be grouped into three primary categories. The first type of study is purely "functional"—one learns Torah in order to perform the commandments with the greatest precision and utmost fidelity. The second is a "devotional," or mystical, approach in which study becomes a spiritual praxis by means of which the seeker can connect himself to the Divine. The third is a purely intellectual definition of *Torah lishmah*, according to which the highest goal of study is simply to understand Scripture, focusing primarily, though not exclusively, on legal discussions and Talmudic dialectics.[1266] Lamm's categories offer a useful heuristic lens through which we may view different understandings of *Torah lishmah*. However, in many cases, including the works of

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[1264] See, for example *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #128 pp. 211-212; ibid, #137, p. 221; Zohar 1:142a, 168a. For a few examples of how medieval Jewish philosophers reflected on *Torah lishmah*, see Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot talmud torah* 3:5; ibid, *hilkhot teshuvah* 10:5; idem, *Commentary to the Mishnah*, *sanhedrin haqdamah le-pereq heleq*. *Torah lishmah* is a recurrent theme in the sermons of R. Nissim of Gerona; see *Derashot ha-RaN*, *derush* #7; ibid, *dersuh* #10; Joseph Albo, *Sefer ha-Iqqarim* 3:22. The precise nature of Maimonides' understanding of *Torah lishmah* has been the subject of considerable debate. See Yeshayahu Leibowitz, *The Faith of Maimonides*, trans. John Glucker, New York 1987, esp. p. 23; and for a very different perspective, see Hannah Kasher's critique in her '"Torah for its Own Sake," "Torah not for its Own Sake," and the Third Way', *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 79.3 (1988-1989), pp. 153-163. For an overview of differing conceptions of *Torah lishmah* before the eighteenth century, see Norman Lamm, *Torah Lishmah: Torah for Torah's Sake in the Works of Rabbi Hayyim of Volozhin and his Contemporaries*, New York and Hoboken 1989, pp. 205-230.

[1265] See Ephraim Kanarfogel, 'Compensation for the Study of Torah in Medieval Rabbinic Thought', *Of Scholars, Savants, and Their Texts: Studies in Philosophy and Religious Thought*, ed. R. Link-Salinger, New York 1989, pp. 135-147.

[1266] Norman Lamm, 'Pukhovitzer's Concept of *Torah Lishmah*', *Jewish Social Studies* 30 (1968), pp. 149-150, refers to this approach as "cognitive."

several important Eastern European Jewish thinkers in the century before the Maggid, all of these definitions were accepted as simultaneously valid and seen as being mutually compatible.[1267]

The debate regarding the various definitions of *Torah lishmah* eventually became imbricated with the related question of which sacred texts should form the core of Jewish curriculum. Medieval Jews argued whether traditional subjects like Bible, Talmud, or *halakhah* should be the sole focus of one's studies, or if other bodies of knowledge like Kabbalah or philosophy should be admitted—or even demanded.[1268] Some medieval mystics went so far as to claim that only the study of kabbalistic works could be deemed truly *lishmah*, for only through these works can one truly come to know God. Indeed, there are voices in *Tiqqunei Zohar* and the later strata of the Zohar itself that call for the study of Kabbalah over and above all other religious texts.[1269]

Later works of Lurianic Kabbalah came to define *Torah lishmah* as a mystical act of study in order to mend the cosmic fracture and restore the unity of the divine name Y-H-V-H.[1270] In particular, such study was to be performed for the sake of *shekhinah*,

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[1267] Lamm has demonstrated this point convincingly in ibid, pp. 149-156.

[1268] See R. Bahya ibn Pakuda, *Hovot ha-Levavot*, *haqdamah*; trans. as *The Book of Direction to the Duties of the Heart*, trans. Menahem Mansoor, London 1973, pp. 85-86, 91. More broadly, see Isadore Twersky, 'Religion and Law', *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. S.D. Goitein, Cambridge, Mass. 1974, pp. 69-82; idem, *Introduction to the Code*, pp. 89-92, 196. Some medieval Jewish thinkers argued that the study of philosophy was the very highest expression of coming to know God, but I am not aware of any that restricted their definition of *Torah lishmah* to philosophy alone. On rationalism as an integral part of religious life, see Harry Austryn Wolfson, 'The Jewish Kalam', *Jewish Quarterly Review 75th Anniversary Volume* (1967), pp. 544-573; Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, pp. 86-88; Herbert A. Davidson, 'The Study of Philosophy as a Religious Obligation', *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. S.D. Goitein, Cambridge, Mass. 1974, pp. 53-68.

[1269] See Jacob Katz, 'Halakhah and Kabbalah and Competing Disciplines of Study', *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility*, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 56-87.

[1270] Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 207-212, 230; idem, 'The Study of Torah as a Rite of Theurgical Contemplation in Lurianic Kabbalah', *Approaches to Judaism in Medieval Times*, ed. D.R. Blumenthal, Chico, Cal. 1988, vol. 3, pp. 29-40.

associated with the final *heh* of Y-H-V-H and the same letter in the word *lishmah*.[1271] These texts describe casuistic exercises of *pilpul* and the study of *halakhah* as fulfilling the utilitarian purpose of breaking through the "husks" (*qelippot*) that obscure and surround the divine sparks within them, referring to the divine wisdom hidden deep within the Scripture. Clear preference is given to the study of Kabbalah, the inner dimension (*penimiyyut*) of Torah.[1272] The theme of *Torah lishmah* appears a great number of times in Isaiah Horowitz's *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*.[1273] However, it is important to note that Horowitz's work blends together exoteric and esoteric elements of Torah, and the author saw no definitive rift between Kabbalah and other intellectual disciplines.

There can be no doubt that Hasidism absorbed many elements of the Kabbalistic approach to Torah study, including the conception of studying Scripture as a mystical praxis.[1274] A number of teachings from the BeSHT address the nature of *Torah lishmah*, which underscore both the devotional and theurgic aspects of sacred study.[1275] In addition, *Torah lishmah* is frequently treated in the original writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye,[1276] as well as in the sermons of the BeSHT's grandson R. Moses Hayyim

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[1271] See *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar hanhagat ha-limmud*, ch. 1.

[1272] This approach is made quite clear throughout *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar hanhagat ha-limmud*. See R. Hayyim Vital's introduction to *Sha'ar ha-Haqdamot*; *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 7:10, p. 341; ibid, 6:47, p. 244 in which the term *halakhot pesuqot* ("clearly-rendered decisions") is associated with being cutting off (*mufsaq u-muvdal*) from the world of chaos (*'olam ha-tohu*). For a different perspective, see *Hesed le-Avraham* 2:9, 2:28. Surprisingly, the author claims that Talmud is a pure "food" without any admixture of questions.

[1273] See, inter alia, *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *massekhet shevu'ot*, *ner mitsvah* #63-69; ibid, *torah she-bi-ketav* #4.

[1274] See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 207-219.

[1275] For a remarkable example, see Meir Margoliot, *Sod Yakhin u-Vo'az*, London 1956, pp. 6-8; trans. in Jacobs, *Hasidic Thought*, pp. 29-35. See also *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *haqdamah*, p. 21; Scholem, '*Devekut*', pp. 212-213. Cf. *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *mishpatim*, p. 404.

[1276] See *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 1, *noah*, pp. 108-109; ibid, *va-yishlah*, pp. 357-359.

Ephraim of Sudilkov.[1277] However, the subject of *Torah lishmah* is quite rare in the teachings of the Maggid, and nowhere is it associated with the study of Kabbalah alone.[1278] This lacuna is quite interesting given that *Torah lishmah* is an important theme in the works of several of the Maggid's prominent students, including R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil,[1279] R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk,[1280] R. Meshullam Feibush Heller,[1281] and R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady.[1282] In the case of the latter thinkers this renewed emphasis may have as much to do with the fact that *Torah lishmah* took on a central place in the debates with the *mithnaggedim*.[1283]

The term *Torah lishmah* may be relatively rare in the teachings of the Maggid, but the notion that one must engage in Torah study with total focus and contemplative attention is a fundamental aspect of his conception of sacred study as a spiritual practice. A large number of the Maggid's sermons devote significant attention to exploring the devotional, even theurgic, objectives of Torah study. He does not imply, however, that goals like attaining *devequt* or redeeming *shekhinah* may only be accomplished through the study of Kabbalah. The influence of the vocabulary and theology of the Jewish mystical tradition is found in every one of his sermons, both implicitly and explicitly, but

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[1277] See Roland Goetschel, 'Torah Lishmah as a Central Concept in the Degel Mahaneh Efrayim of Moses Hayyim Ephraim of Sudylkow', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 258-267.

[1278] See LY #203, fol. 61a-b; MDL #195, p. 313-314. The Maggid's sermons also employ the term *lishmah* when describing how one should perform all commandments. See, for example, LY #200, fol. 60b;

[1279] See *Me'or 'Einayim*, vol. 1, *bereshit*, p. 2; ibid, vol. 2, *liqqutim*, p. 476. This element of R. Menahem Nahum's teachings has yet to be fully explored by scholars, and I hope to return to it in a future study.

[1280] *No'am Elimelekh*, vol. 1, *shemot*, pp. 168-169; ibid, vol. 2, *liqqutei shoshanah*, pp. 528-529, 537.

[1281] See *Yosher Divrei Emet* #7, fol. 113b; ibid #9, fol. 114a.

[1282] See Roman A. Foxbrunner, *Habad: The Hasidism of R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady*, North Vale 1993, pp. 139-140, 147-148.

[1283] See Lamm, *Torah Lishmah*, pp. 230-324; Allan Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdim: Rabbinic Responses to Hasidic Rapture*, Baltimore and London 1997, esp. 51-60, 151-153, 160-164.

for the Maggid, the inner essence (*penimiyyut*) of Torah can be accessed even through reading the seemingly mundane narratives in the book of Genesis. Furthermore, he often offers clever and insightful reinterpretations of rabbinic passages, including both *halakhah* and *aggadah*, which reveal his belief that these spiritual lessons may be found within—or read into—the rabbinic corpus as well. Thus there is no reason to suspect that the Maggid necessarily attributes any greater significance to the study of esoteric or mystical subjects over and above the Talmud or the Bible, though in some sense accessing their inner nature is tantamout to kabbalistic study.

Let us begin with an examination of the small number of the Maggid's teachings that do explicitly refer to the issue of *Torah lishmah*. Many earlier authors emphasized that such study precludes learning in order to become famous or to receive honor. Indeed, the Maggid often underscores this principle and furthers it from a Hasidic perspective. He argues that a true scholar must engage in *Torah lishmah* because he is a limb of the *shekhinah* and thus an element of the Godhead. If he is found lacking in this respect, *shekhinah* will be missing something vital as well.[1284] But the Maggid suggests that *Torah lishmah* also has a positive impact upon the scholar himself:

> "All who engage with Torah *lishmah* sake will merit many things."[1285] It is called Torah because it teaches the path (*morah derekh*) upon which one should walk. "Merit many things" (*devarim harbeh*) means that just as the Torah is endless (*ein sof*), for the Torah and Holy One are one, so

[1284] OHE, fol. 15a; and cf. SLA, p. 137. The Maggid relates this to the biblical mandate that a priest who is missing a limb cannot serve in the Temple (Lev. 21:17-23), explaining that nothing that is blemished can approach the blessed Holy One. In other words, study with improper motivations brings about a lack in *shekhinah* that prevents her from uniting with *tif'eret*.

[1285] m. Avot 6:1.

> too will [the student] merit words (*devarim*), the depths of the Torah, flowing forth like a river constantly and without interruption.[1286]

The idea that *Torah lishmah* will be rewarded with inspiration that gushes forth like a mighty river is already explicit in the rabbinic passage cited at the beginning of the homily. However, the Maggid provides an explanation for why this is so: a scholar who studies *lishmah* is rewarded with access to the infinite realms of the Divine from which there ensues an endless flow of words. Clearly we are meant to understand this verbal stream as a torrent of new interpretations of Torah that veritably flood the mind of the scholar engaged in *Torah lishmah*.

The broader context of the Maggid's theology of language allows us to describe this process with even greater precision. The new ideas spill forth out of the *sefirah hokhmah*, which is associated with *qadmut ha-sekhel*, the pre-cognizant region of both the divine Mind and the human intellect, as well as the divine Wisdom hidden with the text of the Torah itself. The act of studying *Torah lishmah* forms a bridge between *hokhmah* and *binah*, allowing the student to draw forth new ideas from the depths of his mind and the inner realm of the Torah.

The Maggid's teachings also attribute important devotional elements to *Torah lishmah* that extend beyond the immediate context of scriptural study. This type of learning engenders a sense of attunement to the presence of God in all things and at every moment. The Maggid makes this point in an elliptical but rich teaching that offers a sustained interpretation of Proverbs 30:4:[1287]

[1286] LY #201, fol. 61a, with parallels in OT #453, *aggadot*, p. 466; and OHE fol. 62b. Cf. LY #76, fol. 14b. For an interesting expansion of this idea in work of R. Menahem Nahum of Chernobil, see *Yesamah Lev*, vol. 2, pp. 593-597.

[1287] All citations in this teaching not otherwise referenced come from this verse.

"Who has gone up to heaven and descended" (Prov. 30:4) down below, raising up [the lower emotions of] awe and love in his mind. These [two] are called "heaven."[1288]

"Who has gathered up the spirit (*ruah*) in the hollow of his hand?," refers to one who gathered all the words to the *middot* above.

"Who has wrapped the waters in a mantle?" One who wraps up the waters—Torah[1289]—"in a mantle," in a garment, as in "the ordinary conversations of a scholar require study" [i.e., Torah may be found even within their mundane words.][1290]

"Who has established all the extremities of the earth?," [referring to] all the divine sparks of earthiness. This is "what" (*mah*), [as in] "what is his name or his son's name, if you know it?" When one knows that all there is (*mah*) comes from His name, as is known, from love and awe and all other appellatives, all words and thoughts come from *shekhinah*, and all of this comes from there (alt. "from the Name"). All the attributes of awe, love, etc., and all wisdoms come from God, and are like his child, as it were. Therefore when one knows all this, he [can] raise them up to the Holy One. This is [the meaning of] the verse "the word of Y-H-V-H is pure" [1291]... [all comes] from the supernal Word. The word "pure" (*tserufah*) refers to one who knows to connect (*le-tsaref*)[1292] all words and physical actions with the Holy One.

This is [the meaning of] *Torah lishmah*, and not in deed alone. The principle is thus: a person must take some awe and love for the blessed Creator from everything he sees, or hears, or says, or he knows the combinations of the letters and the divine appellations. This is the explanation of *lishmah*—like its name (*ke-shemah*), [the Torah] teaches (*moreit* [sic]) him awe and love. [But *lishmah*] also means "for her sake"—*leshem heh*, for the sake of *shekhinah*. All words must be

[1288] Zohar 3:257a.

[1289] The connection between Torah and water is a very old association. See, inter alia, b. Bava Qamma 82a; Zohar 2:121a (R.M.).

[1290] b. Sukkah 21b.

[1291] The Maggid (or the person transcribing his sermon) has combined Prov. 30:5 with 2 Sam. 22:31 and Ps. 18:31.

[1292] The word *le-tsaref* is generally translated as "to combine" or "to permutate," but in this case the Maggid is using it in a slightly different sense.

> raised up, as mentioned above... This is the meaning of "the Torah is the names of the Holy One."[1293]

Torah lishmah represents an integrated way of looking at the world, one in which the mystic traces everything that he sees, thinks, speaks or hears back to its origin in the Divine. This is an orientation toward religious service more broadly, and indeed toward how one should engage with the world around him, which is clearly not restricted to sacred study alone.[1294] All acts of contemplation thus performed may be referred to as *lishmah*.

Yet there is an important linguistic element to this teaching that must not be overlooked. At the heart of this holistic approach is the need to trace language back to its divine source. The world was created by means of the divine Word, which remains hidden within the corporeal realm in order to sustain and animate it. It is this linguistic divine energy that the mystic' uncovers and returns to God through the act of gazing upon the physical world.

A sermon preserved in the writings of R. Meshullam Feibush Heller offers the longest description of *Torah lishmah* attributed to the Maggid. We read:

> I heard from the mouth of that holy man Dov Baer, on the Sabbath I spent there during his lifetime, his reply to a question someone asked about a passage in the Midrash. That text compared a student of Torah to a pearl-encrusted clapper inside a golden bell.[1295] He said that this refers to those who study Torah truly for her own sake (*lishmah*), in order to be attached to God. Their thoughts are only of God. When Scripture says "May this book of teaching never depart

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[1293] OT #317, *pesuqim*, p. 365. This cryptic passage is one of the few teachings in OT with no parallel elsewhere in the Maggid's corpus.

[1294] Of course, the idea the *lishmah* is not restricted to study is not new; see, for example, *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot teshuvah* 10:5.

[1295] *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* 27:1.

> from your mouth; contemplate it day and night" (Josh. 1:8), the text really meant to "contemplate *Him* day and night;" your thoughts should be of God.[1296]
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> The divine presence is concentrated right there in the spirit-breath of Torah as it comes forth from a person's pure mouth. If one can purify both his mouth and heart, he may become a throne for God. So attachment to God is the innermost part [of this act of study]; the teachings one learns are the external form in which this devotion is garbed. That is a proper understanding. This is not true if your desire and love are for anything other than God—if you are still attached to temporal matters or seek even some bit of self-glorification. Then your innermost thought is of that glory, and your learning surrounds that thought. Woe to the disgracing of Torah, making her into a garment for your own foolish thoughts that she has to cover up!
>
> That is why the midrash compared the student of Torah to a golden bell. The bell is the external section, while the clapper is within it and makes the sound. "Woven gold is her garment," but "the full glory of the king's daughter lies within" (Ps. 45:14). That glory consists of awe before God and the indwelling presence of *shekhinah*, within the heart of every Jew. The "woven gold" is the letters of Torah, in which she is dressed. But the pearl-studded clapper (*'anvil*) is our attachment to God, which is possible only where there is true humility (*'anavah*)....[1297]

Proper contemplative intention has the capacity to transform the very letters and words intoned in the act of Torah study into a garment for God and a manifestation of the divine Presence. Like the clapper that creates sound by striking the external form of the bell, the structure of the letters provides a linguistic framework through which the inner spirit may be revealed.

[1296] The Maggid is interpreting the ambiguous *bo* ("it") of Josh. 1:8 as a reference to God, not the Torah scroll.

[1297] *Yosher Divrei Emet* #10, p. 114b. Based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah* vol. 1, pp. 288-290. See also Krassen, *Uniter of Heaven*, p. 10. This teaching is the only instance in which R. Meshullam Feibush, who was primarily a disciple of R. Yehiel Mikhel of Zlotshev, quotes something he heard from the Maggid directly.

This metaphor, however, operates on several levels. The Maggid uses the same image to describe the interior world of devotion and *devequt* within the disciple. Like the clapper inside the bell, these spiritual energies are simply being clothed within the specific teaching being studied at that moment. The particular subject is of secondary importance to the devotional efforts of the student, which, themselves ineffable, become garbed in the words of Torah that he speaks.

Like a great many other sermons in the Maggid's corpus, this homily also underscores the importance of humility. One cannot achieve this type of communion with the Divine if any shreds of pride or self-aggrandizement remain. Only expunging the ego and engaging in pure *Torah lishmah* allows the element of *shekhinah* within the mystic's heart to emerge and become invested in the letters of his contemplative study.

R. Solomon of Lutsk recalls the Maggid's understanding of *Torah lishmah* in the first of his two introductions to MDL. While not cited as a teaching heard directly from his master, R. Solomon's unique description of the Maggid' embodiment of this ideal is a phenomenological reflection upon the ways in which such enthused study can change someone. He writes:

> When one studies Torah *lishmah* and for no other reason, all of his power and attributes connect to the blessed One's wisdom. He merits divine wisdom, so exalted that nobody can speak of it. Certainly it is impossible to describe it or put it into writing. This is [the meaning of "all who engage in Torah *lishmah* will] merit many things,"[1298] referring to the supernal wisdoms [that he senses] in every movement and footstep, in everything that he sees. He alone apprehends all this. But, in addition to the wisdom hidden within his heart, there are other elevated and praiseworthy levels that are visible to other people... we saw every one of the virtues enumerated by the sage [in

[1298] m. Avot 6.1.

> the mishnah] embodied in our Master [the Maggid], as is abundantly familiar to all "those who truly know him,"[1299] because he engaged in Torah *lishmah*.[1300]

The study of Torah *lishmah*, namely for no other reason than in order to achieve *devequt*, enables one to enter a state of mystical self-transcendence. In doing so his mind becomes a channel through which divine *hokhmah* begins to flow. But Torah *lishmah* also leads him to a broader type of spiritual awareness, for one who studies in this manner can then see the divine Presence within everything that surrounds him. This attunement is visible even to those around him, since the perceptive disciples of someone who studies Torah *lishmah* will see these qualities manifest in him.

The Maggid's sermons include relatively few specific references regarding *which* texts should be studied. The importance of Torah study is found in the earliest versions of the Maggid's ritual *hanhagot*,[1301] and these suggest that he recommended the study of Bible, Mishnah and Talmud, and placed a particular emphasis on the study of *mussar*, or ethical-homiletical books.[1302] One collection of teachings informed by the Maggid even

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[1299] Based on b. Ta'anit and b. Megillah 15a. R. Solomon seems to refer to those individuals had known the Maggid during his lifetime and were astute enough to grasp the great depth of his mystical study.

[1300] MDL, p. 3.

[1301] See Gries, *Conduct Literature*, pp. 114-120. See, for example, the *hanhagot* published from R. Shmu'el Shmelke of Nikolsburg's manuscript in SLA, p. 54.

[1302] Gries, *Conduct Literature*, pp. 120-121, where he points out that the various *hanhagot* attributed to the Maggid differ significantly on the point of studying works of *mussar*. For example, the version of these teachings found in *Darkhei Tsedeq* emphasizes that one must read the classical texts of Jewish learning, but says nothing about ethical books. This may have been intended to demonstrate to an outside readership that the Hasidic masters—and their students—were still committed to the norms of Torah study. The *hanhagot* printed in *Alpha Betta*, by contrast, reinforce the importance of the *mussar* works, likely as a polemic against the arid scholarship of the rabbinic elites. Gries also notes that he believes that the version preserved by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev in *Shemu'ah Tovah*, which do include an injuntion to study ethical works over and over again, is the most authentic record of the Maggid's *hanhagot*. These ethical works would have included post-Lurianic books such as *Reshit Hokhmah*, *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, as well as earlier pietistic works like *Sefer Hasidim*. It is certainly possible that the Maggid was alluding to less well-known works of Kabbalistic ethics written in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the importance of these popular moralistic works has been repeatedly emphasizes—and in some cases, demonstrated—by Piekarz. See above, n. 101 and pp. 74-75.

suggests that *hiddushim*, creative new interpretations of Talmud, RaSHI and Tosafot, purify one's mind for the service of God.[1303] However, in one teaching the Maggid expresses clear reservations about the exclusive focus on Talmudic dialectics. The Evil Inclination would never try to make one desist from studying, he claims, since such a ruse would never be successful. Rather, the Evil Inclination tries to ensure that he learns only from works that will not instill him with any of fear of God or allow him to understand the *halakhah* fully. The hapless student is seduced into becoming mired in the endless swamp of learning Talmud with all of its various commentaries.[1304]

The Maggid's teachings do not explicitly address the threats of studying secular wisdom. This issue did not become of moment until the decades after his death. One teaching, however, may be read as implicitly referring to this question. The Maggid quotes a tradition from the Zohar that distinguishes between two kinds of wisdom.[1305] The first type, embodied by the biblical character Jethro, is the true wisdom achieved by people only after having tried all types of idolatry and "external wisdoms." Solomon too falls in this category, because he learned from all people. The second, more rarified kind of wisdom is awarded to those who study only the highest wisdom of divinity (*hokhmah 'ila'ah, hokhmah elohut*). However, individuals of this second class attain their wisdom

[1303] *Darkhei Tsedeq*, p. 18. This recalls the famous statement attributed to the R. Menahem Mendel of Kotsk: "a page of Talmud purifies like a *mikveh*." Indeed, Torah study was an extremely important value in later schools of Polish Hasidism, and the Kotsk/Peshiskhe/Ger schools in particular. These Hasidic masters combined a fiery religiosity with intellectual engagement, and for them *lishmah* meant that one could study with joy and pleasure, although there is absolutely no room for ulterior motivations or personal gain. See the teachings attributed to the Kotsker in *'Amud ha-Emet*, Benei Brak 2000, pp. 142, 148, 210-21, with a parallel in *Emet ve-Emunah*, Benei Brak 2004, p. 542 n. 853; and *Emet ve-Emunah,* 428-30 n. 601, with a parallel in *'Amud ha-Emet*, p. 162. For a fascinating description of Torah *lishmah* by the R. Abraham Borenstein, the Kotsker's son-in-law, see *Iglei Tal*, Tel Aviv 1992, introduction (unpaginated).

[1304] See LY #337, fol. 69a, where the Maggid cites this idea as something he found in *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *massekhet shavu'ot*. See Joseph Weiss, 'Torah Study in Early Hasidism', *Studies in East European* Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism, ed. D. Goldstein, London and Portland 1997, pp. 56-68.

[1305] See Zohar 1:141b, 3:223a.

only through constantly engaging in purely cerebral study. In fact, the Maggid suggests that just the opposite is true. Since everything in the world is a manifestation of divine *hokhmah*, these wise scholars simply examine the world around them with the eyes of spiritual attunement and see nothing but God.[1306]

Thus the Maggid's devotional approach to reading Scripture focuses less upon *what* should be read, and is far more concerned with *how* religious texts—and in some cases, the physical world—should be approached. *Lishmah* is a spiritual paradigm that must be adopted when reading most works, although some, like the intricate world of Talmudic dialectics, can ensnare the student and prevent him from focusing on the ultimate aim of *devequt*. Indeed, the study of any subject is only a vehicle for connecting to God:

> The essence of [God's] pleasure comes from a person thinking and being passionate to give pleasure (*nahat ruah*) to the blessed One. This is to fulfill His will, since the service itself is not the essence. For sometimes a person studies because of his nature, he desires to learn. So too might one do business, for he has a desire for that. What is the difference between them, since both are fulfilling their desires? The essence of the blessed Holy One's pleasure comes from one's desire to serve Him, as it says, "Y-H-V-H your God is a consuming fire" (Deut. 4:24). The essence of His "eating" and his pleasure from the performance of the commandments comes from the fires of devoted passion.[1307]

Here we read most explicitly that studying Torah is only a means to an end, for the true goal is to bestow pleasure upon God. This reframing of study as an act of giving to the

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[1306] MDL #143, p. 242. Stepping back for a moment from our analysis of the Maggid's theology, it is interesting to consider whether or not this may provide a conceptual justification of how someone like the BeSHT could be seen as a teacher to a very intellectual group of students that included scholars like the Maggid and his disciples.

[1307] MDL #97, p. 169. The notion that God "consumes" human devotion, i.e. that passionate devotion feeds, sustains and gives pleasure to the Divine, is found frequently in the Maggid's name. For another example, see *Torei Zahav*, *pinhas*, p. 240.

Divine is of central importance, for the notion that God receives something from the devotional service of human beings is a cornerstone of the Maggid's theology.

Study as a Devotional Praxis

The Maggid's sermons articulate a vision of study as an intensely mystical praxis with the potential both to change the reader and effect theurgic goals. These aims may be accomplished by studying any part of Torah, and the Maggid makes no demand that one study only explicitly mystical texts:

> "And the tree of life in the midst of the garden" (Gen. 2:10). That is, it is taught that when one studies or prays, he should imagine that he is in the Garden of Eden, where there is no jealousy, lust or pride.[1308] This will deliver him from ulterior motivations. But we must understand, how can he think this? He himself knows that he is in the world, amid people that he recognizes. The matter is thus: when one studies or prays with fear and love, connecting and binding his mind to the Creator, he contemplates that He fills all of the worlds and there is no place devoid of His glory, and all is filled with the life-force of the blessed Creator. Therefore, in everything that he sees he will see only the divine life-force that is drawn into it.[1309]

Sacred study requires, and indeed helps to cultivate, a unitary vision of the world in which all elements of physical reality are manifestation of the divine Presence. In some sense the Maggid is subtly challenging the very meditative practice of imagining oneself in the Garden of Eden that he has quoted. Presumably the goal of the original technique as it appears in *Reshit Hokhmah* is to withdraw from other people and from the physical world at large and thereby retreat into a contemplative solitude. The Maggid, however,

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[1308] *Reshit Hokhmah*, *sha'ar ha-qedushah*, ch. 4.

[1309] MDL #200, p. 325-326. This teaching is quoted in *Mevasser Tsedeq, be-shalah*, p. 53; ibid, *va-yakhel*, p. 88; *emor*, p. 156, where the Maggid's student clearly interprets it as referring to a visionary experience. He writes that even one should visualize himself standing alone in the Garden of Eden even when he is performing a commandment in public, which will prevent him from any sort of ulterior motivations.

has shifted the emphasis dramatically, calling upon the student to visualize the physical world and the people around him as suffused with God's life-force. Embracing this paradigm is what it means to imagine oneself as being within the Garden of Eden.

This teaching rests upon the ancient Jewish metaphor of Scripture as a garden. This verdant image of the Torah is particularly important in many kabbalistic works, and appears with great frequency in the Zohar.[1310] Similar descriptions of the study of Torah as a journey through a garden appear in other homilies from the Maggid, but in some cases they underscore a different message. We read:

> There is an upper Garden of Eden, and a lower Garden of Eden. The Torah is called a "garden," as it says, "a river goes out from Eden to water the garden (*gan*)" (Gen. 2:10). The Zohar says that these are the fifty-three portions of the Torah.[1311] A person sees letters, but a river brings bounty from the delight of *hokhmah* (*'eden ha-hokhmah*), watering the fifty-three (*gan*) portions and enlightening the one studying. This is called the Lower [Garden of Eden]. There is an Upper Garden of Eden, referring to when someone learns and comes to the great depth.[1312] The logic (*sevara*) is so subtle that he knows that he cannot understand. It is the subtlest of the subtle. In his mind it "runs and retreats" (Ezek. 2:14), and he delights (*mit'aden*) in the depth of the logic, although it is too subtle to be expressed in letters. It is a voice (*qol*)[1313] that cannot be brought into a letter at all.

[1310] See Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, pp. 125-127; Moshe Idel, 'The Journey to Paradise: The Jewish Transformations of a Greek Mythological Motif', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 2 (1982), pp. 7-16 [Hebrew]. See also Oded Yisraeli, 'The Tree of Life and its Roots—A History of a Kabalistic Symbol', *A Garden Eastward in Eden: Traditions of Paradise: Changing Jewish Perspectives and Comparative Dimensions of Culture*, ed. R. Elior, Jerusalem 2010, pp. 269-289 [Hebrew], as well as the other studies collected in that excellent volume.

[1311] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 19, fol. 38a. See above, p. 306. The word *gan* ("garden") has a numerical value of fifty-three, the number of different portions in the Torah.

[1312] On the Upper and Lower Gardens of Eden, see Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, pp. 121-125, 135.

[1313] One of the manuscripts preserves "jot" (*qots*) instead of "voice," perhaps referring to the tradition that the jot of the letter *yod* points to the highest realms of wisdom, the sefirah *keter*, which cannot be expressed in words.

> One must arrive at both of these aspects. This cannot happen except through awe, which is the central column [uniting the two realms], a garden by which they ascend from the lower to the higher, as it says in the Zohar.[1314] A person's mind and understanding depart when he is overtaken by a great feeling of awe, and he remains in that state [for some time]. But through this he comes to an even higher level afterward, which is the upper Garden of Eden.[1315]

The Maggid invokes the image of the two Gardens of Eden, one higher and one lower, as a metaphor for different modalities of engaging Torah. The river of inspiration, clearly associated with the *sefirah binah*, flows forth from the realm of *hokhmah* and slakes the thirst of the one studying the words of Scripture. But this still represents a lower level, and one who journeys back into the waters of *hokhmah* can achieve an even higher level of inspiration.

The mystic reaches the divine Wisdom itself through an overwhelming experience of awe and fear. This moment of total rapture, which robs him of all intellectual and cognitive faculties, grants him access to the pool of *hokhmah* that is beyond language. However, this stage of transcending the intellect and entering into a realm above words is only temporary. The contemplative attains a still greater level of knowledge as he translates the insights of his ineffable encounter into the structures of language.

The Maggid frequently suggests that impassioned and inspired engagement with Torah has cosmic implications. As we have seen, God created the world through the words and letters of Scripture. Therefore, says the Maggid, reading those same words of Torah with love and awe has the power to draw new vitality into the physical realm.[1316] Yet this theurgic effect is not restricted to the study of Scripture alone. Reading the words

[1314] Zohar 1:26a.

[1315] SLA, p. 24.

[1316] MDL #63, p. 103.

of the Oral Torah enables an encounter with the ancient sages whose vitality is embodied in their words, but this type of study also unites the *sefirot*:

> When one wishes to understand something, considering it at great length, he raises it up to the World of Thought and draws forth from the supernal wisdom for himself. When one studies a teaching of one of the sages, he should think of the sage's name as the body, and the ideational core (*sekhel*) of his words as the mental energy (*mohin*) [within]. All the earlier sages (*tanna'im*) and later scholars (*amora'im*) are attributes of the blessed Holy One and His *shekhinah*.[1317] He repairs the World of Speech and the World of Thought through this study.[1318]

Schatz-Uffenheimer correctly claims that this teaching focuses upon the unification of two different pairs of *sefirot* and their associated symbols: *tif'eret* and *malkhut*, referred to as the blessed Holy One and *shekhinah*; and the World of Thought and the World of Speech, which respectively correspond to *binah* and *malkhut*. The words of a particular teaching, be it a verse from the Torah or a rabbinic statement, are a garment for ideas contained within them. It is the task of the contemplative student to raise up these elements of wisdom within his mind, thus effecting a unification of the *sefirot tif'eret*/*binah* and *malkhut*.

Accepting that the spiritual life necessarily involves a natural vacillation between the states of *qatnut* and *gadlut*, contracted and expanded consciousness, is an important part of the Maggid's teachings.[1319] One cannot possibly sustain moments of heightened awareness indefinitely, but other modalities of serving God are still accessible even in

[1317] See Zohar 3:27b (R.M.).

[1318] MDL #28, p. 46. MDL, ed. Kahn #46-47, fol. 13b-14a, divides this passage into two teachings.

[1319] On the kabbalistic background to these concepts, see Mordechai Pachter, '*Katnut* ("Smallness") and Gadlut ("Greatness") in Lurianic Kabbalah', *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 10 (1992), pp. 171-210 [Hebrew].

moments of lesser illumination. This same peregrination is found in study, just as it is a part of all other religious rituals:

> Let us understand *qatnut* and *gadlut*. For example, when one sits and studies Torah without any understanding, he is in *qatnut*, for his intellect is not complete. But when he studies with understanding and with fiery passion, he is on the rung of *gadlut*, since he is connected to the upper levels. So it is in prayer, and with every other commandment—there is both *qatnut* and *gadlut*.[1320]

It is not always possible to attain great heights of spiritual or intellectual understanding every time he begins to read Scripture. Together comprehension and devotion allow the mystic to reach a very high state of spiritual consciousness, but these rarefied moments of triumph neither last forever nor happen with utter consistency. This does not mean, however, that a less illuminated mode of study is meaningless or ineffective. The mystic must embrace *qatnut* as yet another way of serving God. It is interesting to note that the final line of this sermon describes Torah study as one specific practice within the greater matrix of commandments, all of which must be performed with intensity and intention.

The Maggid describes some of the experiential and theurgic dimensions that are unique to mystical study in his interpretation of a rabbinic story about a group of sages who were studying Torah together, surrounded by fire and the words were rejoicing like when they were given on Sinai.[1321] We read:

> They were immersed in Torah study with fiery passion, with awe and love, and the words and letters left their mouths on fire, sparking and rising all the way up to cleave to their root. These

[1320] LY #74, fol. 14a.

[1321] The word *semeihin* probably means "radiant" or "luminous" in this context, but it unclear if the Maggid understood it in this way.

> rose up, and those descended, "as they were given on Sinai"[1322]—the Creator bestows energy (*hishpi'a*) and illuminated the lights of the twenty-two letters, in which the blessed name Y-H-V-H is garbed. They illuminated all the worlds. That is the explanation of the matter.
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> This is [the meaning of] "the sweet melodies [accompanying] the bride and groom."[1323] Couplings (*zivvugim*) and unions without number were performed because of them [i.e. the scholars]. Especially when they immersed in the secrets of Torah, since "secret" (*raz*) has the numerical value of "light" (*or*). It appeared to be fire, even though there was not really any fire, but only luminous light and sparks of the letters rising up. Anyone with open eyes and the eyes of the intellect can see all this, as is taught in many places in the Zohar.[1324] They brought joy and pleasure to the supernal worlds above, the world of pleasure and joy that bestows energy on the world of *hokhmah*. This increased their wisdom and new interpretations of the secrets of Torah (*hiddushei razin de-orayta*). The pleasure and joy came upon them as well, since they were joyful—the joy in performing a commandment causes *shekhinah* to alight,[1325] as is known.[1326]

This remarkable homily recalls the story of the Maggid's first encounter with the BeSHT, and is connected to the passages in which the experience of Mt. Sinai is described in erotic terms.[1327] Here we see that illuminated Torah study brings great pleasure to God, since through it the contemplative returns the words of Scripture and the letters of Creation to their source in the Divine. But this mystical act also has an affect upon the student, for he too enjoys the pleasure resulting from the union of the *sefirot* brought about by his learning. More specifically, the scholar also receives new intellectual

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[1322] See *Shir ha-Shirim Rabbah* 1.10.2; y. Hagigah 2:1.

[1323] b. Hagigah 14b; Zohar 3:230a. Both of these passages are about Torah study, and the latter describes the ways in which the different *sefirot* are united by the *tsaddiq* when he learns.

[1324] Zohar 1:90a, 94b, 98b.

[1325] See b. Shabbat 30b, and RaSHI's commentary ad loc.

[1326] LY #264, fol. 81b, with parallels in OT #203, *tehilim*, p. 268-269; and OHE, fol. 74b.

[1327] See above, pp. 367-369.

inspiration and novel interpretations of Torah. We will explore this very important theme in the Maggid's teachings at greater length below.

In a few sermons the Maggid suggests that the study of Torah allows one to develop spiritual powers bordering on magic. Earlier we noted that although the subject of miracles is not a major element of the Maggid's ideology, the ability of *tsaddiqim* to perform wondrous feats is indeed present in several of his teachings.[1328] However, they accomplish miracles not by means of reciting magical formulae, but rather through enthused prayer, supererogatory acts of piety, and passionate and fiery Torah study.

There are many of traditions of the BeSHT having attained clairvoyance by gazing into the letters of Torah.[1329] References to similar powers appear in the Maggid's teachings, but relatively little emphasis is placed upon the visionary power of the *tsaddiq*:

> Torah and the Holy One are one,[1330] and therefore when one connects himself to the letters of Torah, then automatically he can know what happens within [the full range or expanse of] time, since he himself is beyond time. This is "the commandment (*mitsvah*) of Y-H-V-H is pure, [illuminating the eyes]" (Ps. 19:9). [The word] *mitsvah* comes from *tsavta* ("connection"), referring to when one connects himself to God. "Pure" refers to someone "pure of heart" (Ps. 24:4), [who studies] not in order to know what is in time, but for God alone. Ipso facto it "illuminates his eyes" to know what happens in time.

[1328] See above, pp. 124, 201-204.

[1329] For example, see Margoliot, *Sod Yakhin u-Vo'az*, pp. 6-8. On traditions of clairvoyance attributed to the BeSHT, see Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 60-62, 273, 278-279; Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 115, 129-130. On the relationship between magic and mysticism in the BeSHT's legacy, see above, pp. 124, 170.

[1330] See above, pp. 313-317.

> This is [the meaning of] "the Torah of Y-H-V-H is his desire, [and he studies that Torah day and night]" (Ps. 1:2). Torah is related to the words "teaching" (*hora'ah*) and "sight" (*re'iyah*). He wants to see nothing but Y-H-V-H alone, which he glimpses by means of Torah's letters.[1331]

This passage is an excerpt from a longer sermon about God's creation of the physical world by means of the divine Word. The scholar does not begin his studies with the intent of acquiring any type of magical sight. He longs only to attain a vision of the divine Presence within the depths of the Torah, but the connection he forges with God also grants him knowledge of the events of the temporal world. Yet even in passages like these, the Maggid describes nothing akin to the ascents of the soul or the powers typical of *ba'alei shem* or popular Kabbalists. Delving into Torah allows one to gaze upon the world from the divine perspective in which everything is known, and clairvoyance is simply a by-product of this mystical study.[1332]

Some of the Maggid's sermons suggest that illuminated study can do more than grant clairvoyance. They describe Torah study as a way of healing someone, since words have the power to cure,[1333] and it can also purify one from all the sins that he has committed.[1334] The Maggid claims that impassioned Torah study is the solution for someone who has become too immersed in physicality.[1335] Its power vanquishes the Evil Inclination, but, more importantly, full immersion in Scripture allows one to tap into

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[1331] MDL #86, pp. 149-150, with parallels in OHE, fol. 44b; and ST p. 67-68. There are slight variations between these parallels, and a somewhat shorter version is found in OT #156, *va-ethanan*, pp. 206-207.

[1332] Hagiographical stories depicting the Maggid as possessing clairvoyance are perhaps the most common type of tale about him. See, for example, *'Eser Orot*, p. 14a. In one such story, which is found in various versions in many early Hasidic works, the Maggid is able to discern something about the maker of a vessel simply by examining the physical object; see *Ma'amarei Admor ha-Zaqen 'al ha-Torah ve-ha-Mo'adim*, *re'eh*, p. 802. See also *Ner Mitsvah ve-Torah Or*, *sha'ar ha-emunah*, p. 48b. Other sources attribute a similar ability to the BeSHT. See KTVQ, fol. 32a; *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *ha'azinu*, p. 289.

[1333] MDL #31, p. 49-51; and see above, pp. 202-203.

[1334] MDL #161, p. 261.

[1335] MDL #113, p. 187.

hokhmah, the realm of infinite motion and potential from which lasting transformation may be drawn forth.

In the context of the mystical, and perhaps magical, powers of Torah study, the Maggid offers an interesting explanation of the famous Talmudic phrase "Israel have no constellation" (*ein mazal le-Yisra'el*).[1336] He reinterprets *ein* as *ayin*, meaning that the infinite Nothing is the constellation of Israel.[1337] In a teaching preserved by one of his students, the Maggid suggests that the Jewish people can access the divine *hokhmah* that infuses the letters of Torah, and may thereby use it to change the physical world:

> I heard from the Maggid that during the Torah's descent from its source, it became garbed in this world, for in truth the Torah came forth from *hokhmah* or *binah*, where it had been above time and higher than the array of Zodiac and the stars. [On its way] it must have first happened upon Aries, the first sign of the Zodiac.[1338] [This sign] was automatically nullified by the Torah's illumination, which caused the array [of the Zodiac] to crumble. And Israel are equal to this, since the Zohar taught "God, the Torah and Israel are all one."[1339] Thus, if they cleave to the fullness of Torah

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[1336] See b. Shabbat 156a. See also James H. Charlesworth, 'Jewish Astrology in the Talmud, Pseudepigrapha, the Dead Sea Scrolls, and Early Palestinian Synagogues', *Harvard Theological Review* 70.3-4 (1977), pp. 183-200; Richard Kalmin, 'Problems in the Use of the Babylonian Talmud for the History of Late-Roman Palestine: The Example of Astrology', *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine*, ed. M. Goodman and P. Alexander, Oxford 2010, pp. 165-183; and Moshe Idel, 'The Zodiac in Jewish Thought', *Written in the Stars: Art and Symbolism of the Zodiac*, Jerusalem 2001, pp. 21-26.

[1337] This wordplay, which seems to carry with it strong anti-magical associations, appears often in the Maggid's sermons and in the quotations attributed to him in the works of his disciples; see MDL #100, p. 175; MDL #127, pp. 119-120; ST, p. 54; *Qedushat Levi*, *eikha*, p. 372; *Zot Zikhron*, fol. 11b.

The kernel of this reading of *ein/ayin mazal le-yisra'el* also appears in the name of the BeSHT, and could indeed have been an idea that the Maggid absorbed from his teacher; see SLA, p. 36; *Me'or 'Einayim*, *liqqutim*, p. 470. However, it also appears in *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *bereshit*, pp. 14-15, without being attributed to the BeSHT; and ibid, *tetsaveh*, p. 283. See also *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *mishpatim* p. 388; ibid, vol. 2, *aharei mot*, p. 50; *emor*, p. 81; *ve-zot ha-berakhah*, p. 403. It is interesting that the author of this work, who quotes the Maggid many dozens of times throughout, never cites this teaching in his name.

[1338] Rachel Hachlili, 'The Zodiac in Ancient Jewish Art: Representation and Significance', *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* (1977), pp. 61-77; and Bartel L. Van der Waerden, 'History of the Zodiac', *Archiv für Orientforschung* (1952), pp. 216-230.

[1339] See above, pp. 313-317.

> with all of their hearts, they [too] are above the array of the stars and the Zodiac. They can shake that matrix as they wish.[1340]

This passage takes for granted that to some degree the Zodiac controls the ordinary events of the world. The Jewish people, however, are a part of Torah itself, and they have the power to transcend the astrological powers. They can effect cosmic change by cleaving to Scripture in its abstract and pre-linguistic perfection, before it was became garbed in stories and laws as it entered the physical world.

This affinity, or even identification, between Torah and the Jewish people impacts the Maggid's approach to sacred study. Even if one's primary aim is not to achieve any sort of cosmic change, the interconnectivity between Israel and Scripture means that impassioned study has great implications:

> It is known that each and every word, indeed each and every letter, contains all 600,000 letters of the Torah, which correspond to the 600,00 souls of Israel.[1341] The study of one who intends to act in the name of all Israel is accepted on high and performs unifications and unions (*yihudim ve-zivvugim*), for they are the root of the 600,00 letters and the beginning of Creation. "In the beginning" (Gen. 1:1) means for the sake of Israel, who are called "the beginning."[1342] Therefore one studying with this intention can arouse and connect all the worlds, even though he does not learn the entire Torah at once. He can [even] create worlds, as explained in the Zohar.[1343] All 600,000 letters of the Torah are included in one another, and therefore whatever he learns, whether a small or large amount, includes the entirety of Torah and all the souls of Israel.

[1340] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *pesah*, p. 244.

[1341] This tradition appears in Zohar 3:145a (R.M.); cf. Zohar Hadash, *shir ha-shirim*, fol. 74b; and *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *toledot adam*, *beit ha-hokhmah tinyana*; trans. in Krassen, *Generations of Adam*, pp. 176, 195-196. See also *Hesed le-Avraham* 2:18 and 2:11, where the author quotes from an ancient manuscript in his possession. See also, Mark Verman, 'The Torah as Divine Fire', *Jewish Bible Quarterly* 35.2 (2007), p. 97.

[1342] See RaSHI to Genesis 1:1.

[1343] Zohar 1:4b. Creation through Torah study is a crucial theme in the Zohar. See Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows from Eden*, pp. 193-203. See also *Sefer ha-Bahir*, ed. Abrams, #136 pp. 220-221.

> Perhaps this is what the sages' meant in saying that just as the Torah was given with 600,000 letters, so too it is taken up with 600,000 letters.[1344] "Just as it was given" refers to Creation, which was by means of the 600,000 letters of Torah. "So too it is taken up" means that when a person wishes to uplift the words and letters above, for "taken up" (*netilat*) can mean "lifting up" (*ha'a'lah*), as in "raised them" (*va-yenatlem*, Isa. 63:9), and "lifting up the hands" (*netilat yadayyim*). This is also by means of the 600,000 letters. His intention must be in the name of all Israel, and through this he will uplift and raise them up above, letters to letters and combinations to combinations. All of them will certainly bind together, and all the words leaving his mouth will become total holiness, a part of God above,[1345] for the word returns to its root and a person can build and create worlds, as we said above. Therefore the sages are called "builders" (*bonim*),[1346] as it says, "with wisdom a house is built" (Prov. 24:3).[1347]

The essential connection between the souls of Israel and the words of Scripture means that these two are interwoven into a single organic fabric. Earlier we cited several traditions that describe each letter of Torah as containing the entirety of Scripture. One who reads the Torah, even a single one of its letters, has access to the whole body of Scripture and therefore can illuminate the entire world. Indeed, just as God formed existence through Torah, so too can students create worlds by means of their study.

In this teaching, however, the Maggid extends the unity of Torah to include the Jewish people as well. He claims that a scholar must intend to uplift all of Israel in his studies. The people are homologous to the letters of Torah, and they are raised up together with the letters spoken aloud in the course of his learning. In general the idea

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[1344] b. Ketubot 17a. However, this Talmudic passage mentions nothing about letters. It refers to the 600,000 men who were in attendance at Sinai, and recommends that the same number of people accompany a scholar of Torah when he dies.

[1345] A common rereading of Job 31:2.

[1346] b. Berakhot 64a.

[1347] MDL #192, p. 305, with a parallel in OT #179b, *ki tavo*, pp. 236-237.

that one must perform the commandments on behalf the entire Jewish people is not a major theme in the Maggid's teachings, but it is a prominent motif in earlier mystical texts. This is especially true of the works of Lurianic Kabbalah, which describe the souls of the Jewish people as sharing a common origin in the form of *adam qadmon*, the primeval anthropos. The cosmic *tiqqun* requires that all of their souls be restored to their rightful place in the divine superstructure.[1348]

The words of Torah may be inherently holy, but the Maggid reinforces that accessing or activating the divine energy within them does not happen automatically. It is not enough to recite them by rote, and one who studies or intones the letters of Scripture without the correct contemplative attention is bitterly misusing a divine gift:

> One must not say, "I am immersed in God's Torah and commandments, which are complete holiness; even without [my] intention they are holy." Do not say this! On the contrary, in particular with holy things your intention must be fitting; your thought must be pure and your word complete, for "they are life to those who speak them" (Prov. 4:22).[1349] It [the intention] should be clear in each and every word that leaves your mouth, in each and every letter, vowel and sound.[1350]

The Maggid seems to understand that his theology of language allows room for the claim that inner intention during studying, while perhaps laudable, is relegated to second place. If the very letters of Scripture themselves hold divinity within them, then is it not sufficient to speak them aloud? The Maggid's answer is resoundingly in the negative. He does not demand that one soar to brilliant heights of scholastic achievement, but the

[1348] See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, p. 413 n. 17. For a later reflection on this idea, see Hillel Zeitlin's poignant description of this in Green, *Hasidic Spirituality for a New Era*, pp. 51-54.

[1349] The Maggid is interpreting the word *motseihem* ("find them") as "speak them."

[1350] LY #132, p. 38b-39a.

Maggid clearly believes that the tremendous potential within each and every speech act can only be unlocked through intense focus and intention.

CREATIVITY AND THE ORIGIN OF IDEAS

A critical element of the Maggid's approach to devotional study is the priority he assigns to developing *hiddushim*, or novel interpretations of Torah.[1351] The power of sacred learning is found not in the memorization and recitation of canonical texts, says the Maggid, but rather in the creation of new ideas. He also reflects upon the issue of whether they represent a new stage in the ongoing and unfolding process of revelation, or if they were already included in the Revelation at Mt. Sinai. More deeply, the search for origins of *hiddushim* presents the Maggid with an epistemological question: Which types of cognitive or contemplative processes lead to new interpretations of Scripture, and how can we account for human creativity?[1352]

The Maggid often underscores that *hiddushim* must transform the person who is studying. Employing an image drawn from the conceptual world of Safed Kabbalah, one

[1351] This same quest for creativity lies at the heart of the Zohar's approach to biblical interpretation as well; see Liebes, 'Zohar and Eros', pp. 67-119; and Hellner-Eshed, *A River Flows From Eden*, pp. 190-203. R. Nahman of Bratslav also emphasized the value of exegetical creativity. The style of R. Nahman's homilies is defined by creative association, in which he frequently links together obscure biblical and rabbinic passages through highly imaginative linguistic plays, numerical equations, and inventive conceptual interpretations. See *Liqqutei Moharan* I:54, 61, 262; II:21; Green, *Tormented Master*, p. 287. He limits it to the world of homiletics and *not* Jewish law. As we will see, the Maggid does discuss creativity in the world of *halakhah* as well, at least in a theoretical sense.

[1352] This enigma has continuously vexed scholars of psychology, neuroscience, cognition and epistemology. For a number of important and emblematic works, see the studies collected in *The Origins of Creativity*, ed. Karl H. Pfenninger and Valerie R. Shubik, Oxford and New York 2001; Mark A. Runco, *Creativity: Theories and Themes: Research, Development, and Practice*, Amsterdam and Boston 2007. Some of the Maggid's disciples continued to explore the origins of new ideas; see, for example, *Me'or 'Einayim*, *tsav*, p. 217.

of the Maggid's teachings claims that every new interpretation of Torah becomes a *maqif*—an encompassing light—that surrounds the person in whom it originated:[1353]

> Let us understand the deeper meaning of the *maqifin* by means of a parable: when a great scholar of Torah comes up with a new interpretation, some wonderful concept that emerges from his learning, his heart is filled with pleasure. From amidst this pleasure comes great joy, which surrounds him from outside and is called a *maqif*. Proof for this is found in the Talmudic statement, "his face took on a radiant aura"[1354]—joy surrounded him from outside. This *maqif* extends to the end of all the levels, meaning that the sage who came up with the idea tells it to someone else, bringing him happiness as well. This person tells it to yet another, making him happy too, and [eventually] it reaches the end of the world. Thus the *maqif* travels from its root to the end of all the levels, meaning that the root of the joy causes happiness unto the end of all the levels.

A new understanding of some element of Torah sparks a chain reaction of joy that begins within the human heart, eventually spreading out and encompassing the one who is studying. Through communication via language, this *maqif* then extends to other people as well, growing to include all those who hear this particular interpretation of Torah. Elsewhere the Maggid extends this notion to language more broadly, saying that all of one's words are *maqifim* that surround him.[1355]

The second part of this sermon, however, offers a different perspective on this process. We read:

> The opposite is also true. Joy can come from the most rudimentary level and still arrive at the source in the supernal realm. A parable: when a young child tells his parent some matter of wisdom, he (i.e. the child) receives joy from this. This makes the father happy as well, even

[1353] On the concept of a *maqif*, see *Pardes Rimmonim* 2:7, 6:3, 29:1; and inter alia, *Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-kelalim* ch.1, 1:4; Avivi, *Kabbala Luriania*, vol. 3, pp. 1420-1422, 1449; *Hesed le-Avraham*, 4:11, 5:31.

[1354] b. Menahot 68b.

[1355] OHE, fol. 66a.

> though the father already knew the matter before. Nevertheless, it causes the child great joy. Later on, when the father tells someone greater and wiser about the child's wisdom, he too becomes joyful even though he already knew the idea.[1356]

As in most of the Maggid's parables about a father and son, the parent represents God and the child may allude to the Jewish people, the *tsaddiq* in particular, or even a novice student at the beginning of his path. Thus in this passage we see the Maggid describing a vector of joyful influence extending not from one being to another, but from the creative human exegete toward the Divine. This notion that our new interpretations of Torah give God pleasure is an important theme in the Maggid's teachings.

The Maggid describes the act of Torah study as a way of entering into a realm of total conceptual freedom that renews the scholar:

> The sages taught: "do not read 'engraved' but 'freedom.'"[1357] The matter is thus. In Torah there are two kinds of freedom: freedom from the angel of death, and freedom from servitude to the nations [of the world].[1358] This is because Torah preceded the world by two thousand years.[1359] It is above the worlds, since the worlds were taken from it. All sadness, servitude and death, God protect us, come from the destruction of the worlds, since [before this one] God created worlds and destroyed them.[1360] From brokenness came death and afflictions, since everything that descends from its level is called dead.[1361] But the Torah is above all, and free of brokenness. Therefore one enters Torah, where there is no brokenness, becomes free of everything.

[1356] OHE, fol. 62a. See also the version of this teaching from *Qedushat Levi*, *purim*, p. 366, quoted in Green, 'Around the Maggid's Table', p. 88.

[1357] m. Avot 6:2, based on Ex. 32:16.

[1358] Cf. *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* 18:3.

[1359] *Bereshit Rabbah* 8:2.

[1360] *Bereshit Rabbah* 3:7.

[1361] Zohar 3:135b.

Torah originated in the *sefirot* of *hokhmah* and *binah*, which are beyond the regions of *shevirah*, or cosmic brokenness. Studying the words of Scripture grants one access to realms beyond sickness, death and exile, allowing him to enter regions of the Godhead in which divine unity of the *sefirot* was never fractured. However, this opportunity to transcend the broken realms is not granted automatically:

> The Torah preceded the world by two thousand years. This means that it is impossible to study Torah without wisdom (*hokhmah*) and understanding (*binah*)—discerning wisdom. These two beloveds are never parted, and one cannot exist without the other. If he is a wise person who understands, then he grasps the knowledge (*da'at*), which is Torah, referred to as a child. When he comes to the knowledge, which is Torah, and studies it, he creates new heavens and earth, as it is written, "For as the new heaven and the new earth which I make stand before Me," (Isa. 66:22). The sages taught, "it does not say 'which I made' but rather 'which I make', eternally from the new interpretations of Torah."[1362]

The Maggid is building upon the Lurianic association of the *sefirot hokhmah* and *binah* with the respective *partsufim* of *abba* and *imma*.[1363] These *sefirot*, he claims, are the two eons by which Torah preceded the world, and thus represent Scripture before it entered into the limited linguistic garb it currently occupies. Torah, here associated with the *sefirah da'at*, emerged from these two *sefirot*/cosmic structures as it was translated into language. But the Maggid is also teaching that one learning Torah must have properly cultivated these two attributes of *hokhmah* and *binah*, meaning fear and awe, before he can truly access the creative potential of such devotional study. He continues:

> What are novel interpretations of Torah (*hiddushin de-orayta*)? The attributes of love and awe that one renews in his study. When he is immersed in the plain-sense meaning of Torah, this produces

[1362] Zohar 1:5a.

[1363] See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 139-140, 170, 176, 238-239; Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash*, pp. 25-26, 128.

> the attributes of awe and love. When he studies its deeper meaning, the love and awe are of a higher level. The same is true for all the levels of PaRDeS, referring to *peshat*, *remez*, *derash*, and *sod*. The higher the level [of study], the more love [and awe] are renewed above.
>
> This is "new heaven"—love, and "new earth"—awe, as is known, "which I create," as it were (Isa. 66:22). Even though the arousal comes from a person, the blessed Holy One does everything and imbues love and awe within him. The person only brings about the arousal, inspiring love and awe above, as it says, "see, what has been created comes before you".[1364] ... a person creates worlds above through the Torah. But first he must cultivate the attributes of wisdom and understanding, for without them he cannot learn Torah, which is *da'at*, and create worlds with it. Even though he may study Torah and grow wise, nevertheless this is only the "back side" of Wisdom (*ahorit hokhmah*), the unripened fruits of supernal wisdom....[1365] He must arrive at the front side of wisdom, where there was no brokenness.[1366]

The Maggid demands the cultivation of awe and love as a prerequisite for the creative study of Torah. Developing these attributes allows one to engage the higher *sefirot*, which together constitute the World of Thought, and renew them as he enters into the deeper dimensions of the meaning Scripture. However, this teaching, like the one before it, describes God as the ultimate source of the cosmic rebirth and the innovative interpretations of Torah. Passionate study inspires a response from the Divine, arousing God to renew the *sefirot* and bestow *hiddushim* in the mind of the student.

A dynamic approach to interpreting Scripture entails reading old texts with a fresh sense of vitality and inspiration, for reciting the words of Torah with love and awe gives them additional life-force. This type of learning transforms the one who is studying, but it also leads to the creation of new ideas:

[1364] Zohar 3:13a.

[1365] See *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:4.

[1366] SLA, pp. 20-21.

> When someone has a new idea about some wisdom in the Torah, he gives new *mohin* ("mental energies") to those words. The *mohin* were hidden at first, garbed within the words, and now he has divested them of their garment, revealing and expanding them. These are the adornments of the bride. He gives *mohin* to those words of Torah he speaks in awe and love. "All those who immerse themselves in the teachings about the *'olah* [sacrifice], it is as if they offered it,"[1367] since when he speaks those words with awe and love he gives new life-force to the words.[1368]

One who develops a new interpretation of Torah brings forth that idea from its potential, hidden deep within the garb of Scripture. What are these garments that the person studying must remove in order to release the hidden creative energies? They are the stories, the narratives, and perhaps even the specific details of the commandments that define the Torah as we have it. One studying has the responsibility to draw forth new interpretations contained within this linguistic garment, actualizing some new element of the infinite core of potential energy within Torah. These *hiddushim* are called "adornments of the bride" (i.e. *shekhinah*), a metaphor for new interpretations of Torah commonly found in kabbalistic literature.[1369]

The Maggid's teachings identify the origins of *hiddushim* in the realm of *qadmut ha-sekhel*, or the pre-cognizant mind. In the midst of a homily addressing the question of how abstract thoughts can become expressed through spoken language, we read:

> We ourselves see this in a person who suddenly attains some idea or knowledge. He thinks about it afterward in his mind, [considering] many things that were hidden from him. This idea that occurred to him was drawn forth from the pre-cognizant mind.[1370]

[1367] See b. Menahot 110a; and cf. Tanhuma, *tsav* #14.

[1368] MDL #25, p. 41, with parallels in OT #421, *aggadot,* p. 437; OHE, fol. 25b; KTVQ, fol. 31b; and ST p. 55a.

[1369] See below, pp. 430, 433-434.

[1370] MDL #180, p. 281. For a longer discussion of this teaching, see above, pp. 285-286.

New interpretations of Torah, just like all other ideas, emerge from the very deepest region of the human mind, identifiable with the *sefirah hokhmah* or perhaps even *keter*. This realm is a reservoir of inspiration from which *hiddushim* may be consciously drawn, but in *qadmut ha-sekhel* itself there can be no active or purposeful intellection. It is a fountain of creativity without any clear structures or linguistic frameworks, and therefore the ideas that come from *qadmut ha-sekhel* must be invested in *mahshavah*, *qol*, and eventually even *dibbur* before they can be communicated to another human being.

We have seen that the Maggid describes the study of Torah as a recreation of the moment of Revelation on Mt. Sinai. He suggests that one who studies with great attunement and connection will even hear the voice of God speaking to him in the present day:

> I heard the following from my teacher [the Maggid]: ... "if you listen, [hearkening to My voice]" (Ex. 19:5). ["Listening"] means understanding and paying attention to the words, even to *your* words. When you pray or study with great attachment and extra discernment, then "you shall hear My voice," meaning that it will be as if I am speaking to you.[1371]
>
> From amidst your words you will understand great and awesome secrets of Torah in each letter and vowel. [This will happen] very quickly, [so fast] that it is impossible for the simple mortal mind to understand it. This is the meaning of "and now"—by means of your attachment, "if you listen, you will hear My voice"...[1372]

This tradition describes the inspiration and new ideas attained through study bestowed upon one by God; they are divine gifts so powerful and vital that they transcend the rational human mind. This suggests that in some sense Revelation did not end with the

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[1371] The Maggid is interpreting the verse, "If you listen, *then* you will hear My voice."

[1372] *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *yitro*, p. 170. Cf. OT #92, *be-shalah*, p. 128; and OHE, p. 58c. For a disciple of the Maggid who interprets this verse as a mandate to listen to God's voice in all human conversations, see *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *yitro*, p. 141. See also SLA, p. 40.

events of Sinai, for it is a process that continues whenever one learns Torah with mystical attachment. The words themselves are intoned by the person studying, but God is the ultimate source of the new ideas that emerge from this sacred encounter with the text. Do these *hiddushim* come forth from *qadmut ha-sekhel* as well? In the present teaching this aspect of the question remains ambiguous.

However, the possible connection between study, Revelation and the pre-cognizant mind is formulated even more explicitly in another of the Maggid's sermons:

> When someone investigates and thinks about a *halakhah*, considering it for a long time, intelligence and understanding come to him only some time afterward. Why is this so? Because at first he did not focus his mind well enough. Later on he is visited by the supernal intelligence (*ha-sekhel ha-'elyon*), which we might say is the upper tip of the letter that focuses the [energy of the] *yod*—or Thought—so that it does not drift hither and thither. Immediately after this intelligence comes to him, some general understanding of the path upon which he should walk is immediately revealed to him. From this he discerns the details of the matters with which he had been struggling, but he still cannot put everything in exactly the right place.
>
> It is known that this type of revelation brings a person great pleasure and great joy, which shows that it comes from the world above, the highest world of spiritual pleasure. Afterward he thinks about the particulars, arranging everything [in his mind] and putting each component in the right place. Now his revelation is greater, since at first he was not thinking of any form of a letter. Initially the pleasure was revealed to him in a general way. Then he thinks by means of the letters, which come from the five points of articulation. This is the first *heh* (=5) of the divine Name, and therefore the first *heh* is called *binah*.[1373]

The human mind generally flows freely from one thought to another, and focusing on one particular idea for an extended period of time requires much concentration. Study is an act of *tsimtsum* in both senses of the word: total withdrawal from all distractions, as well

[1373] MDL #192, p. 302.

as intense focus upon the question or problem at hand. The first stage in which the solution is revealed comes via *hokhmah*, an initial flash of illumination unbounded by letters. The person studying may then explore the idea through the medium of language, the transformation of *hokhmah* into *binah*. This process of contemplation by means of the letters leads to an even greater understanding of the idea.

Later in this homily the Maggid notes that these initial stages represent only a partial revelation, since both take place solely within the mind of a single individual. Both *hokhmah* and *binah* are entirely cognitive, constituting the realm of *mahshavah*. Although *binah* is home to the roots of language, the ideas developed within *mahshavah* are still purely internal and cannot as yet be communicated to someone else. Revelation is only truly complete when the idea can be expressed to someone else through speech, a combination of *qol* and *dibbur*.

We are starting to see that the Maggid's description of the process of human intellection parallels the events on Mt. Sinai. The primordial Torah was translated from *hokhmah* and *binah* into its current linguistic garb, and then communicated to his people in an act of divine love. Humanity would have been unable to withstand the great intensity of Torah's light without this necessary *tsimtsum*, which would have been overpowering when still in its most abstract form. Of course, human cognition mirrors the processes of Creation as well, and the Maggid draws this connection explicitly later in this same sermon.

For the Maggid, new interpretations of Torah are a divine gift bestowed upon a person out of great love. God sends *hiddushim* to a devoted seeker because of His great affection. In at least one teaching the Maggid suggests that someone who is truly

connected to God does not have to struggle for new interpretations of Torah, since such a person will simply repeat what God Himself has told him.[1374] However, in many other teachings it seems that *hiddushim* only come about after an intellectual journey:

> A parable about a son who is loved by his father. Once a guest came to test him, but the son could not understand the *halakhah* [of the test] at all because of its great depth and sharpness. Yet because of his great love for his child, the father could not bear his beloved son's pain from encountering such great difficulty. What did the father do? He gave him a hint[1375] about the *halakhah*, showing him the path upon which to walk and demonstrated how to "give and take" with the dialectics; he very nearly told him all the contents of the *halakhah*.
>
> When the guest came to ask him about the *halakhah* and test him in front of his father, he began by reciting the *halakhah*. The guest asked him some questions and presented some difficulties, but he explained everything correctly, answering and dismantling (*mefareq*) [the questions] with his clarified and illuminated intellect. The father saw this and was overjoyed, delighting and taking pride in it. Even though all of this was accomplished by his power, he still received great pleasure. When the guest saw the father's delight, he wanted to increase it even more, and he redoubled his efforts by asking new questions and presenting powerful new difficulties. The son, trusting his father, was inspired on his own. He became wise and explained all of the questions.[1376]

It seems that God cannot bear to stand by and watch someone become frustrated at not being able to understand some particular point of Torah. Therefore, the Divine becomes his teacher and sends along *hiddushim* in order to help the one studying solve the problem. Yet although He is the source of this person's initial inspiration, God takes great delight in seeing him immersed in Torah and succeeding in his studies. In the parable,

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[1374] See OHE, fol. 62b.

[1375] Lit. "opened an opening for him" (*patah leih pitha*).

[1376] LY #266, fol. 85b, with parallels in OT #229, *tehilim*, p. 286-287; TSVHR #138, pp. 67-68; and OHE, fol. 76b-77a. See *Qedushat Levi*, *be-shalah*, p. 185, where R. Levi Isaac cites a version of this parable as something he heard frequently from the Maggid. See below for a parable in which the son brings joy to his father by asserting his independence and contradicting his words.

however, the father only gives hints; he can rightly take pleasure in what his son does with them.

But the tenor of the homily changes significantly toward the end of the parable. The child matures and becomes confident in his own scholastic abilities. The son is secure in his belief that his father can help him, but no longer needs to receive his explicit instructions. He is now more learned, having become wiser and more self-reliant, and can now develop his own solutions to the difficulties that emerge from his learning. This mature, independent form of study brings God even more joy than before. Perhaps in this we are meant to hear an allusion to the classic Zoharic concept of *it'aruta de-le-tata*, or "arousal from the creatures below" that brings great delight to the Divine.

There is a theurgic element in the Maggid's conception of Torah study, for *hiddushim* can unify the *sefirot hokhmah* and *binah*, also called the *partsufim* of *abba* and *imma*:

> Let us understand what is written in the Lurianic writings, that the *yesod* of *abba* is long and *yesod* of imma is *short*.[1377] A wonderful parable: Why does a person study a tractate [of the Talmud]? Certainly because of love or fear, or both together. Now love and awe are called *ze'ir* and *nuqvah* ("male" and "female"); *ze'ir* is referred to as "love," and *nuqvah* is called "awe." For example, at the very beginning, after he has studied just one page, ostensibly he understands it and enjoys the learning. But afterward he comes up with many difficulties with this learning, and he cannot prove it one way or the other. What should he do? He must fall silent in his study and begin to contemplate within his mind (*be-mahshavah*). This is called raising up the "female waters"

[1377] *Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-kellalim*, ch. 10; *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-qaddishim*, ch. 2. Regarding the *yesod* of *abba* and *imma*, see Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash*, pp. 26-28, 127-136.

> (*mayyim nuqvin*).[1378] It is known that *ze'ir* and *nuqvah* must ascend before the union of *abba* and *imma*, raising up the "feminine waters" to *abba* and *imma*. Then the supernal union can happen. Now when something in his study proves difficult, one should fall silent, bringing [inward] the words that he could have spoken [aloud], which is *malkhut*. The love, since presumably he only began to study out of love, is *ze'ir*... and now that he has fallen silent in his study and begun to think in his mind, bringing the love and the words to his mind, this is the ascent of *ze'ir* and *nuqvah*, raising up "feminine waters" for the union of *abba* and *imma*.

The Maggid has presented a fascinating reinterpretation of a particularly graphic element of the sexual mythos of Lurianic Kabbalah. His mapping of the *partsufim* in this teaching is slightly different than above. Here *abba* and *imma* represent one's contemplative and intellectual faculties, and *ze'ir* and *nuqvah* are the emotional elements. Contemplative study begins by engaging one (or both) of these lower passions, but neither of them is powerful enough to overcome the more challenging quandaries that emerge in the course of one's study. At that point the Maggid recommends that instead of allowing one's words to leave them through the vocalized act of study, one should turn inward and raise up these two elements in his mind. By means of his contemplative silence in which he uplifts the words in his mind, the person studying enables a unification of the four *partsufim*; *nuqvah* ("awe," but also *malkhut* and all spoken language) and *ze'ir* ("love") are raised up to *abba* and *imma*.[1379] He continues:

> This matter is wondrous and clear. When someone cannot understand a matter, he begins to think about it and through this a thought suddenly occurs to him; the idea strikes him like a lightning

[1378] The term "female waters" (*mayyim nuqvin*) refers to divine light trapped below in the husks of the physical world. It must be reunited with the "masculine waters" above through human action. See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 137, 396.

[1379] A teaching attributed to the Maggid's son (though not one quoted in his father's name) explains that because the human mind is an element of *shekhinah*, proper study effects a unification with *kudsha berikh hu* and *ze'ir anpin*/*shekhinah*; see *Hesed le-Avraham*, *va-yera*, p. 32

> bolt of sudden illumination.[1380] This idea comes from the pre-cognizant mind (*qadmut ha-sekhel*), which is *hokhmah*. But the wisdom that hits him like a bolt of lightning is [only] the *yesod* of *hokhmah*... the *yesod* of *abba*. The aspect that comes to him suddenly is the *yesod*, which is the union of the pre-cognizant mind, *hokhmah*, and Thought, which is *binah*. *Abba* and *imma* engage in a union of the supernal *partsufim*. The masculine gives bounty to the feminine, and union between the pre-cognizant mind, which is *hokhmah*, and Thought, which is *binah*, and the *hokhmah* that falls upon him like a lightning bolt is called the "mighty key" (*mafteah eitan*), meaning strength.[1381] Because the wisdom that falls upon him is greatly contracted, and is only a simple idea (*sekhel pashut*), but after he settles this idea in his mind very well, now the simple meaning of the *halakhah* becomes clear in the idea that occurred to him. Now it is called an "outside teaching" (*barayta*),[1382] for that which was once [only] in the mind can now come into speech.[1383]

This contemplative process sparks a momentary flash of inspiration, described by the Maggid as a bolt of lightning. The one searching for an answer to his questions is thus enjoined to create an open passage of communication, a unifying bridge, between the depths of his preconscious mind and the regions of active cognition.

This connection can only be forged through the medium of silence. Within that contemplative quiet, a solution first comes to him from the world of *hokhmah*, but it is still unformed and abstract. Then it enters *binah*, the realm of linguistic intellection and the "letters of thought." But only after he has considered it there for an extended period

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[1380] Cf. Maimonides' introdcution to the *Guide*.

[1381] See Zohar 2:110a-b.

[1382] The term *barayta* generally refers to Tannaitic statements that were not included in the Mishnah but are quoted in the Talmud.

[1383] OHE, fol. 58a. The conclusion of this passage is instructive, even though it is not directly relevant to the present discussion: "I have written all of this just as I heard it, but there is no explanation why the *yesod* of *abba* is long. But after this I heard a simple reason for this. It is known that more than the calf wants to suckle, [the cow wants to give nurse] (b. Pesahim 112a). Therefore the *yesod* of *abba*, who is the giver, is called long. The *yesod* of *imma*, who is the receiver, is called short."

of time, working on it and refining it, can he articulate the profundity of the idea and convey it to others. Presumably this process takes place within the human self and the Godhead at the same time. Indeed, Maggid refers to states of consciousness and elements of the human psycho-structure as *partsufim* precisely because the unifications between them take place within the person and the Divine at the same time.[1384]

New interpretations are a divine gift sent from on high; some are the result of human actions, while others are delivered to the student because of God's great love. But the question remains as to whether the Maggid describes such *hiddushim* as being truly novel, or if he allows for the possibility that new interpretations of Torah already existed previously in a somewhat more abstract form. Earlier we noted that some of his sermons describe *hiddushim* as new manifestations of something already hidden within the Torah's latent potential, and in many sermons he explores this issue at great length:

> "Beauty (*hod*) and splendor are before Him, strength and joy in His place" (1 Chron. 16:27). The verse should have said the opposite, "splendor and beauty before Him," since by means of the splendor before Him they come to acknowledge (*le-hodot*) Him. Perhaps it is as our sages taught: the blessed Holy One delights and takes pleasure in the Torah of the *tsaddiqim*.[1385] Even before the creation of the *tsaddiqim* in the world, their Torah was engraved there above, and the blessed Holy One cites it in their name... the learning of the *tsaddiqim*, their *hiddushim* either in plain-sense meaning or the deeper meaning of Torah, was all said before the *tsaddiq* was created in this world... and the light is revealed and drawn down by the *tsaddiq*... "joy" (*hedvah*) means that one who learns with fiery passion, great joy and attachment to the blessed One, will certainly align his words to their truest sense. These words are the same as those engraved and inscribed, the combination of his letters above. This is the meaning of "in his place."

[1384] See THM 485

[1385] Tanhuma, *huqqat* #8.

> This also helps us understand the verse, "happy is the one whose strength is in You, the pathways in his heart" (Ps. 84:6). The Torah is called "strength" (*'oz*), as it says, "Y-H-V-H will give strength to His people" (Ps. 29:11). Perhaps it means thus: "happy is the one whose strength," referring to the Torah that is his—this person attains a *hiddush* in some realm of Torah, and it aligns to truth of the matters as they are engraved above. This is the meaning of "in You." "Pathways in his heart" refers to the sages' teaching: "those in whom the paths of the Torah are paved into their heart."[1386] It refers to those who study according to the way of truth, according to the truth of the thirty-two paths of Wisdom, which [the verse] calls "pathways." It is written "their heart" (*levavam*), for they learn with both of their hearts, [namely] awe and love.[1387]

Here we see that the *hiddushim* produced by all later *tsaddiqim* existed long before they were uttered by that particular scholar. But this teaching also suggests that there are ideal—or perhaps even correct—interpretations of the Torah to which all other *hiddushim* are compared. Indeed, other sermons from the Maggid do claim that some *hiddushim* are *zarim*, literally "strange" but best translated as "unfitting" or "improper." Only select individuals who have attained a very high level of *devequt* can create new interpretations in this world below that correspond correctly to those in heaven.[1388] Another tradition suggests that only deeply refined scholars can interpret Torah in accord with its true nature (*mekhaven ha-torah la-amito*).[1389] References such as these, although they are rare, exist in tension alongside a wealth of teachings from the Maggid that underscore the virtually boundless nature of human creativity. The difference may be situational: sometimes one may wish to "say Torah," and is therefore looking for a creative and

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[1386] *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* 17:1, which cites the present verse.

[1387] LY #277, fol. 93b-94a, with a parallel in OT #258, *tehilim*, p. 314-315.

[1388] KTVQ, fol. 5b.

[1389] See *Qedushat Yisra'el*, Jerusalem 1955-1956, p. 79

inspiring interpretation. In other cases, one may be struggling with a difficult or complex passage and just want to figure it out and come to the correct solution.

Hiddushim developed by later sages were already known to God for several reasons. These ideas long existed as hidden potential within the divine Wisdom that undergirds the words of Torah, and they are only revealed through the mind of the student. Furthermore, linear time is utterly irrelevant to God, for the Divine can find pleasure in something that will only come into fruition at a later time. Ideas articulated by *tsaddiqim* in later generations already existed within the mind of God in the earliest moments of Creation:

> God precedes time; past and future are all the same before God. Before Israel even existed, the deeds and teachings of each and every *tsaddiq* were revealed in heaven. As soon as the notion of Israel arose in the divine mind, God was already deriving joy and pleasure from the deeds of each *tsaddiq*. This is witnessed in the tale of Moses' ascent to Mount Sinai, during which he found God saying "My son Eliezer says: 'A two-year-old cow [may be used as the Red Heifer]'."[1390] This was hundreds of years before Rabbi Eliezer lived! So too did the sages say, "Everything a faithful student is ever to say was already given in the law of Moses at Sinai." God said to Moses: "Thus will scholar so-and-so innovate in that generation."[1391]
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> The teachings and deeds of each *tsaddiq* give pleasure and delight to our blessed God. This is the sort of love and joy brought about in the Parent by the child's power. This is what the Zohar means when it says that "Israel sustain their Father in heaven."[1392] This is like the parent being given joy by that beloved child. In the fullness of pleasure the parent may cry out: "I am made strong and healthy by this pleasure!" So it is with the blessed Holy One: the pleasure is so great, it is as though they were sustaining Him!

[1390] Tanhuma, *huqqat* #8

[1391] *Va-Yiqra Rabbah* 22:1.

[1392] Zohar 3:7b.

> This is also the meaning of "I was (*va-ehyeh*) His nursling, His pleasure day by day" (Prov. 8:30). RaSHI explains that the Torah [or "wisdom," the subject of this verse] grew up in God's bosom for two thousand years before Creation. But the simple meaning of this verse claims that wisdom was God's nursemaid or teacher. It is difficult even to say this. Isn't God the First of all firsts? But we can understand it in our way. Torah prides herself on being God's teacher, as it were. This refers to the great pleasure God derives from Torah, from the teachings of each and every *tsaddiq* and the good things each one does. These are the commandments that make up the Torah; this becomes a nursing and sustenance for God...
>
> It is known that the [sacred] name *Ehyeh* ("I will be," Ex.) refers to the future. This is its explanation of *va-Ehyeh*—if the Torah was only to be given to Israel in the future, and has not yet been given, what pleasure was there? Therefore it says "with Him" (*etslo*), meaning that for Him the past and the future are all the same. All is revealed before the blessed One.[1393]

Not only were the *hiddushim* of all later *tsaddiqim* included in the Mosaic revelation, but, like the Torah itself, they preexisted the very creation of world. Concepts of temporality are inapplicable to God, for the religious service of human beings brings pleasure to the Divine even before it takes place in the physical world. God's delight in the new interpretations of Torah that emerge from their sacred study is particularly intense.

Several of the Maggid's teachings explore the question of whether ideas are the result of spontaneous inspiration, or if they are the necessary result of purposeful study:

> If an idea (*sekhel*) occurs to someone[1394] and he does not know what to do with it, he should begin to clarify it. He contradicts it, and then stands it up once more, breaking down [the idea] and then building it up. [This is] the secret of "touching and not touching,"[1395] [which continues] until he

[1393] LY#283, fol. 102a-103b, with a parallel in OT #31, *toledot*, pp. 42-43. Based in part on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 116-117.

[1394] Heb. *kshe-nofel le-adam sekhel kol de'hu*, perhaps a translation of the Yiddish verb *aynfallen* ("to occur to"). He uses similar terms in describing how "strange thoughts" (*mahshavot zarot*) spontaneously appear in the mind.

[1395] Cf. y. Hagigah 2:1.

> fashions a garment and a contracted vessel for the idea. This comes from the World of *'Aqqudim*, and therefore the light, i.e. the idea, comes before the vessel.
>
> However, if he studies [a passage of] Talmud first, and then an idea comes to him after he has begun to clarify [what he read], this alludes to the World of *Neqqudim*, which comes from the eyes [of *adam qadmon*].[1396] That is, he sees the vessel and then can argue in the Talmud until he gives a reason for everything, giving light to this vessel. The idea that comes to him from the World of the *Neqqudim* is sent to him from on high.[1397]

The Maggid has described two different models of intellection. The second of these methods, in which learning comes first and leads to inspiration and creativity, is the model we might generally associate with the devotional study of Scripture. The reader creates a vessel for new ideas by encountering the text and integrating it into his mind, eventually filling this conceptual garment with the light of creativity and understanding. In the first model, however, the flash of inspiration is sent to a person from on high even before he picks up a book. Only afterward does he create a vessel for this mysterious illumination through the framework of textual study.

One type of inspiration comes from the World of *'Aqqudim* ("bound points"), and the other from the World of *Neqqudim* ("atomized points"), Lurianic terms for stages of the process of emanation. *'Aqqudim* is the first world to have been created after the initial *tsimtsum*, and is still a region of unity and abstraction. *Neqqudim*, on the other hand, is defined by brokenness and differentiation, and it is in this realm that the six lower *sefirot* from *tif'eret* to *yesod* emerged from the eyes of *adam qadmon*.[1398] In this teaching the

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[1396] The version in KTVQ reads *ayin* ("Nothing") instead of *'ayin* ("eyes"), which changes the meaning of the homily. This may have been an error in copying or printing the text, but it may also be the case that the person transcribing the teaching mistook the word because they are pronounced the same way.

[1397] OHE, fol. 24b. For a parallel that appears to have some textual problems, see KTVQ, fol. 19a.

[1398] See *Ets Hayyim* 6:3; *Sefer ha-Derushim*, *derush 'olam ha-'aqqudim*, p. 13-16; Avivi, *Kabbala Luriana*, vol. 3, pp. 1351-1352; Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, p. 134-135; Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash*, p.

Maggid has adopted these rather obscure kabbalistic terms as a vocabulary for referring to modes of human cognition. Earlier we noted that the Maggid describes the Revelation at Sinai as a moment in which the infinite divine Presence became "bound" (*aqud*) within space, time, and ultimately the text of Torah.[1399]

CREATIVITY, THE DIVINE WILL AND RELIGIOUS LAW

The Maggid attributes tremendous power to human creativity. He often underscores that the *tsaddiqim* shape God's thoughts, determining, and in some cases even overturning, the divine Will.[1400] In his more radical formulations of this principle, the Maggid describes the righteous as literally teaching God what to do.[1401] Rather than angering God, however, this demonstration of independence brings Him great pleasure:

> The sages taught: "the righteous perform (*'osim*) the will of God."[1402] They did not say, "perform His word or utterance." Now, of course the blessed One's Will cannot be grasped. A parable for this: a father who articulates some point of *halakhah* or new interpretation of Torah before his son. The son can contradict his father's words, because of his sharpness and learning (*pilpulo*). Even though the child opposes his father by contradicting his words, the father is delighted and filled with great joy, as in [the verse], "become wise, my son, and gladden my heart" (Prov. 27:11).[1403] *This* is the father's will more than if [the child] had remained in silent agreement with his words.

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23. In much the same way, R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady identifies the World of *'Aqqudim* as the locus of *'itoreruta de-le'eila*, or divine "arousal from above" that does not come in response to human deeds; see *Liqqutei Torah*, *va-ethanan*, fol. 3b. Elsewhere he contrasts *'Aqqudim*, which is *keter* and the very roots of Torah, to *Neqqudim*, which is *hokhmah*; ibid, *ve-zot ha-berakhah*, fol. 94b. Cf. *Me'or 'Einayim*, *va-yetse*, p. 93. See also KST, #322, p. 219-220, where an unattributed teaching compares *'aqqudim* to the letters, and *Neqqudim* to the vowels that animate them.

[1399] OT #98, *yitro*, p. 137.

[1400] See *Qedushat Levi*, *va-yiggash*, pp. 119. We will return to this theme again in our discussion of prayer in the following chapter.

[1401] See OT #384, *pesuqim*, p. 401; SLA, p. 85.

[1402] For example, see b. Berakhot 35b; b. Yoma 22b; b. Bava Batra 25b.

[1403] The rest of the verse reads, "That I may have what to answer those who taunt me".

> So do the righteous rule [through their] fear of God, as it were.[1404] This is [the meaning of] "they make the will of God,"[1405] though they do not make His word or his utterance.[1406]

Rereading "perform" as "make" (both *'osim*), the Maggid is claiming that *tsaddiqim* give shape to and articulate the divine Will through their reasoning and logic. Even though their ideas may oppose God's initial desire, this inversion brings Him great joy. However, it is interesting that the Maggid suggests that we cannot change the divine Word, or utterance, which remains manifest in the world since the moments of Creation. This is part of a larger teaching about how miracles were already imbued in the world, since God stipulated that all works of creation follow the will of the *tsaddiqim*.[1407]

To some degree the Maggid's teachings on the limits of human agency are an issue of prayer, which will be treated in the following chapter. However, this parable suggests that the question is also one about the boundaries of hermeneutical freedom. *Hiddushim* are an expression of mankind's ability to interpret the divine Writ anew in each generation. In some cases he describes *hiddushim* as coming directly from God, but many of the Maggid's teachings emphasize that it is possible for *tsaddiqim* to create the divine will because they can use the letters of the Torah exactly as they wish.[1408] Given this power, we should ask if the Maggid is willing to extend this interpretive freedom to the realm of Jewish law as well.

[1404] b. Mo'ed Qatan 16b.

[1405] The verb *'osim* has the sense of both "perform" and "make," but the Maggid's interpretation is striking because he has chosen the one that is contextually unexpected.

[1406] MDL #183, p. 284, with a parallel in OT #89, *be-shalah*, p. 124.

[1407] On the Maggid's understanding of miracles, see above, pp. 104, 124, 201-204.

[1408] OT #126, *be-huqqotai*, pp. 176-177. R. Israel of Kozhenits quotes a teaching from the Maggid about using the twenty-two letters of the Torah, which are the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, to change God's will; see R. Israel's commentary to R. Judah Leib of Prague, *Be'er ha-Golah*, Pietrokow 1910, fol. 78a. My thanks to Benny Brown pointing out this source.

Mystical texts that leave room for great theological freedom and exegetical creativity, so long as they do not change the praxis of *halakhah*, are relatively common.[1409] Let us choose but two examples published within a century of the Maggid's life. In *Hesed le-Avraham* (1685), R. Abraham Azualai's summary and reworking of Moses Cordovero's kabbalistic writings, we read:

> Regarding matters [in the Oral Torah] that are not related to *halakhah*, but are interpretations (*midrashim*) or other things dependent on the Torah about which the sages disagree, one saying like this and the other saying like that. In matters such as these, one opinion will seem reasonable to a person, and he agrees with one of them. He is not called a heretic (*kofer*). For example, the sages disagree regarding Job. Some say he existed, and others say he did not. Some say he was Jewish, others say he was a non-Jew. The choice is in one's hand to stand by one of these opinions, as long as he does not think that he has the power to prove one of them by reason or philosophy, or something of the sort.[1410]

The Talmudic sages offered many different, and often mutually exclusive, readings of the Bible, and nobody is duty-bound to accept all of them. Indeed, one should choose the opinion that seems most reasonable to him, selecting from a great variety of different interpretations. But R. Abraham's description holds several interesting and rather conservative points as well. He allows that one may select the explanation that suits him best, but he does not endorse coming up with new interpretations *ex nihilo*. Furthermore, he predicates that none of the sages' positions should be considered more verifiable than the others through outside (i.e. philosophical) reasoning. All of their interpretations exist comfortably within the spectrum of possibilities.[1411]

[1409] On creativity in the Zohar, see above, n. 1351.

[1410] *Hesed le-Avraham* 2:1.

[1411] See Scholem, 'Revelation and Tradition', pp. 300-303.

Another example in this vein may be found in R. Hayyim ibn Attar's introduction to his famous Torah commentary *Or ha-Hayyim* (1742).[1412] He writes:

> At times I shall [take up] the scribe's quill and draw [new explanations of] the plain-sense meaning of verses, which depart from the interpretations of the sages. I have already revealed my opinion, for I do not, Heaven forefend, disagree with even one iota of the earlier authorities' [words]. But permission is given to interpreters of Torah to work and to plant it (*le-'ovdah u-le-zor'ah*). [Its] "light is sown away for the righteous" (Ps. 97:11), and it is a life-giving land (*erets hayyim*) that brings forth abundant fruit from all seed that her [i.e. the Torah's] husband, a disciple of Torah (*ben Torah*), will sow. Only a matter of *halakhah* that has been established by the earlier authorities cannot be changed by others.

Exegetical creativity, as long as it does not impact *halakhah*, is the prerogative of any scholar. However, it should be noted that in the lines following this passage R. Hayyim suggests that even a learned person should not come up with new interpretations whole cloth. Oral traditions should be afforded pride of place, and finding new ways to synthesize received traditions with the written text is a significant part of the exegete's task.[1413]

For the Maggid, the words of Torah are an inexhaustible wellspring of new ideas waiting to be revealed. There is no evidence that he has any of R. Hayyim's reticence regarding coming up with interpretations that were not part of an oral tradition. However,

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[1412] Cf. his comments to Lev. 26:3, #5. The importance of this book in later Hasidic circles has been noted; see; David Assaf, '"A Heretic who has no Faith in the Great Ones of the Age": The Clash over the Honor of *Or ha-Hayyim*', *Modern Judaism* 29 (2009), pp. 194-225. On ibn Attar's life, thought and exegetical paradigms, see Elazar Touitou, *Rabbi Hayyim ibn Attar and his Commentary 'Or haHayyim al haTorah'*, Jerusalem 1997 [Hebrew]; Ariel Evan Mayse, '*Or haHayyim*: Creativity, Tradition, and Mysticism in the Torah Commentary of R. Hayyim ibn Attar', *Conversations* 13 (2012), pp. 68-89. It should be noted that R. Hayyim was also a scholar of *halakhah*, and we do not yet know to what degree (if at all) his kabbalistic inclinations affected his legal decisions. I am currently preparing an extensive analysis of his mystical and legal thought.

[1413] The tension between creativity and the desire to conform to (primarily) oral traditions has been present in Kabbalah since its earliest days. For example, see Abrams, 'Orality in the Kabbalistic School of Nahmanides', pp. 85-102; Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*, pp. 53-60, 84-90, 98-99, 114, 122.

we must determine if this creative flexibility extends to matters of law as well. We cannot assume that when he refers to Oral Torah, he means the legal tradition, since for him Oral Torah refers to the entire project of human interpretation. Does the Maggid believe in a single ideal *halakhah*, or might there be an infinite number of valid legal interpretations as well? And if so, do the *tsaddiqim* have the power to refashion Jewish law, creating an alternative *halakhah* in line with the goals of spiritual life? These questions are critical both in light of the nearly limitless creativity the Maggid allows (and even demands) in interpreting Scripture, and the authority he affords to *tsaddiqim* who can literally determine God's will.

Spirituality and law are often framed as opposing forces in the religious life of devoted mystical seekers. The spirit inspires the mystic to new levels of intimacy with God, while the *nomos* restrains and binds him to the norms of a particular community. The strain between these two poles may be fraught or fruitful, but it remains a tension nonetheless.[1414] In the case of Hasidism, Arthur Green has argued that some of the early masters explored the theoretical possibility of a type of spirituality that lay outside of the framework of Jewish law.[1415] They articulated a new paradigm of religious life, anomian and to some degree even anti-nomian, in which the ideal was to serve God *beyond* the

[1414] See, for example, Twersky, 'Religion and Law', pp. 69-82; idem, 'Law and Spirituality in the 17th Century: A Case Study in R. Yair Hayyim Bacharach', *Jewish Thought in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. I. Twersky and B. Septimus, Cambridge, Mass. 1987, pp. 447-467; Jacob Katz, 'Law, Spirituality and Society', *Jewish Social Studies* 2.2 (1996), pp. 87-98, 105-108. For an exploration of the relationship between law and spirit in Jewish mysticism, see Elliot R. Wolfson, *Venturing Beyond: Law and Morality in Kabbalistic Mysticism*, Oxford 2006, pp. 187-285. A tension between legal orthodoxy and spirituality has often been described in studies of Islamic mysticism. See Louis Massignon, *The Passion of Al-Hallaj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, ed. H. Mason, abridged edition, Princeton 1994. See also Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions*, pp. 21, 61, 340, 359. While in many cases this tension is quite apparent, Schimmel also notes that even when *shari'a* is enumerated as a lower stage of religious practice, many Sufis describe religious law as an essential element of the mystical path for; see ibid, pp. 16, 98-99.

[1415] See Green's remarks in his 'Discovery and Retreat.'

confines of the commandments.[1416] Although at the end of the day the Hasidic masters resolutely defended the importance of the law, Green suggests that these yearnings for a spirituality unbridled by the specific norms of Jewish law should not be dismissed.[1417]

The historical record reflects something of this tension as well. The polemical works of the *mithnaggedim* reveal biting criticisms of the Hasidim for their lack of study and disdainful attitude toward scholars, perceived legal infractions, and even for using personal charisma and mystical authority in making legal decisions.[1418] Indeed, this backlash from the *mithnaggedim* may have been a factor in inspiring the Hasidim to reinforce their study of *halakhah* and observance, while still levying a powerful critique against prideful and narcissistic scholars.[1419]

Yet the attitude toward Jewish law in early Hasidic thought is quite complicated, and the academic study of the relationship between Hasidic devotional piety and *halakhah* has only just begun.[1420] Hasidic leaders who also served as legal judicators

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[1416] Of course, the impulse to serve God beyond the commandments does not necessarily imply that one does so against them. The notion of *retson ha-bore* described by the German Pietists led to supererogatory levels of piety. See above, pp. 297-298.

[1417] This longing for extra-legal piety may be related to later flirtations with antinomianism that are found in the teachings of R. Mordecai Joseph of Izbica (1800-1854) in which the will of God and the *halakhah* are not always synonymous. See Shaul Magid, *Hasidism on the Margin: Reconciliation, Antinomianism, and Messianism in Izbica/Radzin Hasidism,* Madison 2003; Joseph Weiss, 'A Late Jewish Utopia of Religious Freedom', *Studies in East European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism*, ed. D. Goldstein, London and Portland 1997, pp. 209-248; Morris M. Faierstein, *All is in the Hands of Heaven: The Teachings of Rabbi Mordecai Joseph Leiner of Izbica*, Hoboken 1989. For a very different perspective, see Herzl Hefter, '"In God's Hands": The Religious Phenomenology of R. Mordechai Yosef of Izbica', *Tradition* 46 (2013), pp. 43-65.

[1418] See the summary in Mordecai Wilensky, 'Hasidic Mitnaggedic Polemics in the Jewish Communities of Eastern Europe: The Hostile Phase', *Essential Papers on Hasidism*, ed. G.D. Hundert, New York 1991, pp. 244-271; and Uriel Gellman, *Sefer Hasidim: A Lost Anti-Hasidic Polemic*, Jerusalem 2007, pp. 104-105, and n. 308 [Hebrew]. See also Green, 'Hasidism and its Response to Change', esp. pp. 328-333.

[1419] Weiss, 'Torah Study in Early Hasidism', pp. 66-67.

[1420] Aaron Wertheim, *Law and Custom in Hasidism*, trans. Shmuel Himelstein, Hoboken 1992; Levi Cooper, 'The Admor of Munkacs Rabbi Chaim Elazar Shapira: The Hasidic Posek—Image and Approach', Ph.D. Dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 2011 [Hebrew]. In a recent lecture entitled 'Individualism and Nomos: Alternative Horizons for Hasidism Research', delivered at *Hasidism and the Academy: Dialogue,*

(*posqim* or *dayyanim*) were common in the nineteenth century, but this was quite rare in the late eighteenth century.[1421] Scholars have assumed that the early Hasidic masters left behind relatively little writing on *halakhah*, and that the few remaining texts are of little consequence. Recent scholarship, however, has reminded us that many members of the Maggid's circle were deeply immersed in the world of *halakhah*. R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev was the leader of a rabbinical court (*av beit din*) in one of the largest Jewish communities in Russia.[1422] Some of the Maggid's students authored their own works of *halakhah*, including R. Shmelke Horowitz and his brother R. Pinhas Horowitz, two very important rabbinic figures who were called upon to lead communities in Central Europe.[1423] The Maggid's young disciple R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady was a mighty scholar of Jewish law, and his summaries of *halakhah* were posthumously published as *Shulhan 'Arukh ha-Rav*.[1424] To this list we might add R. 'Uziel Meisels,[1425] an author of

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Research and Application (March, 2014), Maoz Kahana outlined some the basic issues facing scholars of Hasidism and *halakhah*. It has also been suggested that a similar picture exists in the study of German Pietists, whose legal works have been overlooked by scholars in favor of their more theologically enticing esoteric doctrines; see Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Peering Through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period*, Detroit 2000, esp. pp. 19-31; Uriel Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland', p. 118 n. 247.

[1421] For a study of one such nineteenth century figure, see Iris Brown, 'Rabbi Hayyim Halberstam of Sanz', Ph.D. Dissertation, Bar-Ilan University, 2004 [Hebrew].

[1422] Levi Cooper, 'Rabbinate, Law, Erudition: Unknown Aspects of the Life of Rabbi Levi Yitshak of Berdyczów', *Rabbi Levi Yitshak of Berdyczów: Collected Studies*, ed. Z. Mark and R. Horen, Ramat-Gan (forthcoming) [Hebrew].

[1423] See his *Sefer ha-Ketuvah* (on b. Ketubot) and *Sefer ha-Maqneh* (on b. Qiddushin), which together constitute the first two parts of *Sefer ha-Fla'ah*.

[1424] Only one small section of this work, dealing with the laws of Torah study (*Hilkhot Talmud Torah*), was printed within the author's lifetime. On the importance of this work for the study of R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, as well as early Hasidism more broadly, see Avinoam Rosenak, 'Theory and Praxis in Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady: The *Tanya* and *Shulhan 'Arukh Ha-Rav*', *Jewish Law Association Studies* 22 (2012), pp. 251-282; Levi Cooper, 'On Etkes' *Ba'al Ha-Tanya*: A Review Essay', *Diné Israel* 29 (2013), pp. 177-189.

[1425] See his *Tif'eret ha-Tsevi*, Zolkiev 1803; *Tif'eret 'Uziel*, Warsaw 1863.

several interesting legal works, and R. Israel of Kozhenits,[1426] who was a well-respected legal scholar in addition to being a popular *maggid*.[1427]

The relationship between Hasidism and *halakhah* must be considered from four different angles: 1) how different Hasidic masters describe *halakhah* as a system of law in theoretical terms; 2) how they understood the role of *halakhah*—and by extension, the commandments—in the devotional life; 3) the role of creative, and often obscure, legal dialectics and casuistry (*pilpul*);[1428] 4) how they decided specific points of *halakhah* when confronted with real-life cases (*pesaq*).[1429] Given that we have no legal writings or rulings from the Maggid aside from a single opinion cited by his student R. Shne'ur

[1426] Among his many works, see *Ner Yisra'el*, Vilna 1840; *Beit Yisra'el*, Warsaw 1876.

[1427] In addition, R. Meshullam Feibush Heller had a reputation for his extensive knowledge of Jewish law; see Krassen, *Uniter of Heaven*, pp. 32-33

[1428] Scholars of *halakhah* continue to debate the nature and role of this literature; see Haim Dimitrovsky, 'On *Pilpul*', *Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume* vol. 3, pp. 111-182 [Hebrew]; Elhanan Reiner, 'Changes in Polish *Yeshivot* in the 16th and 17th Centuries and the Debate over *Pilpul*', *Studies in Jewish Culture in Honour of Chone Shmeruk*, ed. I. Bartal, E. Mendelsohn and C. Turniansky, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 9-80 [Hebrew]; Shaul Stampfer, 'On the Nature and Function of *Pilpul*', *Essays for a Jewish Lifetime: The Burton D. Morris Jubilees Volume*, ed. M. Butler and M.E. Frankston, New York (forthcoming). For an example of *pilpul* in early Hasidic books by the Maggid's students, see *Ginzei Yosef*, *hiddushim*, pp. 305-477.

[1429] Integral to this question is to what extent Hasidic thought, or Kabbalah more broadly, informed their understanding of *halakhah*. Kabbalah can influence *halakhah* in both explicit and implicit ways. Legal scholars generally shy away from using Kabbalah to adjudicate points of *halakhah*, but it does happen. The possibility of citing mystical works like the *Zohar* or Lurianic Kabbalah as proofs in a legal context has been examined in great depth; see, inter alia, Jacob Katz, *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility*, Jerusalem 1998;Israel M. Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigle She-Banistar: The Halachic Residue in the Zohar*, Tel Aviv 2001 [Hebrew]; Itzhak Englard, 'The Oven of Akhnai: Various Interpretations of an Aggadah', *Shenaton ha-Mishpat ha-Ivri* 1 (1974), pp. 45-56 [Hebrew]; Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 169-188, 289-293. The interface of *halakhah* and Kabbalah remains an open question in Jewish law in the modern era. For studies of the role of mysticism in the works of two of the preeminent scholars of Jewish law of the twentieth century, see Benjamin Brown, 'Kabbalah in the Rulings of the Hafetz Hayyim', *New Old Things: Myths, Mysticism and Controversies, Philosophy and Halacha, Faith and Ritual in Jewish Thought Through the Ages*, ed. R. Elior and D. Maisel, Jerusalem 2011, pp. 485-542 [Hebrew]; and Benjamin Lau, 'The Status of Kabbalah in the Rulings of Rabbi Ovadia Yossef', *Da'at* 55 (2005), pp. 131-151 [Hebrew].Yet there are also cases in which a judge's decision is subtly informed by his understanding of Kabbalah. For example, R. Menahem 'Azaria da Fanno's (1548-1620) legal rulings were deeply informed by his implicit privileging of Kabbalah over Talmudic sources, even though this assumption is never stated explicitly; see Bonfil, 'Halakhah, Kabbalah and Society', pp. 39-61.

Zalman,[1430] only the first two of these questions will concern us at present.[1431] Let us turn to the Maggid's understanding of the nature of *halakhah* and the role of human agency and innovation in legal decision-making.

The Maggid frequently underscores that the great power of the commandments form a linkage between man and God.[1432] While he extends the possibility of serving God through mundane activities in the physical realm as well (*'avodah be-gashmiyyut*), the Maggid suggests that this mode of serving God is fraught with danger.[1433] Yet even these ordinary actions are governed by *halakhah*, and the legal rules that define eating, business, and sexual relations are part of what transforms these deeds into religious acts as well. But, as we have seen, this is not the only reason. The divine energy that sustains the world suffuses all elements of the physical, and human actions free the divine sparks, also referred to as letters, uplifting them back to their root. This does not happen automatically, and one must take great care to cultivate the proper awareness of God when acting in the corporal world.

The fields of *halakhah*, and the Talmud in particular, are often associated with stern Judgments (*dinim*) in mystical literature beginning with the later strata of the Zohar,

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[1430] See R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, *She'elot u-Teshuvot*, Brooklyn 1988, #14 p. 69. R. Shne'ur Zalman was a tremendous scholar of his own and would have little reason to falsify this account in order to bolster his opinion, particularly if the Maggid did not have a reputation for being a legal scholar. He records the event as the summer of 1772 in Rovno, just a few months before the Maggid's death. In 1765 the Maggid gave his approbation to a book on ritual slaughter, but there is nothing in that short endorsement that allows us to see the breadth of his knowledge.

[1431] A story in *Shivhei ha-Besht* records an incident in which R. Aaron of Karlin consulted the Maggid regarding a point of law in a case of divorce; see Ben-Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, p. 100. However, it should be noted that even in this story the Maggid actually gave a clear legal decision (*pesaq halakhah*); this point is even clearer in the Yiddish version; see Karl Erich Grözinger, *Die Geschichten vom Ba'al Schem Tov: Schivche ha-Bescht*, Wiesbaden 1997, vol. 1, p. 72. The fact that the Maggid's other students who wrote works of *halakhah* do not cite his legal opinions suggests that this subject was not among the most important things they learned from him.

[1432] For a precise summary, see the tradition cited in *Liqqutei Torah*, *va-ethanan*, fol. 10b.

[1433] See above, pp. 192-195.

such as *Raya Meheimna* and *Tiqqunei Zohar*.[1434] According to Lurianic Kabbalah, the study of intricate points of law removes the chaff surrounding the *halakhah*, which has the same letters as *ha-kallah* ("the bride," i.e. *shekhinah*), which may then be adorned by the study of Kabbalah, which is more important.[1435] In some cases learning *halakhah* is framed as a necessary prerequisite for immersion in the secrets of Torah, but other texts describe the study of law as a distraction that interferes with the main goals of Torah study. However, in some passages these same Kabbalists did reflect on the nature of *halakhah*, exploring the processes by which it is decided and positing why there are disagreements amongst the various authorities.[1436] Some important mystical works, such as *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, give much attention to detailed points of law as well as theoretical or conceptual modeling of *halakhah* with little or no prejudice.[1437] Furthermore, the rituals and mystical systems of the Zohar and Lurianic Kabbalah did influence the development of Jewish law, although this often happened in ways that are subtle and difficult to chart.

The Maggid does indeed extend the license of human creativity into the realm of *halakhah* in addition to homiletics—at least theoretically. It is no coincidence that his teachings on the nature of Jewish law often invoke two famous Talmudic passages,

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[1434] See Jacob Katz, 'Halakhah and Kabbalah and Competing Disciplines of Study', *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility*, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 56-87.

[1435] See *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar hanhagat ha-limmud*, *haqdamah*. On *halakhah* and Talmud in later works inspired by Safed Kabbalah, see *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 10:7, p. 387; ibid, 7:10, p. 341; and for a more positive portrayal, see *Hesed le-Avraham*, 2:9,14; 17. There R. Abraham Azulai describes the study of *halakhah* in glowing terms, and while the highest level of Torah study is study for its own sake (*lishmah*), he emphasizes that this is an attitude and not a matter of curriculum. Cf. *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 6:46, p. 236; and 6:47, p. 244.

[1436] For a few important and instructive examples, see Moses de Leon, *Sefer ha-Rimmon*, ed. E.R. Wolfson, Atlanta 1988, pp. 366-367; *Pardes Rimmonim* 9:2. Cf. Maimonides' introduction to *Mishneh Torah*.

[1437] Krassen, *Isaiah Horowitz*, pp. 20-23.

namely the story of the "oven of Akhnai"[1438] and the maxim of "these and those are the words of the living God."[1439] The first of these emphasizes human autonomy in deciding matters of law, whereas the second has become a locus classicus for debates about the limits of legal pluralism.[1440] The Maggid refers to these stories in other contexts as well, but we will restrict our present discussion to teachings about his philosophy of law.[1441] A few of the upcoming homilies focus upon the role of the individual adjudicator, whereas in others the Maggid engages broader meta-questions about the nature of Jewish law.

The first teaching is in many ways the most radical, unequivocally reinforcing that the project of human creativity includes the field of *halakhah*:

> "These and those are the words of the living God," both those that forbid and those that permit. "With knowledge rooms are filled" (Prov. 24:4). All of the attributes (*middot*) come from Knowledge (*da'at*).[1442]... Each person draws down from *da'at*, combining the words in this way or that. This one draws love from *da'at*, meaning that the egg is permitted. Another draws down awe

[1438] b. Bava Mets'ia 59b. See Englard, 'The Oven of Akhnai', pp. 45-56; idem, 'Majority Decision vs. Individual Truth': The Interpretation of the 'Oven of Achnai' Aggadah', *Jewish Law and Legal Theory*, ed. M.P. Golding, New York 1993, pp. 353-368; Rubenstein, *Talmudic Stories*, pp. 34-63; Chaya Halberstam, 'Encircling the Law: The Legal Boundaries of Rabbinic Judaism', *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16 (2009), pp. 396-424; Itzhak Brand, 'Can Wondrous Signs Determine Law?: A Comparison of Two Talmudic Traditions', *Revue des Etudes Juives* 172 (2013), pp. 1-22.

[1439] b. 'Eruvin 13b; b. Gittin 6b. See Michael Rosensweig, "'*Elu va-Elu Divrei Elokim Hayyim*': Halakhic Pluralism and Theories of Controversy', *Tradition* 26.3 (1992), pp. 4-23; Abraham Sagi, '"Both are the Words of the Living God": A Typological Analysis of Halakhic Pluralism', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 65 (1994), pp. 105-136; Moshe Sokol, 'What Does a Jewish Text Mean?: Theories of '*Elu ve-Elu Divrei Elohim Hayim*' in Rabbinic Literature', *Daat* 32-33 (1994), pp. xxiii-xxxv.

[1440] See RaSHI to b. Ketubot 57a; RiTVA to b. 'Eruvin 13b; *She'elot u-Teshuvot Havat Ya'ir* #192; *She'elot u-Teshuvot Seridei Esh* 1:113, p. 337. My thanks to Rabbi Yitzhak Blau for referring me to these sources.

[1441] In one of the Maggid's sermons about Creation, we read: "We must explain, 'these and those are the words of the living God.' One person says one thing, and another says something else, but they do not disagree. They are referring to the creation of the world and its sustaining power. The essence is the light of the infinite One that illuminates it from the sides and from within, for "the world is filled with His glory" (Isa. 6:3) and these and those are the words of the living God, who gives life to all the worlds." See LY #268, fol. 86b-87a.

[1442] Referring to the *sefirot*, which are frequently referred to as *middot* in Kabbalistic literature. However, we should remember that for the Maggid they are both elements of the Godhead as well as part of the structure of the human psyche.

> from *da'at*, and the egg is forbidden.[1443] And when one wants to change the *halakhah*, like R. Joshua, who said that "we pay no attention to a heavenly voice,"[1444] he returns the ruling (*din*) to the attribute of *da'at* and from there draws it down through a different attribute. The enlightened will understand.[1445]

The seven lower *sefirot*, here described as "rooms," emerge from *da'at* in the divine superstructure, but in this case the Maggid is clearly referring to their correlate within the human psyche as well. Any particular ruling on a specific point of law may be changed by returning it back to its source in the *sefirah da'at*. It is instructive that the Maggid does not say that one returns the decision to *hokhmah*, or even to *binah*. *Da'at* often means awareness of the divine Presence in the Maggid's teachings, and it is the distinguishing feature that transforms all of one's deeds into the service of God.[1446] In this passage, however, *da'at* is the finite realm through which the nearly infinite potential of the first *sefirot* are revealed.[1447] *Da'at* is also the highest seat of concrete human knowledge, and we should not forget that it is often associated with Moses and with the Written Torah.

Does this teaching suggest that judges have an a priori legal intuition in accord with which they must then decide the law? Or is the Maggid describing a more purposeful, intentional process of decision-making in which judges actively seek to decide *halakhah* in accordance with their soul? We do not have enough evidence to know if this would have prescriptively affected the Maggid's actual legal rulings, but this

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[1443] The Mishnah presents a disagreement over whether or not an egg laid on a Jewish holiday may be eaten on that day.

[1444] See b. Bava Mets'ia 59b; b. Berakhot 52a. See also OT #126, *be-huqqotai*, pp. 176-177. The Maggid's reading of R. Joshua' rejecting the heavenly voice because he wants to change the *halakhah* is a fascianting exegesis and not at all obvious.

[1445] MDL #58, pp. 86-87. For a list of parallels, see below.

[1446] *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *bo*, p. 274.

[1447] See OT #350, *pesuqim*, p. 385.

framework does provide an interesting kabbalistic justification for why different scholars will reach different decisions even when confronted by the same exact case. In the passage above, the heavenly voice represented the current heavenly judgment on the *halakhah*. R. Joshua's reasoning led him in a different direction, and, ignoring the previous heavenly judgment, he changed the *halakhah* to accord with him own decision.

The printed version of the teaching in MDL offers a second understanding of the multiplicity of *halakhah* as well:

> Another explanation of "these and those are the words of the living God." The Oral Torah is the adornments of the bride. One person says that the adornment must be like this, and another says that this is not so pleasing, and another way is more beautiful. The king receives great pleasure in their disagreement over the adornments, since both of them wish to adorn the king.[1448]

This interpretation is different from the one given immediately before it. The term "adornments" is commonly applied to *hiddushim* in earlier mystical texts, but here the Maggid may be suggesting that interpretations of Oral Torah, like standards of beauty, are inherently subjective. All new decisions bring great joy to God, as long as they are offered with integrity. Each one is appealing in the eye of the beholder, which remains true even if they contradict another or are mutually exclusive. But perhaps we are meant to take the analogy to ornaments less literally, since surely each proponent has his reasons in addition to thinking that his interpretations more beautiful. Pure subjectivity, after all, is not integrity.

The Maggid does not explicitly identify these subjectively beautiful interpretive adornments with legal rulings. The introductory phrase of "another explanation" may

[1448] MDL #58, pp. 86-87. See significantly different parallels in OT #396-397, *aggadot*, p. 419; OHE, fol. 38a; and KTVQ, fol. 7b.

very well have been added in by the scribe, the copyist or the editor of MDL, and only the context of the previous teaching suggests that this notion applies to *halakhah*. Indeed, this passage appears on its own in another published book of the Maggid's sermons, where it is followed by the teaching about bringing new *mohin* into the words through contemplative study.[1449] This other context suggests nothing about change in *halakhah* being subjective.

At this point we should mention a tradition from the BeSHT found in the writings of R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye. In the midst of a long sermon extolling the importance of Torah study (and indeed, the intricacies of *halakhah*), R. Jacob Joseph writes as follows:

> My master [the BeSHT] explained a Talmudic passage as follows: although there are those who prohibit and those who permit, this is in the six extremities of *ze'ir anpin*. But above, in *binah*, which is called "the living God,"[1450] everything exists in single unity. This is [the meaning of] "these and those are the words of the living God."[1451]

The parallels to the Maggid's teaching are certainly striking, but the differences are instructive as well. Here the BeSHT says that *binah* is the realm of unity beyond all legal decisions and dialects. *Binah* nourishes and sustains the partitioned world of the *halakhah*, or the six *sefirot* of *ze'ir anpin* (*hesed* to *yesod*).[1452] However, in his own comments R. Jacob Joseph goes on to explain that *da'at* is really the source of the lower *sefirot*, where distinctions are made between what is permitted and prohibited. Mirroring

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[1449] See KTVQ, fol. 24b; and above, p. 408.

[1450] See Zohar 2:257a; *Pardes Rimmonim* 23:1.

[1451] *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 1, *mi-qets*, p. 382. Cf. *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *va-yaqhel*, p. 483; ibid, *shelah*, p. 966. However, in one instance R. Jacob Joseph cites this as something he heard from "a great scholar" (*mi-gadol ehad*), without connecting it to the BeSHT; see *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *mishpatim*, p. 428.

[1452] See *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 2, *qorah*, p. 999, where the author cites a tradition from the BeSHT that study without understanding is an embodiment of *malkhut*, but study with understanding raises *malkhut* up to *binah*.

an idea we will see in the Maggid's teachings below, R. Jacob Joseph suggests that Hillel and Shamai represent the *sefirot hesed* and *gevurah*, respectively. This accounts for the differences between their legal decisions.[1453] He concludes on a resoundingly Lurianic note, emphasizing that one should study *halakhah* in order to free the bride, *shekhinah*, of the obscuring "husks," and then devote oneself to the study of the inner elements of Torah—Kabbalah.[1454] This suggests that legal disagreements are the result of obscuring husks, though they are in some sense rooted in divinity as well.

The supernal Torah exists in absolute unity in the abstract realms above. It takes linguistic and legal form only as it is translated through the seven lower *middot* and enters our world. This accounts for a great variety of different opinions in *halakhah*, but is any one of them more correct than the others? In answering this question, let us turn to the second part of one of the Maggid's sermon to which we referred in our discussion of the importance of *hiddushim* above.[1455] We read:

> There must be a reason why [the Torah] changes down below. It may be understood through the sages' teaching: "a heavenly voice went out and said, 'the *halakhah* is like R. Eliezer.' R. Joshua said, 'we do not listen to a heavenly voice.' R. Nathan happened upon Elijah and asked him, 'What was the blessed Holy One doing at that time?' He replied, 'He smiled and said, "My children have defeated me."'[1456] Now, if the heavenly voice declared that the *halakhah* was like R. Eliezer, then presumably the true Torah [above] conforms to that, and so must the configuration [of the letters] be above! If so, this is difficult. How could R. Joshua say that we pay no mind to a

[1453] *Pardes Rimmonim* 9:3.

[1454] *Ben Porat Yosef*, *mi-qets*, pp. 381-384.

[1455] See above, pp. 416-417.

[1456] Referring to b. Bava Metsi'a 59b.

> heavenly voice!? And we must also understand the origin of all the dialectics[1457] of the Talmud, which is the Oral Torah. Surely such disputes have no relationship to the Torah above.[1458]

The Maggid has pointed out that the entire project of the Oral Torah is about finding multiple divergent but valid viewpoints, fleshing out different possibilities. It is an approach to legal dialectics that by its very nature encourages multiplicity, not conformity or harmony. He continues:

> Truly there are no dialectics above. Matters exist just as they are, in accord with the *halakhah*. But from our perspective, meaning after [the Torah] came down through its seven pillars,[1459] which are the seven days of building,[1460] we can refer to dialectics inclining to the side of compassion, judgment, or any other attributes. The dialectics begin in, "I will be that which I will be" (*ehyeh asher ehyeh*, Ex. 3:14),[1461] which is related to *da'at*,[1462] which inclines this way and that. This explains the statement in the Zohar, "the blessed Holy One consulted with the Torah."[1463] This seems difficult, for how can there be any consultation above, God forbid? "Consulted" must refer to the dialectics, just a person "consults" with himself in seeing that there are reasons to incline to both sides [of the decision]. But this is still difficult, for how can the *tsaddiqim* use their reasoning to come up with something that is against the Torah above?

[1457] Aram. *shakla ve-tarya,* literally "give and take."

[1458] A parallel version of this in KTK 5c adds that there is no doubt on high.

[1459] Prov. 9:1. This verse is interpreted as referring to Torah in b. Shabbat 116a; cf. *Bereshit Rabbah* 64:8. The Maggid refers to the seven lower *sefirot*, often referred to as "columns" in kabbalistic literature. See Zohar 1:82a, 186a, 231a.

[1460] Another common name for the *sefirot*.

[1461] The name *Ehyeh*, or *Ehyeh asher Ehyeh* (Ex. 3:14) is generally associated with the *sefirah keter*. See, inter alia, Zohar 1:15a, 100b (Sitrei Torah); 2:49b; *Sha'arei Orah,* ch. 10; *Pardes Rimmonim* 1:10; 3:1. See also Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, pp. 92-96, 215-219. This name not does not seem to occupy an important place in the Maggid's theology, and is rarely mentioned; see OT #15, *noah*, p. 22. KTK, p. 5c suggests that in this case it refers to the infinite possible expressions of the Divine.

[1462] *Keter* and *da'at* are both on the central line of *sefirot*. Furthermore, *da'at* is often described as a more concrete manifestation of *keter*.

[1463] Zohar 3:61b.

The entire body of *shakla ve-tarya*, the legal dialectics of the Talmud and its discursive reasoning, is only an integral part of Torah as it appears from our perspective. However, the Maggid is bothered by the possibility that human interpretation might lead sages to decide the *halakhah* contrary to what exists in the pure, ideal Torah above.

> It is as we have explained in another place. "The *tsaddiq* rules by the fear of God" (2 Sam. 23:3)[1464]—because of the greatness of his connection to God, the *tsaddiq*'s will is the Will of the blessed One. Just like the supernatural miracles we have seen *tsaddiqim* perform, since they decree and the blessed Holy One fulfills, the same is true here. Because they were so deeply attached to the blessed One, R. Joshua said that we pay no mind to a heavenly voice. The Torah has already been given to Israel, meaning that it is from our perspective. It says "to incline after the majority" (Ex. 23:2). If so, we must follow these positions, since certainly the Torah [as we see it] from our perspective includes dialectics. We are the majority, and we have the power to transform the combination [of the letters] above so that the *halakhah* follows us.
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> This is [the meaning of]: do not read "ways" (*halikhot*) but "laws" (*halakhot*).[1465] Those below have the power to change the "cosmic ways" above, so that they are like the laws that we have decided. This is [the meaning] of the statement, "My children have defeated me," by changing the combination [of the letters of the heavenly judgment] to agree with them. "He smiled," since God receives great pleasure and delight from this, as it were.
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> This is alluded to in the verse, "happy is the one who finds strength (*'oz*) in You" (Ps. 84:6), which refers to the Torah from our perspective. "Who finds... in You," meaning the new interpretations of Torah he has achieved by means of his great attachment, he can transform the combination above—this is "in You." Perhaps we can say that "in You" (*bakh* = 22) also alludes to the following. There are twenty-two letters of the Torah, which have the ability to reverse the letters of the combination from *bakh* to *khab* (22).

[1464] See b. Mo'ed Qatan 16b.

[1465] b. Megillah 28b, based on Habakkuk 3:6.

> This is the explanation of the ending of the verse, "in the pathways of their heart." Who can do all of this? One who has traveled the pathways of Torah, and the cosmic ways are the well-trodden paths of his heart. He must also connect and attach himself to God with great love and awe. This is "in their heart."... This is the meaning of the Talmudic phrase "the verse is turned around and interpreted"[1466]—the interpretation of the *tsaddiqim* below transforms Scripture above.[1467]

There is no rift between the supernal Torah and its manifestations below, for the Jewish sages have the ability to change Scripture according to their will. Clearly this means that there is no single ideal, true manifestation of *halakhah* that all legal decisions should be striving to achieve, since the Torah above transforms in order to conform to the rulings of the *tsaddiqim* below.[1468] This suggests that the supernal Torah, while it is abstract, fluid, and full of an infinite number of possibilities, is not entirely pre-linguistic or devoid of specific content. There are indeed combinations of letters above, which mirror those established by the sages below.

A third teaching from the Maggid focuses on the figure of King David, portraying him as the ideal adjudicator who makes his decisions based on the root of his soul:

> The Talmud teaches: "David decided the tradition according to the *halakhah*, but Saul did not."[1469] We must explain why this was so, for is it not taught that "these and those are the words of the living God?" Of course, in truth "these and those [are the words of God]," but each of them (i.e. David and Saul) spoke and decided the law according to his rung and the origin of his soul.[1470] It

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[1466] b. Bava Batra 119b.

[1467] LY #277, fol. 94b-95a, with a parallel in OT #258, *tehilim*, p. 316-317.

[1468] Cf. OT #312, *pesuqim*, p. 361. This passage does not invoke the word *halakhah*, but clearly refers to the question of legal decisions. The Maggid suggests that the sages are able to connect themselves to *hokhmah*, the realm of infinite potential, and therefore change the law in accordance with their wishes. By means of their cognition, from *hokhmah* to *binah* and so on, they bring the *tserufim* from above to below, and this gives God great delight. Cf. also KTVQ, fol. 5c.

[1469] A paraphrase of b. 'Eruvin 53a. Cf. b. Sanhedrin 93b.

[1470] On deciding matters of law according to the root of one's soul, see *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, *hakdamah* 34. For examples in two works of the Maggid's students, see *Qedushat Levi*, *purim*, p. 237; *Tif'eret 'Uziel*, *shir*

is known that the root of King David's soul was the attribute of *malkhut*,[1471] and it is known that *malkhut* receives from all of the six extremities;[1472] sometimes from this one, sometimes from that, and sometimes it tends toward two of the extremities. It is written, "incline after the majority" (Ex. 23:2), meaning whatever the preponderance may be, whether for kindness (*hesed*), judgment (*din*), or compassion (*rahamim*), which mediates [between them]. Whatever it may be, this is called "inclining after the majority." It is known that any attribute that overpowers another is called the majority, since those that oppose are subsumed within this conquering attribute and are totally nullified (*bettelim mi-metsiyyutam*) like a lamp in broad daylight.[1473] The victorious attribute is the majority, and even though the others are also the "words of the living God," they are subsumed within the majority.

Now King David came from the attribute of *malkhut*, where everything is included and things reach completion. [*Malkhut*] is called the assembly (*atseret kenishin*),[1474] the house of assembly[1475] where all of the upper attributes congregate. Thus David was able to align the law and to decide the tradition according to the *halakhah*. This attribute is called *halakhah*, since it is the conclusion of all the "cosmic ways" (*halikhot olam*, Hab. 3:6), whether for kindness or compassion, and so forth etc.

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ha-shirim, p. 85-86, where it is cited as a Lurianic tradition. R. Naftali Bakhrakh refers to the notion that each person's soul derives from a certain letter of the 600,000 in the Torah, and that therefore there are 600,000 explanations of Scripture. In the future people will read it according to root of their soul. He says that R. Isaac Luria could discern from which verse each person's originated just by examining their forehead, and would then tell them the fitting interpretation based on this information; see *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 16:30, p. 843.

[1471] Zohar 3:21a.

[1472] Referring to the six *sefirot* from *hesed* to *yesod*.

[1473] See b. Hullin 60b.

[1474] Zohar 1:64a; 3:96b, 197a.

[1475] The Hebrew term *beit kenesset*, which most often refers to a synagogue, sometimes appears as a name for *shekhinah*; see *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 69, fol. 115a. On *beit kenesset* as the assembly point for all blessings, see *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 47, fol. 84b.

> Furthermore, *malkhut* is called the Oral Torah, which is interpreted by means of the thirteen principles, as is known.[1476] The *halakhah* follows whichever attribute is victorious above. [David] aligned the truth in accord with how it concluded above in the root of his soul.... This was not true of Saul, whose level was not from this attribute. He too taught "words of the living God" from the root of his soul, but could not align to the truth as it had been decided above.[1477]

The Maggid is offering an interesting reinterpretation of Exodus 23:2, long cited in Jewish legal texts as commanding the principle of majority rule.[1478] He suggests that the process of deciding *halakhah* entails determining which of the *sefirot* is the strongest. In other words, what becomes the practical legal norm is the result of the interface (*halikhot*) between the different *sefirot*.

At first blush this seems to be a purely metaphysical investigation, leaving far less room for personal autonomy in deciding the *halakhah* than the teaching cited above.[1479] However, the Maggid adds another important piece to the puzzle. He explains that the origin of a judge's soul is the lens that governs his internal process of deliberation, even determining the outcome of the decision-making process.[1480] The Maggid describes King

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[1476] See *Sifra*, ed. I. H. Weiss, Vienna 1862, pp. 1a-3a. On the thirteen principles of exegesis in the Maggid's thought, see OT #140, *qorah*, pp. 185-190; *Qedushat Levi*, *ki tissa*, p. 250; ibid, *rosh ha-shanah*, p. 414; cf. *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-zemirot*, ch. 6.

[1477] MDL #189, p. 291, with a parallel in OT #114, *qedoshim*, p. 157.

[1478] Quoted in the story on b. Bava Metsi'a 59b. Cf. Deut. 17:11; y. Mo'ed Qatan 3:1; y. Sanhedrin 1:4, 2:4; b. Hullin 11a; *Derashot ha-Ran* #7; Zohar 2:117a. See Englard, 'Majority Decision vs. Individual Truth', pp. 353-368; Ephraim E. Urbach, 'On the Rule "Incline after the Majority"', *Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. D. Har and J. Fraenkel, Jerusalem 1998, pp. 503-509 [Hebrew]; Mordecai Elon, 'The Sages' Faith in "Incline after the Majority" and "Do Not Turn"', *Torah she-be'al Peh* 45 (2006), pp. 191-205 [Hebrew]; Aaron Isaiah Blou, 'Incline After the Majority', *Torah she-be'al Peh* 10 (1968), pp. 128-134 [Hebrew]; Joseph Rivlin, 'Majority Decisions in Jewish Law', *Justice* 11 (1996), pp. 29-34; and see also Michael Wygoda, 'The Legitimacy of Majority Decisions in Criminal Trials', *Jewish Law Association Studies* 20 (2010), pp. 361-370.

[1479] Cf. KTVQ, fol. 5b. This abbreviated version of the teaching suggests that the *tsaddiqim* change the ways in which *halakhah* is drawn down through the matrix of the Talmudic dialects, and *this* is called "inclining after the majority." This subtle difference changes the frame of the piece entirely.

[1480] Here we might do well to recall the debate about the role of intuition in legal decision making more broadly; see Joseph C. Hutcheson, Jr., 'The Judgment Intuitive: The Function of the "Hunch" in Judicial

David as the legal arbiter par excellence. As the embodiment of the *sefirah malkhut*, David is the most attuned to the cosmic processes. His legal decisions reflect the way the *halakhah* has already been determined by the cosmos, which he can intuit due to the root of his soul. Though Saul's and David's opinions are both the "words of the living God," only the latter figure was attuned to the higher legal truth.[1481]

This model is quite different than that presented in the first homily we examined. There we noted that one who wishes to change the *halakhah* simply needs to return the law to its origin, tracing it back through the root of his soul to the *sefirah da'at*, and from there he can draw forth another ruling more in line with his wishes. In the second and third teachings, however, there is an ultimate legal truth that lies beyond the subjective decision making of the individual scholar. In the second passage, the ideal *halakhah* shifts to conform to the decisions of the *tsaddiqim* below. In this final teaching the law is determined not by the scholar's logic, but through his perception—or perhaps better, his intuition—regarding how the matter has already been decided in the matrix of the *sefirot* above. The Maggid may be suggesting that a sage's legal reasoning will instinctively lead him in that direction, and this ability to accord with the heavenly *halakhah* is not obviously inconsistent wit the notion that it can also be transformed.

Decision', *Cornell Law Quarterly* 14 (1928-1929), pp. 274-288; Richard A. Wasserstrom, *The Judicial Decision: Toward a Theory of Legal Justification*, Stanford 1961, esp. pp. 20-21, 89- 99, 103-104, 113-115; Ian Weinstein, 'Don't Believe Everything You Think: Cognitive Bias in Legal Decision Making', *Clinical Law Review* 9 (2002), pp. 783-834. For parallels in another field, see also Lynn Rew, "Intuition in Decision-Making', *Image: The Journal of Nursing Scholarship* 20.3 (1988), pp. 150-154; Lindy King and Jane V. Appleton, "Intuition: A Critical Review of the Research and Rhetoric', *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 26.1 (1997), pp. 194-202.

[1481] See also Ephraim Kanarfogel, 'Torah Study and Truth in Medieval Ashkenazic Rabbinic Literature and Thought', *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought*, ed. H. Kreisel, Beer Sheva 2006, pp. 101-119.

A fourth homily from the Maggid focuses upon a Talmudic legend about Rabbi Meir, who is often portrayed in rabbinic literature as an exceptionally deft scholar of law and the teacher of many great sages.[1482] We read:

> "The words *kotnot 'or* ("garments of skin") were written as *kotnot or* ("garments of light") with an *aleph* in the Torah of R. Meir"[1483] We must be precise: why does it say R. Meir's Torah, and not the Torah [scroll] written by R. Meir? Furthermore, if this is according to its simple meaning, how could he have exchanged an *'ayin* for an *aleph*? He should have looked into Ezra's Torah scroll, from which they corrected cases of doubt [in other scrolls], [fixing] anything that was extra or defective.[1484] Even without this, it is still difficult! The entire Torah was fitting to be written by R. Meir, since his eyes were trained on the truth.[1485] How could he have written an *aleph* instead of *'ayin*—this changes the plain-sense meaning of the word!?
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> We can explain this based on the sages' teaching, that R. Meir's name was actually R. Nehorai. So why was he called R. Meir? Because he enlightened (*me'ir*) the eyes of the sages in *halakhah*.[1486]... The root of his soul came from the primordial Mind (*sekhel ha-qadum*), from which the *halakhah* itself receives. He could enlighten and illuminate the eyes of the sages, since the root of their souls was in *hokhmah* and his was from the world that flows into *hokhmah*. R. Meir's Torah had no slag or impurities mixed in, which are the questions and possible answers [presented in Talmudic discussion]. We know from the Zohar that they come from the side of the *kotnot 'or*, which are the "husks."[1487]... Although it is said that [R. Meir] would show them forty-nine aspects (lit. "faces") of purity [and forty-nine aspects of impurity], his intent was to

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[1482] See Aliza Shenhar, 'The Figure of Rabbi Meir and Its Literary Characterization in the Legends', *Heqer Veiyun: Studies in Judaism*, Haifa 1976, pp. 259-266 [Hebrew]. On the relationship between R. Meir's name and his image in rabbinic literature, see Galit Hasan-Rokem, 'Rabbi Meir, The Illuminated and the Illuminating: Interpreting Experience', *Current Trends in the Study of Midrash*, ed. C. Bakhos, Leiden 2006, pp. 227-243.

[1483] *Bereshit Rabbah* 20:12. See above, pp. 325-327.

[1484] See RaSHi to b. Mo'ed Qatan 18b; Lea Himmelfarb, 'The Identity of the First Masoretes', *Sefarad* 67 (2007), pp. 41-42.

[1485] Based on Prov. 4:25, and see RaSHI's comments ad loc.

[1486] b. 'Eruvin 13b.

[1487] Zohar 3:27b, 124b.

> demonstrate to the sages that reasoning can lead one to incline to either side. The one who understands will understand and grow wise, discerning the good, the true and the upright.... therefore [the sages'] said that [his colleagues] could not grasp the depths of his mind (*da'ato*). If they could not grasp the depths (*sof*), how much more so could they not reach the origins of his mind.
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> This is the [meaning of] "the Torah of R. Meir," as in the sages' teaching that at first it is called the Torah of Y-H-V-H, and as one learns it becomes his Torah.[1488] In R. Meir's Torah and his learning it was "written," meaning engraved and carved upon the tablet of his heart,[1489] "garments of light," meaning that his Torah was holy and without any slag or admixture.[1490]

R. Meir's *halakhah* is absolutely pure and unified. It has no need for discursive logic, and it lacks any debris in the form of doubts, questions or multiplicity. Why is it thus? R. Meir's "Torah," referring to the corpus of his teachings and not the physical scroll, is utterly illuminated because he has access to *qadmut ha-sekhel*, either the highest realm of *hokhmah* or *keter* itself. This positions R. Meir as a greater sage than even Moses, who is generally associated with *sefirot tif'eret* or *da'at*, a very surprising theological position. Although he may show different sides of a legal debate to his students, his own grasp of Torah is totally pure; the dialectics are only for the benefit of others.

Despite the brilliance of R. Meir and the perfection of his illuminated Torah, the *halakhah* is not generally decided in his favor. This point is already made explicitly clear in the Talmudic source upon which the Maggid is drawing, giving as a reason the fact

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[1488] b. Avodah Zarah 19a.

[1489] Prov. 3:3, 7:3. See *Sifrei Devarim*, *va-ethanan*, ch. 34*; Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, ch. 23.

[1490] ST, p. 64a-b, with parallels in OT #14, *bereshit*, pp. 17-18; and KTVQ, fol. 27b. Cf. OT #5, *bereshit*, p. 7; MDL #188, pp. 287-288.

that his colleagues could not fully grasp his decisions.[1491] But the Maggid offers a more kabbalistic explanation regarding why the *halakhah* is not decided in accord with him. He suggests that R. Meir's soul was rooted in a realm beyond the origins of *halakhah* itself, and therefore all of his brilliant dialectics are only a lens through which he projects his wisdom.

Thus we have seen that there are at least four different traditions from the Maggid that address the theoretical nature of *halakhah* and how Jewish law is determined. There is no evidence that the Maggid ever served as judicator of *halakhah*, either in a court or in written decisions. But a significant number of his students were scholars steeped in traditional works of Jewish law, many of whom wrote important works of law and decided cases of *halakhah* in the decades after the Maggid's death. The presence of these traditions in the Maggid's teachings suggests that the question of law and the boundaries of human creativity must have been of some importance to the Maggid and his circle.

These texts offer an interesting way of conceptualizing Jewish law. They are part of a theological worldview in which the changes in *halakhah* are part of a much broader project of renewal and creative reinterpretation of canonical texts. These sermons suggest that the Maggid offered his students new ways of thinking about the system of *halakhah* and how its laws had been determined thus far, but they do not necessarily represent an engine for change in making future legal decisions. There must have been limitations to the nearly unlimited freedom provided by this understanding of *halakhah*, whether conceptual, communal or psychological. The Maggid never says that one should use

[1491] RaSHI points out that his colleagues could not discern which of his opinions were correct and which were not, because he could give perfect reasoning for all of them. Cf. MaHaRSHA ad loc, who argues that R. Meir did not issue a clear decision after having offered defensible reasons for both sides.

prophecy or the Holy Spirit to decide legal matters,[1492] nor are there traditions about any sort of questionable or antinomian behavior.[1493]

But something must have stopped the Maggid, and his students, from extending these principles of flexibility and change to practical legal decisions. One explanation might be the fact that R. Dov Baer was employed as a *maggid*, not a *rav* or an *av beit din*. In the decades after his death, Hasidic legal conservatism was reinforced and perhaps inspired by opposition from the Lithuanian rabbinic elite. But the Maggid himself was deeply immersed in the fervently pietistic, often ascetic, culture of Eastern Europe. Much of this ethos remained with him even after he was attracted to the spiritual path of the BeSHT, and he clearly had a deeply ingrained fear of sin. It is difficult to imagine him throwing off the shackles of *halakhah*, or reducing it to an anarchic system in which the law is putty in the hands of human scholars. These teachings seem to have had little effect on the Maggid's own praxis, at least as it is described in the hagiographical literature. However, his students imbibed his teachings, and only further research will reveal the extent to which these notions are present in the Maggid's disciples' discussions of *halakhah*.[1494]

[1492] The Maggid is remembered as having taught that it is easier to attain Holy Spirit (*ruah ha-qodesh*) in exile, but this tradition has no connection to deciding *halakhah*; see MDL #49, p. 70.

[1493] A possible exception may be found in the strange event recounted in Maimon, *Autobiography*, pp. 169-170; Assaf, 'The Hasid as Homo Ludens', pp. 121-150. In contrast, there is a famous story in *Shivhei ha-BeSHT* about the BeSHT eating meat from an animal declared non-kosher by one authority; see Ben Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, #141, p. 166-167. Cf. ibid, #71, p. 90-91; #178, p. 192; #246, p. 254-255.

[1494] For other early Hasidic sources that reflect upon the nature of *halakhah*, see *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *ya-yehi*, p. 56; ibid, *shavu'ot*, p. 135; *Qedushat Levi*, *purim*, p. 237; ibid, *liqqutim*, p. 439; ibid, *liqqutim*, p. 479; *Tanya*, *iggeret ha-qodesh*, ch. 26; *Tif'eret 'Uziel*, *shir ha-shirim*, p. 85-86; *She'erit Yisra'el*, Monsey 2004, *derush le-sukkot*, pp. 117-118; *Ma'or va-Shemesh, huqqat*, pp. 460, 464; ibid, *shoftim*, p. 594. See also the remarkable passage included in the anonymous section of material in *KSHT* #320, pp. 189-200. I plan to devote a study to the subject conceptions of *halakhah* in early Hasidic thought.

THE DANGERS OF PRIDE

Nullification of the ego and ridding oneself of all personal desires and pride are cornerstones of the Maggid's mystical theology and moral teaching.[1495] The *tsaddiq* has great power over the physical world and even has the ability to shape divine Will, but he is also defined by his humility and modesty. Indeed, the *tsaddiq* attains these abilities precisely through entering into a state of *ayin* and thoroughly emptying himself of his ego. Yet the Maggid is well aware of the pride that can overtake a teacher or an advanced student, and in many places explicitly warns against it:

> "When you build a new house, make a railing for your upper story, so that blood-guilt not be held against your house should somebody fall from it" (Deut. 22:8). This refers to one offering a new interpretation of Torah. "Make a railing for *your* upper story." If the verse were referring to a literal house, it would have said: "for *its* upper story." As it is, the upper story refers to you, referring to the swelling of your pride at this new teaching. Do not let your head get turned by pride! Even though this is a bit of Torah that no ear has ever heard, it comes not from you, but from God. "Should somebody fall from it" [lit. "should the one who falls, fall from it"]—he is all set for such a fall.[1496] You know that this has already happened, that the vessels were broken because of pride, when each one said, "I will rule."[1497] This is enough for the one who understands.[1498]

[1495] For just a few examples among the myriads, see MDL #16, p. 3; OT #462, *aggadot*, p. 474.

[1496] See b. Shabbat 32a.

[1497] See Targum Yonatan to 1 Kings 1:5. The phrase "I will rule" (*ana emlokh*) is often found in later Kabbalistic works to describe the jostling between the *sefirot* that eventually led to the calamitous "breaking of the vessels." See also Jonathan Garb, 'Rabbi Kook and His Sources: From Kabbalistic Historiosophy to National Mysticism', *Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Babi-Baha'i Faiths*, ed. Moshe Sharon, Leiden 2004, pp. 88-89.

[1498] LY #196, fol. 59b; with parallels in OT #176, *ki tetse*, p. 225; and OHE, fol. 67b. Based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 2, p. 124. In *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *parashat ki tetse*, *derekh hayyim tokhehat mussar*, #38, R. Isaiah Horowitz offers a similar interpretation of Deut. 22:8, explaining that one must make a "roof" for their pride, lest it cause them to fall. He does not, however, connect it to creative new interpretations of Torah.

The Maggid extolls the importance of interpretive creativity, which is a fundamental part of his exegetical enterprise. But he is also wary of the pride and hubris that can accompany such scholarly accomplishments. The Maggid emphasizes that new interpretations flow into the mind of the student or teacher from the hidden depths of God's Mind. These ideas are divine gifts of inspiration, not simply the result of intellectual diligence, and the scholar must remember that their ultimate source lies beyond him.[1499]

The Maggid warns that the successful student may easily slip into a posture of arrogance and complacence. He underscores, however, that Scripture—and the Divine—are totally infinite, and therefore the quest to understand and interpret Torah is endless:

> Should one praise himself for his wisdom: If his wisdom comes from the infinite One (*ein sof*), he should take no glory in this. And if it is not from the infinite One, he should examine this wisdom and realize that it is lacking, for it comes from the "brokenness" (*shevirah*). This is [the meaning of] "let not the wise man glory [in his wisdom]... but... the one who knows me [shall glory in this]" (Jer. 9: 22-23), as in "and Adam knew [... his wife]" (Gen. 4:1,25). He has the intention to connect to the infinite One, who is not divided into any parts.[1500]

Study leads to *devequt* and intimate knowledge of God, and this encounter with the Divine cannot take place if the scholar's ego remains present. Engagement with Torah is an infinite journey not only because there is nearly a endless amount of information to learn, but because the sacred texts are a linguistic garb for an infinite God and an access

[1499] The Maggid does not seem to have addressed the possibility that describing all ideas as originating in the mind of God might impede a self-critical attitude.

[1500] OT # 151c, *pinhas*, p. 202. A version of this teaching preserved in MDL #114, p. 187 warns of the dangers of taking pride in one's *devequt*.

point for connection to the boundless Divine.[1501] Elsewhere the Maggid adds quite explicitly one who claims to have learned enough both curtails his own religious growth and fails to imitate God in the appropriate way, and therefore cannot ever hope to achieve *devequt*.[1502]

Emphasizing creativity in a group setting like the Maggid's *beit midrash* would certainly have led to a blossoming of different theological positions, but it might also lead to bitter rivalry. Some of the Maggid's sermons may be interpreted as revealing his fear of such competition among his students. Many of those who assembled in his study-hall were mighty scholars, and a significant number of them went on to become the founders of the Hasidic movement itself. Despite the fact that they must not have seen eye to eye on every issue, teachings from the Maggid underscore the need for mutual respect and tolerance:

> "Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel encamped by tribes and the spirit of God came upon him" (Num. 24:2). The sages taught that Balaam saw that the openings of Israel's tents were directed away from each other [a sign of modesty] and said, "these people are worthy of having s*hekhinah* rest upon them."[1503]
>
> This is relevant to a group of scholars who sit around one table. They all offer teachings about a particular verse or rabbinic statement, one explains the verse one way and another explains it differently. If, Heaven forbid, they are in competition with each other, each claiming: "my explanation is better than the others"—woe to them, it is better they had never been born. But if their sole intention is to develop and enhance Torah, they are very fortunate.

[1501] R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady developed an interesting notion that one of the commandment's is the injunction to know all of Torah (*mitsvat yedi'at ha-torah*) as a prerequisite for attaining a deeper understanding of the divine Wisdom. See Foxbrunner, *Habad*, pp. 137-177.

[1502] LY #72, fol. 14a.

[1503] b. Bava Batra 60a, cited by RaSHI ad loc. See also *Zohar* 3:211b.

> The "openings" Balaam saw were their mouths, as in the verse: "guard the openings of your mouth" (Micah 7:5). He saw that their "openings" were not directed towards each other, that they had no intention to oppose each other. Rather each person offered a teaching and explanation only for the sake of Heaven. Such people, he said, are worthy of having s*hekhinah* rest upon them.[1504]

Of course, scholarly creativity in a close-knit intellectual environment can lead to competition, but there may be an autobiographical element to this teaching as well.[1505] Conflicts between Hasidic leaders began in the years after the Maggid's death. Some of these disagreements were territorial spats about geographical and economic influence, but many had an ideological element as well.

The conflict between R. Abraham of Kalisk and R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady was one of the more famous disagreements between former members of the Maggid's circle.[1506] R. Abraham, a student of the Maggid and later R. Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, accused R. Shne'ur Zalman of both departing from the Maggid's style of leadership and changing the Maggid's theological doctrines. R. Shne'ur Zalman replied by claiming that nothing he said or did deviated in the slightest from their teacher's path.

[1504] OT #144, *balaq*, p. 196, with a parallel in MDL #166, pp. 264. Based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 2, pp. 54-55. Cf. *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *terumah*, p. 408; and *Duda'im ba-Sadeh*, p. 132, where it appears in the name of the BeSHT. However, the work's author R. Reuben Horowitz ha-Levi was born after the BeSHT's death, and his attribution should not threaten the possibility that it actually comes from the Maggid. A similar teaching is found in *Ma'or Va-Shemesh, balaq,* p. 474. It is interesting to note that R. Qalonymous Qalman Epstein is confronting a different Hasidism at a very different moment in its historical development. He uses this same notion to explain why there are so many *tsaddiqim*, all of whom have different paths in serving God: they must each develop their own style in order to make sure they do everything with authenticity and not simply by rote.

[1505] See also *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *qorah*, p. 104, for a tradition in which the Maggid claims that from the moment the Davidic kingdom was divided, every *hiddush* has someone who contradicts it and offers the opposite interpretation, even if not in that time or place. This teaching from the Maggid is cited as a part of a longer sermon on the need for new interpretations of Torah in each and every generation, and R. Ze'ev Wolf argues that these opposing forces are good and evil, or pure and impure. However, there is no such dualism in the teaching he cites from the Maggid.

[1506] On the disagreement between R. Abraham of Kalisk and R. Shne'ur Zalman, see Gries, 'From Myth to Ethos', pp. 117-146; Etkes, *Ba'al haTanya*, pp. 317-385; Raya Haran, 'R. Abraham of Kalisk and R. Shneur Zalman of Ladi—A Friendship Cut Off', *Kolot Rabim: Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume,* ed. Rachel Elior and Joseph Dan, vol. 2, pp. 399-428 [Hebrew].

Sermons like the Maggid's homily above may be read as representative of his attempt to foster a group of disciples who valued creativity and were able to develop their own understanding of the spiritual path, but who did not compete with or undercut one another.

THE LIMITS OF STUDY

Many of the Maggid's teachings describe pride that comes from Torah study as a devastating impediment to religious growth. But we must also ask if the Maggid's sermons suggest that there is anything inherently problematic about the activity of study. Hasidism was accused of downplaying the importance of learning Torah, and, in more extreme cases, neglecting and even deriding study as a hindrance to the true goals of the spiritual life. The notion of *devequt* as the pinnacle of religious service and a particularly strong emphasis on prayer were important elements of the new religious ethos of Hasidism.[1507] This shift in values was one of the elements of Hasidic thought that sparked the ire of the rabbinate, and neglect of study and disrespect for Torah scholars were explicitly cited in the earliest bans against the Hasidim.[1508]

Elements of the Maggid's teachings do indeed deemphasize the centrality of Torah study. One teaching attributed to the Maggid claims that one must take periodic breaks from study in order "to sequester himself in his mind" (*le-hitboded be-mahshavto*) and thus achieve *devequt*. This recess is necessary because the later generations have a

[1507] See Weiss, 'Torah Study in Early Hasidism', pp. 56-68. Weiss argues that while most Hasidic masters saw *devequt* and Torah study as compatible, a few understood them as contradictory goals. See also Scholem, '*Devekut*', pp. 212-213; Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 310-325.

[1508] See Wilensky, 'Hasidic Mitnaggedic Polemics', 261-266. On how discussions of the nature of Torah study and its importance were to become very important in the intellectual debates between the Hasidism and the *mithnaggedim* in the generations after the Maggid's death, see Lamm, *Torah Lishmah*, pp. 230-324; and Nadler, *The Faith of the Mithnagdim*, esp. 51-60, 151-153, 160-164.

relatively low spiritual capability and lack the necessary focus to maintain *devequt* amidst their learning.[1509] However, as is demonstrated in many passages above, the Maggid's teachings offer a compelling and rich account of the spiritual praxis of study. His sermons include the mystical theology that undergirds such study, and they describe the religious experiences attained by the scholar as well as the theurgic effects his learning may have upon the Divine. Study clearly occupied a very important place in the Maggid's religious worldview, and his teachings often cite the neglect of Torah study as a particularly grave transgression.[1510]

However, the very fact that the Maggid's teachings break down the distinction between learning Torah and prayer demonstrates that in many ways sacred study is not unique. The link between study and worship is made possible because it allows one to make use of the mystical elements of language. This point is made all the more clear by the great number of teachings in which the Maggid uses Torah study and prayer as almost interchangeable activities.[1511]

Of course, introspection and moral development were also an important part of the Maggid's spiritual path. Some of his teachings claim that goals such of these cannot be attained during study:

> My master and teacher [the Maggid], his soul among the heavenly treasures, quoted the holy Zohar as teaching that each day of the week stands upon one of the seven character traits (*middot*).

[1509] LY #29, fol. 5a-b. Similar teachings are found in the short collection *Darkei Yesharim/Hanhagot Yesharot*, compiled by R. Menahem Mendel of Premishlan, but this version presents *devequt* and Torah study as fundamentally incompatible. However, Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 316-317, demonstrated that this rather extreme position is tempered by a version of the teaching in a manuscript in the possession of R. Shmu'el Shmelke of Nikolsburg. That manuscript has since been published as SLA, and the passage in question appears in pp. 58-61.

[1510] OT #460, *aggadot*, p. 473.

[1511] To my knowledge the Maggid does not refer to the disagreement in b. Shabbat 10a, where prayer is described as "transient life" (*hayyei sha'ah*) and study as "eternal life" (*hayyei 'olam*).

> "And there was light" on the first day refers to the quality of love, and so forth, as seen in Zohar *Bereshit*.[1512] He said that one should purify one quality each day: on the first day of the week, work on love; on the second day, awe, and so the rest. But if this does not suffice, one should stay with that quality until it is refined.
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> My teacher said that early [in his path] he would turn his attention away from his studies and all other concerns, spending an hour or two meditating on one character trait until it had become perfectly clarified. On Shabbat an added measure of holiness enters a person, each in accord with his own rung. Any person who seeks to serve Y-H-W-H feels as he comes to pray on Shabbat eve a great arousal of devotional passion. Then [while reciting the six psalms of *qabbalat shabbat*] one should review and reconsider one's *middot*.[1513]

Improving one's character requires a type of focused inner work that cannot take place while the student is fully devoted to absorbing knowledge. Indeed, says the Maggid, prayer is a more appropriate locus for such introspection. The timeline presented in this passage is also worthy of note, for R. Menahem Nahum is describing something he remembers as part of the young Maggid's devotional path.

Several of the Maggid's homilies suggest that sacred study is one of the only ways to attach oneself to God,[1514] because the true intensity of the divine essence cannot be withstood without the Torah.[1515] However, many other teachings make it clear that the unique qualities of Scripture stem from the capacity of its letters to both attenuate and

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[1512] Zohar 1:31a.

[1513] *Me'or Einayim*, *be-shalah*, p. 170. R. Menahem Nahum then connects it to the verse, "on the sixth day they brought what they had gathered, and it was twice that which they had gathered daily" (Ex. 16:5), as well as the tradition from BeSHT that one should recite Psalm 107 on Friday afternoon. My thanks to Arthur Green for sharing his translation of this passage with me.

[1514] OT #245, *tehilim*, pp. 298. Yet even in this passage the Maggid describes Torah study *and* the commandments as ways of mediating the infinite divine light so that human beings may withstand it. Cf. ST, p. 83b-84a.

[1515] MDL #132, pp. 227.

reveal the divine energy within them. Indeed, it is this aspect of language that allows one to remain in a permanent state of *devequt*:

> The Talmud asks: "Is God not a consuming fire?" Isn't it beyond us to cleave to God constantly in an ecstatic way? It responded: "Cleave to God's qualities."[1516] This refers to the garments of God, which are the letters. It is possible to think constantly of the letters of Torah, and Torah is God's garment. Even when in conversation with people, you should contemplate only the letters that comprise those words being spoken. They too are derived from the twenty-two letters of Torah.[1517]

One can always be thinking of Torah, since Scripture itself is a linguistic representation of the divine Presence. Thus by contemplating the letters within his mind one may still commune with God even when he is not formally studying. But the Maggid goes even farther, claiming that the letters of all speech are the same as those of Torah. This means that all language shares a linguistic structure with the Torah, and therefore one can meditate upon all human words in order to discover the Torah within them.

Many of the Maggid's sermons underscore that study itself does not impede one's connection to God in any way. Rather, as noted above, the pride and arrogance which often accompany scholastic achievement prevent one from attaining *devequt*:

> An explanation of the mishnah: "one who is reciting and breaks from his studies, saying 'how beautiful is this tree, and how lovely is this field,' it is considered as if he is mortally liable."[1518] "Breaks," means that he disconnects himself from God on account of his learning. In his heart he says about himself, "how beautiful is this tree," as in "man is a tree of the field" (Deut. 20:19)... This is [also] the explanation of the mishnah "one who walks along the road alone."[1519] Although

[1516] b. Sotah 14a.

[1517] OT #167, *'eqev*, pp. 217-218; TSVHR #111-112, pp. 51-52; KTVQ, fol. 18b; and OHE, fol. 24a.

[1518] m. Avot 3:7.

[1519] m. Avot 3:4.

> he is studying, he is alone and is not attached to the blessed One. On the contrary, great pride overtakes him because of his learning, and therefore [it is as if he has committed a mortal sin].[1520]

Reading the mishnah somewhat against the grain, the Maggid claims that it is possible for one to become so engrossed in his study that he forgets that his ultimate goal must be cultivating a devotional connection with God. In cases such as these learning may indeed become a hindrance, for the scholar's pride and conceit prevent him from attaching himself to the Divine.[1521]

The mystical bond with God cultivated through devotional practices like study is not restricted to those moments alone. In fact, according to the Maggid, this sense of connection should spread forth into all of one's activities:

> "A clever person acts with awareness, but a fool exposes his stupidity" (Prov. 13:16). This means that someone who is wise, even though he does the things he needs to do, he will do them with awareness (*da'at*) and attachment to the blessed One. *Da'at* means connection and attachment, as in "and Adam knew [his wife Eve]" (Gen. 4:1). It also says, "know the God of your fathers" (1 Chron. 28:9, which means to connect and attach yourself to the God of your fathers, at all times and in all of your deeds. "A fool exposes (*yifrosh*) his stupidity." Even though he withdraws (*parush*) from the world and studies Torah always, he studies and prays without attachment to the blessed Creator, [intending] only to grow haughty and be called "rabbi," this is stupidity.[1522]

Someone who has true awareness will perform all of his deeds with great attachment to God. If one does not have such understanding, however, none of his actions can fulfill this fundamental purpose. Even his study of Torah is tinged by pride, and will therefore amounts to nothing.

[1520] LY #216, fol. 64b, with parallels in OT #442, *aggadot*, p. 460; and KTVQ, fol. 5b.

[1521] Versions of this teaching are also cited by two of the Maggid's disciples; see *Peri Hayyim*, ch. 2 fol. 22b; *Ahavat Dodim*, Lemberg 1793, *shir ha-shirim*, fol. 46a.

[1522] MDL #181, pp. 281-282.

The Maggid's teachings frequently reveal that mystical, impassioned study occupies a central place in his spiritual path. A few of them reflect upon the fact that there are costs that accompany a life of total commitment to learning that borders on asceticism. We read:

> "Y-H-V-H spoke to Moses, saying: 'Command Aaron and his sons, saying: "This is the Torah of the ascending offering, the offering on its stake upon the altar, all night until the morning the altar's fire shall be lit upon it.... Fire shall constantly burn upon it; it shall not go out"'" (Lev. 6:1-2,6). RaSHI says that the word "command" here indicates a special urging, applicable now and in all generations. Said Rabbi Simeon: Such urging is especially needed when there is a cost to the pocketbook.
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> If this passage is to be understood in its simple sense, why is "special urging" needed in order to command two daily sacrifices? What "cost to the pocketbook" is there for these two single communal offerings by the whole people of Israel? The additional sacrifices were much more costly! And how are these "applicable now and in all generations?" The two daily sacrifices were ended when the Temple was destroyed.
>
> We therefore must interpret this passage to conform with our sages' teaching that "whoever studies Torah is like one who offers all the sacrifices."[1523] This is the Torah of the ascending offering [means that Torah itself rises as an offering]. You may read this entire passage as pointing in that direction. Command Aaron and his sons, saying: This is the Torah of the ascending offering ... "special urging ... in all generations" because Torah will never be negated; "it will not be forgotten from the mouth of his seed" (Deut. 31:21). We are being urged to study Torah, that which rises higher than any burnt offering. What sort of Torah study is this talking about? The offering upon its stake, meaning teachings offered in ecstasy and close attachment to our blessed Creator, not things that flow only outward from the lips. "Any word that does not come forth in awe and love does not fly upward,"[1524] and is not called an ascending offering.

[1523] b. Menahot 110a.

[1524] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 10, fol. 25b.

> "Upon the altar" refers to the person, who is called an altar. "Y-H-V-H God created man out of dust of the earth" (Gen. 2:7); from the place of his future atonement, the "altar of earth."[1525] "All night," all the days of a person's life on earth, which are like a night, until the morning. The altar's fire, the fiery teachings of Torah, shall be lit upon it [or "within him"], with ecstatic attachment to the Creator.
>
> The passage ends with "Fire shall constantly burn upon it; it shall not go out." Not for a single moment. "You shall contemplate it day and night" (Josh. 1:8). This indeed requires "urging, now and for all generations," that it never end. Rabbi Simeon emphasizes this, for he also taught: "If a person concerns himself with seeds at the time of planting and with harvest at its time, when will his learning get done? Therefore one should study Torah always, and his work will be accomplished by others."[1526] This advice indeed is at great "cost to the pocketbook," if one is to leave all worldly work behind and only study Torah.[1527]

Here we see a clear example of the Maggid's internalization of the imagery of the Temple, which he employs as a symbolic vocabulary for acts of personal devotion.[1528] The fire of the altar has been transformed into the scholar's flames of passion, whose sacrificial gift is now composed of the words he speaks in his illuminated study. These letters, the "ascending offering," rise up constantly, flowing back toward their origin in the Divine. This teaching suggests that this should be one's sole occupation, and that all mundane tasks should ideally be performed by someone else.

This passage is complemented by several other homilies that clearly prioritize study over engagement with the physical world.[1529] In some, the Maggid warns that

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[1525] *Bereshit Rabbah* 14:8.

[1526] See b. Berakhot 35b, where this view is qualified by the Talmud.

[1527] LY #114, fol. 23a-b, with a parallel in OT #108, *tsav*, pp. 151-152. Based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 1 pp. 257-258.

[1528] See Margolin, *Human Temple*, esp. pp. 127-138.

[1529] See MDL #95, pp. 163-166; SLA, p. 26.

leaving the world of study can be very dangerous indeed, even though it may at times be unavoidable.[1530] In others, we see that serving God through the physical realm must be reserved for the elites who have developed a rich inner life.[1531] Though *tsaddiqim* appear to be immersed in the corporeal world, their contemplative attachment to God is not broken by engagement with physicality. Most people cannot do this successfully, and when they emulate the *tsaddiq* their actions are empty and meaningless. They are accosted by strange thoughts when they depart from the cloistered world of religious service.

Yet the Maggid's portrayal of the relationship between serving God through the corporeal world and studying Torah is more complicated than a schema of two alternative spiritual paths in tension with one another. Some of the Maggid's sermons draw a clear link between one's study and one's performance of the physical activities. In one, we read:

> According to the Talmud, all agree that the Torah was given on Shabbat.[1532] At that time the worlds were elevated, having ascended above. This is "face to face" [i.e. a direct and intimate encounter with the Divine]. Each day they [the words of Torah] should be as new as if they were given on that very day.[1533] Just as [the experience of] Sinai was "face to face," so must it be each day as you are studying... When one studies in this way, even if he studies something that is the "fallen fruit"[1534] (*novelot*) [i.e. a lower aspect of Torah] ascends higher; many things are repaired...

Study must be "face to face," a personal and immediate experience of the divine Wisdom that mirrors Israel's encounter with God on Mt. Sinai. This phrases reflects the language

[1530] LY #113, fol. 22b-23a; and cf. *Yosher Divrei Emet* #19, fol. 120a.

[1531] LY #284, fol. 105b.

[1532] b. Shabbat 86b.

[1533] See RaSHI's comment to Deut. 26:16, quoting Tanhuma, *ki tavo* #1.

[1534] See *Bereshit Rabbah* 17:4.

of Deut. 5:4, but it also invokes the Lurianic concept of the proper alignment of the cosmic unification.[1535] This intimate act of communion, both that of the student with the Torah and the *hieros gamos* itself, is enabled by approaching the words of Scripture with a sense of perpetual newness. The Maggid continues:

> ... Our sages taught: "Torah was given only to those eat the manna."[1536] Moses received the Torah. In the great clarity of his mind he indeed took it all in within those forty days. Our sages said that he kept learning and forgetting it until it was finally given to him as a gift.[1537] They also said that it takes forty years for a student to truly understand his teacher's mind.[1538]
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> This was why God had to rain food on us from heaven. He makes Shabbat flow down upon us, giving us spiritual sustenance as a gift. Understanding of Torah comes to us as "food" as well. The Zohar says that even now food that is consumed by a true sage is not just corporeal, but includes a subtle spiritual essence.[1539] That spirit derives from Torah, since "Man does not live by bread alone, but by all that comes forth from the mouth of Y-H-V-H" (Deut. 8:3). This refers to the divine word by which the food itself was created. That word is the Torah that flows on to us all; we are nourished by the spirit of Torah.[1540]
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> This is [the meaning of], "three that eat at a single table and speak words of Torah upon it, it is as if they are at the table of the Omnipresent."[1541] These three are the three cavities of the skull, the three *mohin*.[1542] "And speak words of Torah [upon it]"—everything is Torah.... A sage receives energy from the Torah (*hashpa'at ha-Torah*) in his eating, and through his eating he attains Torah. His eating is immersion in Torah. Therefore it is called a table (*shulhan*)—sending fifty (*sholeah*

[1535] See Magid, *From Metaphysics to Midrash*, pp. 43-46.

[1536] Tanhuma, *be-shalah* #20. See Mekhilta, *be-shalah*, *haqdamah*.

[1537] b. Nedarim 38a; Tanhuma, *ki tissa* #16.

[1538] b. Avodah Zarah 5b.

[1539] Zohar 2:60b.

[1540] Thus far based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 2, pp. 215-216.

[1541] m. Avot 3:3.

[1542] Zohar 3:136a.

> *nun* = 50) gates of understanding, for the blessed Holy One sends a person inspiration to arouse and purify himself [for] the fifty gates of understanding the Torah. The Zohar teaches that the long *nun* is man [i.e. the elongated shape of the final letter represents the human form]. The bent *nun* [i.e. its regular form] does not extend down below, but when it does so [by becoming the final letter, this understanding] is garbed within the person who attains it.[1543] This is the meaning of [the Zohar's statement that] the long *nun* is man.[1544]
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> This is the meaning of "if He had fed us the Manna and not given us the Torah, it would have been enough for us."[1545] We would have attained the Torah through the Manna, and if he had fed us the Manna alone, that would have been enough. Understand this.[1546]

The previous sermon we examined totally spiritualized the image of the sacrificial fire into an act of interior devotion. In this homily, however, the Maggid has transformed the act of eating into a way of studying Torah. The highest elements of the scholar's grasp of Torah, the "fifty gates of understanding," come to him precisely through his consumption of physical food. Of course, the *midrash* limits this special quality to the Manna bestowed upon the Israelites in the wilderness. However, the Maggid builds upon the Zohar's reinterpretation of this rabbinic tradition and extends it to include all food that is eaten in a contemplative manner by students of Torah.[1547]

This nuanced approach to the physical world is mirrored by a tradition found in *Me'or 'Einayim*:

[1543] Zohar 1:18b.

[1544] Cf. ST, p. 62a.

[1545] From the Passover *haggadah*.

[1546] SLA, pp. 22-23.

[1547] Elsewhere the Maggid notes that words of Torah spoken over a meal are like the soul that dwells within the physical form of the table and the food. See MDL #31, p. 50.

> My teacher was wont to call this "mundane matters (*hullin*) that are performed in a purely holy manner."[1548] Even something that appears mundane can be made holy, since the Torah is within all things. In eating, for example, there is so much Torah and many paths [to the Divine], and there are so many laws in washing ones hands. The same is true in business. My teacher said that the life-force of those things come from Torah and the laws they have. Torah and the Holy One are one, since everything has some hook in the Torah, even the smallest of creations.[1549]

Everything in the physical realm comes from Scripture, and indeed the world is directed by means of Torah. Given that God and the Torah are one, this means that no elements of corporeality are without an inherent connection to the Divine. It is possible to serve God even through one's mundane actions because he is always totally surrounded by the vitality of Torah. One mode of engaging with Scripture is through imbibing its words and absorbing intellectual wisdom, but the elements of Torah found in the corporeal world can also, or perhaps only, be revealed through performing physical deeds.

SPEAKING TORAH AND THE BOUNDARIES OF LANGUAGE

Thus far we have explored the Maggid's presentation of Torah study as a mystical practice. Let us now approach the issue from a slightly different perspective by examining his descriptions of how spiritual ideas may be transmitted from a teacher to the student. Language represents a unique nexus between God and man in the Maggid's theology; words and letters are a concrete medium in which the infinite divine Wisdom may become expressed. Extending this principle into the human realm, the Maggid also refers to language as a channel necessary for the exchange of ideas between two different

[1548] b. Hagigah 19b. The editors of OT, p. 598 note that this interpretation is already found in *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*.

[1549] *Me'or 'Einayim*, *be-shalah*, pp. 170-171.

people. However, he is keenly alert to the fact that one's thoughts can never be fully expressed in words. Wisdom, whether human or divine, is attenuated, diminished and transformed as it becomes articulated in language.

Recent scholarship has focused on the Hasidic sermon as an event and an experience.[1550] The moments in which these teachings were delivered, often in a deeply spiritual atmosphere during the third Sabbath meal, were often compared to the giving of the Torah on Sinai. In Hasidic texts *tsaddiqim* are not described as simply giving a homily; they literally "speak Torah," and their words represent a new element of divine Revelation.[1551] One particularly well-known tradition from the Maggid offers some personal reflections on how prospective *tsaddiqim* might accomplish this:

> Once I heard the Maggid say to us explicitly, " I will teach you the best way to say Torah. You must not sense yourself as anything at all. Be a listening ear attuned to the way the World of Speech is speaking in you, for you yourself are not speaking. As soon as you hear your own words, stop. We saw this many times, for when he [the Maggid] opened his mouth to speak it was as if he was not in this world at all. *Shekhinah* was speaking from within his throat.[1552] Sometimes he would stop and wait for a while, even in the middle of an idea or a word.[1553]

In order to correctly "say Torah," the Hasidic preacher must fully and completely transcend his ego. Any residual element of self-awareness will interfere with the flow of wisdom through his mind, and, more precisely, it will prevent *shekhinah* from being able to speak from within him. Once more we find the Maggid invoking the familiar symbol

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[1550] See above, pp. 44-45. According to a later Hasidic tradition, R. Dov Baer was called the "Maggid" because he drew down (*higid*) divine compassion in his sermons. That is, his homilies were performative acts whose impact extended far beyond the semantic meaning of the words; *Ner Yisra'el*, vol. 6, p. 413.

[1551] See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 474; Green, 'Hasidic Homily', pp. 241-242. See R. Israel Loebel's usage of phrase "speakers of Torah" (*omrei Torah*) in *Sefer ha-Viku'ah*, reprinted in Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 2, pp. 317-318.

[1552] Medieval kabbalistic literature generally attributes this prophetic state to Moses.

[1553] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *tsav*, p. 213.

of the World of Speech, for only through arousing this divine capacity for language can the human preacher truly begin to speak Torah.

The Maggid was a contemplative and introspective mystic. Many of his teachings describe a spiritual journey in which one begins with letters and words, and moves through the physical sounds of speech to the innermost reaches of the conscious mind, and then eventually arrives at a subtle realm that is beyond words. Given this type of mystic quest, it comes as no surprise that we find teachings from him that underscore the difficulty of speaking in public. One tradition from R. Israel of Kozhenits, to which we referred earlier, explains as follows:

> We received [the following] from our teacher and master [the Maggid]: At times the *tsaddiq* is connected to the upper worlds in his mind. He cannot open his mouth to share a teaching (*halakhah*) with them [i.e. his students], descending from his level to theirs. Therefore, they must prepare the way and open the channel with their questions or other such things.[1554]

The *tsaddiq* may become so enraptured by his contemplative meditation that he loses his ability to talk to the people around him. His disciples can inspire their master to begin speaking, but this type of communication is still described as a "descent." Other homilies of the Maggid claim that one who is speaking cannot listen to anything else, and therefore he cannot receive any new interpretations of Torah.[1555] Teaching disciples thus comes at the expense of the master's own intellectual and spiritual creativity. Furthermore, and more fundamentally, the Maggid argues that one who truly understands an idea also realizes that it cannot be spoken aloud.[1556] Thoughts originate in the dynamic and creative realm of *hokhmah*— the unformed and prelinguistic potential of ideas—and only

[1554] See *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *liqqutim*, p. 219.

[1555] OT #473, *aggadot*, p. 479.

[1556] OT #141, *qorah*, p. 190.

once they have come into *binah*—the region of conscious intellection—can they be translated into words and then conveyed to others. A flash of inspiration remains forever within one's mind, and by its very nature it cannot ever be communicated.[1557]

However, as we have noted throughout this study, the Maggid repeatedly returns to the conclusion that the mystic is compelled to embrace language and speak to others. It is not enough for him to remain in silent contemplation in the deepest recesses of his mind. In one sermon, he compares teaching to giving birth, whereas silent and solitary contemplation is likened to infertility.[1558] In another homily, he argues that the *tsaddiq* must speak to his students in order to instruct them, to offer them constructive rebuke and to shepherd their religious growth.[1559] All acts of revelation, both human and divine, take place in language; spiritual instruction can only be accomplished through words. Furthermore, speaking and teaching are not described as acts of altruism in which the master sacrifices some of his own potential intellectual growth in order to help his students. The *tsaddiq* receives something as well, for new aspects of divine Wisdom and secrets of Torah begin to flow through his mind when he connects to the people around him.[1560]

The mandate for a teacher to share his wisdom through language does not change the fact that spoken words cannot convey the fullness of his thoughts. But this limitation is also what allows for communication to take place. A master's knowledge can be so

[1557] OHE, p. 20d. THM 483

[1558] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *va-yera*, p. 25.

[1559] See the fascinating tradition cited in *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *noah*, pp. 50-51. On the role of the "rebuker" (*mokhiah*) in Eastern Europe, see Piekarz, *Beginning of Hasidism*, pp. 100-104, 141-156.

[1560] OT #103, *tetsaveh*, p. 143.

great that it would totally overwhelm the student, were he to reveal it all at once. A teacher must contract his wisdom by focusing it into words.[1561] In one sermon, we read:

> "A teacher should always teach his student succinctly" (*derekh qetserah*).[1562] If a master wants his disciple to understand his expansive wisdom, but the student cannot receive it [in its current form], the teacher must focus his mind (*sikhlo*) into words and letters. For example, when one wants to pour from one vessel into another and is afraid lest it spill, he uses another vessel called a funnel. The liquid is contracted into this, and therefore the [second] vessel can receive it without any of it spilling outside.
>
> The matter is just the same with a teacher whose intellect is contracted into words and letters. He speaks them to the student, and through them the student can receive the master's expansive mind.[1563]

A teacher must constrict his wisdom into words if he is to transmit it to his student. This is the Maggid's interpretation of instructing one's disciples "succinctly," reading *derekh qetsarah* as "by way of contraction." The teacher must must bring forth ideas from his mind and embody them in spoken language so that they may be heard by his students. In order to explain this dynamic, the Maggid offers the image of pouring water through a funnel; the vessel constricts the stream of the liquid, but enables its seamless transfer into a second receptacle. Thus the teacher's letters and words form a linguistic channel through which his wisdom may flow into the mind of the student.

This passage comes from a sermon about Creation and the ways in which divine Wisdom is embodied in physical reality. The Maggid offers the case of the teacher and his student, and then the image of the funnel, as parables for illuminating these cosmic

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[1561] This idea is found dozens of times in the Maggid's sermons, and quoted in his name by his students with great frequency. For two examples, *Qedushat Levi*, *ki tissa*, p. 252; *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *terumah*, p. 181.

[1562] b. Hullin 63b.

[1563] MDL #101, pp. 178, with a parallel in OHE, fol 49b. See also OT #92, *be-shalah*, p. 128.

processes. Indeed, throughout his teachings the Maggid frequently emphasizes that the parable (*mashal*, pl. *meshalim*) is one of the teacher's most important tools for overcoming the inherent limits of language.[1564] Of course, the *mashal* has an important pedagogical and rhetorical role in rabbinic literature,[1565] the works of medieval philosophy[1566] and especially in classical kabbalistic texts.[1567] Parables are a central feature of an overwhelming number of early Hasidic homilies.[1568] But, as Aryeh Wineman has demonstrated, they are particularly crucial in the Maggid's sermons, almost all of which employ *meshalim* in some form.[1569] Of these, the image of a father and a child or a student and his master are by far the most common. If all words are a type of vessel for ideas and meaning, the parable is the lingustic vessel par excellence, and for

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[1564] See Saperstein, *Jewish Preaching*, pp. 93, 100-103.

[1565] David Stern, 'Rhetoric and Midrash: The Case of the Mashal', *Prooftexts* 1.3 (1981), pp. 261-291; Daniel Boyarin, 'History Becomes Parable: A Reading of the Midrashic *Mashal*', *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text*, ed. V.L. Tollers and J. Maier, Lewisburg, Penn. 1990, pp. 54-71; Jacob Neusner, 'Rabbinic Narrative: Documentary Perspectives on the Parable (*mashal*) in Sifra and the Two Sifres', *Major Trends in Formative Judaism*, Lanham 2002, pp. 221-282; Alon Goshen-Gottstein, *God and Israel as Father and Son in Tannaitic Literature*, Jerusalem 1987 [Hebrew]. See also Daniel Boyarin, 'The Parables of Enoch and the Foundation of the Rabbinic Sect: A Hypothesis', *The Words of a Wise Man's Mouth Are Gracious (Qoh 10,12): Festschrift for Günter Stemberger on the Occasion of his 65th Birthday*, Berlin 2005, pp. 53-72.

[1566] See Roslyn Weiss, 'Four Parables About *Peshat* as Parable', *The Legacy of Maimonides: Religious, Reason and Community*, ed. Y. Levy and S. Carmy, Brooklyn 2006, pp. 111-126; Josef Stern, 'Maimonides' Parable of Circumcision', *S'vara* 2.2 (1991), pp. 35-48; James A. Diamond, 'Maimonides on Leprosy: Illness as Contemplative Metaphor', *Jewish Quarterly Review* 96.1 (2006), pp. 95-122; Mordechai Z. Cohen, 'Logic to Interpretation: Maimonides' Use of al-Fârâbî's Model of Metaphor', *Zutot* 2 (2002), pp. 104-113.

[1567] See Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 158-164, 223-224 276-278, 336; Sendor, 'The Emergence of Provencal Kabbalah', pp. 205-223. See also Joëlle Hansel, 'La figure du "mashal" dans l'herméneutique du XVIe au XVIIIe siècle', *Revue des Etudes Juives* 160.1-2 (2001), pp. 135-154; Daniel Abrams, '"Text" in a Zoharic Parable: A Chapter in the History of Kabbalistic Textuality', *Kabbalah* 25 (2011), pp. 7-54; Raphael Shohat, 'The Vilna Gaon's Commentary to *Mishnat Hasidim*: The *Mashal* and the *Nimshal* in Lurianic Works', *Kabbalah* 3 (1998), pp. 265-301 [Hebrew].

[1568] See Moshe Idel, 'The Parable of the Son of the King and the Imaginary Walls in Early Hasidism', *Judaism—Topics, Fragments, Faces,* Identities, ed. H. Pedaya and E. Meir, Beer Sheva 2007, pp. 87-116; and, more broadly, Aryeh Wineman, *The Hasidic Parable*, Philadelphia 2001. See also Martina Urban, 'Mysticism and *Sprachkritik*: Martin Buber's Rendering of the Mystical Metaphor *Ahizat 'Enayim*', *Revista Portuguesa de Filosofia* 62.2-4 (2006), pp. 535-552.

[1569] Aryeh Wineman, 'Parables and *Tsimtsum*', *Prooftexts* 16.3 (1996), pp. 293-300.

this reason they are one of a preacher's greatest assets. A few brief examples will allow us to illustrate the Maggid's understanding of the nature of *meshalim* and their significance in the process of teaching through language.

In the midst of a homily about the emergence of the *sefirot* of *hokhmah* and *binah* from the infinite realm of *keter*, the Maggid returns to the question of how human knowledge (*hokhmah*) may be transmitted from one person to another. He explains:

> By means of a parable: a father wishes to help his child understand some matter of wisdom. Yet the child cannot understand this wisdom as it is, in all of its profound depth. The father must instruct him by means of a parable, and through this he [the child] can reach the wisdom itself. Looking at this carefully, we can see that the father himself is wise and understanding. The letters and the idea of the parable are extraneous, since he knows the wisdom without the parable.
>
> But the child forces the father [to use] the letters and the idea of the parable. For the child's sake, the father grafts the element of supernal wisdom onto the letters and new idea of the *mashal*. The wisdom is hidden within the parable. The child imbibes (*yoneq*) from the letters and the idea of the parable until he understands the *mashal* quite well. Then, if the child is wise, by means of the parable he can grasp the wisdom. The letters of the *mashal* are conduits through which the waters of supernal wisdom flow.[1570]

The father's wisdom is too expansive for his child to grasp without an intermediary. He must therefore imbue his ideas into a vessel, which in this case is a parable. But this limitation is not permanent. By plumbing the depths of his father's words and looking beyond the simple meaning of the parable, the son can actually recover the wisdom that lies within them. A homily found elsewhere in the Maggid's corpus outlines a similar dynamic: a teacher must clothe his profound wisdom in simple explanations and stories.

[1570] MDL #131, p. 226, with a parallel in OT #118, *qedoshim*, p. 165.
See also *Pirqei ha-Ne'ezar*, sec. 2, ch. 116, fol. 72a.

These words allow his students to receive the master's ideas, to struggle with understanding them, and eventually to attain the profound wisdom just as it once existed in their teacher's mind.[1571]

In another sermon, describing the Lurianic notion that the lowest level of a higher world becomes revealed as the uppermost element of the world below it,[1572] the Maggid offers the following remarks:

> To make this more understandable, let us give the parable of a master instructing his student. The teacher's wisdom is unfathomably great, and moreover, it is sealed away and hidden within his mind. Certainly the disciple cannot comprehend it. A student can only grasp the words that he hears from the master's mouth. And even so, if he does not train his mind upon the teacher's words, he cannot receive [even those] words. Therefore the words spoken by the teacher, which are the lowest level [i.e. the lowest expression of his wisdom], enter into the mind of the student, meaning his mental energies (*mohin*).
>
> At the beginning of his studies, the disciple absorbs the words just as they are. But as he grows wiser, the teacher can explain the matter with greater complexity—its continuation and meaning. Yet the inner essence, the hidden wisdom, can neither be grasped by the student nor communicated by the teacher. But the teacher's act leaves an impression of this sealed wisdom [within his student]. Since the power of the maker is in the made, this impression grows and develops, and little by little it expands in his mind.[1573]

In this parable, the student cannot apprehend his teacher's knowledge in all of its fullness and intricacy. Nor can he access it when it is locked away in the master's mind. Therefore, the teacher must convey his wisdom by contracting it into words, even though

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[1571] See ST, p. 47.

[1572] See *Ets Hayyim* 14:9, 37:4.

[1573] LY #241, fol. 71a-b, with parallels in OH #24, *va-yera*, p. 34; and OHE, fol. 72b. Cf. LY #150, fol. 50b. See also MDL #206, p. 331. For a more fully developed version of this teaching in the Maggid's name, see *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 2, *mattot*, p 240-241; and *Pirqei ha-Ne'ezar*, sec. 1, ch. 141, fol. 113b, which refers to the "writings of the Maggid."

in doing so he diminishes it. These words are now within the disciple's ken, becoming something concrete by which to increase his intellectual capabilities. As the process continues, the master may reveal more and more ofhis wisdom, but it is always restricted by the boundaries of words.

Yet the notion that "the power of the Maker is in the made," a Kabbalistic phrase that appears frequently in the Maggid's sermons in reference to divine immanence in the physical world, suggests that the master's wisdom is still present in his words, even though its full potential can never be revealed. The very act of teaching through language impacts the disciple. The student continues to mull over the words of his teacher, and his master's ineffable "hidden wisdom" that has been impressed in his mind begins to awaken and mature.

One of the Maggid's sermons offers a more precise description of the student's efforts to plumb the depths of his master's words. We read:

> At first [the student] does not consider these words deeply, and grasps them only according to their simple meaning due to his small degree of understanding. However, then he begins to take up the content of the matter and turns his mind away from everything else. With the fullness of his intellect and his power of contemplation he delves into the matter, [immersed in his study] to such a degree that he would not answer even if someone calls to him. It is almost as if he cannot see something that lies before his eyes, for he has diverted his attention so much into the heart of the matter. Then he comes to the ultimate understanding and truth of the matters. This type of removing his mind [from all other things] is almost like a type of death or slumber, which is one sixtieth of death.[1574] All of his vitality ascends above, and through this he receives new mental energies (*mohin*), as in "they are renewed [i.e. he receives new understanding], each morning

[1574] b. Berakhot 57b.

> [after his meditative "slumber"]" (Lam. 3:23).[1575]

The student must divert his attention from all distractions and withdraw from all physical stimuli if he is to grasp the true profundity of his teachings' words. Only this type of intense concentration allows the contemplative focus necessary for him to understand the meaning of his master's teaching. We should note, however, that in this passage the Maggid does not describe to the disciple's quest for understanding as receiving or revealing a hidden element of wisdom that has been embodied within his master's words. This homily portrays the flood of comprehension as happening within the student. After he has turned inward and "risen above" language, to employ the vertical metaphor of the homily, the student achieves a new level of understanding.

The Maggid's understanding of parables informs his own interpretation of earlier texts. He says quite explicitly that the anthropomorphic language of Lurianic Kabbalah is a *mashal*, a vocabulary of physical terms used to refer to a divine reality that is inherently spiritual.[1576] Furthermore, the Maggid claims that the entire Torah, even the non-narrative sections, is composed of parables that communicate divine Wisdom.[1577] However, he draws a key difference between the *meshalim* of Scripture and all other parables. In most *meshalim* the letters and words are only a vessel for the idea within them; they become superfluous once the student has penetrated to their wisdom. The letters of the Torah, however, are intrinsically holy, for they too are saturated with the divine Presence.

These brief examples are indicative of the Maggid's overall approach to parables, which operate in his sermons on several levels. First, *meshalim* function on their own as

[1575] MDL #205, pp. 329-330.

[1576] OHE, fol. 60b.

[1577] MDL #126, pp. 217-218.

short embedded narratives within his homilies. Second, the Maggid employs parables to illustrate and embody the message of the homily. In the teachings above, cosmological processes are described through an analogy to the realm of human cognition. And in many cases his parables have a reflexive and self-referential element, for in order to demonstrate their necessity the Maggid employs a parable. Third, parables about the art of teaching, which appear with great frequency in the Maggid's homilies, refer to what the Maggid himself is doing. Surely it is no coincidence that the Maggid often uses the *meshalim* of master and disciple, or a parent educating his child, in his discussions of how divine energy or spiritual wisdom can be communicated from one realm to another. This is, after all, the very same task that lay before him.

But might the Maggid's *meshalim* have an additional rhetorical function as well? Parables are often more than a pragmatic technique employed by homilists to entertain their listeners. The pedagogic importance of *metaphors* in determining the way we think and experience the world has been analyzed by scholars of philosophy and linguistics, among them George Lakoff and Mark Johnson.[1578] William Kirkwood has offered some insightful remarks about the parable that will help us understand the Maggid's teachings. He writes of parables that they, "challenge listeners' established beliefs and attitudes, but also evoke in them certain feelings and states of awareness significant in their own right as the ends, not mere means, of religious discipline. The operation of these motives is one of the particularly interesting features of parables as rhetorical devices."[1579] Parables are

[1578] George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, Chicago 1980; George Lakoff, 'The Contemporary Theory of Metaphor', *Metaphor and Thought*, ed. A. Ortony, 2nd edition, Cambridge 1993, pp. 202-151. See also Sells, *Mystical Languages of Unsaying*, pp. 6-9, 29-30, 39-44, 125-140, 159-164.

[1579] William G. Kirkwood, 'Storytelling and Self-Confrontation: Parables as Communication Strategies', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 69 (1983) p. 59. See idem, 'Parables as Metaphors and Examples', *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985), pp. 422-440.

by definition brief vignettes primarily found in oral teachings, and they function as engines of spiritual self-confrontation. Storytellers, preachers and religious masters all employ parables to overturn their listener's assumptions and inspire growth, and in some cases, even provoke an experience.

The Maggid's teachings called his students to a different type of spiritual consciousness of a paradoxical truth about existence: in truth there is only *ayin*, the divine Nothing, which finds expression through *yesh*, the physical world. In light of this, we might add a fourth dimension to the Maggid's usage of parables: they affected the student and awakened him to a new awareness of the Divine. Of course, this may not happen immediately. Not unlike a Zen koan, the student must spend time contemplating and considering the teaching received from his master.[1580] Only then can the disciple retrieve the ineffable wisdom embedded in the parable.[1581]

"Each According to his Level"

The Maggid seems to have understood that a teacher whose disciples have a range of intellectual interests and capabilities must speak to them differently. Presumably he delivered different types of sermons to his various audiences; the homilies offered to an intimate group of his disciples would not have been identical to those given in more open public settings. In one sermon he alludes to this issue, saying that while a master can

[1580] See Isshū Miura and Ruth Fuller Sasaki, *The Zen Koan: Its History and Use in Rinzai Zen*, New York 1965; Steven Heine and Dale S. Wright, ed., *The Koan: Texts and Contexts in Zen Buddhism*, Oxford 2000; Henry Rosemont, Jr., 'The Meaning is the Use: Koan and Mondo as Linguistic Tools of the Zen Masters', *Philosophy East and West* 20.2 (1970), pp. 109-119; Charles G. Zug III, 'The Nonrational Riddle: The Zen Koan', *The Journal of American Folklore* 80.315 (1967), pp. 81-88; Wolfson, *Eros, Language, Being*, pp. 319-320.

[1581] In his introduction to MDL, R. Solomon of Lutsk notes that at some point after the death of Isaac Luria people began do misunderstand his teachings and interpret them too literally; see MDL, p. 2.

reveal more of his expansive wisdom to his advanced students, he must tailor, adapt and even diminish his teachings in order to match the abilities of his less accomplished disciples.[1582]

However, some gifted teachers are able to go beyond the ability of addressing different kinds of audiences. Talented masters can engage every one of their listeners at the very same time by delivering sermons that are sublimely polysemous.[1583] This notion is echoed in Solomon Maimon's description of the sermon he heard from the Maggid during his brief stay in Mezritch:

> Every one of the new comers believed that he discovered, in that part of the sermon which was founded on his verse, something that had special reference to the facts of his own spiritual life. At this we were of course greatly astonished.[1584]

Each person at the Maggid's table felt that he was being personally addressed, even though the sermon was the same for all. Though closely related, this is not quite the same as speaking to students on different levels simultaneously; it is about engaging the unique circumstances of different individuals simultaneously. I suspect these phenomena are grounded in the Maggid's understanding of the nature of language and the process through which teachers convey their ideas. A master focuses his knowledge into words

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[1582] LY #285, fol. 106b. See Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite*, p. 38.

[1583] See *Sha'ar Ma'amrei ha-RaSHBI*, Jerusalem 1998, *mishpatim*, pp. 91-92, where R. Simeon bar Yohai is described as being able to garb (*le-halbish*) the secrets of Torah so that only those who are worthy will understand the true depths of his teachings; cf. *She'elot u-Teshuvot Rav Pe'alim*, vol. 1, Y.D. #56.

This calls to mind the distinction between Kenner ("connoisseurs") and Liebhaber ("amateurs") often drawn by critics of German literature and music. Excellent composers can write a piece that satisfies one or the other, but truly great composers can create works that electrify both types of people at the very same time; see Arnold Schering, 'Künstler, Kenner und Liebhaber der Musik im Zeitalter Haydns und Goethes', *Jahrbuch der Musikbibliothek Peters* 38 (1931), pp. 8-23; Peter Schleuning, *Der Bürger erhebt sich: Geschichte der deutschen Musik im 18. Jahrhundert*, Stuttgart 2000, pp. 128-139. My thanks to Nehemia Polen for drawing this analogy to my attention.

[1584] Maimon, *Autobiography*, p. 169.

and letters, which must then be unpacked by his various students. The results of their efforts surely differ from disciple to disciple.

Two traditions from the Maggid cited by R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir will shed further light on the phenomenon of a teacher being able to deliver a single instruction that is appropriate for many students. We read:

> The Maggid offered a parable about someone who travels to a far away land with his merchandise, etc. There he sees wondrous and elevated things. At the time of the holidays, he returns home and tells his loved ones and relatives what his eyes have seen. Even while on the road he speaks quite a bit to the people and the community, [telling them] about the wondrous things he has seen, as is the way of the world.
>
> Of course there are significant differences between the opinions of those who have been listening to his words. Each one [hears them] according to his understanding and the level of his contemplative connection to God. According to this, he inclines his ear to listen and bring forth for himself some hint of wisdom, for "there are no words without the voice being heard, which calls out turn to the path of Y-H-V-H."[1585]

It seems reasonable to read this parable as an autobiographical account of the Maggid's own spiritual journeys.[1586] His internal mystic quest led him to the depths of his consciousness, and as he returns he cannot help but tell others about the amazing sights he has witnessed. His various listeners, however, each grasp the storyteller's account differently. His students interpret his words through their own epistemological framework, and each of his students extracts a different kernel of wisdom from the same account the master's journey. This is the "voice" hidden within the specific words.

[1585] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *qohelet*, p. 312. The final words are an adaptation of Psalms 19:4 and Isaiah 40:3.

[1586] The editors of SLA also interpreted this homily as being autobiographical, citing it their introduction as evidence of the way in which his varied disciples heard the same sermons differently; see SLA, p. 60. The BeSHT told stories with a self-referential element as well; see *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 2, *tsav*, p. 533.

This passage is complemented by another tradition from R. Ze'ev Wolf, one that is explicitly biographical in its description of the Maggid. He writes:

> Once we were sitting in the Maggid's house, where all sorts of people, young and old, had assembled. He opened his mouth to speak works of Torah, [saying]: a parable referred to in [the sages'] teaching: a person who has two wives, one young and the other old. The old one plucks his black hairs, the young plucks his white ones, and between the two of them he becomes bald.[1587]
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> So it is with words of Torah. The sages were aroused to say that the Torah was given as black fire on white fire.[1588] "Black fire" refers to words of awe, such as ethical instruction (*divrei mussarim*), which applies to the youth who have not yet grasped the secret of Y-H-V-H. They must be frightened by matters of awe and a terrifying whip.[1589] "White fire" refers to matters of love, allusions and secrets of Torah that apply to those enlightened people, teaching them the sublime taste of intellectual apprehension of God.
>
> Many people come before the master to ask things of him. Some pull him [in one direction] and ask about awe, a name for black fire. Others ask about matters of love. Between them he becomes "bald"—he cannot speak about anything. However, if he is an all-encompassing sage (*hakham ha-kolel*), with a broad soul and expanded consciousness, he can bring forth words that are equal before all, [understood by] each according to his rung and understanding. [Each disciple] can find rest for his soul, searching the intention of the master for [the lesson that] applies to his particular divine service.[1590]

Some teachers are rendered speechless by the fact that their students require many different things. A more wide-ranging and expansive master, however, will find the words necessary to inspire each of his disciples in the appropriate way. Such a person is not forced to retreat into silence. This is the plain-sense meaning of the Talmudic story

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[1587] b. Bava Qamma 60b.

[1588] y. Sotah 8:3; Tanhuma, *bereshit* #1.

[1589] See Zohar 1:11b.

[1590] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *devarim*, p. 160. See also Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland," p. 169 n. 114. See above, n. 455.

cited by the Maggid, but here we see R. Dov Baer adding an extra layer of mystical interpretation. He describes the teacher as bringing his ineffable wisdom into language, using the power of words to to deliver a single sermon that is fitting for all of his students.

Solomon Maimon and R. Ze'ev Wolf were not the only ones to remember the Maggid's ability to speak on multiple levels at once. Another tradition appears in a work attributed to his great-grandson, R. Israel of Ruzhin.[1591] We read:

> When the Maggid spoke Torah at the table, his disciples would go over the teaching (*Torah*) as they returned home. This one would say, "I heard the teaching in such a way." Another would say, "I heard it in a different way." Each of them heard it differently. But I say that is no great surprise, for the Torah has seventy faces. Each student heard the teaching from the Maggid according to his particular face of the Torah.[1592]

The Maggid's various students, says R. Israel, heard the same sermon in very different ways. But this tradition does not attribute the diverging interpretations of the Maggid's disciples to their individual spiritual attainments. R. Israel claims that each student was essentially linked to a particular "face," or way of approaching Torah, and that this connection colored the manner in which they absorbed the Maggid's teachings.

These traditions offer an image of the Maggid as a leader who addressed a range of different people, not simply a small group of elite disciples.[1593] This notion is supported by the wide variety of teachings attributed to him, which range from short, incisive snippets of spiritual advice to long, complicated and rather abstract sermons.

[1591] See above, pp. 139-140.

[1592] *'Irin Qaddishin*, vol. 1, *shavu'ot*, p. 205. It is interesting to note that R. Israel continues with the claim that some teachers can affect their students simply by gazing upon them, and have no need to speak any words of Torah at all.

[1593] See also Berger, *'Eser Orot*, fol. 12a.

Furthermore, textual evidence suggests that in some cases several of his disciples wrote down the same teaching. Each did so in his own way, capturing a different aspect of that sermon. The image of the Maggid as a preacher capable of speaking to multiple audiences at once may also be reflected in the fact that several types of students came to him, all of whom were struck by the great profundity of his teachings. He attracted charismatic but non-intellectual figures such as R. Zushya and R. Moses Leib of Sassov, as well as great scholars like R. Shmu'el Shmelke of Nikolsburg, R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev, R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady, and even the young Solomon Maimon.[1594]

Conclusion

The Maggid's notion of sacred study is built upon his conception of Torah as the linguistic embodiment of the divine Presence. Scripture is God's ineffable Wisdom translated into words, and the scholar must always strive to reach the *penimiyyut*, the inner dimension of *hokhmah*, that is embodied by its words. Attaining *devequt* through the study of Torah depends on the way the scholar approaches his studies, not the particular texts he is reading. Study of any religious text can recreate the intimate encounter between Israel and God on Mt. Sinai, as long as it is performed with passion and enthusiasm.

Mystical study transforms the scholar, since it forges a connection with the pre-linguistic realm of the divine Thought and fills his consciousness with new ideas. But this type of study also transforms the way the scholar views the physical realm around him, for it attunes him to the fact that the corporeal world also holds within it the divine Word.

[1594] Similarly, Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite*, pp. 74, 90-97, argues that being able to convey spiritual ideas to people of many different intellectual levels and abilities was one a central concern of R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady.

The impassioned study of Torah also affects the Divine. It brings great pleasure to God, and draws new spiritual energy through the matrix of the *sefirot*. Here, as elsewhere, we see an interesting tension in the Maggid's thought. Though he warns against the literal interpretation of Lurianic symbols, his own descriptions of God and the divine pleasure are strikingly anthropomorphic. And despite the Torah's intrinsic sanctity, God's delight in our study is not automatic. It is not enough for one to recite its letters without understanding or comprehension.

Hiddushim, or new interpretations of Torah, originate in the pre-linguistic realm of *hokhmah*. Attaining these new understandings of Scripture is one of the primary goals of sacred study, for God delights in them. In some cases *hiddushim* are a divine gift, described by the Maggid as an idea that overcomes the scholar almost spontaneously, like a spark of intuition. These sublime flashes of illumination are formulated into language in the realm of *binah*, the World of Thought, through the student's intense contemplation and consideration. Eventually he understands them well enough to speak them verbally, thus drawing them into the *sefirot* of *tif'eret*/*qol* and *malkhut*/*dibbur*. This reenacts the sacred process through which God's ineffable wisdom was translated into language on Mt. Sinai.

The element of human creativity involved developing *hiddushim* seems virtually unbounded. Although they originate in God's wisdom, it is the student who draws them forth from this reservoir of potential, articulating them in letters and giving them expression through language. A few of the Maggid's teachings even extend this power to the realm of Jewish law, for it is possible for a scholar to change a point of *halakhah* by uplifting it to its roots in the upper sefirot and bringing down a new decision. Elsewhere

the Maggid argues that the great number of different, even contradictory possible interpretations of *halakhah* presented in the Talmud exist only from our perspective, and that the purest expression of Torah above changes according to the will of the scholars below. Another teaching, however, offers a very different picture by claiming that the human judge below must listen perceptively to the way the law has been decided in its ideal form in the *sefirot* above. Instead of the scholar changing the abstract law to accord with his own intuition, here the judge is called upon to rule in keeping with the way the decision has been rendered within the Godhead itself.

Some of the Maggid's sermons deemphasize the absolute centrality of learning Torah, and he often conflates study with prayer, since both activities involve the contemplation of holy letters. A few of his teachings seem to recognize a tension between the intellectual enterprise and the goal of *devequt*. Yet a great many of his homilies emphasize the great importance of sacred study, underscoring that it does not impede one's connection with God in any way. Indeed, it is not the act of studying per se that interferes with *devequt*, but rather the pride and narcissism that often accompany a scholar's achievements. In other cases, a student may become so enraptured by his complicated dialectics that he will forget that the ultimate goal of learning Torah is an encounter with the Divine. Furthermore, many of the Maggid's sermons imply that in some sense it is preferable to serve God through study rather than engagement with the physical world, for the latter path is fraught with danger and must be undertaken only after great contemplative preparation. However, the Maggid does not deny the importance of serving the Divine through the corporeal realm, and he argues that immersing oneself in the study of Torah prepares him for such service.

The Maggid refers to words and letters as necessary vessels through which a teacher may communicate his ideas to a student. In doing so he draws a connection between the revelation of the Torah on Sinai, the moment in which the infinite divine Wisdom took on a linguistic garb, and the manner in which the master's *hokhmah* is focused in language so that it might be understood by his disciples. The Maggid acknowledges that a teacher may be so caught up in his own contemplative efforts that it is difficult for him to begin to speak, but he underscores that it is vital for him to do so. A master's words give wisdom to his students, but he too is graced with new insight and inspiration as he begins to teach.

The parable is perhaps the most important medium through which a teacher may focus his wisdom and convey his thoughts to his students. Like all words, these short anecdotes are a necessary linguistic intermediary between the minds of the master and his disciple. Parables articulate ideas in a manner that allows the diligent student to contemplate and interpret them and eventually recover the ineffable wisdom imbued within it. Yet because all communication of ideas requires the master to contract his wisdom into words, his teachings may be interpreted in many different ways. Furthermore, great preachers have the capacity to offer sermons and instructions that are compelling and appropriate for many different students at once. As is revealed in the testimony of the Maggid's disciples, his audiences were at times quite varied. Instead of allowing himself to be shocked into silence, says the Maggid, in cases like this the teacher must garb his wisdom within words in such a way that it may be correctly understood by each and every one of the assembled students.

Chapter 6: Prayer

Introduction

Prayer is a central pillar of early Hasidism's spiritual path. The Hasidic masters inherited the traditional kabbalistic attitude toward the significance of prayer, but elevated it to a new degree of importance.[1595] Their approach to prayer and their emphasis of its singular power was also a flashpoint in the controversy with the *mithnaggedim*. Offenses like wild antics and gesticulations of some masters, the rejection of Ashkenazi liturgy for the Sephardic prayer rite (*nusah*), and the formation of separate prayer quorums (*minyanim*) were singled out in the earliest anti-Hasidic bans. The Hasidic equation of prayer with study, and in some cases the preference for worship over study, also incurred the wrath of the Lithuanian elites.[1596]

The Hasidic masters' embrace of prayer stems from a belief in attaining *devequt* as the highest religious ideal. Whether *devequt* should be reserved for the elite or held up as a goal for everyone was a matter of some debate among different Hasidic thinkers, but their united emphasis on prayer clearly indicates a broader turn toward a more devotional,

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[1595] See Green's remarks in 'Early Hasidism', p. 445. For a general overview of Hasidic approaches to prayer, see Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, London 2001; Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 149-170; idem, 'Models of Understanding Prayer', pp. 7-111; Schatz, 'Contemplative Prayer', 209-226; Margolin, *Human Temple*, esp. pp. 202-204, 302-307; Samuel H. Dresner, 'Prayer in Hasidism', *Prayer in Judaism: Continuity and* Change, ed. G. H. Cohn and H. Fisch, Northvale 1996, pp. 217-239; Naftali Loewenthal, 'Habad Approaches to Contemplative Prayer, 1790-1920', *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 288-300. See also Rivka Horwitz, 'Abraham Joshua Heschel on Prayer and His Hasidic Sources', *Modern Judaism* 19.3 (1999), pp. 293-310.

[1596] On the elevation of prayer over Torah study as a flashpoint of controversy, see Wilensky, 'Hasidic Mitnaggedic Polemics', pp. 248-253, 261-266; Nadler, *Faith of the Mithnagdim*, pp. 50-55. Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'Contemplative Prayer', p. 210 claims that prayer has always been afforded more importance than study in traditional Jewish thought. However Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, pp. 17-18 critiqued her for this, arguing instead that study has generally been considered more important. The complicated relationship between study and prayer dates back into Antiquity. See Yaakov Elman, 'Torah ve-Avodah: Prayer and Torah Study as Competing Values in the Time of Hazal', *Jewish Spirituality and Divine Law*, ed. A. Mintz and L. Schiffman, Jersey City 2005, pp. 61-124. Many early Hasidic masters struggled with the question of how to balance these two acts; see Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, pp. 18-20; Foxbrunner, *Habad*, pp. 139-140, 147-148.

and accessible, modality of religious service. Popular Hasidic teachings about prayer and stories of the illuminated and effective prayers of the *tsaddiqim* played a very important role in the spread of the Hasidic movement.[1597]

Nearly all of the Maggid's sermons address the subject of prayer in some form.[1598] Many characteristics of the Maggid's theology of language that we have explored are found in his conception of prayer as well. Indeed, to some degree the distinction between study and prayer breaks down, for both are activities intensely focused upon language as a medium that bridges the human and the Divine realms.[1599] Correctly reciting the words of prayer, like all language, requires one to unite the World of Speech with the World of Thought, thus uplifting the *sefirah malkhut* to *binah* in the cosmic structure as embodied in the speaker.[1600] However, in this chapter we will highlight elements of his understanding of language that are unique to the subject of worship.

The Maggid's teachings frame prayer as the central activity that sets the tone for all of one's language throughout the rest of day. We read:

> One must guard his mouth and tongue from any speech, even that which is permitted, before praying. Even greeting another person creates a blemish before prayer.[1601] It is known that the

[1597] Gries, 'Hasidic Prayer Stories', pp. 219-235.

[1598] The Maggid's teachings on prayer may be divided into two categories: *hanhagot*, or recommended practices and techniques; and sermons that outline a broader theology of prayer. We should note that the issues of prayer is one through which the difference between the various collections of the Maggid's teachings is readily apparent. LY includes a vast number of *hanhagot* about the practice prayer, whereas the sermons in MDL, OT and OHE are devoted more specifically to the theology of prayer.

[1599] In one teaching the Maggid notes that people are drawn to Torah study because of the thrill of new ideas, whereas they lose their desire to pray because the liturgy is the same each and every day; see *Ve-Tsiva ha-Kohen*, ch. 10 pp. 84-85; cf. LY #134, fol. 40b.

[1600] See OT #198, *shir ha-shirim*, p. 257. See also *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 2, *derush le-shabbat teshuvah*, p. 638, for a similar teaching from the BeSHT; cf. *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 2, *be-midbar*, p. 634.

[1601] b. Berakhot 14a.

> world was created through thought, speech and deed. First came the thought; speech is a branch of thought, and deed is a branch of speech. So too when a person arises from his sleep he becomes a new creation.... If his first words are permitted words, and of course if they are forbidden, even though he may pray and immerse himself in Torah afterward, everything branches forth and is drawn from the first utterance. Just as speech is a branch of thought and depends upon it, so too is the second word in regards to the first, as is written in the Zohar.[1602]... Thus one must be careful to sanctify and purify his first word, and clarify his first thought so that it will be connected to holiness, so that this will be true for all the subsequent words drawn from it. Afterward, when he stands up to pray amidst the joy that comes from performing a commandment, he will certainly be answered because he has sanctified his initial words and thought.[1603]

The first words a person speaks each day are likened to the primal utterance through which God created the world. Just as that original divine speech act contained the roots of all language, so too are one's first words the source of all his speech on that day. If they are profane, or even just mundane, that quality will be imprinted in all of his language. However, if he sanctifies his capacity for language immediately upon arising, devoting his words and his thoughts to God by means of prayer, this element of holiness will be drawn forth into his words throughout the course of the day.

BACKGROUND

Prayer is common in the Hebrew Bible, generally appearing as a spontaneous offering given by an individual in response to a particular triumph or tragedy. There seems to have been no clear obligation to pray regularly in the biblical period, nor is there

[1602] See Zohar 3:83a.

[1603] LY #146, fol. 45b, with a parallel in KST #212, pp. 120-121. See also 8°5307, fol. 105b-106a.

evidence of a standard liturgy.[1604] Only in the rabbinic period did the structure, specific formal requirements, and most importantly for our purposes, the text of Jewish prayer crystallized.[1605] However, while the rabbinic sages demanded attention and concentration in worship, they were well aware of the limits of obligatory prayer.[1606] Fixed liturgies can easily lead to rote worship, and an obligation to employ a set text may interfere with, or even preclude, spontaneous prayer.[1607]

We should note that for the rabbis of the Talmud, as in the Bible, worship was not purely a cerebral exercise. Prayer was recited aloud, although some parts were recited in a whisper.[1608] Nor was prayer entirely linguistic, since many parts of the liturgy were

[1604] See Moshe Greenberg, *Biblical Prose Prayer as a Window to the Popular Religion of Ancient Israel*, Berkeley and Los Angeles 1983. See also Sheldon H. Blank, 'Some Observations Concerning Biblical Prayer', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 32 (1961), pp. 75-90; John F. Sawyer, 'Types of Prayer in the Hebrew Bible', *Sacred Texts and Sacred Meanings*, Sheffield 2011, pp. 281-287; Terje Stordalen, 'Ancient Hebrew Meditative Recitation', *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Cultural Histories*, ed. H. Eifring, London and New York, 2013, pp. 17-31.

[1605] Ezra Fleischer, *Statutory Jewish Prayer: Their Emergence and Development*, ed. Sh. Elizur and T. Beeri, Jerusalem 2012, 2 vols. [Hebrew]; Joseph Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, Berlin and New York 1977; ibid, 'The Fixed and the Fluid in Jewish Prayer', *Prayer in Judaism: Continuity and Change*, ed. G. Cohn and H. Fisch, Northvale, New Jersey 1996, pp. 45-52; Reuven Kimelman, 'Rabbinic Prayer in Late Antiquity', *The Cambridge History of Judaism Vol. IV: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. S. T. Katz, Cambridge 2006, 573-611. See also Bilhah Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer and Religious Poetry*, trans. Jonathan Chipman, Leiden 1994. More broadly, see Joseph Tabory, 'The Prayer Book (*siddur*) as an Anthology of Judaism', *Prooftexts* 17.2 (1997), pp. 115-132.

[1606] See m. Berakhot 4:5, 5:1; t. Berakhot 3:4, 14-16, 18. More broadly, see Robert Goldenberg's excellent study 'Law and Spirit in Talmudic Religion', pp. 232-252.

[1607] On these tensions, see m. Avot 2:13; b. Berakhot 33b; cf. b. Megillah 18a. See also Maimonides, *Guide* I:59, pp. 140-141.

[1608] y. Berakhot 4:1 cites sages who prayed out loud at home, and cf. b. Berakhot 31a. See also Konstantinos T. Zarras, 'Silence and Proper Intention in late Second Temple and Early Rabbinic Prayer: The Case for mBerakhot 5.1', *Das Gebet im Neuen Testament*, ed. H. Klein, V. Mihoc and K.W. Niebuhr, Tübingen 2009, pp. 3-24.

accompanied by physical movements.[1609] Some rabbinic descriptions of prayer even include descriptions of visionary experiences as well.[1610]

Prayer was a foundational element of kabbalistic religious practice from its earliest stages, and had long been a focal point of Jewish mystical speculation, even before the early medieval Kabbalists.[1611] The ascents of the *heikhalot* literature were often accompanied by hymns, and in some cases the mystic joins along with the angelic choir in reciting the heavenly liturgy before God.[1612] The later German Pietists of the twelfth and thirteenth century emphasized the importance of prayer, which replaced the ascent to the Throne of Glory as the locus of mystical experience.[1613] The Pietists had no doctrine similar to the notion of *kavvanah* ("intentions") found in later Kabbalah, but their teachings attributed special significance to one's inner state during prayer. They emphasized that great secrets were to be found in the words of the liturgy itself, which could be unlocked through tallying the numerical values of letters and words, or counting the total number of words in a particular unit. This approach to prayer removed the words

[1609] Uri Ehrlich, *The Nonverbal Language of Prayer: A New Approach to Jewish Liturgy*, trans. Dena Ordan, Tübingen 2004.

[1610] Elliot R. Wolfson, '"Israel: The One Who Sees God"—Visualization of God in Biblical, Apocalyptic, and Rabbinic Sources', *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, Princeton 1994, pp. 13-51; idem, 'Iconic Visualization and the Imaginal Body of God: The Role of Intention in the Rabbinic Conception of Prayer', *Modern Theology* 12.2 (1996), pp. 137-162

[1611] For an excellent overview, see Efraim Gottlieb, 'The Meaning of Prayer in Kabbalah', *Studies in the Kabbala Literature*, ed. J. Hacker, Tel Aviv 1976, pp. 38-55 [Hebrew].

[1612] See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 57-63; idem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1965, pp. 20-30; Janowitz, *Poetics of Ascent*, esp. pp. 6-10, 87, 92-93; Swartz, *Mystical Prayer*, pp. 109-168. These liturgical traditions of the *heikhalot* mystics influenced the development of Jewish liturgy into the medieval period; see Meir Bar-Ilan, *The Mysteries of Jewish Prayer and Hekhalot*, Ramat-Gan 1987 [Hebrew]; Schäfer, *Hidden and Manifest God*, pp. 45-48, 52, 85-95, 111-113, 141; Ra'anan S. Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic*, Tübingen 2005, pp. 41-45, 223-225.

[1613] See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 100-103; Dan, *Esoteric Theology*, pp. 69-79, 140-141; Fishman, 'Rhineland Pietist Approaches to Prayer', pp. 313-331. See also Joseph Dan, 'The Emergence of Mystical Prayer', *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, Northvale 1998, pp. 221-257; idem, 'Prayer as Text and Prayer As Mystical Experience', *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, Northvale 1998, pp. 259-276; idem, '*Pesak ha-Yriah veha-Emunah* and the Intention of Prayer in Ashkenazi Hasidic Esotericism', *Jewish Mysticism: The Middle Ages*, Northvale, New Jersey 1998, pp. 277-311.

of the liturgy from their context, since their symbolic association and numerical values were more important than their plain-sense meaning, and at the same time it canonized the text of the prayers to an unprecedented degree.[1614]

The Provencal Kabbalists developed new types of mystical prayer.[1615] They emphasized the need of *kavvanah*, defined as intense meditative concentration during prayer as well as contemplation of the associations between the words of the liturgy and the *sefirot*.[1616] According to these mystics, the most important work of prayer takes place within the mind, described as the realm of *mahshavah*.[1617] The highest form of prayer entails leaving the physical realm behind, tracing one's thought back to God and then experiencing a communion (*devequt*) with the Naught (*ayin*).[1618] Of course, there are theurgic elements to this doctrine of prayer in addition to the experiential aspects, for the mystic's prayers affect the ways in which divine energy flows through the *sefirot*.[1619]

The Zohar expands on both of these elements of kabbalistic prayer, namely the associations of the *sefirot* with the liturgy and the contemplative encounter with the

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[1614] Dan, 'Emergence of Mystical Prayer', pp. 229-231; Fishman, 'Rhineland Pietist Approaches to Prayer', p. 318

[1615] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 243-248.

[1616] See Idel, 'Kabbalistic Prayer in Provence', pp. 165-186; Pedaya, *Name and Sanctuary*, pp. 57-59, 164-169, 72, 161, 185-186; Dan, 'Emergence of Mystical Prayer', pp. 248-257; Afterman, 'Letter Permutation Techniques', pp. 52-78. See also idem, *The Intention of Prayers in Early Ecstatic Kabbalah: A Study and Critical Edition of an Anonymous Commentary to the Prayers*, Los Angeles 2004 [Hebrew]. It is interesting to note that Abraham Abulafia, the great mystic of language, developed a great number of supererogatory devotional practices involving reciting divine names and combining letters, but devoted somewhat less attention to the statutory prayers.

[1617] Seth Brody, 'Human Hands Dwell in Heavenly Heights: Contemplative Ascent and Theurgic Power in Thirteenth Century Kabbalah', *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies*, ed. R. A. Herrera, New York 1993), pp. 133-158.

[1618] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 419-421; idem, 'Devekut', pp. 202-208; Afterman, *Devequt*, pp. 169-333.

[1619] Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 244-245.

Divine.[1620] The hour of prayer is described as a time of great intimacy with God, with worship becoming a moment of intense communion with the divine Presence and increased awareness of God. This state of consciousness must be entered into and then left, since its great power can totally overwhelm the worshiper.[1621] The various prayer services are associated with different configurations of the cosmos, each with a unique ability to unify a certain arrangement of the *sefirot*.[1622]

The Zohar also emphasizes the orality of prayer, perhaps in a polemic against the spiritualizing rationalists who advocated a more silent form of contemplative prayer.[1623] Of course, sections of prayer like the *'amidah* must be recited quietly, but they should not become silent meditations.[1624] The authors of the Zohar also developed some new customs and effected small changes in the liturgy, many of which were later incorporated into standard prayer books in Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.[1625]

Prayer and *devequt* were very important parts of the sixteenth-century Safed renaissance.[1626] These Kabbalists introduced a number of significant liturgical rituals and compositions.[1627] The many writings of R. Moses Cordovero, who also authored a

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[1620] Isaiah Tishby, 'Prayer and Devotion in the Zohar', *Essential Papers on Kabbalah*, ed. L. Fine, New York 1995, pp. 341-399. See also Jonatan Benarroch, '"The Mystery of Unity": Poetic and Mystical Aspects of a Unique Zoharic Shema Mystery', *AJS Review* 37.2 (2013), pp. 231-256. Somewhat less work has been done on parsing the approaches to prayer found in the various textual strata of the Zohar.

[1621] Hellner-Eshed, *River Flows from Eden*, pp. 66-67.

[1622] Hellner-Eshed, *River Flows from Eden*, p. 142.

[1623] See Guide I:59; and cf. *Kuzari* IV:5, where Halevi underscores that one cannot pray with great emotion and inspiration simply by meditating within the mind; for this reason one must pray aloud.

[1624] See Zohar 1:209b-210a; 3:210b (R.M.). This point is underscored by R. Isaac of Akko; see Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*, pp. 132-133.

[1625] For a series of examples, see Ta-Shma, *Ha-Nigle She-Banistar*, pp. 58-71.

[1626] Pachter, '*Devequt* in Sixteenth Century Safed', pp. 235-316.

[1627] The most famous and influential liturgical composition of Safed is R. Solomon Alkabetz's hymn *Lekha Dodi*; see Reuven Kimelman, *Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat*, Jerusalem and Los

commentary to the prayer book, demonstrate the importance of prayer in his theology. Some scholars have stressed the theurgic, quasi-magical elements of Cordovero's teachings on prayer,[1628] while others have emphasized the meditative, contemplative aspects.[1629] Bracha Zack pointed out that Cordovero describes prayer with the proper *kavvanah* as an act that unites the physical world, which includes both the one praying and the words he utters, with the spiritual realm of the Divine. She also notes that Cordovero, invoking the Zohar, considers the highest level of prayer to be uniting and aligning the *sefirot* without any regard for one's own desires, thinking only of *shekhinah*'s needs.[1630]

R. Isaac Luria's contributions to mystical prayer may be divided into two categories: the widely accessible ritual practices (*hanhagot*), and the phenomenally complicated system of *kavvanot*.[1631] Luria's *kavvanot* are specific intentions to be contemplated, and in some cases envisioned, for each and every section of the liturgy. Their goal is to unite the *sefirot* and shatter the husks in order to redeem the fallen sparks. These *kavvanot* were codified in several different versions and eventually printed; the two most important of which were later published as *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot* and *Peri Ets*

Angeles 2003 [Hebrew]. See also Scholem, 'Tradition and New Creation', pp. 118-157; Green, 'Some Aspects of Qabbalat Shabbat', pp. 95-118.

[1628] Joseph Ben-Shlomo, *The Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero*, Jerusalem 1965, pp. 80-86 [Hebrew].

[1629] Alan Brill, 'Meditative Prayer in Moshe Cordovero's Kabbalah', *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam: Cultural Histories*, ed. H. Eifring, London and New York, 2013, pp. 45-60.

[1630] Bracha Sack, 'Prayer in the Teachings of R. Moses Cordovero', *Daat* 9 (1983-1984), pp. 5-6, 10-11 [Hebrew]. See also *'Emeq ha-Melekh*, 13:24, p. 492.

[1631] Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 220-258. See Benayahu, *Toledoth ha-Ari*, pp. 323-327; trans. in Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, pp. 71-74.

Hayyim.[1632] The ritual practices spread throughout Europe together with the theosophical writings of Safed Kabbalah, and both of them influenced Hasidism.[1633]

The renewed emphasis on prayer was clearly a central part of the BeSHT's spiritual ethos.[1634] He was remembered for the remarkable effectiveness of his worship, and, in addition to the stories about his power as a worker of miracles, there are a significant number of tales about the BeSHT's ecstatic prayer.[1635] But in addition to these hagiographical stories, even a cursory glance reveals that a great number of the teachings attributed to him in the works of his disciples are about prayer.[1636] In keeping with his approach to the spiritual life more broadly, the BeSHT emphasized that worship must be taken seriously but without any admixture of sadness or moroseness.[1637] He also

[1632] Of the various recensions of the Lurianic *kavvanot*, the collection *Peri Ets Hayyim*, Koretz 1782, edited by Meir Poppers was a particular favorite of the early Hasidic masters. See Avivi, *Kabbala Luriania*, vol. 1, pp. 635-649, 810-842. See also Marvin J. Heller, 'Clarifying the Obfuscation Surrounding the Reissue of *Sefer ha-Kavanot*', *Further Studies in the Making of the Early Hebrew Book*, Leiden 2013, pp. 129-136.

[1633] On the *hanhagot* literature and its importance in the diffusion of Kabbalah, see Zeev Gries, 'The Fashioning of *Hanhagot* (Regimen Vitae) Literature at the End of the Sixteenth Century and During the Seventeenth Century and its Historical Significance', *Tarbiz* 56 (1986-1987), pp. 527-581 [Hebrew].

[1634] Scholars have noted the similarity between the Ba'al Shem Tov's emphasis on religious ecstasy and the devotional attitudes of some Christian mystics living in this same region. See above, n. 103.

[1635] Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 124-129. See Ben Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, pp. 50-53. This point is echoed in an early Hasidic tradition that the BeSHT attainted his great spiritual achievements because of his commitment to prayer; see LY #28, fol. 5a. Elsewhere, however, the BeSHT is remembered as having blossomed because of his renewed commitment to ritual immersion; see LY #178, fol. 56b.

[1636] An excellent example of this fact is the long excursus on prayer entitled *'Amud ha-Tefillah* printed in the section on *parashat noah* in *Sefer Ba 'al Shem Tov 'al ha-Torah*, Lodz 1938. It is interesting to note, however, that a significant number of the traditions in *'Amud ha-Tefillah* actually come from the works of the Maggid. For an expanded translation of this work, see Menachem Kallus, *The Pillar of Prayer: Teachings of Contemplative Guidance in Prayer, Sacred Study, and the Spiritual Life from the Ba'al Shem Tov and his Circle*, Louisville 2011; and Ariel Evan Mayse, 'Pillar of Prayer: A Review Essay', *Modern Judaism* 32 (2012), pp. 359-368.

[1637] See BeSHT's letter to R. Jacob Joseph of Pollnoye cited in Rosman, *Founder of Hasidism*, pp. 114-115; and cf. LY #23, fol. 4b; #39, fol. 6b; #42, fol. 7a-b. More broadly, see Azriel Shochat, 'On Joy in Hasidism', *Zion* 16 (1951), pp. 30-43 [Hebrew]; Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 93-110.

underscored the notion that one should pray only for the sake of *shekhinah*, and not for one's own physical needs.[1638]

Of particular relevance to our discussion is the BeSHT's notion of cleaving to the letters of prayer.[1639] As we have seen, he described the words of prayer, and especially those that are spoken aloud, as vessels that hold divine energy. This spiritual element within the letters of prayer may be accessed through *kavvanah*, which for the BeSHT meant enthusiasm, passion, contemplative focus, and a sense of constant renewal in approaching the text of the liturgy.[1640] However, there are teachings from the BeSHT that describe *all* words of prayer, even those recited without *kavvanah*, as holding the divine presence; just as the physical world is suffused with the divinity, so does all language contain sparks of holiness.[1641]

[1638] This notion is repeated dozens of times in the BeSHT's name in early Hasidic books; see, inter alia, *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *va-yaqhel*, p. 478; *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 1, *noah*, p. 121; *Tsofnat Pane'ah*, vol. 1, *be-shalah*, p. 273; *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *toledot*, pp. 71-72; ibid, *ki tetse*, pp. 540-541, 544-555.

[1639] There are a great many examples of the BeSHT's teachings on the letters of prayer in early Hasidic literature. See above, pp. 166-173; and cf. *Me'or 'Einayim*, *ki tissa*, p. 199; *Yisamah Lev*, *shabbat*, pp. 518-519. See also Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 156-170; idem, 'Models of Understanding Prayer', pp. 23-49; idem, 'Modes of Cleaving to the Letters', pp. 299-317; Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 147-150.

[1640] See *Ben Porat Yosef*, *quntres aharon*, p. 685; *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *yitro*, pp. 140. R. Jacob Joseph records an interesting tradition that he received "from his teachers and from books," namely that prayer requires a different type of *kavvanah* each and every day; *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, *'eqev*, p. 1180. Scholars continue to debate whether or not he endorsed using the specific Lurianic *kavvanot*. See *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, *qedoshim*, p. 636; and Joseph Weiss, 'The Kavvanoth of Prayer in Early Hasidism', *Studies in East European Jewish Mysticism and Hasidism*, ed. D. Goldstein, London 1997, pp. 99-105; Etkes, *The Besht*, pp. 129-131; and for a very different perspective, Menachem Kallus, 'The Relation of the Baal Shem Tov to the Practice of Lurianic *Kavvanot* in Light of his Comments on the Siddur Rashkov', *Kabbalah* 2 (1997), pp. 151-167.

[1641] *Ben Porat Yosef*, vol. 1, *toledot*, pp. 276-277. It is interesting to note that I have been unable to locate any parallel to this notion in the Maggid's teachings. See *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *terumah*, pp. 70-71, who connects this tradition to the doctrine of uplifting "alien thoughts."

DEVEQUT

The Maggid's teachings frame *devequt* as the goal toward which one should strive in all religious actions. However, a great many of his explorations of *devequt* happen in the context of prayer, and it seems that the Maggid understood worship to be among the most important, if not the primary, activity through which one might attain this type of mystical attachment to the Divine.[1642] Prayer, at least in its more elevated and refined form, is nearly synonymous with *devequt*.[1643] In one teaching we read, "*Devequt* is when one says a word, extending it for a very long time, since because of the *devequt* he does not want to leave the word."[1644] Attachment to God is possible within prayer because one can devote himself to contemplating the words of the liturgy, each of which is a vessel and a "full structure" that holds the Divine.[1645]

According to the Maggid, prayer also requires *hitpashtut ha-gashmiyyut*, or withdrawal from all external stimuli and attachments to the physical world.[1646] Cultivating absolute focus by fully entering into the words of speech prevents one from becoming ensnared in the "husks," psychological and perhaps cosmological barriers that might otherwise restrain him from attaining *devequt*.[1647] Even more importantly, this

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[1642] See LY #9, fol. 2a.

[1643] MDL #3, p. 16.

[1644] LY #21, fol. 4a.

[1645] LY #2, fol. 1a.

[1646] LY #41, fol. 6b. On the importance of *hitpashtut ha-gashmiyut* for the Maggid and other early Hasidic thinkers, see Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 67-79, 199-200; Piekarz, *Between Ideology and Reality*, pp. 72-77; Idel, *Hasidism*, p. 64, 177-178; Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 173-174, 189-193, 360-361; Kauffman, *In all Your Ways Know Him*, pp. 426-466; and Gellman, 'Buber's Blunder', pp. 24-29. On the background of this concept, see *Arba'ah Turim*, *orah hayyim* #98; cf. Rabbenu Yonah's commentary to p. 22b of R. Isaac Alfasi's summary of b. Berakhot, s.v. *tsarikh she-yiten*. See also *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 1, *yitro*, p. 370.

[1647] See ST, p. 54b.

focus allows one to enter into the state of *ayin*.[1648] In some instances this is simply a paradigm in which one abnegates any sense of self, but in others the Maggid seems to have a more radical understanding of reaching *ayin*.[1649] In one teaching, he describes the proper intention for reciting the word "one" from the Shema' ("Hear, Israel, Y-H-V-H is your God, Y-H-V-H is one"; Deut. 6:5) as the awareness that there is no other reality except for God.[1650] In another homily, we read:

> We must understand, how is it that drawing the vitality into the world depends on our words and our prayers?[1651] The matter is thus: "from my flesh I do see God" (Job 19:26) [i.e. this lesson about the Divine may be observed from the physical realm]. A person is full of vitality and breath. Within him they are totally spread out. But when he wishes to speak, he contracts the breath through the windpipe to the five positions of the mouth, to whichever of them he wants, and his voice and his wisdom can be sensed [through] this speech. His vitality and wisdom and voice are focused into that word.
>
> Thus when a *tsaddiq* stands up to pray before the blessed Creator, surely he connects (*medabbeq*) and binds (*meqasher*) his mind and his vitality to *Ein Sof*, which is utter oneness that cannot be depicted. When he begins to speak, he draws forth the vitality of the blessed Creator into the words and speech that he brings forth from his mouth. He is truly attached to his vitality and breath that have been focused through articulation into the letters he is speaking. It seems as if his breath and vitality, which are connected to *Ein Sof*, [are] articulated and focused through the articulation of those letters.[1652]

[1648] See Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 72-73.

[1649] Ibid, pp. 67-92; Piekarz, *Between Ideology and Reality*, esp. pp. 69-70, 110-125; and Lorberbaum, 'Attain the Attribute of *'Ayyin*', pp. 181-209.

[1650] Quoted in THM, p. 447; OHE, fol. 9a.

[1651] See *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 3*, 'eqev*, pp. 1183-1184. People have become so humble and think so little of themselves that they cannot believe that their prayers have the power to draw down divine energy.

[1652] MDL #199, p. 324.

Prayer begins with a radical experience of the divine infinity, a direct and seemingly unmediated union with *Ein Sof* that is beyond all forms of language or images.[1653] This encounter, which is the worshiper's starting point, is then followed by a return to speech through the language of prayer. The words spoken by the one who is praying are a manifestation of his own inner vitality and thoughts, but after his encounter with God these words are transformed into vessels that give expression to the Divine. The first half of this sermon, which we will examine at greater length below, underscores the importance of the traditional liturgy in this process. Perhaps by emphasizing the role of the fixed text the Maggid is making a deeper point about the importance of such liturgical structure, which saves one from a feeble search for words after such a radical experience of the Divine.

We should note that in this case the first encounter with *Ein Sof* happens beyond language, but not necessarily beyond the physical body.[1654] There is great intimacy and a profound connection between the mystic and the Divine, but the Maggid's sermon is not describing an experience that can only be achieved by fleeing physicality. Indeed, the fusion of the spiritual and the corporeal, with the latter giving expression to the former, is one of the things that can be accomplished during such elated moments of illuminated prayer.

[1653] Scholem argued that there was no true mystical union in Judaism; see Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 5, 123. But Idel and others have since qualified Scholem's claim, demonstrating that the term *unio mystica* may indeed be used to describe some Jewish mystical texts; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 59-73; idem, 'Universalization and Integration: Two Conceptions of Mystical Union in Jewish Mysticism' *Mystical Union and Monotheistic Faith: An Ecumenical Dialogue*, ed. M. Idel and B. McGinn, New York 1989, pp. 27-57; Afterman, *Devequt*, esp. pp. 20-21, 37-38, 273-276, 330-332. See also Leah Orent, 'Mystical Union in the Writings of the Hasidic Master, R. Shneur Zalman of Lyady', *Studies in Spirituality* 18 (2008), pp. 61-92; David Aberbach, 'Mystical Union and Grief: The Baal Shem Tov and Krishnamurti', *Harvard Theological Review* 86.3 (1993), pp. 309-321. However, even for those scholars who do believe that there is *unio mystica* in Judaism, this formulation of becoming attched to *Ein Sof* is rather striking.

[1654] See Margolin, *Human Temple*, p. 186.

Elsewhere we find the Maggid offering very different advice regarding the early stages of prayer:

> When one first begins to pray, he should do so with awe (*yir'ah*). This is the gate through which one may enter before God. He should say in his heart, "To whom do I wish to connect myself? To the One who created all the worlds with his language, and still gives them life and sustains them." He should contemplate His greatness and exaltedness, and afterward he can enter the higher worlds.[1655]

The emotion of awe is associated with both *shekhinah* and *dibbur*, and it represents the first stage of the contemplative ascent to God.[1656] Meditating on the fact that God spoke the world into existence allows one to reach the higher levels, presumably because it both inspires a mindset of awe and reminds the one praying that his own words have great creative power. This paradigm, grounded in an awareness of the divine element of language, may then serve as the point of departure for a deeper contemplative journey that moves one beyond the letters themselves.

THE PRAYER OF *SHEKHINAH*

The Maggid often describes the power of speech aroused during prayer as the same divine quality of language imbued within humanity from the time of Creation.[1657] More specifically, he often refers to prayer as a moment in which *shekhinah* itself begins to speak from within the body of the one praying.[1658] Some of his teachings describe this

[1655] LY #16, fol. 3a.

[1656] See Zohar 1:11b.

[1657] ST, p. 54a.

[1658] In one of the more extreme formulations, prayer is described as intercourse with *shekhinah*; see LY #18, fol. 3b.

phenomenon experientially: when one prays with great passion and enthusiasm, the words leave his mouth all on their own (*mi-piv me-'atsmam*).[1659] Elsewhere we read:

> As soon as one says, "My Lord, open up my lips" (Ps. 51:17), *shekhinah* becomes garbed in him and speaks the words. When he has faith that the *shekhinah* is reciting these words, awe will overtake him, and the blessed Holy One will focus Himself and dwell with him.[1660]

Shekhinah itself is the source of the words that become one's prayer. *Dibbur*, or the World of Speech, becomes invested within a person the moment he begins to recite the *'amidah*.[1661] Throughout the Maggid's teachings we have seen the notion that human speech is an embodiment of the divine quality of language, represented by the tenth *sefirah malkhut*. In this context, it suggests that prayer might also be understood as an act of divine self-worship, but one that can only be accomplished through humanity.

Does an approach to prayer in which the ideal is for God to speak through the worshiper render him totally passive? There are a number of traditions in which the Maggid likens the one praying to a musical instrument, a vessel through which the voice of God is able to find articulation. This paradigm, he argues, results in humility and prevents any ulterior motivations or conceit from creeping into the act of worship. A musician may be entranced by the beauty of his own performance, but such thoughts of grandeur will never afflict the instrument itself.[1662] Let us choose but one example that illustrates this point:

> One must think that the World of Speech is speaking in him, and otherwise it would be impossible for him to speak, as it is written, "My Lord, open up my lips" (Ps. 51:17). This is also true of his

[1659] LY #183, fol. 57b.

[1660] LY# 44, fol. 8a. See also *Orah le-Hayyim*, *va-yiggash*, p. 184.

[1661] See Idel, 'Models of Understanding Prayer', pp. 7-111.

[1662] *Tif'eret 'Uziel*, *rosh ha-shanah*, p. 141. See also *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 2, *ha-azinu*, pp. 393.

> thoughts, for they could not be without the World of Thought. He is like a shofar; the sound he gives forth comes from that which is blown into him. If the person blowing stops, the voice will stop as well. Without God, it is impossible to speak or think.[1663]

Ultimately it is God who speaks in prayer, not the person who is physically intoning the words of the liturgy. Weiss and Schatz-Uffenheimer explained these texts as further proof that the Maggid's spiritual path idealized passivity and resignation.[1664] But Margolin has suggested an alternative, and quite compelling, interpretation of this cluster of teachings. While certainly introspective and deeply mystical, the Maggid's prayer is actually quite active and dynamic.[1665] Prayer is an internalized, transformative journey through which one's thoughts and words become expressions of the Divine.[1666] It is by no means an automatic process, however, and this change can only happen after a great deal of contemplative energy has been expended. This means that the ultimate goal of prayer is to draw the divine Presence into the human body, binding the physical and the spiritual realms together through the medium of language.

Examining another of the Maggid's teachings about the unity of God and man during prayer will help us clarify this point. In one of his most famous teachings, we read:

> "Make for yourself two trumpets of silver" (Num. 10:2). The phrase "two trumpets" (*shtei hatsotserot*) is to be read as linked with, "On the image of the throne was an image with the appearance of a man, from above" (Ezek. 1:26).

[1663] MDL #106, p. 184.

[1664] Weiss, 'Via Passiva', pp. 71-78; Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 67-92, 144-167

[1665] Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 346-352.

[1666] Margolin, *Human Temple*, p. 184-185.

> A person is really only *dalet* and *mem*, [two letters] which stand for *dibbur* and *malkhut*.[1667] But when one attaches himself to the Holy One who is the cosmic *aleph*, he becomes *adam*.
>
> The Holy One entered into multiple contractions, coming through various worlds, in order to become one with humans, who could not have withstood God's original brightness. Now the person has to leave behind all corporeality, also traveling across many worlds, in order to become One with God. Then his own existence is itself negated. Such a person is truly called *adam*, the one on the image of the throne (*kisse*), for God Himself is hidden (*mekhuseh*) there.
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> This follows the prophet's description of "cloud and crackling fire." At first the person is in a "cloudy" state, filled with darkness, unable to pray with enthusiasm. But then along comes the "crackling fire," when he attains ecstasy. This is the "image of the throne," where the blessed God is hidden. He discovers it in a *mar'eh* ("appearance" or "mirror"). Whatever is awakened in him is awakened within God as well. If love is aroused in the *tsaddiq*, so too is it aroused above. The same is true of any quality. This is true of those who are very pure, rising across all those worlds to become one with God... all of the upper worlds and all the attributes are in his hands, and he is like the king amongst his legion... just as the *tsaddiq* wishes, so does God desire...
>
> These are the "two trumpets (*hatsotserot*) of silver (*kessef*)." A person is only a *hatsi tsurah* ("half of the whole form"), or *dam*. But the *aleph* by itself, as it were, is also an incomplete form. Only when attached to one another are they made whole. *Kessef* can mean "longing." One must always long for the blessed Holy One, and God will love him as well....[1668]

Shekhinah dwells within each human form, and it is from this element of God that mankind derives its sacred capacity for language. If this quality remains isolated within a human being and is unconnected to the other *sefirot*, *shekhinah* is in exile and the human form is incomplete. When the *dibbur* within is uplifted and united with the Divine, however, the contemplative actually becomes one with God.

[1667] Together these two letters also spell *dam*, or "blood," referring to human physicality.

[1668] MDL #24, pp. 38-40, with parallels in OT #134, *be-ha'alotekha*, pp. 182-183; OHE, fol. 10b; based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 2, pp. 18-19. This important teaching was quite well known, and exists in many different versions; See below, Appendix 1; and cf. MDL #162, pp. 262.

Such unification with God does not extinguish the *tsaddiq*'s personal identity, or at least not in full. In fact, to some degree the opposite is the case. The *tsaddiq* reigns over the worlds, and the divine Will reflects his deeds and wishes like the image in a mirror. Nor does this unity with God mean that the *tsaddiq* totally abandons his connection to the physical world. The playful interpretation of *adam* ("man") as a combination of God qua the cosmic *aleph* on one hand, and *dibbur*/*malkhut* and *dam* ("blood") on the other, suggests that the proper unification between the Divine and man comes about precisely through bringing together the physical and the spiritual.

We should also note that the idea of *shekhinah* speaking through someone during prayer is closely connected to the issue of petitionary prayer. The notion that one might come before God in order to plead for his material needs stands in conflict with the Maggid's goals of *devequt*, humility, and self-transcendence.[1669] Yet of course he could not abandon the statutory liturgy or ignore the centrality of the petitionary prayers.[1670] One approach to resolving the tension between material requests and ecstatic, mystical prayer given by the Maggid highlights that the experience of speaking intimately with the king is more important than having one's prayers answered. Therefore, supplications for one's physical needs are no longer the primary focus of one's contemplation, even if it is the subject of the words of the liturgy.[1671]

[1669] Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 144-167; Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, pp. 23-25; Green, 'Hasidic Homily', pp. 251-253. See also Horwitz, 'Heschel on Prayer and His Hasidic Sources', pp. 295-298.

[1670] See b. Berakhot 32a; b. Shabbat 10a; *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot tefillah* 1:2.

[1671] LY #22, fol. 4a. It is interesting to note that while petitionary prayer in the statutory liturgy is for the community rather than the individual, this fact is rarely commented upon in the Maggid's discussions of mystical prayer.

However, in a great many sermons the Maggid underscores that one should pray only out of concern for *shekhinah*.[1672] How does one become aware of that which *shekhinah* needs? *Shekhinah* lacks precisely that which human beings are missing; because each person holds an element of God within him, his needs also represent a divine lack.[1673] Indeed, petitioning God on behalf of *shekhinah* is made possible by the very fact that *malkhut* becomes invested within one as he begins to speak the words of prayer:

> "And Judah approached him, saying "Please, my lord, let your servant speak a word to my lord; do not become angry with your servant, for you are the equal of Pharaoh" (Gen. 44:18). The sages taught that "approaching" always means prayer.[1674] It seems to me that our verse alludes to this. "And Judah approached him" refers to any Jewish person, since we are called "Jews" (*yehudim*) after him. When you arise to pray before the blessed One, this is how you should act: the entire intention of your prayer should be to bring blessing to God's *shekhinah*.
>
> This is the meaning of the Sages' statement: "pray only with a serious demeanor (*koved rosh*)[1675]—be mindful of the Beginning of all beginnings."[1676] Even though you are asking for something that you need, your intention should be that whatever it is not be lacking above. Your soul is a part of God, and it is one of the limbs of the *shekhinah*. The goal of your prayer is that the lack be fulfilled on high. This will certainly make your prayer acceptable, and the adversary will be unable to find blame in you. Do not be like those described in the *Zohar* who act only for themselves, barking out "give, give."[1677]

[1672] See also *Torei Zahav*, *noah*, p. 9; *Peri Hayyim*, ch. 2, fol. 12a, 15b; *Divrei Emet*, *naso*, fol. 38b.

[1673] LY #224, p. 66b. See also MDL #118, p.192. On the importance of fulfilling the divine need in Kabbalistic Hasidic thought, see above, n. 853.

[1674] Tanhuma, *va-yera* #8; cf. *Bereshit Rabbah*, 49:8.

[1675] m. Berakhot 5:1.

[1676] A reference to *keter*, called *resha de-kol reishin*. See Zohar 3:10b-11a, 289b. Cf. *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun*, 21, fol. 44b.

[1677] *Tiqqunei Zohar, tiqqun* 6, fol. 22a, and see Prov. 30:15.

> It is known that *dibbur* is called "Judah," since *mahshavah* is the *yod* and *heh* of Judah, drawn into *qol*, which is the *vav*. The *vav* gives to the *dalet*, which then becomes a *heh* [i.e. *qol* emerges into *dibbur*]. This is the explanation of, "And [Judah] approached" in prayer. "Saying," fulfill my request for Your sake, for I am a portion of God above. "Please, my lord" (*bi adoni*), "do not become angry." Do not let the adversaries harass me, since my sole intention is to bring blessing above to the aspect of the Creator inside me; this is *bi adoni*—"the Lord is within me." "For you are the equal of Pharaoh"—Pharaoh's name also means "to reveal."[1678] Your inner self is being revealed, for He lies within. The World of Speech speaks through you. This is the meaning of, "Let your servant speak a word." She is called [the divine] Word, referring to the World of Speech.[1679]

Worship is a process through which *shekhinah*, or *dibbur*, the divine element that dwells within Israel is revealed. But to whom, we should ask, is such a prayer directed? Here too the boundaries between man and the Divine blur quite profoundly, for in some sense God is both the words of prayer as well as the intended recipient.

The Maggid emphasizes that one must not be so crass as to use the sacred connection built by his words of prayer for personal desires. Instead, he should plead for blessing, healing and redemption on behalf of the *shekhinah*. Of course, the two coincide, since one can only come to know the needs of *shekhinah* through being mindful of the fracture and suffering in his immediate surroundings. Prayer for *shekhinah* begins with the awareness of what one lacks and the needs of those around him, for satisfying these seemingly mundane, material concerns also fulfills a divine need.

On one level, the passage above describes a unification of the World of Speech (*shekhinah*) with the rest of the Godhead, bringing the concrete up into alignment with

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[1678] See Num. 5:18.

[1679] OT #56, *va-yiggash*, p. 76, with a parallel in LY #269, fol. 87b-88a. Cf. *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *va-yiggash*, p. 51.

the more transcendent elements of God. But we also see that the one who prays undergoes another type of contemplative journey as well, one that takes him from the innermost realms of thought to expression in words. The Maggid is interpreting Judah's name as a symbol that alludes to the processes of articulation. It begins with *mahshavah*, the *yod* and the *heh*, which represent *hokhmah* and *binah*. These cognitive and contemplative elements are then drawn into the *vav*, the voice, which is the *sefirah tif'eret*. Only as these three flow into *malkhut*, or the five (*heh*) positions of the mouth, can the words of prayer begin to stream forth.

Prayer for the sake of redeeming *shekhinah* is another way of describing the restoration of language to God. By devoting our words of prayer to God, we return the lost divine aspect of *dibbur* to its rightful source:

> "May my voice be heard in His palace" (Ps. 18:7). Speech is called a palace. One should pray only in order to bring language to Him. When one prays for this, all the guards will let him through. There is a parable about a peasant who bears the signet ring of the king. Although he is unworthy of coming before the king, the guards let him through, since the king longs for the signet. They rush him to the king so that the king can enjoy his pleasure more quickly. In this way the blessed Holy One longs for the Word. This is the meaning of, "May my voice be heard in His palace"[1680]—that is, [may it be so] for the sake of the Word.[1681]

Shekhinah, the divine Word, is in exile, and may only be restored to the palace of the Divine through the prayers of humanity. One who has this type of awareness is able to pass into deeper realms than would otherwise be possible, because he is returning something to God and thus bringing great pleasure to the Divine. This lost item is nothing

[1680] The Maggid is taking the mem of me-heikhalo to mean "because of."

[1681] OT #292, *pesuqim* p. 346, with parallels in OHE, fol. 7b; and SLA, pp. 106-107. See also LY #45, fol. 8a.

less than the sacred element of speech, embodied and uplifted through the words of human prayer.

The awareness that one is praying only for *shekhinah* allows him to enter into a state of *ayin*. In this moment of transcending his own particular needs, it is possible for the one praying to become connected to the infinitely expansive divine Presence:

> One must consider himself to be Nothing, forgetting himself entirely. In all his prayers he should ask only for things on behalf of *shekhinah*. Thus he will be able to ascend higher than time, to the World of Thought, where everything is equal: death, and life, dry land and ocean... This is not the case when he is bound to the physicality of this world. There he is connected to distinctions, such as good and bad, and the "seven days of construction." How can such a one transcend temporality, where everything is totally one? So it is with someone who considers himself to be something (*yesh*) and requests his own needs. The blessed Holy One cannot become clothed in him. The Divine is infinite (*ein sof*), and no vessel can hold him. But this is not the case with someone who considers himself Naught.[1682]

Someone who is bound to his own material concerns remains mired in the "seven days of construction," or the seven lower *sefirot*.[1683] Of course, these too are vessels for God, but their capacity to hold divine light is quite limited. Only through forgetting himself by praying for the sake of *shekhinah* can the worshiper arise to the realm of *binah*, the infinitely dynamic World of Thought.

PRAYER OF THE *TSADDIQ*

We have noted several times that the Maggid ascribes tremendous power to the *tsaddiq*, but that he is not referring to someone who has inherited the office of *rebbe* and

[1682] MDL #110, p. 186.

[1683] The notion that one can become "mired" in the *sefirot* is remarkable, and reflects the importance of *hokhmah*/*ayin* above all other aspects of the Godhead in the Maggid's theological system.

occupies a formal communal role. For the Maggid, the *tsaddiq* is the spiritual devotee who has harnessed the power of language and thought, realizing that these faculties are embodiments of elements of the Divine and then devoting them to God alone. But despite this great power, the Maggid still wonders how it is possible that the *tsaddiq*'s prayers can be efficacious enough to bring about healing and draw divine energy into the world. And how, we will see him ask, is it theologically acceptable for a person to change the will of God? The answers to these questions are rooted in the Maggid's theology of language.

The Maggid describes the *tsaddiq* as the fulcrum of the universe; he includes everything in the world, and all people.[1684] He aligns the different elements of the Godhead and sustains the physical world by drawing new vitality and energy into it.[1685] The *tsaddiq* can raise up negative decrees to their source in the Divine, and from there he can refashion them into blessings.[1686] We saw in the teaching about the "two trumpets/forms" that God's actions follow the deeds of *tsaddiqim* like an image in a mirror.[1687] And while it is certainly not a major theme in his sermons, R. Israel of Kozhenits cites a tradition from the Maggid that the *tsaddiq* must indeed pray for the material wellbeing of the Jewish people.[1688]

[1684] MDL #176, p. 275. See Green, 'Zaddiq as Axis Mundi', pp. 327-347.

[1685] MDL #60, pp. 92-93. See also *Orah le-Hayyim*, *'eqev*, p. 318.

[1686] MDL #48, p. 69-70.

[1687] Other teachings from the Maggid broaden this idea to include everyone; see MDL #151, p. 251. A similar teaching based on Ps. 121:5, "Y-H-V-H is your shadow," appears in *Qedushat Levi*, *be-shalah*, p. 178, where it is attributed to the BeSHT; and *Degel Mahaneh Efrayim*, *be-har*, p. 400, without any attribution. See also *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *sha'ar ha-gadol*; trans. as Krassen, *Isaiah Horowitz*, p. 301.

[1688] *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *va-yiggash*, p. 51. Whether the *tsaddiq* should pray for the material needs of his followers, or if he should simply direct them in spiritual matters, was a major point of debate among the early Hasidic masters; Etkes, *Ba'al Ha-Tanya*, pp. 42-62. Thus we should note that it is quite possible that R. Israel's understanding of the tradition he received from the Maggid about the need to pray for one's

Occasionally the Maggid's teachings are more subdued. He teaches that God longs for the prayers of the *tsaddiqim*, although their requests are not necessarily answered in direct ways.[1689] Or, even more modestly, he suggests that the *tsaddiqim* are simply able to perceive the good hidden within all divine decrees.[1690] Even in these cases, however, the *tsaddiq*'s prayer is effective precisely because he has forged an unbreakable bond between his thoughts and speech:

> Complete *tsaddiqim* are those people whose words of holiness, prayer and Torah, are all in order to unite Speech with the World of Thought. In each prayer and every word of Torah, one must believe that he certainly unites the World of Speech with the World of Thought, if he does so with intention. Even though he prays and his request is not granted, by means of the arousal below he unites the World of Speech with the World of Thought, causing the same thing to happen above. These people, whose sole intention is to unite the World of Speech and the World of Thought, are true *tsaddiqim*.[1691]

Two elements come together to make *tsaddiqim* unique. The first is their ability to align the Worlds of Speech and Thought. However, this teaching continues by claiming that people of an intermediate spiritual caliber (*beinonim*) ask for their own needs and wants. If they do so for a higher purpose, they are judged favorably, for they too have the ability to unite these *sefirot*. But if they seek only to gratify their own desires, they are dismissed and judged harshly. Thus the second defining characteristic of a *tsaddiq* is his humility and self-transcendence, for his prayers and even his petitions included absolutely no ulterior motives.

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followers' physical needs reflects his own understanding of the role of the *tsaddiq* and the social function he has assumed.

[1689] *Tif'eret 'Uziel*, *pesah*, p. 134

[1690] Ibid.

[1691] OT #418, *aggadot*, pp. 435-436, with a parallel in TSHR #123, pp. 57-58.

It seems that in some cases *tsaddiqim* do not realize that their actions have the ability to align together the Worlds of Speech and Thought. The Maggid emphasizes that they must believe that their deeds have such great power, even if the results are hidden from them and it appears that their prayers have been rejected. Indeed, he refers to it as a matter of faith that their words bring together the Worlds of Speech and Thought and inspire unity in the realm of the Divine. This restores harmony to the Godhead and redeems *shekhinah* from her exile, but may not result in the *tsaddiq*'s own wish being fulfilled.

Throughout this study we have been grappling with the question of whether the connection of *'olam ha-dibbur* and *'olam ha-mahshavah* that takes place within the human being should be identified with the same connection being forged in the Godhead, or if they are simply parallel processes that happen in response to one another. In this case the Maggid seems to suggest that prayer serves as a catalyst that inspires a divine reaction. The alignment between the Worlds of Thought and Speech within the worshiper brings about a similar union in the Divine, and God's "arousal" is first inspired by the *tsaddiq*'s prayers.

Many of the Maggid's homilies describe the spiritual powers of *tsaddiqim* as being nearly unlimited. There too he attributes the effectiveness of their prayers to the manner in which they align all of their thoughts, deeds and words:

> The holy luminary, our teacher R. Dov Baer, said that the *tsaddiq* has attained the level of "what" (*mah*). All of his deeds, his words and his thoughts are always united with and connected to the blessed One, and he does not separate from God for even a moment... even his physical needs are for the service of God. A *tsaddiq* such as this can nullify the bad decrees.[1692]

[1692] *Peri Hayyim*, ch. 4 fol. 36a-b.

The word *mah* ("what") is often associated with *malkhut* in earlier Kabbalah,[1693] but it also appears in connection with *hokhmah*,[1694] and it is thus natural for the Maggid to consider it synonymous with *ayin*. The *tsaddiq* has achieved such a high degree of humility, embodying the element of *mah*, that he can accomplish anything through his prayers. His life is defined not by personal wishes but by absolute devotion to God; his deeds, speech and even his thoughts are unceasingly trained on the Divine. Any pride and self-aggrandizement, argues the Maggid, disrupts this attunement and thereby destroys the effectiveness of his prayer.[1695]

The *tsaddiq*'s connection to the infinite Naught, brought about through his great humility, is a key element of his ability to change the will of God:

> Presumably we should wonder how it can be that we find the prayer of a *tsaddiq* compared to a pitchfork that can overturn even the thought of God,[1696] as in, "Who rules over Me? *Tsaddiq*!"[1697] How can it be that the speech of the *tsaddiq* can ascend so high that it becomes something different!? Doesn't the word of the blessed Holy One become the *hokhmah* that gives us life, as in the verse, "with the word of Y-H-V-H the heavens were created" (Ps. 33:6). Then how can the *tsaddiq*'s word arise so high that it can transform God's thoughts?

Ein Sof was contracted into *hokhmah*, the divine element that is present in and unites all physical reality. This *hokhmah* becomes manifest in the world through the divine Word. How can it be that the *tsaddiq* reverses this process by causing his own words to return to the well of God's wisdom and change His mind? The answer lies in an important nuance,

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[1693] See the classic descriptions of creation through *binah* (*mi*) and *malkhut* (*mah*) that appears in the introduction to the Zohar 1:1b-2a

[1694] Zohar 3:28a.

[1695] OT #443, *aggadot*, p. 460.

[1696] b. Sukkah 14a.

[1697] b. Mo'ed Qatan 16b.

for there are in fact two types of *hokhmah*: higher wisdom (*hokhmah 'ila'ah*) and lower wisdom (*hokhmah tata'ah*). Higher wisdom is *hokhmah* as it exists in pure potential, whereas lower wisdom is *hokhmah* that has become revealed through —and restricted in—the temporal world. Later in the homily, we read:

> "The world stands between two *tsaddiqim*."[1698]... The two *tsaddiqim* are the two shapes of the letter, a bent *tsaddiq* (צ) and an extended *tsaddiq* (ץ). The bent shape is "feminine," since it submits (*nikhfefah*) to receive from the "masculine" world, the *yod* (י) or *hokhmah*. When the *tsaddiq* wants to pray and draw forth divine energy, he begins with a prostration,[1699] meaning that he bows before the supernal world, like an extended *nun* (ן).[1700] He is garbed in awe, meaning *hokhmah*, [since] "the beginning of wisdom is the awe of God" (Ps. 111:10). He considers and is mindful of before whom he stands—the King of kings, the blessed Holy One. He is overtaken by tremendous awe, fear and embarrassment. This is the indwelling of *shekhinah*, meaning the awe of the innermost wisdom.... He enters the gateway to the Naught (*ayin*), which is *hokhmah*, the *yod*, and through this he connects the *yod* with the extended *nun* and becomes a *tsaddiq*. But this is still only the lower *yod* [i.e. the lower manifestation of God's Wisdom]....
>
> This is the meaning of, "And he took from the stones [of the place]" (Gen. 28:11). It is known that the letters are called "stones."[1701] When a *tsaddiq* prays with the letters, he connects himself to the higher wisdom. This means that he has entered the gateway to the Naught, considering that were it not for the power of the blessed One, he would be nothing at all. If so, all is the power of God. Speech is the blessed One's World of Speech, through which the world was created. The World of Speech is drawn forth from *hokhmah*, which is the pleasure and delight that God receives from the worlds. Even now he speaks only for the delight of the blessed One, returning the letters to their

[1698] Zohar 1:153b.

[1699] The opening words of the *'amidah* are accompanied by a bow. One version of the Lurianic *kavvanot* notes that when reciting the word "you" (*atah*) of the first blessing, he should intend to draw down energy through the twenty-two letters from *aleph* to *tav* into *heh*, or *malkhut*. See *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-'amidah*, ch. 3.

[1700] The Maggid is interpreting the letter *tsaddi* (צ) as a combination of the letters *nun* (נ) and *yod* (י).

[1701] See *Sefer Yetsirah* 4:12; and see above, p. 215.

> Source in *hokhmah* whence they were drawn... Through this the *tsaddiq* connects to the higher wisdom, which becomes garbed in his words. With this intention and his desires, he draws forth divine energy and the supernal will into *hokhmah*, and from there to the very lowest of the levels.[1702]

The *tsaddiq*'s prayer begins with an experience of overwhelming awe. This moment is the indwelling of *shekhinah*, which, as we have seen, is necessary before he can begin to recite the words of prayer. Knowledge of this inspires a great sense of *yirah*, which carries with it connotations of wonder, awe and fear, in addition to the symbolic association with *malkhut*. This sensation in turn reminds the *tsaddiq* that he is truly nothing but a vessel filled with divine energy.

Although this preparatory stage is the lower level of *hokhmah*, it grants the *tsaddiq* access to the depths of the higher wisdom, for it allows him to enter into the state of total Naught.[1703] Through the words of his prayer he returns the letters to their origin in the realm of divine Thought, which in this case is *hokhmah* and not *binah*. From there the *tsaddiq* draws forth new possibilities from the infinite sea of God's Wisdom. Yet the final lines of the excerpt above hold an interesting ambiguity: does the "supernal will" refer to *keter*, as it is commonly described in classical Kabbalah, or does the Maggid also mean to say that the original will is being transformed by the *tsaddiq* who draws it into the two different types of *hokhmah*.[1704] The Maggid's initial question of how *tsaddiqim* change God's mind suggests that he may indeed be playing on this double meaning.

[1702] MDL #60, p. 90-1, 93-95, with parallels in OT #424, *aggadot*, p. 438-443; and OHE, fol. 29a-30a.

[1703] See *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 2, *'eqev*, pp. 302-303.

[1704] See Schatz-Uffenheimer's comments on p. 95, where she notes this ambiguity and suggests that the Maggid may be referring to the divine energy itself as the "supernal will," which is common in earlier Kabbalah as well.

R. Levi Isaac recalls a somewhat simpler version of this idea in his *Qedushat Levi*. Citing a tradition from the Maggid, he argues that the *tsaddiq* never actually changes the divine Will itself. He simply controls the pathways through which that Will becomes manifest in the physical world:

> There is a well-known teaching from the Sages: "One should first recount the holy Blessed One's praise, and afterward pray."[1705] I heard this explanation from my master and teacher [the Maggid]: The notion of the songs and the praises and the hymns that are said for the Creator's glory, the intended goal is not to use them to placate him, God forbid. A king of flesh and blood is excited when he is praised, and his pleasure comes from being extolled.
>
> Now a change in God's Will cannot be imagined. The intent of [these praises] is to draw forth the Will and the power of the Cause of causes (*'ilat ha-'ilot*) and clothe it in the holy emanated attributes, such as loving-kindness, mercy, compassion, and grace. When we praise Him with these attributes, like "compassionate and merciful, slow to anger and abundantly loving," and so on, [this praise] garbs the undifferentiated divine Will (*ratson pashut*) in the attributes. Later, after this preparation, we pray and draw the energy from the Creator upon us through the attributes.
>
> This is the meaning of "recount (*yesapper*) the omnipresent One's praise"—as in "their polishing was of sapphire" (*sapir gizratam*; Lam. 4:7), referring to brightness. Our praise garbs God's illumination within the attributes. Afterward one may pray to draw forth that energy.[1706]

Prayer is not an attempt to change God's Will, but rather a method for bringing new aspects of its totally unformed—and thus unrealized—potential into expression. The divine Will cannot be altered because it has no clear manifestation. The attributes refer to the *sefirot*, the channels through which divine energy is refracted into the physical world. The course of this energy's flow is shaped by the text of the liturgy, though the Maggid

[1705] Based on b. Berakhot 32a, but with slight variations. This version matches the formulation of Rabbenu Bahye on Num. 16:22, and the popular fifteenth-century ethical work *Orhot Tsaddiqim*, ch. 25.

[1706] *Qedushat Levi*, *pirqei avot*, p. 647

does not clarify if the words themselves are the *middot*, or if the words of the prayers simply describe and inspire the movement of divine vitality through the various pathways.[1707] Whether or not he would apply this to spontaneous prayer outside the context of the traditional liturgy is another interesting ambiguity, though we shall see later on that the Maggid seems to have been opposed to creative additions to the set prayers.

Several of the Maggid's teachings explain the power of the *tsaddiq*'s prayer through comparing him to a prophet.[1708] The subject of prophecy does not come up frequently in the Maggid's sermons, and nowhere does he suggest that achieving prophecy is the primary goal of the religious life.[1709] However, a few of the Maggid's

[1707] The idea that prayer molds the unformed divine Will seems closely related to the notion that human language—both letters and words—gives shape to the infinite potential of divine energy, a common theme found throughout R. Levi Isaac's teachings. For example, see *Qedushat Levi*, *bereshit*, p. 3; ibid, *balaq*, p. 358-359.

[1708] The association between the *tsaddiq* and the prophet is a common one in early Hasidic thought. Moshe Idel has shown that the polemics against the BeSHT include the claim that he considered himself a prophet; see Moshe Idel, 'The BeSHT as a Prophet and Talismanic Magician', *Studies in Jewish Narrative: Ma'aseh Sippur Presented to Yoav Elstein*, ed. A. Lipsker and R. Kushelevsky, Ramat Gan 2006, pp. 124, 132-133 [Hebrew]. Opposition from the *mitnaggedim* have forced Hasidism to downplay this element of their teachings, but the association of the *tsaddiq* with the prophet and prophecy is clearly visible in the early literature of the movement; see Green, 'Typologies of Leadership and the Hasidic Zaddiq', pp. 146-149; Gellman, 'Hasidism in Poland', pp. 72-83; Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 59-60, 132, 139, 147-148. See also Garb, *Shamanic Trance,* pp. 69-71, 101.

[1709] See, however, LY #48, fol. 9b: "When one is speaking with attachment to the world above, and he has no strange thought, and a thought comes to him as a prophecy (*nevi'ut*), certainly it will be so. This thought comes to him because of the decrees that are made on high regarding this thing. Sometimes one may hear a voice speaking, because he has connected the voice of his prayer and the voice of his Torah to the supernal Voice. It may sound like a voice that speaks about the future."

See also MDL #49, p. 70, for the famous teaching that it is easier to achieve the Holy Spirit (*ruah ha-qodesh*) while in exile; and OT #206, *tehillim*, p. 274, which describes how one can transition from *histaklut* to actual prophecy. On achieving of achieving prophecy in medieval Jewish philosophy and Kabbalah, see Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 239, 304-305, 419; Fishbane, *As Light Before Dawn*, pp. 256-257 and n. 18. See Zeitlin's description of different types of prophecy translated in Green, *Hasidic Spirituality*, pp. 85-86. More broadly, see Daniel Reiser, '"To Rend the Entire Veil": Prophecy in the Teachings of Rabbi Kalonymous Kalman Shapira of Piazecna and its Renewal in the Twentieth Century', *Modern Judaism* 34 (2014), pp. 334-352. See also Yochanan Muffs, 'The Prayer of the Prophets', *Molad* 7 (1975), pp. 204-210 [Hebrew]; and idem, 'Who Will Stand in the Breach? A Study of Prophetic Intercession', *Love and Joy: Law, Language and Religion in Ancient Israel*, New York 1992, pp. 9-48.

homilies blend the roles of the *tsaddiq* and the prophet, defining them as mystics who have the ability to accomplish extraordinary feats through their words alone.[1710]

One of the Maggid's teachings about the connection between prophecy and prayer begins with the same question posed in the previous homily, namely how the prayers of the *tsaddiqim* can be likened to a pitchfork that overturns divine judgments and transform them into blessing. This quandary is juxtaposed with a seemingly unrelated question found in the Talmud: why did King Josiah ask Hulda the Prophetess about the scroll he had found, and not any of the male prophets of his day?[1711] The Talmudic sages suggest that King Josiah sent for her because women are more compassionate.[1712] However, for the Maggid this answer sparks yet another difficulty: if a prophet simply conveys the word of God, how can he or she change the words given by God to make them more compassionate?[1713] He explains that the letters of prophecy come equally to all prophets,

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[1710] Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer has argued that the understanding of prophecy found in the teachings of the Maggid's school is decidedly quietistic. She claims that in the Maggid's school prophetic ecstasy can only be achieved through completely nullifying and abnegating the self, and therefore the mystic lacks any agency and the prophecy has no relevance to the world around the prophet; see her *Hasidism and Mysticism*, pp. 200-203. However, Ron Margolin has proven that there are active elements of kabbalistic and Hasidic conceptions of prophecy as well; see Margolin, *Human Temple*, pp. 315-318, 343-348. This active side of the prophet is underscored by another teaching, in which prophet is the one who does actions in the physical world. Here used interchangeably with the *tsaddiq*. Based on Amos 3:7, God reveals everything that He does in the world to his servants the prophets, precisely because they are the ones who do the physical action MDL #87, p. 151.

[1711] See 2 Kings 22:11-20.

[1712] b. Megillah 14b. See also the more conservative answer given by MaHaRSHA, ad loc.

[1713] The Maggid cites Num. 22:38. The question how of a prophet received his message, and whether or not it had explicit linguistic content, was a matter of great debate in medieval Jewish philosophy. See Kreisel, *Prophecy*, pp. 622-625. Saadya Gaon describes the prophet hearing a "created word" (*dibbur nivra*), though this word is purely internal and not a hypostatic element; see Altmann, 'Saadya's Theory of Revelation', pp. 140-160. Maimonides, on the other hand, writes that a prophet first sees an "image" (*mashal*) and then an explanation is "engraved upon his heart"; see *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot yesodei ha-torah*, 7:3; and Jeffrey Macy, 'Prophecy in al-Farabi and Maimonides: the Imaginative and Rational Faculties', *Maimonides and Philosophy*, ed. S. Pines and Y. Yovel, Dordrecht 1986, pp. 185-201; Oliver Leaman, 'Maimonides, Imagination and the Objectivity of Prophecy', *Religion* 18 (1988), pp. 69-80; and for a more radical reading, Alvin J. Reines, 'Maimonides' Concept of Mosaic Prophecy', *Hebrew Union College Annual* (1969), pp. 325-361. See also Wolfson, 'Hallevi and Maimonides on Prophecy', pp. 354-370.

but that each one is able to decide how they are to be combined into words. The prophet is connected to *mahshavah*, or *hokhmah*, and decides how the letters that God sends him will manifest as *dibbur*.[1714]

Prophets have carte blanche to receive a message from the Divine and then consciously rearrange it into whatever they desire. Men and women interpret prophecies differently because they have different natures. This is similar to one of the ways in which the Maggid described the process of determining *halakhah*; there are many different possible decisions implicit in the law, and each judge rules according to the root of his soul (*shoresh neshamah*).[1715]

This teaching is complemented by another of the Maggid's sermons, perhaps indeed a parallel transcription of the same homily. The transcriber notes, "I heard a long homily about this from our master and rabbi, but I cannot remember," presumably referring to the passage we have just examined.[1716] However, the writer reconstructs the following:

> The essential reason is as follows. It was truly within [the prophet's] power to transform the prophecy from one of anger to compassion when formulating the prophecy (*be-dabro leshon ha-nevu'ah*). This does not mean that the prophet would actually change the words, God forbid, that

[1714] MDL #85, p. 148, with parallels in OT #164, *'eqev*, pp. 213-214; and OHE, fol. 44a-44b. This teaching also appears with slight variations in *Ohev Yisra'el*, *'eqev*, p. 252, without attribution to the Maggid. But there is one very important difference between the two versions: according to the passage in *Ohev Yisra'el*, the prophet receives the letters "in a certain style" (*be-eizeh signon*), and nevertheless he can transform them as he wishes and thus exchange divine justice for compassion. The Maggid seems to be making a much subtler point about the way in which the message filters through the prophet.

[1715] Perhaps this view of prophecy may have had a role in shaping aspects of Heschel's description of a prophet as one who identifies with the paths of God, but then shapes the language into his own particular message. See Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets*, New York 1962, esp. pp. 3-26, 324-334, 367-389, 410-446. See also Alexander Even-Chen, 'Mysticism and Prophecy According to Abraham Joshua Heschel', *Kabbalah* 5 (2000), pp. 359-370 [Hebrew]; Edmond Jacob, 'La dimension du prophétisme d'après Martin Buber et Abraham J. Heschel', *Prophecy: Essays Presented to Georg Fohrer on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. J.A. Emerton, Berlin 1980, pp. 26-34.

[1716] The editor of OT adds "see *parashat 'eqev* for the correct answer," which refers to the previous sermon.

> he heard from the Holy One. Rather, the matter depended on the prophet's melody (*niggun*); [everything followed] the melody in which he conveyed the prophecy to Israel.
>
> It is known that the melody is the cantillation notes, which are *hokhmah*. The essence of prophecy depends on the cantillation. The proof for this is that the vast majority of a verse's cantillation notes alter its meaning from the plain sense.[1717] Thus [the meaning of the prophecy] depended on the prophet's speech (*dibbur*). If he spoke to them with a sharp tone, then the prophecy was a type of anger. If he used other cantillation notes, it was a type of compassion. In addition, the prophet would arouse supernal compassion through the cantillation notes of compassion....
>
> This is the meaning of, "The Lord God has given me learned language" (*leshon limmudim*; Isa. 50:4). That is, the prophecy is in his [the prophet's] language by means of the melody and the cantillation notes.[1718]

Though it is more directly related to the nature of prophecy than prayer, this teaching offers another perspective on issues raised by the previous homily. Here we see that prophet does not have permission to alter the actual words of the prophecy he has been given, for perhaps such a change would be impossible. However, the prophet can transform a divine message by altering its melody because the cantillation notes themselves come from *hokhmah*, the realm of infinite potential. That is, the meaning of a prophecy can be altered through modifying its semiotic delivery.

In this version of the Maggid's teaching the content of prophecy appears to be static, perhaps a more conservative apologetic in the face of the more radical teaching

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[1717] *Zohar* 1:15b; *Tiqqnei Zohar*, *haqdamah*, fol.12b. See Wolfson, 'Biblical Accentuation, Part II', pp. 4-7. On importance of the cantillation marks in determining the meaning of biblical texts, see Simcha Kogut, *Correlations Between Biblical Acceptation and Traditional Jewish Exegesis*, Jerusalem 1996 [Hebrew]. See also Edna Sultan, 'On the Significance of Cantillation', *Journal of Jewish Music and Liturgy* 8 (1985-1986), pp. 35-42; Emanuel Rubin, 'Cantillation as a Key to "Deconstructivist" Thought in the Masoretic Text of the Bible', *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Jewish Music* (1997), pp. 115-132; idem, 'Rhythmic and Structural Aspects of the Masoretic Cantillation of the Pentateuch', *World Congress of Jewish Studies* 11,D, vol.2 (1993), pp. 219-226.

[1718] LY #238, p. 69, with a parallel in OT #449, *aggaadot*, p. 463.

cited just above. Yet the implications of this homily are in some ways more far-reaching than those of the previous passage. Here it would seem that the *tsaddiq* has free reign to transform the meaning of a prophetic message however he sees fit, an interpretative move that goes beyond simply rearranging the letters sent to him by God.[1719]

Earlier we noted that according to the Maggid, one who prays with contemplative devotion and fervor actually unites with God.[1720] This leads to an even more radical notion of what it means to alter divine decrees: *tsaddiqim* actually mold and define the divine Will, which remain shapeless and inert without them.[1721] However, some teachings describe the vector of influence stretching in precisely the opposite direction. R. Levi Isaac remembers the following parable and explanation from his teacher:

> Our teacher and master, the holy luminary R. Dov Baer, gave the following parable about a father who teaches his child and wants him to say some question or answer all on his own. He does so in order for the child to rejoice in what he knows. Even if it is some deep matter beyond the child's grasp, he explains its innermost depths so that it will be within his power to understand it.... nevertheless, the child enjoys saying the question or the answer, and it is even ascribed to him. This case is exactly the same. Even though the *tsaddiq* nullifies God's decrees, the *tsaddiq*'s thought to pray comes from Him as well. Because of the *tsaddiq*'s language and the power and

[1719] As noted above, in other homilies the Maggid takes an even more radical position regarding the powers of prophecy, at least that of Moses. The highest level of prophecy gives one the ability to direct God's word as he sees fit, and we should remember that Moses gave the Torah because he was able to apprehend the very essence of divinity (*etsem elohuto*). It was he who governed the manner in which Torah came forth from the higher *sefirot* and entered into language. In fact, Moses was able to give the Torah because he is connected *dibbur*/*mahshavah*, no split in between and he is not connected to worldly concerns, and therefore he is the one who give Written Torah its garment. God speaks to the prophet from amidst his mind, and in this respect Moses was also distinguished from the others who had visions of God. His mind was more attuned to the divine thought and therefore he was the one who could give the Written Torah its garb. See *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *shemot*, pp. 118-120; cf. ibid, *shemot*, pp. 235, 241-242; *Mevasser Tsedeq*, *be-ha'alotekha*, p. 177; MDL #132, p. 228; and *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 2, *va-ethanan*, p. 295.

[1720] See *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *rosh ha-shanah*, pp. 254-255, which claims that the reason that one must move his head in six directions as he recites the word "one" of the *Shema'*, the moment in which he unites with the Divine, so as to overturn the negative decrees from each and every side.

[1721] *Qedushat Levi*, *liqqutim*, p. 481.

> strength of his prayers, the nullification is ascribed to the *tsaddiq*, even though the thought and the words were sent to him by God. Thus far the words of my master and teacher.[1722]

The original decree originates with God, but the same is true of the *tsaddiq*'s will. His desire to overturn the judgment, and indeed his ability to do through prayer, come from the Divine as well.[1723] Just like the child in the parable, the *tsaddiq* rejoices in being able to change God's mind, but he can accomplish this because of God's great love for him. Indeed, perhaps the *tsaddiq* is even aware of the fact that both his powers of prayer and his intentions are a divine gift. This framing dovetails nicely with the Maggid's teachings that describe the *tsaddiq* as one who has attained the state of *ayin*, shedding himself of any personal motivations and thereby allowing himself to become a vessel through which the divine Word can speak.[1724]

Finally, we must also consider the Maggid's understanding of a more fundamental question: what does it mean for a prayer to be answered? Given his struggles with the concept of petitionary prayer, it comes as no surprise that some of his teachings describe a very different kind of "answer" than simply receiving the thing—whether spiritual or physical—for which one asked:

> "I will give grace to whom I will give grace..." (Ex. 33:19). This may be understood in accord with the Zohar's teaching that words brought forth without love and awe cannot fly upward.[1725] Speech and voice are a gendered pair, speech being female and voice is male. These together comprise *vav* and *heh*, the last two letters of God's name Y-H-W-H. If they emerge without love and awe, representing *yod heh*, the first two letters, which is their birthplace within the name, they

[1722] *Qedushat Levi*, *qedushah shelishit—purim*, p. 542.

[1723] See also *Qedushat Levi*, *va-yiggash*, p. 119. This accords with the biblical and Talmudic theology in which *wants* the prophet to intercede for Israel.

[1724] Given the remarkable powers attributed to the *tsaddiq* in R. Levi Isaac's own theology, it is quite interesting that he portrays the Maggid's teachings in this way.

[1725] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 10, fol. 25b

> bring about division. But the whole purpose of saying the words, both in prayer and in study, is to raise them upward to their source.
>
> Just as the world's creation began with the twenty-two letters of the alphabet, as the *Zohar* understands God's creation through Torah, so does life-sustaining energy flow into all creatures by means of those letters. One's task is to reverse this process, causing words and letters to flow back upward into their Source. This is the process: he must link word to word, voice to voice, breath to breath, thought to thought. These represent the four letters Y-H-W-H. If he does this, all his words fly upward to their Source. He brings his words into God's presence, causing God to look at them.
>
> This is what it means that prayer is "answered." This looking is itself a sort of flow downward, reaffirming the existence of all the worlds. There is no passage of time above.
>
> The divine wellspring gushes forth in each instant. The flow is constant, and its nature is to do good and give blessing to God's creatures. But if one prays or studies in this way, he may become a channel for that spring, bringing its blessing and goodness to the entire world....
>
> This is the meaning of the verse: "I will give grace to whom (*et asher*) I will give grace." The word *asher* has two other meanings. One has to do with praise, as in *ashrei* ("blessed"), the other with seeing, as in *shur*. Read the verse to mean: The one who offers praise (*asher*) by means of those letters,[1726] I will turn and see (*asher*). In this way I will then give grace, for the looking itself is the answer to prayer and petition....[1727]

This homily is a rich description of prayer as a contemplative exercise in which one connects the language, sounds and thoughts of their own supplication to the corresponding elements of the *sefirot*. A prayer that has been "answered" is one that opens up the channels of energy between God and man, causing divine vitality to cascade into the world. We noted that *histaklut*, contemplative gazing, allows one to access the

[1726] Though he never says so explicitly, perhaps the Maggid is interpreting the '*et*' at the center of this verse as representing the twenty-two letters.

[1727] LY #131, fol. 37a-37b, with a parallel in OT #105, *ki tissa*, p. 145. Based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 1, pp. 230-232.

hokhmah within all things, and inspire a renewed flow of divine energy.[1728] But in this homily, instead of a human being contemplating a physical object, it is God who "gazes" upon the one praying and showers him with blessing. This may result in having one's specific petition fulfilled, but the primary goal of worship is to inspire the influx of new divine energy into the physical realm.

Uplifting "Alien Thoughts"

The notion that "alien thoughts" (*mahshavot zarot*) must be raised up to their source and transformed was a very important, and controversial, element of early Hasidic thought.[1729] In this realm the Maggid was deeply influenced by the holistic approach of the BeSHT. Instead of seeking to combat bizarre or distracting thoughts during prayer through ascetic practices or simply ignoring them, the Maggid, like his teacher, requires that they must be uplifted and sanctified.[1730] All human thoughts and emotions derive from one of the seven lower *sefirot*, and therefore any of them may be raised to their origins in *binah* and then expressed in a new way.[1731] For example, love—or even lust—for physical pleasures can be restored to its truest form, which is the love of God. Similarly, thoughts of pride and self-aggrandizement may be cultivated as the awareness

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[1728] See above, pp. 234-237.

[1729] *Yosher Divrei Emet* #17, fol. 118b, cites the practice of raising up "alien thoughts" as one of the elements of the Maggid's teachings that can only be understood by rarefied individuals. Cf. *Sefer ha-Tanya*, *sefer shel beinonim*, ch. 28. See Idel, 'Prayer, Ecstasy, and "Alien Thoughts"', pp. 57-120; Yūrō Teshima, 'The Problem of 'Strange Thoughts' and its Treatment', *Perspectives on Jews and Judaism: Essays in Honor of Wolfe Kelman*, ed. A.A. Chiel, New York 1978, pp. 421-442; Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, pp. 104-120; Yehudah Yifrach, 'The Elevation of Foreign Thoughts in the Traditions of R. Israel Baal Shem Tov as Transmitted in the Works of his Students', MA thesis, Bar-Ilan University, 2007 [Hebrew]; Yehudah Shaviv, 'Contending with Strange Thoughts in Prayer', *Sinai* 140 (2008), pp. 67-72 [Hebrew]. See also Hillel Zeitlin's treatment of the subject, translated in Green, *Hasidic Spirituality*, pp. 94-97.

[1730] See *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 3, *quntres aharon*, p. 1375; *Tsofnat Pane'ah*, vol. 1, *be-shalah*, p. 267; *Ketonet Passim*, *balaq*, p. 323.

[1731] See LY #194, fol. 58b-59b.

of God's glory as well as human dignity.[1732] Because of its emphasis on inward contemplation and nullifying the ego, the Maggid describes prayer as the ideal time for effecting this transformation.

Why do such thoughts occur? Sometimes they come to a *tsaddiq* because of the generation's misdeeds. In this case, they are testament to his high spiritual rung, because the alien thoughts come to him in order to be uplifted and repaired.[1733] More often, the Maggid says, *mahshavot zarot* accost someone because that person has done something wrong. Yet these thoughts are not a burden to be escaped, for they provide the penitent with a unique opportunity for healing and return to God. Such thoughts are never purely accidental, and it is through uplifting them that one comes to an even higher level of religious service. God sends them to the mystic in order to assist in his growth,[1734] and the energy one receives from sublimating them stokes his prayer with additional fire.[1735] However, the Maggid underscores that one should still be embarrassed because of them. Because the contemplative faculty of the mind is so powerful, any distracting or ignoble thoughts present a grave problem.[1736]

In many homilies the Maggid explains that the process of uplifting *mahshavot zarot* is possible because of the divine quality inherent in language. All thoughts and emotions are composed of letters, including even *mahshavot zarot*.[1737] But the letters of

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[1732] MDL #25, pp. 40-41. See also *Or ha-Me'ir, shir ha-shirim*, p. 263. Thus the mystic is not alienated from the world per say and does not necessarily see it disparagingly. He has simply turned within, understanding that carnal desires are clothed in spiritual desires; see Margolin, *Human Temple*, p. 185.

[1733] LY #112, pp. 21b-22b. Cf. *Teshu'ot Hen*, *mishpatim*, pp. 79-80

[1734] MDL #167, p. 265.

[1735] *Zot Zikhron*, p. 57.

[1736] MDL #2, p. 15

[1737] ST, p. 54b.

strange thoughts have fallen into "brokenness," the realm of the *qelippot*. Having strange thoughts when speaking words of prayer send the divine Word, from which we derive all of our language, into exile.[1738] Yet because all letters are holy, they may be raised up to their origin in *binah*, where the mystic can recombine them into a something positive.[1739] Strange thoughts accost one in prayer in order for him to uplift them, and, when they are transformed, God rejoices in the success.[1740]

For example, the Maggid recommends that one who is overcome with lustful thoughts for something physical should remember that everything was created with *hokhmah*. This divine element gives inner vitality to the physical world, including all thoughts and words. One must look past the external shell of the lust and see the divine life-force within it, for holy thoughts and *mahshavot zarot* differ only in the permutation of their letters.[1741] This knowledge allows the one praying to take his fallen lust and express it anew as love for the Divine, formulating his unchaste thought and then coming up with a permutation of the letters that would yield a spiritual desire. Uplifting a strange thought such as this is far more than simply vanquishing a distraction, since it actually increases his ability to serve God. This process uplifts a fallen spark that has been trapped in the husks, bringing great pleasure to the Divine.[1742]

[1738] MDL #112, p. 187.

[1739] See MDL #50, pp. 70-72, for a teaching about words whose façade may be holy letters, but the inner intention is either missing or inappropriate. See OT #386, *aggadot*, p. 411.

[1740] OT #208, *tehillim*, p. 275-276.

[1741] One who sees this inherent unity is referred to as an *ish ha-nilbav*. See above, pp. 244-245.

[1742] MDL #74, pp. 128-130. Cf. LY #43, fol. 7b-8a, in which the Maggid likens the Evil Inclination to a thief in the night. If one simply frightens it away, it will return once more. But if one grabs the Evil Inclination by the "hand" and truly vanquishes it, there can be no future distractions. See also OHE, fol. 7c, which shares elements in common with MDL #50, p. 72.

In several teachings the Maggid likens the act of prayer to a journey in which the worshiper moves from one palace to another.[1743] He is examined at each station, says the Maggid, to see whether or not he is worthy of continuing:

> "I have seen servants riding on horses" (Eccl. 10:7). Letters of prayer are called "horses." When a strange thought rides upon them, one is astonished to see a servant riding on the king's horse. But when he attunes himself to the fact that these are holy letters, and only their combination is negative, he brings the letters to *mahshavah*, to the world of "exchange" (*'olam ha-temurah*),[1744] and new combinations are made from them—words of Torah instead of silly words.[1745]
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> This is the meaning of, "She [Tamar] sat at the crossroads" (*va-teshev be-fetah 'einayyim*, Gen. 38:14). She is the one upon whom all gaze and see the blessed Holy One.[1746] "Judah saw her and thought her a prostitute"—"a prostitute" (*zonah*) means "beautiful" (*zo na'ah*), since she is a limb of *shekhinah*. But this is difficult! If she is a limb of *shekhinah*, why is she so adorned in silly things? The verse says, "For she had concealed her face (*paneha*)," meaning that her inner nature (*penimiyyutah*) was concealed.
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> This is the explanation of, "And Bela the son of Be'or reigned in Edom; and the name of his city was Dinhavah" (Gen. 36:32). The BeSHT[1747] said the following about the Zohar's teaching that a person is judged in each and every palace, and he is cast out of the palace [if found unworthy].[1748]

[1743] In this the Maggid and the BeSHT are clearly invoking the descriptions of heavenly ascents in the *heikhalot* literature; see above, pp. 148-149 and n. 417.

[1744] See also OHE, p. 36d, for a teaching on uplifting the fallen forms of various emotions based on Lev. 27:33. However, in *Qedushat Levi*, *va-yera*, p. 50, *'olam ha-temurah* refers to the origin to which one must take all thoughts. It is interesting to note that *shekhinah* is referred to as *temurah* in *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 21, fol. 60b. The phrase *'olam ha-temurah* is found occasionally in kabbalistic literature as a way of referring to the physical world, a realm of distinction and change, as opposed to the static upper worlds; see Zohar 3:281a (R.M.); *Shenei Luhot ha-Berit*, *lekh lekha*; cf. *Qedushat Levi*, *shavu'ot*, pp. 326; *Liqqutei Torah*, *yom ha-kippurim*, fol. 70a. See also *Pardes Rimmonim* 25:1.

[1745] The Maggid's formulation in this case makes it unclear if the new permutation is assembled by the worshiper, or if it is somehow performed *for* him.

[1746] The Maggid is reading *petah 'eynayim* literally as "an opening for the eyes." *Shekhinah* is often associated with *petah* in earlier Kabbalah. See Zohar 1:103a-b.

[1747] *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *noah*, p. 65, quotes a much shorter version of this idea as something he heard the Maggid say in the BeSHT's name.

[1748] Zohar 2:245b; 1:234a.

> The explanation is that the words are called palaces, since the intellect (*sekhel*) dwells within them. As he prays a person moves from letter to letter, and word to word. If he is not worthy, they cast him out, meaning that they send him a strange thought and automatically he becomes "outside."[1749]
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> This is the meaning of, "And Bela the son of Beor reigned in Edom." Edom (*adom*, "red") refers to fiery passion. A person who prays with great fervor and is ruled by a strange thought is called Bela, which can mean "destruction."[1750] "Son of" (*ben*)—but when he understands (*mevin*) exactly what the strange thought really is, then "Beor"—he sets it aflame (*meva'er*), since through it he comes to a fiery passion of the Creator, as is known.
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> "The name of his city (*'iro*)"—why is he aroused, since "his city" can also mean "arousal" (*hit'orerut*)? "Dinhavah"[1751]—because he is mindful and attentive to the fact that judgment is being given; that is, he is being judged.[1752]

The Maggid, drawing on the teachings of the BeSHT and the Zohar, describes prayer in much the same way as the ancient *heikhalot* texts, which chronicle the ascent of the mystic through the various heavenly palaces in order to glimpse the Throne of Glory. Here the journey has been internalized to a great degree, for of course the Maggid is not referring to celestial palaces somewhere in the firmament. But neither do these palaces exist solely within the mind. They are identified as the very words of prayer, though from

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[1749] Elsewhere the Maggid compares prayer to Shabbat, likening one who thinks *mahshavot zarot* to someone transgresses the Shabbat boundary; see MDL #179, p. 279. Cf. Zohar 1:32a.

[1750] See, inter alia, Lam. 2:2, 5; 2 Sam. 20:19-20.

[1751] The Maggid is interpreting the name Dinhavah as two words: *din* ("judgment") and *hav* ("give").

[1752] MDL #55, pp. 80-82, with parallels in OT #50, *va-yishlah*, pp. 67-68; OHE, fol. 9b-10a. Cf. LY #194, fol. 58b-59b; OHE, fol. 3b. See R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir's version of this teaching in *Or ha-Me'ir*, *shir ha-shirim*, pp. 277-278; ibid, *ruth*, p.50. See also MDL #29, pp. 48, and Margolin's insightful remarks in *Human Temple*, pp. 189-91. This homily is an excellent illustration of the Maggid's exegetical strategy, which brings biblical tales to life as vivid descriptions of the inner world of prayer. He carefully tracks and reinterprets each and every word of the verse, and his interpretations draw upon both word plays and symbolic associations.

this text alone it is unclear if the Maggid and the BeSHT are referring to spoken words or written words, either on the page or visualized within the mind of the one praying.

The contemplative is pronounced unworthy if a *mahshavah zarah* succeeds in distracting him. If this happens, he is cast out and his inward quest is over, for the thought can longer be raised up. This, too, is a common motif in the *heikhalot* literature, where there is tremendous danger inherent in the journey.[1753] Indeed, distracting thoughts threaten to derail the entire enterprise of contemplative prayer. But it is precisely the awareness of this precariousness, says that Maggid, that gives the mystic the mindfulness necessary to overcome the strange thought. Knowledge that he is being "judged" anew as he utters every word, and indeed every letter, means that the mystic will be constantly vigilant that no *mahshavot zarot* distract him. If he is wise, he will uplift the strange thought and use it as kindling for the fires of his devotional fervor.

Kavvanah, the Lurianic *Kavvanot* and Liturgy

Let us now turn to the Maggid's attitude toward the Lurianic *kavvanot*.[1754] A great many of his teachings underscore the importance *kavvanah*, which we might translate as contemplative intention and attunement, in all speech; this is all the more true regarding prayer. Words spoken without *kavvanah* remain down below and cannot be connected to the Divine.[1755] However, given the popularity of the *kavvanot* in pre-Hasidic pietistic

[1753] See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 49-54.

[1754] The complexities of the relationship of the early Hasidic masters to the *kavvanot* is a matter of scholarly debate. Weiss, 'The Kavvanoth of Prayer in Early Hasidism', pp. 95-125; Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 215-241; Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 160-170; Rapoport-Albert, 'God and the Zaddik', pp. 315-317; Pinchas Giller, 'Between Poland and Jerusalem: Kabbalistic Prayer in Early Modernity' *Modern Judaism* 24 (2004), pp. 226-250.

[1755] *Me'or 'Einayim*, *ki tissa*, p. 200. This notion is found dozens of times in the Maggid's sermons, and is often connected to the following paraphrase of *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 10, fol. 25b: "words brought forth without love and awe cannot fly upward."

circles, we should ask if the Maggid ever employs *kavvanah* as a technical term. Did he endorse the practice of using specific *kavvanot* in prayer, did he actively discourage it, or was it a relatively minor element of his approach to prayer? In one homily, we read:

> When a person prays according to the simple meaning [of the liturgy], the words are not alive. Only the name [of God] gives vitality to the words. For example, when one says, "Blessed are You," there is no vitality in "Blessed are You" until he mentions the name [Y-H-V-H]. But when one prays according to Kabbalah, "Blessed" is a name, "are You" is a name, and so it is with all the words of prayer, since this is the World of Speech.[1756]

A cursory reading of this teaching might suggest that the Maggid did indeed endorse the Lurianic *kavvanot*, which connect all words of the liturgy to permutations of the divine names and the *sefirot*.[1757] However, the final line suggests otherwise, since it reminds us that holiness is found in *all* language! As we have seen throughout the many different areas of the Maggid's thought, *'olam ha-dibbur* refers to *shekhinah*, or *malkhut*, an aspect of the Divine which becomes invested in one who speaks with total focus and concentration. While this reflects a deeply mystical understanding of the nature of the language, it does not necessarily mean that each word of prayer must be accompanied by a complicated cluster of intentions in order for it to have this power.

We should also remember that the Maggid describes all language as an embodiment and expression of the name Y-H-V-H. Knowledge of this fact allows one to speak each word of the liturgy, whether or not it is formally a divine name, with the understanding that it too is an articulation of God's name. This type of contemplative

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[1756] MDL #13, p. 26. See the texts cited by Weiss, 'Kavvanoth of Prayer', p. 106. A similar teaching appears in *Or la-Shamayim*, *noah*, p. 17.

[1757] Even here we cannot assume with total certainty that "according to Kabbalah" would be restricted to Lurianic *kavvanot*. Perhaps he meant something more ecstatic, more in keeping with the mystical path of Abulafia or Gikatilla.

awareness does not necessarily conflict with the traditional *kavvanot*, but the two are not synonymous. The ambiguity in the Maggid's teachings about "prayer according to Kabbalah" may reflect the fact that his various teachings were addressed to different audiences. His public sermons and his *hanhagot* were meant for a relatively wide audience, and must certainly have been different than the private counsel the Maggid would have given to his more elite, learned disciples.

Our broader interpretation of the teaching cited above is confirmed by another important and well-known passage:

> One who invokes all the *kavvanot* known to him in his prayer, can only do so for those that he knows. But if someone says one word with great connection (*hitqashrut gadol*), all the *kavvanot* are automatically included in that word.[1758] When he utters the word with this great attachment, those worlds above are certainly aroused, and it accomplishes great feats. Therefore one should be careful to pray with great attachment and fiery passion, and certainly he will accomplish great things in the world above, since each and every letter arouses up above.[1759]

Despite their great profundity and nuance, in some ways the Lurianic *kavvanot* actually limit prayer in several important ways. They are totally inaccessible to anybody without many years of advanced study. The mystics of previous generations knew the correct keys that would open all the heavenly channels, says the Maggid in a famous parable, but we can only break the locks through passionate devotion.[1760] A tradition in a work by one of the Maggid's students claims that one who does not know the *kavvanot* should be mindful of the fact that the language of the prayer-book is composed of letters,

[1758] OHE adds "since each and every letter is a world."

[1759] LY #227, fol. 67a, with a parallel in OHE, fol. 64a. See Weiss, 'Kavvanoth of Prayer', p. 106-107.

[1760] See *Yosher Divrei Emet* #42, fol. 135a-b.

cantillation marks, crowns and vowels, which correspond to the four worlds.[1761] Yet the specificity of the *kavvanot* also restricts prayer for those who possess some knowledge of Lurianic Kabbalah.[1762]

This question of the *kavvanot* is an important one for understanding the overall accessibility of Hasidic spirituality. The Hasidic masters draw upon the terminology and conceptual structures of Lurianic Kabbalah, but their teachings offer early mystical traditions in highly simplified form. Thus instead of elaborate and complex *kavvanot*, which require many years of diligent study in order to master, these leaders emphasized the importance of *kavvanah* and *devequt*. The Hasidic conception of *kavvanah* shares many elements in common with the Kabbalistic *kavvanot*, such as drawing spiritual vitality into the letters, uniting *shekhinah* and *tif'eret*, the goal of uplifting the sparks, and so forth, but the two notions are not identical.

This debate surrounding the *kavvanot* is bound to the question of which liturgy should be used in the synagogue. Pietists in Europe had been praying according to a version of the Sephardic rite influenced by the Lurianic *kavvanot* for many years before the beginning of the Hasidic movement.[1763] However, the *mithnaggedim* became incensed as many more people began to forsake the traditional Ashkenazi liturgy and

[1761] *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *noah*, p. 66. This disciple then connected this idea to the BeSHT's teaching about the levels of Noah's ark representing the different levels of divinity present in language; see above, pp. 170-171.

[1762] Similar sentiments are found in many early Hasidic texts. For example, R. Qalonymous Qalman Epstein of Krakow quotes a tradition from R. Elimelekh of Lizhensk, a disciple of the Maggid; see *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, *nitsavim*, pp. 646-647. See also Krassen, *Uniter of Heaven and Earth*, pp. 70-74.

[1763] Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1 pp. 47, 67; Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania*, pp. 120, 197.

adopt this version of the Sephardic rite.[1764] The *mithnaggedim* found this move offensive, in part because of the pretentiousness in allowing a large number of people to pray in the manner once reserved for the elite. But accepting a new liturgy also meant that the Hasidim disrupted the communal structure by separating themselves and forming new prayer quorums.[1765]

Why did the early Hasidim change from one liturgy to another, if they were not adopting the Lurianic *kavvanot* whole cloth? To some extent this shift was an attempt to mirror what smaller circles of pietists and mystics had been doing for many years. Changing the liturgy also established a separate identity for the nascent Hasidic movement, distinguishing their prayer quorums from those of the pietists as well as the masses.[1766] But the shift to the Sephardic rite also demonstrates the importance of the world of Lurianic Kabbalah to the early Hasidic masters. Their interpretations of Lurianic Kabbalah were highly simplified and emphasized psychology and mystical experience over elaborate cosmology, but much of their conceptual framework is based in the terminology and structures of Safed Kabbalah. The venerated image of the holy Luria was quite important to the Maggid and his students, as was imitating some of the customs associated with him, but more obscure—and inaccessible—practices such as the *kavvanot*

[1764] See Wilensky, *Hasidim and Mitnaggedim*, vol. 1 pp. 40-41, 45, 47-49; idem, 'Hasidic-Mitnaggedic Polemics', pp. 248-253; Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, pp. 36-45. See also Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 223-226.

[1765] It is also possible that the struggle for control of Lurianic Kabbalah, which remained primarily in manuscript form during the Maggid's lifetime, was also a factor in this conflict, though the *mithnaggedim* never say this explicitly. The disastrous collapse of the Sabbatean movement had left many Jews suspicious of popular mystical religion and its misuses. In Central Europe bans were issued against the dissemination of Kabbalah in an attempt to restrict its knowledge to small circles, and although there were no such decrees in Eastern Europe, by changing to a kabbalistic liturgy the Hasidim were greatly expanding the circle of those involved in Lurianic Kabbalah. See Shmuel Ettinger, 'The Hasidic Movement', p. 237, who argues that these power dynamics were at the heart of the controversy.

[1766] See Yohanan Petrovsky-Shtern, 'Hasidism, Havurot, and the Jewish Street', *Jewish Social Studies* 10 (2004), pp. 20-54.

seem to have been consciously left behind. And even without performing the *kavvanot*, given the importance attached to the precise words and letters of the liturgy, one can see why the text of Luria would have been preferred.

The most famous passage addressing the question of liturgy in the Maggid's sermons is a teaching structured as a responsum appearing in MDL.[1767] He explains that there were thirteen gates in the Temple, corresponding to the twelve tribes and one for those who were unsure to which tribe they belonged. Since prayer, like the sacrifices of the Temple, is a means of approaching God, this same pattern applies to the many and various liturgical traditions. Only one rite befits all, namely that of the Lurianic Kabbalah. This liturgy is pieced together from different liturgies, and is therefore universally accessible.

This responsum is an important text for understanding the relationship of early Hasidism to Lurianic Kabbalah more broadly, which is beyond the scope of the present study.[1768] However, in another important passage in MDL, the Maggid discusses the issue of liturgy together with the role of language in prayer:

> The earlier sages asked why prayer was instituted, for surely all of one's requests are revealed before God. The answer is thus: the ARI (R. Isaac Luria) wrote that one should not recite poems that are not "according to the way of truth," but rather only those that were established by the Men of the Great Assembly and [R. Elazar] the Qalir, which are "according to the way of Truth."[1769] It

[1767] MDL #96, pp. 167-168.

[1768] For scholarship that uses this passage as just such a case study, see Moshe Hallamish, *Kabbalah: In Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, Ramat-Gan 2000, pp. 106-113; Vick, 'Through Which All of Israel Can Ascend', esp. pp. 23-58.

[1769] On the Men of the Great Assembly as the architects of the fixed liturgy, see b. Berakhot 33a-b; b. Megillah 18a. On the figure of R. Elazar Kalir, see Ezra Fleischer, 'New Light on Qiliri', *Tarbiz* 50 (1981), pp. 282-302 [Hebrew]; Ruth Langer, 'Kalir was a Tanna: Rabbenu Tam's Invocation of Antiquity in Defense of the Ashkenazi Payyetanic Tradition', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 67 (1996), pp. 95-106. On this Lurianic tradition, see *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *haqdamah*.

> is taught in the Zohar that *Ein Sof* cannot be represented by the shape of any letter, even the tip of the *yod*.[1770] If this is true, how can we call Him by all the names and appellatives, praying to him with letters and words?
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> The answer is that given [by the Zohar] itself: He is called merciful and compassionate so that we might know him. When we wish him to have compassion upon us, as it were He contracts His blessed Divinity into the word "compassionate," that is, within the lights and vessels of those letters, as is known to those who possess secret knowledge.
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> The Men of the Great Assembly knew which [type of] drawing forth of the divine vitality was necessary at each moment, [in the prayer services of the] evening, morning and afternoon. Therefore they established the names and the appellatives and words and letters [of the liturgy] according to the need, as the hand of God was upon them and enlightened them.[1771] This was also the case with the Qalir. This is why it is called "according to the path of truth," meaning everything is measured according to the need.
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> This is what the sages said, "the Great, the Mighty, and the Terrible"—had Moses not said them, and had the Men of the Great Assembly not established them, [we could never have said these things].[1772] These words are certainly because of the necessity of drawing vitality into the worlds. This is not true of the words and combinations [of letters] that someone devises from his heart. They are not "according to the path of truth," since who knows if the need of drawing vitality into the worlds is through those words. The enlightened one will understand.[1773]

Here we find the Maggid sharply discouraging liturgical innovation, though not necessarily spontaneous prayer.[1774] There is a fixed, almost magical quality to the words the prayer rite. We might assume that the notion of *devequt* and emotional engagement in

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[1770] Zohar 1:21a.

[1771] A reference to prophecy.

[1772] b. Berakhot 33b.

[1773] MDL #199, pp. 323-324.

[1774] Cf. *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 14:63, p. 616. It would be strange for the Maggid to forbid all creative prayer outside the framework of the fixed liturgy, given his firm statements that all language can be raised up.

prayer would lead to an adoption of a more flexible, even spontaneous liturgy.[1775] This reticence represents a fundamentally conservative element of the Maggid's thought, since we could hardly expect him to abandon the traditional liturgy. But his embrace of structured prayer has a much deeper psychological and mystical basis as well. Prayer is a moment of self-transcendence in which one allows *'olam ha-dibbur* to speak through him, praying not for his own needs but on behalf of *shekhinah*. Spontaneous prayer, on the other hand, is about self-expression.

The Maggid is making an even more programmatic point in this teaching as well. Prayers are known to God long before they are ever expressed verbally, so for what reason must they be recited aloud? Furthermore, the utter ineffability of God means that the entire notion of prayer should be possible, for it is impossible to describe the Divine in words. The Maggid answers that prayer has a performative element. God responds to worship by contracting His sacred divine energy into the words of the liturgy. The goal is not to describe God's essence, which lies forever beyond the realm of language, but rather to inspire the Divine to become garbed within our words and thereby draw forth new vitality to the world.[1776]

The Maggid understands, however, that worshipers naturally lose their inspiration as they recite the same prayers each day. Elsewhere he notes that many people attain great devotional fervor when praying the additions to the *'amidah* that are included on the High Holidays, but let their minds wander during the sections that are more or less identical to those of ordinary weekdays. Therefore one must be particularly careful to

[1775] This is precisely the shift that took place in the teachings of R. Nahman of Bratslav, who emphasized the power of speaking to God in one's native tongue; see *Liqqutei Morahan* II:120.

[1776] See also *Or ha-Me'ir*, *shir ha-shirim*, p. 255.

pray with contemplative intention in those well-trodden parts of the service. The liturgy guides one through each of the four worlds, and one must move through the earlier stages before truly standing in the presence of the Divine.[1777] Indeed, one of the greatest challenges of prayer is the fact that the liturgy easily becomes rote and one ceases to pay attention.[1778]

The Maggid's sermons occasionally offer new interpretations of specific sections of the liturgy or verses that are included in the prayers. He outlines two types of blessings: those that draw energy from above to below, and those that move from below to above.[1779] The *'amidah* draws vitality down, whereas the *qaddish* lifts the lower worlds to the higher worlds.[1780] In some cases, the Maggid gives more detailed instructions regarding the ascent (or descent) through different worlds in a particular part of the prayer service.[1781] Reciting the collection of verses known by the first word of *hodu* ("let us give thanks") before *pesuqei de-zimra* ("verses of praise") makes sense according to the way one traverses the four worlds in prayer, since it starts the journey with inspiring passion.[1782] The formula *le-shem yihud* is recited in order to bring the *sefirah tif'eret* to *shekhinah*, or the divine Word that animates the world. Performing a commandment, such as prayer, reveals the divine Presence in the physical realm; this

[1777] LY #134, fol. 40b-41b.

[1778] Ibid.

[1779] Indeed, from the teachings quoted thus far, one gets the impression that the Maggid believes that *all* prayer moves in both directions.

[1780] See MDL #123, pp. 204-206; MDL #145, p. 246.

[1781] LY #96, fol. 17b.

[1782] LY #85, p. 15b. On the place of *Hodu*, see *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-zemirot*, ch. 1; ibid, *sha'ar ha-qaddishim,* ch. 1; and see also Hallamish, *Studies in Kabbalah and Prayer*, pp. 377-379; Israel M. Ta-Shma, *The Early Ashkenazi Prayer: Literary and Historical Aspects*, Jerusalem 2003, pp. 57-65 [Hebrew]. See also *Sha'arei Orah*, ch. 1, p. 14, on the recitation of *pesuqei de-zimra* in order to cleave asunder the "husks."

brings God great pleasure and delight.[1783] But all of these instructions and explanations are relatively simple. Although they require intense contemplative and emotional focus, they have nothing of the complexity of the *kavvanot* associated with the liturgy by traditional Kabbalists.

VERBAL CONFESSION

The ritual of confession is an element of the liturgy that features prominently in several of the Maggid's sermons. Just as there are letters in commandments, he suggests, so too are all transgressions composed of letters. Both are actions that express an idea that originated within the conscious mind, a realm that is governed by the letters of thought. Sin casts these letters into the husks, and only verbal confession can uplift them.[1784] For this reason, the High Priest recited his sins aloud on Yom Kippur in order to effect the proper atonement.[1785] The work of one of his disciples preserves an interesting tradition about confession:

[1783] LY #65, fol. 12a; cf. MDL #95, p. 166. It is hard to discern from these passages if the Maggid is recommending that this formula be recited before each and every commandment, but that does seem to be the implication. For an interesting explanation of *le-shem yihud* in the teachings of one of the Maggid's students, see *No'am Elimelekh*, vol. 1, *bo*, p. 199; ibid, vol. 2, *metsora'*, pp. 317-318; *devarim*, pp. 471-472; *ki tavo*, pp. 519-520. On this history of reciting *le-shem yihud*, see Hallamish, *Kabbalah*, pp. 45-70; Jacobs, *Hasidic* Prayer, pp. 140-153; Sack, 'Influence of *Reshit Hokhmah'*, p. 256; Vick, 'Through Which All of Israel Can Ascend', pp. 32-36.

[1784] OHE, fol. 19b. See ST, p. 43; and cf. MDL #102, p. 181. This teaching may have been quoted by R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady in his *Ma'amarei Admor ha-Zaken*, 5770 [1809/10], p. 177, though the printing notes that the teaching was delivered on the night of Yom Kippur 5771 [1810]. He says that the matter is explained "in *Liqqutei Amarim* of my teacher." A precedent connecting confession with a broader theology of language may be found in *Reshit Hokhmah*, *sha'ar ha-teshuvah*, ch. 5, p. 788: "It is customary to confess according to the [order of the] alphabet, because all the worlds were created by the twenty-two letters, as explained in *Sefer Yetsirah*. Sin blemishes all the worlds, and therefore it is fitting to confess with the alphabet." On verbal confession more broadly, see *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot teshuvah* 1:1, 2:2; *Hesed le-Avraham* 4:37.

[1785] MDL #127, p. 219. The thrust of this text is that something that is farther away, even defiled and impure, brings an even great joy to God. The journey of the letters to their source is similar to the path of repentance struck by the one praying.

> I heard from my teacher [the Maggid]: Why is it that in the confession (*viddui*) we have to mention each sin? Is it not enough to leave the sin behind and to heartfully regret having done it? Is that not the essence of *teshuvah*? After all, everything we have done is revealed to God.
>
> He said that when we transgress we do so using our strength and vitality. We actually draw the energy of the letters of that act we commit into the deed itself: "Theft," "cheating," "harlotry," and the like. Therefore when we repent, we have to speak them out with those same letters, reciting them with a broken heart and in tears. We have to follow them down to the low place called "sadness" and "weeping," raising those letters up by reciting them in both fear and love, with great devotion, before the world's Creator. This allows them to fly upward, as the Zohar teaches.[1786]
>
> Afterwards I heard from the late sage R. Solomon of Karlin that he also heard our teacher explain the word *viddui* (confession") in this way. *Viddui* has the spelled-out letter *yod* within it. You are raising all those letters back up to their root in *yod*, the root of all the letters.[1787]

The Maggid wonders why one must specify each of his sins by confessing them aloud if these misdeeds are already known to the Divine, for the essence of repentance is simply to refrain from doing the sin again. This echoes his question regarding why we must pray orally, given that God understands our requests before they are uttered. Here the answer is not that divine vitality must be drawn through the words of the liturgy, but rather that in order to heal the fracture caused by a sin, one must save the letters of that transgression and return them to their original source. The Maggid is interpreting the word *viddui* ("confession") as "re-making into a *yod*", returning the letters to *hokhmah*, which is the pool of ultimate potential from which all language—and indeed all creation—originates.

[1786] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 10, fol. 25b

[1787] *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *devarim*, p. 381, based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 2, p. 182. A similar framing of the idea of verbal confession is found in the work of R. Joseph Blokh, another of the Maggid's students; *Ginzei Yosef*, vol. 1, *va-yeshev*, p. 150. Shortly afterward the author reinforces that confession includes a contemplative element within the heart of the penitent, but it must also be articulated aloud with spoken words.

The Maggid often relates verbal confession to the idea of uplifting fallen thoughts, and to his mystical interpretation of the ritual of *nefilat apayyim* or *tahanun* ("prostration") recited after the *'amidah*:[1788]

> "[If] one makes his prayer circular, it is very dangerous and not a commandment."[1789] This means[1790] that there is great danger, lest his mind be shattered (*yeratsets moho*). Prayer (*tefillah*) comes from the word "to wrestle" (*naftulei*, Gen. 30:8).
>
> "If one makes it circular" refers to one who makes his connection [to God] circular. Sometimes he is below and sometimes he is above, like something round, and he is not always connected. "It is very dangerous," means that when he falls in *tahanun*, sometimes his thought will go out in order to gather the sparks from the husks [and may be trapped there]... Thus we find that the ark of Y-H-V-H was taken captive among the Philistines in order to clarify the words that were in exile... This

[1788] In the Sephardic rite, this daily liturgical unit includes an acrostic confession. On the history and development of this ritual, see Ruth Langer, '"We Do Not Know What To Do!": A Foray into the Early History of Tahanun', *Seeking the Favor of God: The Impact of Penitential Prayer Beyond Second Temple Judaism* ed. M. J. Boda, D. K. Falk, and R. A. Werline, Atlanta 2008, vol. 3, pp. 39- 69. For overviews of the practice of *nefillat apayyim* in Jewish mysticism, see Hallamish, *Kabbalah in Liturgy, Halakhah and Customs*, pp. 474-485; Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, pp. 31-35. *Nefillat apayyim* is described in the Zohar in many different ways. Some passages refer to it as hiding from the intensity of the intra-divine intercourse taking place during prayer, but others describe it as including one's soul in the divine intercourse at the same time. Other passages refer to it more as a type of spiritual death. See Zohar 2:129a, 202b; 3:176b, *Zohar Hadash*, *terumah*, fol. 42a. These passages form the basis of the Lurianic notion of going into the *qelippot*, the realm of death, in order to lift up sparks. See Tishby, 'Prayer and Devotion', pp. 381-383. On *nefillat apayyim* in the writings of Cordovero, see Sack, *Kabbalah of Rabbi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 234-237; and on *nefillat apayyim* in Lurianic Kabbalah, see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 241-245; Elliot R. Wolfson, 'Weeping, Death, and Spiritual Ascent in Sixteenth Century Jewish Mysticism', *Death, Ecstasy, and Other Worldly Journeys*, ed. J.J. Collins and M. Fishbane, Albany 1995; Michael Fishbane, *The Kiss of God: Spiritual and Mystical Death in Judaism*, Seattle 1994, pp. 104-108, 110-120, 126-127. Regarding the psychological aspects of *nefillat appayim* in Hasidic literature, see Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, p. 168 n. 88. The eighteenth-century Kabbalist R. Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto describes his practice of *nefillat apayyim* as having been followed by interludes of automatic writing. See Garb, *Shamanic Trance*, pp. 69-70.

[1789] See m. Megillah 4:8. The plain-sense meaning of the word rendered above as "prayer" (*tefillah*) is the singular of "phylactery" (sing. *tefillah*, pl. *tefillin*). This mishnah warns against making the boxes of the *tefillin* into a round shape (*agulah*) instead of a square one.

[1790] OHE reads *piresh ha-RaN*, and OT has *piresh RaSHI*. However, the Maggid is referring to Rabbenu Hananel's commentary to b. Megillah 24b, also quoted by the *Tosafot Yom Tov* on the Mishnah ad loc. Both of these canonical sources would have been known to the Maggid. See also *Arukh*, s.v. T.P/F.L.; y. Qiddushin 4:11.

> is why R. Isaac Luria wrote that one must guard himself when falling in *tahanun*,[1791] which is in the world of action [i.e. the lowest of all worlds.][1792]

Contemplative attachment to God within the mind should be a permanent state. There is great danger inherent in going down to the lowest realms, since one's internal connection to God may be shattered in the process. However, such a descent is necessary in order to redeem the letters and words that have been exiled. This ritual of confession is quite like the notion that one must leave the safety of his holy thoughts in order to uplift *mahshavot zarot*, which are also composed of letters that have become trapped amid the husks.

SILENT PRAYER

Thus far we have discussed the role of letters and words in the Maggid's approach to prayer, but some of his teachings explore extra-linguistic aspects of worship. For instance, several of the Maggid's homilies underscore that ecstatic prayer must not be accompanied by physical motions. Movements and gesticulations may characterize a lower level of prayer, but one truly immersed in contemplation becomes increasingly still as he ascends higher and higher within the mind.[1793] This sentiment contrasts to the more frenetic practices that characterized the style of prayer of his teacher and some of his students.[1794] Similarly, the Maggid recommends that prayers should be recited in a low voice, without any ecstatic shouts.[1795]

[1791] See *Peri Ets Hayyim, sha'ar nefillat apayyim*, ch. 2.

[1792] MDL #147, p. 248, with parallels in OT #479, *aggadot*, pp. 481-482; and OHE, fol. 35b.

[1793] LY #18, fol. 3b; LY #33, fol. 6a.

[1794] See Ben Amos and Mintz, *In Praise of the Baal Shem Tov*, pp. 50-53. R. Shneur Zalman of Liady's descriptions of prayer involve quite a lot of bodily motion; see *Sefer ha-Tanya*, *sefer shel beinonim*, ch. 30; ibid, *iggeret ha-qodesh*, ch. 22; Loewenthal, *Communicating the Infinite*, pp. 109-117.

[1795] LY #6, fol. 1b. A similar passage is found in the *hanhagot* based on the practices of R. Isaac Luria; see Benayahu, *Toledoth ha-Ari*, p. 324

We have also noted that the Maggid's sermons include elements of visual meditations, some of which are rather elaborate. He suggests that one who is on a lower level should recite the liturgy from amidst a prayer-book, for the written letter will aid him. A higher level, however, is to shut one's eyes and thereby allow his inner sight to be trained exclusively upon the world above.[1796] Schatz-Uffenheimer interprets the advice to pray with no physical movements and with closed eyes as the Maggid's attempt to transcend spoken words and pray in absolute quiet.[1797] This raises a very interesting question indeed: does the Maggid describe any modes of contemplative prayer that can only be accomplished in pure silence?[1798]

Several of the Maggid's teachings lend themselves to this interpretation. For example, we read:

> One may perform the service of prayer to God without it being visible to others at all. He makes no motions with his limbs, but the innermost parts of his soul burn within his heart. He cries out quietly (*be-lahash*). This type of inner service is much greater than that which can be seen in the limbs.[1799]

We should begin by noting that the primary message of this text is not the merits of silent prayer. It is a guarded admonition against the dangers of pride and self-aggrandizement

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[1796] LY #27, fol. 5a. For an interesting parallel attributed to the BeSHT, see *Ketonet Passim*, *balaq*, pp. 326-327.

[1797] Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'Contemplative Prayer', p. 224.

[1798] Hayyim of Volozhin, *Nefesh ha-Hayyim*, *peraqim*, chap. 5, underscores the importance of verbal prayer, for silent contemplation accomplishes nothing and does not fulfill one's obligation to pray. See Nadler, *Faith of the Mithnagdim*, p. 68. See also *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, *va-ethanan*, p 1150, citing a teaching from the BeSHT that because prayer (and study) create a link *malkhut* and *binah*, both *dibbur* and *mahshavah* are indispensible. See, however, *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 1, *shir ha-shirim*, p. 263, who records in the BeSHT's name that the element of prayer that "ascends" is not the physical, spoken words but rather the inner contemplative meditations of the heart.

[1799] LY #192, fol. 58a-58b; cf. LY #6, fol. 1b; LY #211,fol 63a. The Maggid's bifurcation between inner and outer service in this teaching clearly recalls to mind the distinction between *hovot ha-levavot* ("inner duties") and *hovot ha-evarim* ("physical duties") made by R. Bahye ibn Paquda in his *Hovot ha-Levavot*.

that might accompany a type of ecstatic prayer that is visible to others. However, much rides on our interpretation of the term *be-lahash*, which may either be translated as "quietly" or "silently." Schatz-Uffenheimer opted for the latter, but this is the weaker reading both conceptually and philologically.

The term *lahash* has long been used to refer to the style of prayer during the personal *'amidah*, which is traditionally referred to as the quiet prayer in contrast with the prayer-leader's vocalized public repetition.[1800] While this type of supplication is so quiet that it cannot be heard by anyone, even the one praying, it is not silent and it is certainly not beyond language. In fact, the Maggid employs the term *lahash* in precisely this way in another of his sermons:

> During the quiet prayer (*tefillah be-lahash*), as one connects himself above, if he is worthy he will be raised up in that prayer, as the Sages taught, "the one who comes to purify himself receives heavenly assistance."[1801] By means of that prayer in which he was attached to God in his mind, he can arrive at an even higher level, and will be connected above even when he is not praying.[1802]

Surely the "quiet prayer" referred to here is the *'amidah* itself. We noted earlier that *shekhinah* speaks through a person as soon as he recites the verse, "Lord, open up my lips" at the beginning of the *'amidah*. While this flow of divine words must be connected

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[1800] b. Berakhot 24b explains that one who raises their voice is among those of small faith. R. Huna, however, qualifies this formulation and allows an individual praying without a community to raise his voice if he would otherwise lack concentration. Raising one's voice in public is still not permitted because it would disrupt the other worshippers. Cf. b. Sotah 32b; *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot tefillah* 5:9, where Maimonides rules that one should neither raise his voice nor pray entirely within his heart, but rather should pray in a voice so quiet it cannot be discerned. In a very different context, b. Hagigah 14a describes teaching the secrets of Torah quietly (*be-lahash*), which obviously cannot mean silent. The BeSHT describes praying the *'amidah* as oral (*be'al peh*) speech, which, although it may be hushed, clearly refers to verbal recitation; see *Ketonet Passim*, *balaq*, p. 327. See also *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar ha-'amidah*, end of ch. 2; and *'Avodat Yisra'el*, *shemini*, p. 113-114, in which R. Israel of Kozhenits describes a whisper as quiet speech (*dibbur be-lahash*) that goes unnoticed.

[1801] b. Shabbat 104a.

[1802] LY #168, fol. 55a.

to the World of Thought, the articulated, physical speech is never truly abandoned. This is the type of prayer that transforms one in such a way that he does not surrender his connection to the Divine even after he has closed the prayer book and departed from the synagogue.

This is not to say that none of the Maggid's teachings emphasize the value of silence. A few of them do so explicitly: "'Silence is a fence for wisdom'[1803]—when one is silent, he can connect himself to the World of Thought, which is *hokhmah*."[1804] This would seem to be the Maggid's reading of the supplication of Hannah, whose story is invoked in the Talmud as the source for quiet prayer.[1805] We read:

> "Hannah prayed in her heart ('*al libah*) (1 Sam. 1:13). She wanted to accomplish something not in accord with the laws of nature, and did not wish to pray with words, for "the heavens were created by the word of Y-H-V-H" (Ps. 33:6). They are the lowest worlds, and when one wishes to do something against these worlds, it must be done in thought, where everything is unified and totally one. "The one who told the oil to ignite, will speak to vinegar and it will burn."[1806] Therefore "her voice was not heard; only her lips moved." She wanted to bring this to the world, and lips are the lowest level of the five points [of articulation].[1807]

[1803] m. Avot 3:13.

[1804] LY #190, fol. 58a. See Zohar 2:20a. See *Divrei Emet*, *noah*, fol. 2a, which explains that in some cases one should enter into the word fully, whereas in others one must uplift the word and *not* enter into it. However, in this interesting passage it is difficult to determine which elements belong to the Maggid, and which are those of the book's author, R. Jacob Isaac of Lublin.

[1805] b. Berakhot 31a, commenting on the events of 1 Sam. 1:9-19. See Leila Leah Bronner, 'Hannah's Prayer: Rabbinic Ambivalence', *Shofar* 17.2 (1999), pp. 36-48; Ishay Rosen-Zvi, 'The Standing Woman: Hannah's Prayer in Rabbinic Exegesis', *Jewish Culture in the Eye of the Storm, a Jubilee Book in honor of Yosef Ahituv*, ed. N. Ilan and A. Sagi, Ein Zurim 2002, pp. 675-698 [Hebrew].

[1806] b. Ta'anit 25a. See *Dibrat Shelomoh*, *be-shalah*, p. 152.

[1807] OT #285, *pesuqim*, pp. 342-343, with parallels in OT, fol. 6b; and SLA, p. 98. These two have a key difference. Instead of "she wanted to bring this to this world," both read "she wanted to understand this in thought." This makes no sense given the final line of the teaching. Cf. 8°5979, fol. 18b-19a, which also reads "understand."

Hannah, who wishes to overturn the laws of nature in order to bear a child, must do so through the power of her contemplative mind. But once that change has been effected in the infinite potential of the World of Thought, it must then be concretized by entering into the physical world through the medium of speech.[1808]

Another of the Maggid's homilies interprets Hannah's story from a different perspective, but with a similar message.[1809] He rereads her name as two parts: *hen* ("supplicate," as in Deut. 3:23) and *heh*, representing the five positions of the mouth. When they supplicate (*mehonenim*) before God, the words are spoken "in the heart," referring to the World of Thought. But this connection between the words and the contemplative thought can only be forged as one articulates the prayers aloud.

Thus contemplative prayer does not necessitate quiet and silence. The words of the liturgy are an extremely important focal point for spiritual meditation, God dwells within the letters, for words are a gift to be used in prayer as vessels for drawing new divine energy into the mystic and the world around him. Language is not simply a burden to be overcome, and we see none of the ambivalence that characterizes the Maggid's view of the physical world.

Yet the Maggid recommends that a *tsaddiq*'s prayer must begin with an experience of the ineffable *Ein Sof*, which is subsequently followed by a return to the structures of words and the liturgy. Earlier we referred to a homily in which the Maggid describes going beyond words at the peak of the Sabbath prayers, although in that same teaching he underscores that this journey happens only in order to transform one's

[1808] Some ambiguity exists, however, regarding whether this verbalization is a later stage of prayer or if it takes place simultaneously with the contemplation.

[1809] See MDL #39, pp. 58-59.

language afterward.[1810] And of course, divine vitality and inspiration flow forth from *hokhmah*, a realm that is beyond any depiction with words or signs. Thus the Maggid was keenly aware of the limitations of words in prayer, and several of his teachings offer a different solution than retreating into absolute silence: wordless language.

A Call Without Words

The early Hasidic masters describe the act of listening to the sound of the shofar on Rosh Hashanah as a mystical experience.[1811] The BeSHT is remembered as having given one of his most famous parables immediately before the shofar was sounded one year.[1812] His teaching refers to a king who erected a series of walls and towers, depositing treasure before each gate. Most of those who ventured to see the king were tempted by

[1810] See above, pp. 237-238. See also the teaching from the BeSHT in *Ketonet Passim*, *shelah*, p. 291.

[1811] The blowing of the shofar is classically understood as one of the central events of Rosh Hashanah. See, inter alia, t. Rosh ha-Shanah 1:11; *Kitvei RaMBaN*, *derashah le-rosh ha-shanah*, vol. 1 pp. 226-232. See also Sol B. Finesinger, 'The Shofar', *Hebrew Union College Annual* 8-9 (1931), pp. 193-228. Some interpretations have focused on the shofar as a call to repentance and to quell the Evil Inclination. This approach is typified by Maimonides; see *Mishneh Torah*, *hilkhot teshuvah*, 3:4; cf. *hilkhot shofar* 1:1. See also R. Nissim of Gerona's gloss to the summary of R. Alfasi on b. *Rosh ha-Shanah* 3a. He rereads the tradition of blowing the shofar in order "to confuse the Satan" as subjugating the evil inclination that lies within the human heart. Other traditions explain that the shofar blast has a theurgic element as well, for it can confuse the Satan and change heavenly decrees from stern judgment into compassion. See *Va-Yiqra Rabbah*, ch. 29. The theurgic is particularly important in the Zohar and in Lurianic Kabbalah; see *Zohar* 3:99a-b. In Zohar 3:232a R.M. the shofar is associated with *binah*, the world of *teshuvah*; see 3:122a R.M. See *Peri Ets Hayyim*, *sha'ar rosh ha-shanah*, ch. 2, which describes the shofar as arousing *ze'ir anpin*, and sweetening the judgments by raising them up to *binah*. Idem, ch. 1, explains that when reciting the word "voice" of the blessing "Who has commanded us to listen to the voice of the shofar," one should intend to arouse the supernal voice at the same time. Cf. *Siddur ha-Ari le-Rabbi Asher*, pp. 769-767; and *'Emeq ha-Melekh* 6:62, p. 289.

[1812] See Idel, 'The Parable of the Son of the King', pp. 87-116; Roy Oliver, 'The Baal Shem's New Year's Sermon', *Jewish Quarterly* 20.2 (1972), pp. 9-13. Of course, the BeSHT's famous "ascent of the soul" described in his letter to R. Gershon of Kitov also took place on Rosh Hashanah, but that event was connected more to the gravity of occasion as a day of judgment and not to the shofar in particular. In ST, pp. 76-78, there is an interesting set of Lurianic *kavvanot* attributed to the BeSHT, though these are printed quite late. R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady claims that his mystical interpretation of the voice of the shofar is in accordance with the BeSHT's *kavvanot*, but his explanations are different than the *kavvanot* in ST, and in many ways they seem to follow the Maggid's teachings; see *Tefillot mi-kol ha-Shanah*, *sha'ar ha-teqi'ot*, pp. 240c–247b, esp. 244c.

the riches and turned away from the true goal; only one true seeker, the king's son, stays the course and reaches his father. The child then realizes that all the king's barriers were but an illusion. The message of the parable is then made clear: God's presence, though obscured by the multiplicity of the physical world, is singularly unified, and there is no place devoid of the Divine. This panentheistic vision is a core element of the BeSHT's theology.

The power of the shofar was an important theme in the Maggid's teachings, and, like his teacher, we have a number of sermons framed as parables delivered before the shofar was blown on Rosh Hashanah.[1813] The Maggid teaches that on that auspicious day each year there is a revelation of the highest order, the world of hiddenness, in which we enter a realm even beyond the conscious mind.[1814] We shall see that one of the ways in which this is accomplished is through the blast of the shofar, a sound that blends together the power of silence with the great capacity of words.[1815]

One of the Maggid's parables about the shofar was recorded by R. Levi Isaac of Barditshev in ST. We read:

> Regarding the *shofar* blasts, a fine parable partly by my holy teacher R. Berish: There was a king who sent his only son away to a distant land, for some reason known only to him.[1816] As time passed, the son became accustomed to the ways of the villagers among whom he lived. He became

[1813] Several parables from the Maggid about the blowing of the shofar have been preserved. It is possible that he offered these sermons at different times, but they are similar enough that they may represent a case in which a number of his disciples wrote down the same teaching differently. For an insightful discussion of these traditions, see Wineman, *Hasidic Parable,* pp. 43-47. In one teaching, he warns that the shofar may be such an incredible experience that one might come to neglect all of the other prayers of the day; see LY #134, fol. 40b-41b.

[1814] KTVQ, fol. 21d.

[1815] Anonymous teachings on the shofar are preserved in KST #330–331, pp. 205-207. These are attributed neither to the BeSHT nor the Maggid, and they lack clear parallels in the teachings attributed to either.

[1816] For a parable of this motif from the BeSHT, see *Toledot Ya'aqov Yosef*, vol. 3, *va-ethanan*, p. 1165.

> a wayward fellow, forgetting the niceties of life with the king. Even his mind and his most intimate nature grew coarse. In his mind he came to think ill of the kingdom.
>
> One day the son heard that the king was going to visit the province where he lived. When the king arrived, the son entered the palace where he was staying and began to shout out in a strange voice. His shout was in wordless sound, since he had forgotten the king's language. When the king heard his son's voice and realized that he had even forgotten how to speak, his heart was filled with compassion. This is the meaning of sounding the *shofar*.[1817]

The parable in this teaching is clear, but its interpretation requires some unpacking. The king is God, as is true of all traditional Jewish parables, but the child may represent the Jewish people or the soul as it is born into the world. Both have been exiled from their "home" in some sense, for a reason unknown to all except the king. The son's new environment, perhaps an allusion to the Jewish exile or the soul amidst the physical world more generally, corrupts him so totally that he no longer has any desire to return to his father. Yet the child has also lost his very ability to communicate with the king, perhaps referring to the loss of his ability to pray. The two are reunited only after the king leaves his palace and ventures forth into the forsaken land, where he is greeted by his son's wordless but stirring cry.[1818]

The implication is that in some cases God's compassion is aroused not through well-articulated supplications or petitions, since we have forgotten how to pray with words altogether. Instead, divine kindness is aroused by the raw emotion expressed in a

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[1817] ST, p. 70; based on the translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, p. 172. The text continues with another parable about the shofar given by the Maggid on a different occasion, this one focusing on God's love for Israel being aroused whenever He gazes upon their image as hewn into the Throne of Glory.

[1818] Perhaps this is the source for R. Shne'ur Zalman of Liady's parable for the month of Elul, in which the King is described as being "in the field," namely more accessible even through the physical world; see *Liqqutei Torah*, *re'eh*, fol. 32a.

primal, wordless cry. The shofar's voice has the power to repair a connection with God even to a degree that language cannot.

R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhytomir gives a slightly different version of this teaching in his book *Or ha-Me'ir*:

> I heard from the Maggid a parable he offered before the shofar sounding: A king sent his beloved children to a far-off country. They spent long years there, exiled from their father's table.[1819] But they were constantly concerned with how to get back, how to come to dwell again in the restful home of their father's innermost royal court. How happy they had been when sharing in their father's joy! How much better things were then than now!
>
> They began to send affectionate messages to their father, hoping he would take pity on them and bring them back. But once they got close enough to the royal court, they saw that their father's countenance was not the same as it had once been. They kept calling out and begging for his mercy, but they were met with silence.
>
> After a long period of receiving no reply, the king's children began to wonder what they might yet do to reawaken their father's former love. "Why is it that we call out and receive no answer? Surely our father has no lack of mercy! There must be some reason for this." They decided that maybe over the course of their years in that distant land they had forgotten the king's language. "We became so mixed up with other nations that we took on their ways and started speaking their language. We have no way to communicate with the king. That's why our words are not heard in his palace!" So they decided to stop calling out in words or language. They would just let out a simple cry to arouse his mercy, since a cry without words can be understood by anyone.[1820]

The king's children, here in the plural, have been exiled from their father's domain. But unlike the prince in the other version, these children still long to return to the king's palace. They attempt to inspire his compassion through their prayers, but their words are

[1819] The metaphor of being banished from their father's table has long been associated with the destruction of the Temple and subsequent exile; see b. Berakhot 3a.

[1820] *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, p. 260; based on our translation in Green, *Speaking Torah*, vol. 2, p. 173.

no longer effective. Although they know the text of the liturgy without fail, their prayers have lost their strength. Why? They too have forgotten their father's language, and it has been replaced with the coarse language of the people around them.

There is a third, somewhat shorter version of this parable, but it is similar enough to these two that there is no reason to translate it here in full.[1821] However, this account also offers an interpretation of the parable, though we cannot know if this section represents a tradition from the Maggid or is the original thought of the transcriber. The Jewish people were sent into this world, "exiled" in the physical realm, in order to uplift the sparks. But along the way they have become too immersed in the corporeal world, and have therefore forgotten God's language. Like the king's children trapped for too long in a faraway land, Israel lost the awareness that their prayers can embody the divine Word.

These parables about the king and his child are quite accessible and relatively simple.[1822] Perhaps these teachings were given before a diverse group of people who had come to pray with him on Rosh Hashanah. Like all parables, their power lies precisely in the fact that they are simple, galvanizing and inspiring. Like the parables we explored in the previous chapter, these rhetorical devices do not only communicate information, they provoke and arouse his students to new levels of spiritual awareness. The BeSHT's

[1821] OHE, fol. 8a-b; and see Schatz, 'Contemplative Prayer', pp. 224-225. Yet another account of a parable from before the blowing of the shofar is included in MDL #38, pp. 57-58, with a parallel in MOS RSL 182:353, p. 14a. This version shares elements in common with those of *Or ha-Me'ir* and OHE. In the manuscript version, however, the homily focuses less on the sound—or voice—of the shofar, and more upon the centrality of the shofar and its ability to uplift all the prayers. The same is true of the Jewish people, who are unique in their ability to arouse God on the day on which the world, and God's sovereignty over it, was created. See also LY #289, fol. 108a-b.

[1822] Of course, the notion that listening to the sound of the shofar can be a mystical experience is a highly accessible devotional practice, especially in comparison to the complicated *kavvanot* associated with the shofar in Lurianic texts.

message before the shofar blowing was that of divine immanence. For the Maggid, however, the voice of the shofar is a wordless cry that holds within it the potential energy of all language. The sound is clearly not silent, though it is invoked precisely when all words have failed and thus offers a medium for returning God by means of something that is beyond the boundaries of language. But this parable might be understood to suggest that a nonverbal cry is necessary only because humanity has lost the correct words, and not that it is in some sense superior to verbal language.

These parables are not the only homilies from the Maggid that invoke the mystical significance of the shofar. Earlier we recalled the Maggid's famous sermon comparing the worshiper to a shofar; just as breath passes through the ram's horn and becomes sound, so too does *shekhinah* speak through the mystic. But in some teachings the Maggid connects the voice of the shofar to the contemplative process of cognition and language that we have seen many times before. Ideas and inspiration come forth from *qadmut ha-sekhel*, passing into detailed thought (*binah*) and then on to the concrete structures of *da'at*. The idea may then be expressed in a voice, such as the sound of the shofar, which is a vessel that holds all previous stages of development. The voice is more like a thought than articulated words, since it is still primarily potential. But the fact that it is unformed and unspecific gives this sound its great power. Ordinarily the voice is expressed in words when one begins to speak, revealing its hidden potential but decreasing its intensity. On Rosh Hashanah, however, its energy is not diluted, and the voice remains so pure that no heavenly adversaries can argue against it.[1823]

[1823] LY #147, fol. 49b. In several other sermons, the voice of the shofar is associated with *binah*, and the defined speech, the letters born from it, is *shekhinah*. OT #70, *shemot*, p. 96. Cf. OT #186, p. 245-246, with a parallel in MDL #38, p. 57-58. See also *Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *shemot*, p. 211; *Or ha-Me'ir*, vol. 2, *ruth*, p. 49.

Given the importance of the wordless sound of the shofar in the parables above, one might expect the Maggid's teachings to offer some reflections on the power of song. Music had a very important place in Hasidic life, and the teachings of many other early Hasidic masters, including the Maggid's own students, include song as an important element in spiritual experiences.[1824] Solomon Maimon reports that the sermon he heard at the Maggid's court was preceded by an evocative wordless melody, and that this song was started by none other than the Maggid himself.[1825] But music is very rarely mentioned in the Maggid's homilies, and in these few instances it is a synonym for prayer; his sermons give little theoretical conceptualization about the power of music in religious life.[1826] This lack is quite interesting, and may perhaps reveal something about the tenor of the Maggid's religious personality.[1827]

CONCLUSION

[1824] Yaakov Mazor, 'The Power of Song in Hasidic Thought and its Role in Religious and Social Life', *Yuval: Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre* 7 (2002), pp. 23-53 [Hebrew]; idem, 'Hasidism: Music', *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, ed. G.D. Hundert 2010, vol. 1, pp. 676-679; and see the expanded version with multimedia at www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Hasidism/Music; Chani Haran Smith, *Tuning the Soul: Music as a Spiritual Process in the Teachings of Rabbi Nahman of Bratzlav*, Boston and Leidin 2010. On the place of music in earlier Kabbalah, see Moshe Idel, 'Conceptualizations of Music in Jewish Mysticism', *Enchanting Powers: Music in the World's Religions*, ed. L. Sullivan, Cambridge Mass. 1997, pp. 159-188; idem, 'Music in Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah in Northern Africa', *Yuval: Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre* 7 (2002), pp. 154-170; Karl Erich Grözinger, *Musik und Gesang in der Theologie der frühen jüdischen Literatur: Talmud, Midrasch, Mystik*, Tübingen 1982.

[1825] Maimon, *Autobiography*, p. 168.

[1826] One of the Maggid's sermons mentions that the song of the Levites helped lift up the sacrifices from the physical realm to the World of Thought; see MDL #95, p. 306.

[1827] Maimonides is another example of a contemplative who allotted little importance to the role of music in religious life; see Boaz Cohen, *The Responsum of Maimonides Concerning Music*, New York 1935; Ernst Werner and Leonard Kravitz, 'The Silence of Maimonides', *Proceedings - American Academy for Jewish Research* 53 (1986), pp. 179-201; Edwin Seroussi, 'More on Maimonides on Music', *Zutot* 2 (2002), pp. 126-135. See also Paul Fenton, 'A Jewish Sufi on the Influence of Music', *Yuval: Studies of the Jewish Music Research Centre* 4 (1982), pp. 124-130.

Chapter 6: Prayer

Prayer is one of the central pillars of the Maggid's theology and approach to the spiritual life. Although *devequt* is by no means restricted to worship, the Maggid often describes prayer as one of the primary actions through which one may cultivate his mystical attachment to the Divine. *Devequt* in prayer requires the worshiper to articulate the words of prayer with total focus and concentration, thereby accessing the divine energy within the sacred letters of the liturgy. In order to do this, however, one must strip away all attachments to the physical world and enter into the state of *ayin*. This means a posture of total humility and lack of ego, and in many of the Maggid's sermons entering the *ayin* also entails an experience of the divine Presence. Some of these homilies refer to this moment of encounter with God as taking place beyond language, whereas a great many other homilies refer to it as happening precisely through the medium of words.

During prayer the divine Word (*shekhinah* or *'olam ha-dibbur*) begins to speak through the worshiper. Human language is an embodiment of the divine quality of language, which is activated and aroused during prayer. Awareness of this fact brings the worshiper to a state of humility and self-transcendence, allowing one to pray for the needs of *shekhinah* instead of his own personal desires. This notion that the World of Speech becomes invested in the worshiper does not necessarily imply passivity or a longing to escape the world. His thoughts and words become an expression of God, binding together the spiritual and the physical realms. In one of the Maggid's more daring formulations, mankind and the divine are two half-forms that complete one another. Human speech gives articulation to an otherwise silent God, but this capacity for language is itself an embodiment of an aspect of the Divine.

The great power of the prayers of *tsaddiqim* stems precisely from their humility and self-transcendence. This allows them to unify the World of Speech with the World of Thought, thus bringing together the sefirot of *malkhut* and *binah*. The *tsaddiqim* can even change the mind of God, for they have access to *hokhmah*, the root of all speech and the realm of infinite possibilities. Some of the Maggid's teachings describe the process through which the *tsaddiqim* alter God's Will as their drawing forth a new potential from the pool of infinite divine Wisdom. However, other sermons claim that the prayers of the *tsaddiqim* simply control the pathways through which the divine Will is expressed. Like the biblical prophets, whom the Maggid imagines as developing the linguistic structure through which their divine message is projected, the *tsaddiqim* form God's will into specific letters and words. In other homilies the Maggid's claims are more circumspect. God sends the *tsaddiqim* the desire to change the divine Will in a particular way, and thus their wish to alter a heavenly decree is just as much a divine gift as their sacred capacity for language.

The Maggid often refers to the importance of uplifting alien or strange thoughts during prayer. These distractions come to the worshiper in order to be raised up and repaired, for they are composed of letters that have been trapped in the *qelippot*. These fallen aspects of the divine Word are sparks of holiness that must be raised up to *binah* and transformed into a more positive combination of letters. This process can be quite dangerous, since it threatens to derail the mystic from his contemplative journey, but when performed properly these alien thoughts are changed into something that allows the worshiper to pray with even greater enthusiasm.

The Maggid constantly emphasizes the important of *kavvanah*, or focus and intention, in prayer, but his attitude to the specific Lurianic *kavvanot* is somewhat less enthusiastic. He never impugns their authority or dismisses them explicitly, but the Maggid clearly describes passionate and fiery enthusiasm as being of greater importance in worship. He seems to have understood that the complex *kavvanot* were accessible only to a small number of people. It seems likely that this attitude toward the *kavvanot* is informed by his understanding of Lurianic Kabbalah more broadly, which he interprets as a largely metaphorical vocabulary for describing the inner workings of the human psyche as well as the Divine.

Of course, Lurianic Kabbalah was a central element of R. Dov Baer's theology. The Maggid, like the many Eastern European pietists who prayed with *kavvanot*, supported the shift to a kabbalistic version of the Sephardic prayer rite. The structure of the liturgy was quite important to him, for the letters of prayer represent specific channels through which divine energy is drawn into the physical world. But this sacred energy is accessed through earnest and impassioned mystical worship, not concentrating on a particular arrangement of Lurianic *kavvanot*.

Spoken words have the power to draw forth this sacred vitality within the letters, and therefore prayer must be articulated aloud. Confessing one's sins requires that each misdeed be verbally recalled, for transgressions cast language further into exile. Worship need not be accompanied by frenetic movements, but prayer is essentially an aural activity. In some rarified moments of contemplative prayer the mystic may venture beyond words into the realm of *hokhmah*, but this is always followed closely by his return to the structures of language; only through the medium of words may his

experience be concretized and expressed. However, the Maggid offers an alternative to silent contemplation or verbal prayer. In some cases the sound of the shofar can lead the worshiper into the deepest recesses of his consciousness and allow him to rise above the structures of articulated language. This wordless cry represents a type of language whose power transcends specific words and leads the mystic beyond the boundaries of the letters.

Afterword: Redemption

Let us conclude our study of the Maggid's theology of language with a few reflections on his description of redemption. Scholars have long debated the extent to which early Hasidism should be considered a messianic movement.[1828] Relatively few of the Maggid's teachings address the notion of redemption directly, and none of his sermons are dominated by a tone that may be described as acutely messianic. The homilies in which the Maggid does explore the notion of redemption, however, refer to it as a process through which human awareness of the Divine is renewed and all language is restored to its source in God.[1829] Given the Maggid's devaluation of worldly circumstances, this formulation is not at all surprising.

The Maggid's teachings, as is true of many other early Hasidic thinkers, emphasize the ideal of *devequt* above the traditional Kabbalistic goals of cosmic *tiqqun* and its messianic ramifications.[1830] While he does not explicitly exclude the importance of the latter ideas, the Maggid underscores the importance of a personal spiritual awakening and mystical experience. Entering into a state of intense communion with the Divine may rightly be described as a sort of private redemption, but the Maggid rarely

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[1828] Scholem, 'The Neutralization of the Messianic Element in Early Hasidism', pp. 176-202; Dinur, 'Origins of Hasidism', pp. 86-208; Isaiah Tishby, 'The Messianic Idea and Messianic Trends in the Growth of Hasidism', *Zion* 32 (1967), pp. 1-45 [Hebrew]; Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'The Messianic Element in Hasidic Thought: Is There an Historical Messianic Tone in the Hasidic Idea of Redemption', *Molad* 1 (1967), pp. 105-111 [Hebrew]; Altshuler, *Messianic Secret of Hasidism*, p. 3-28; Arie Morgenstern, *Hastening Redemption: Messianism and the Resettlement of the Land of Israel*, trans. Joel A. Linsider, New York 2006; Jan Doktór, 'Besht and the Messianic Year 5500', *Kwartalnik Historii Zydów* 215 (2005), pp. 313-323.

[1829] See the tradition cited in *Peri Hayyim*, ch. 6 p. 142, which describes aligning one's thoughts with his deeds as a unification of this world with the World to Come. *See also, Orah le-Hayyim*, vol. 1, *mishpatim*, p. 389.

[1830] Scholem, 'Devekut', pp. 216-217.

makes this identification explicit.[1831] And reuniting words with their divine source (even the coarse words of others) seems more cosmic than personal. One of R. Dov Baer's homilies illustrates redemption as a collective historical process through which humanity's relationship to language is radically transformed. We read:

> "A song of ascents. As Y-H-V-H restores the fortunes of Zion, we see it as in a dream. [Our mouths will be filled with laughter, our tongues, with songs of joy"] (Ps. 126:1-2). We can explain this according to what is written in the Zohar [about the verse]: "Who scorns a day of small beginnings? [Even they will see with joy the plummet in the hand of Zerubbavel]; even these seven, which are the eyes of Y-H-V-H, ranging over the whole earth" (Zech. 4:10).[1832] This is the general principle: the letters that fell into the realm of brokenness (*shevirah*) during the seven days of Creation come to a person in prayer as thoughts of love, awe, splendor, glory and beauty.[1833] These [letters] are the lower waters that cry out, "We too wish to stand before the King."[1834] For this reason they come [to him], each according to his level. But they arrive when he is totally unaware, as he is reciting [well-known] words, such as from Psalms. The thoughts come to him [at this time] because he must be in a state of [spiritual] smallness (*qatnut*) in order to repair them; therefore this must happen without any prior intention (*da'at*).
>
> This is the meaning of, "Who scorns a day of small beginnings?... even these seven, which are the eyes of Y-H-V-H, ranging over the whole earth." We must raise up [these letters] until the arrival our blessed redeemer, may he come speedily in our days. The word is in exile. In the future,

[1831] Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, 'Self-Redemption in Hasidic Thought', *Types of Redemption: Contributions to the Themes of the Study-Conference Held at Jerusalem 14th to 19th July*, ed. R.J. Zwi Werblowsky and C.J. Bleeker, Leiden 1970, pp. 207-212; Morris M. Faierstein, 'Personal Redemption in Hasidism', *Hasidism Reappraised*, A. Rapoport-Albert, London and Portland 1997, pp. 214-224.

[1832] Zohar 2:252a. This passage alludes to the verse in Zechariah, though only a tiny fragment of it is quoted explicitly, and describes how human prayer redeems the divine vitality that is hidden in the earthly realm.

[1833] These attributes represent the seven lower *sefirot* from *hesed* to *malkhut*. Presumably the Maggid is referring to the "fallen," or negative, versions of these *middot*.

[1834] *Tiqqunei Zohar*, *tiqqun* 5, fol. 19b.

> however, all speech will be for God alone, and all of the elements of brokenness will be uplifted. Understand this.

Alien thoughts accost the worshiper during prayer in order for him to repair and uplift them to their source in God. These thoughts are composed of letters that were trapped in the "husks" after the cosmic shattering of the vessels, and redeeming them means that the worshiper must descend into a temporary state of *qatnut*, or constricted consciousness. However, he cannot intentionally enter this dangerous realm. Therefore God sends these wayward thoughts when the worshiper is occupied with reciting the words of prayer. His concentration is elsewhere, and the broken letters take him by surprise. The Maggid continues:

> Do not object [by saying], "And what will come of those words [of prayer] that he recited without awareness (*da'at*)?"[1835] The matter is thus: One [should] consider that he is not speaking at all, but rather that *shekhinah*—called the World of Speech—is speaking from his throat. His memory (*zikaron*), for he has memorized the words [of the liturgy] to which he has become accustomed, will raise them up the words. *Shekhinah* is truly in exile, which means that the Word is in exile. Understand this very well.
>
> Here is a parable about a king that commanded his servants to raise up a mighty mountain, one that is too large to lift. The servants came up with the idea of boring into the mountain and breaking it down, separating it into smaller pieces. Each person lifted a little bit, according to his strength. Through this they performed the king's command. So too, the [supreme] King of kings commanded us to uplift the sparks of holiness, for this is the ultimate goal of all service. It brings great pleasure to the Divine for the lower levels to be uplifted, as we have explained elsewhere. This is the reason for the breaking [of the vessels], so that each person would be able to raise up an [element of divine vitality] according to his level. Understand this parable very well....

[1835] OT reads, "Do not object [by saying], 'What is this notion of reciting words without any awareness.'"

> Know that holiness dwells within the letters of Torah. Holiness and spiritual energy rest upon it, for the Torah and God are one. Therefore Scripture says, "A song of ascents. As Y-H-V-H restores the fortunes of Zion, we see it as in a dream. Our mouths will be filled with laughter (*sehoq*)," which is related to "worn-out clothes" (*begadim shehuqim*)[1836]—the language that had been in exile until now, is in "our mouths." "Our tongues, with songs of joy"—[redeeming the letters will] bring great pleasure [to God].
>
> "Then shall they say among the nations, Y-H-V-H has done these great things for them" (Ps. 126:2)—those who were [in exile] among the nations, will do great things for Y-H-V-H[1837].[1838]

This passage is the Maggid's fullest description of the process of redemption. The divine Word, associated with *shekhinah*, remains in exile until there is a fundamental reorientation in humanity's attitude toward language; in the future all speech must be uttered for the sake of God alone. But the Maggid's parable makes it clear that the cosmic fracture of the "breaking of the vessels," which resulted in the divine Word being sent into exile, was not purely a tragedy. He describes the descent of these holy letters as an essential stage that paved the way for the ultimate redemption of both human and divine language. In fact, the shattering of the vessels allows everyone to take part in a great project, bringing this model closer to the Maggid's usual way of describing the work of aligning the upper and lower realms.

This homily also outlines a spiritual approach to language that complements the contemplative prayer and intensive mystical study described in previous chapters. Here too the worshiper is called upon to recite his prayers with the awareness that *shekhinah* is

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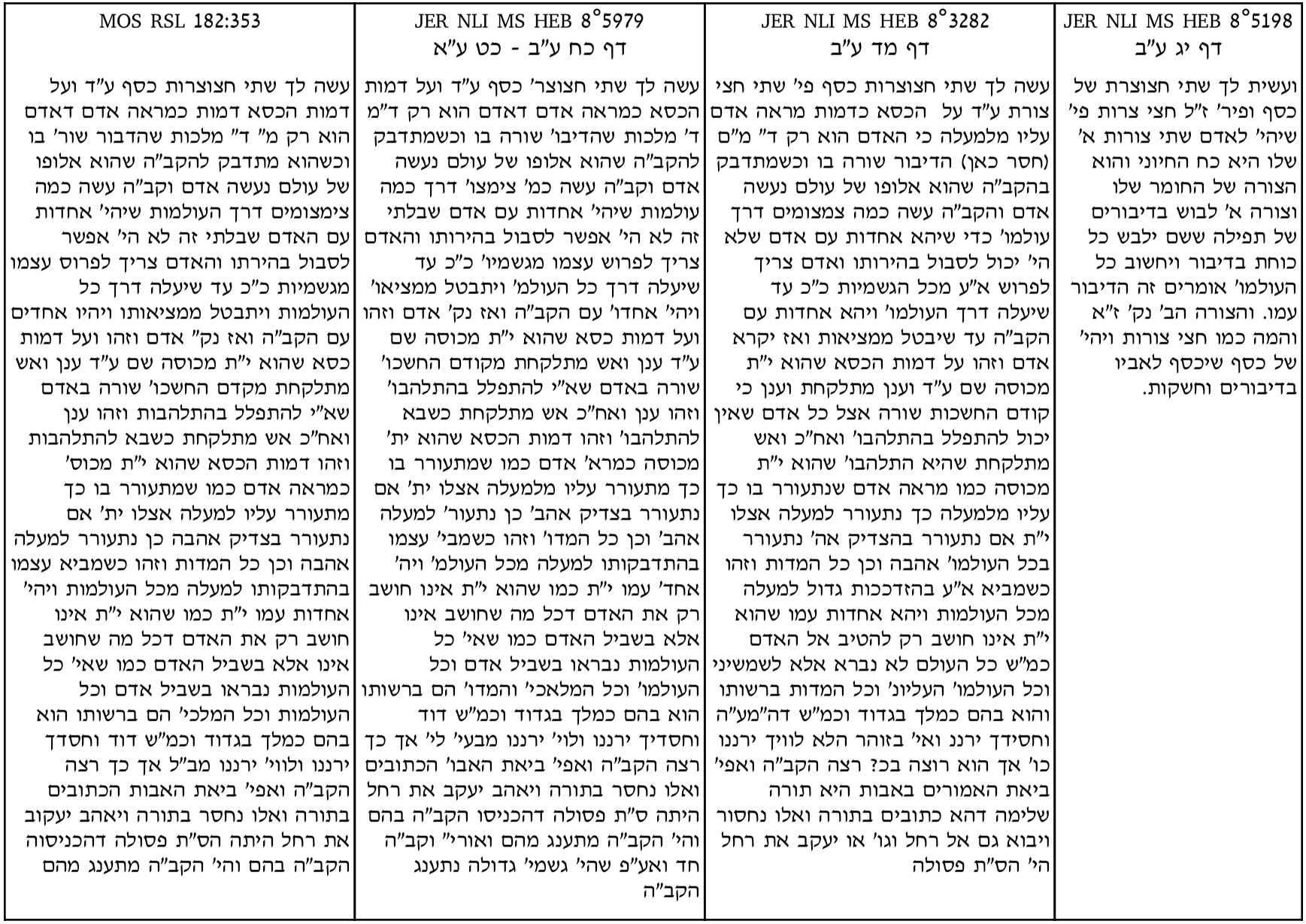
[1836] See b. Ketubot 64b.

[1837] Here the Maggid has totally overturned the plain sense of the verse, which originally refers to the great power and beneficence of God's deeds in redeeming Israel. The Maggid interprets it in just the opposite way: Israel will deliver the divine Word from the "husks" and thus do something great for Y-H-V-H, taken as a reference to *Ein Sof* as well as the origin of all language.

[1838] MDL #173, pp. 271-272, with a parallel in OT #277a, *tehillim*, pp. 335-336.

speaking though him, and that his words are an embodiment of divine language. In this sermon, however, the mystic does not seem to redeem the holy letters through active contemplation. The exiled fragments of divine language come to the worshiper when he is preoccupied with reading the liturgy, but even thus he is focused more on reciting the words of the prayers more than their ideational content or symbolic association. And this teaching does not frame the task of restoring God's Word as being incumbent only upon the elites or the *tsaddiqim*. The king's servants can successfully lift an impossible mountain when they work together. Each person has a crucial role to play in the redemption of language.

Appendix 1: The Sermon of the “Two Trumpets”



JER NLI MS HEB 8°5198 דף יג ע"ב	JER NLI MS HEB 8°3282 דף מד ע"ב	JER NLI MS HEB 8°5979 דף כח ע"ב - כט ע"א	MOS RSL 182:353
ועשית לך שתי חצוצרת של כסף ופיר' ז"ל חצי צרות פי' שיהי' לאדם שתי צורות א' שלו היא כח החיוני והוא הצורה של החומר שלו וצורה א' לבוש בדיבורים של תפילה ששם ילבש כל כוחת בדיבור ויחשוב כל העולמו' אומרים זה הדיבור עמו. והצורה הב' נק' ז"א והמה כמו חצי צורות ויהי' של כסף שיכסף לאביו בדיבורים וחשקות.	עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף פי' שתי חצי צורת ע"ד על הכסא כדמות מראה אדם עליו מלמעלה כי האדם הוא רק ד" מ"ם (חסר כאן) הדיבור שורה בו וכשמתדבק בהקב"ה שהוא אלופו של עולם נעשה אדם והקב"ה עשה כמה צמצומים דרך עולמו' כדי שיהא אחדות עם אדם שלא הי' יכול לסבול בהירותו ואדם צריך לפרוש א"ע מכל הגשמיות כ"כ עד שיעלה דרך העולמו' ויהא אחדות עם הקב"ה עד שיבטל ממציאות ואז יקרא אדם וזהו על דמות הכסא שהוא י"ת מכוסה שם ע"ד וענן מתלקחת וענן כי קודם החשכות שורה אצל כל אדם שאין יכול להתפלל בהתלהבו' ואח"כ ואש מתלקחת שהיא התלהבו' שהוא י"ת מכוסה כמו מראה אדם שנתעורר בו כך עליו מלמעלה כך נתעורר למעלה אצלו י"ת אם נתעורר בהצדיק אה' נתעורר בכל העולמו' אהבה וכן כל המדות וזהו כשמביא א"ע בהזדככות גדול למעלה מכל העולמות ויהא אחדות עמו שהוא י"ת אינו חושב רק להטיב אל האדם כמ"ש כל העולם לא נברא אלא לשמשיני וכל העולמו' העליונ' וכל המדות ברשותו והוא בהם כמלך בגדוד וכמ"ש דה"מע"ה וחסידך ירנן ואי' בזוהר הלא לוויך ירננו כו' אך הוא רוצה בכ? רצה הקב"ה ואפי' ביאת האמורים באבות היא תורה שלימה דהא כתובים בתורה ואלו נחסור ויבוא גם אל רחל וגו' או יעקב את רחל הי' הס"ת פסולה	עשה לך שתי חצוצר' כסף ע"ד ועל דמות הכסא כמראה אדם דאדם הוא רק ד"מ ד' מלכות שהדיבו' שורה בו וכשמתדבק להקב"ה שהוא אלופו של עולם נעשה אדם וקב"ה עשה כמ' צימצו' דרך כמה עולמות שיהי' אחדות עם אדם שבלתי זה לא הי' אפשר לסבול בהירותו והאדם צריך לפרוש עצמו מגשמיו' כ"כ עד שיעלה דרך כל העולמ' ויתבטל ממציאו' ויהי' אחדו' עם הקב"ה ואז נק' אדם וזהו ועל דמות כסא שהוא י"ת מכוסה שם ע"ד ענן ואש מתלקחת מקודם החשכו' שורה באדם שא"י להתפלל בהתלהבו' וזהו ענן ואח"כ אש מתלקחת כשבא להתלהבו' וזהו דמות הכסא שהוא י"ת מכוסה כמרא' אדם כמו שמתעורר בו כך מתעורר עליו מלמעלה אצלו י"ת אם נתעורר בצדיק אהב' כן נתעור' למעלה אהב' וכן כל המדו' וזהו כשמבי' עצמו בהתדבקותו למעלה מכל העולמ' ויה' אחד' עמו י"ת כמו שהוא י"ת אינו חושב רק את האדם דכל מה שחושב אינו אלא בשביל האדם כמו שאי' כל העולמות נבראו בשביל אדם וכל העולמו' וכל המלאכי' והמדו' הם ברשותו הוא בהם כמלך בגדוד וכמ"ש דוד וחסדיך ירננו ולוי' ירננו מבעי' לי' אך כך רצה הקב"ה ואפי' ביאת האבו' הכתובים ואלו נחסר בתורה ויאהב יעקב את רחל היתה ס"ת פסולה דהכניסו הקב"ה בהם והי' הקב"ה מתענג מהם ואורי" וקב"ה חד ואע"פ שהי' גשמי' גדולה נתענג הקב"ה	עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף ע"ד ועל דמות הכסא כמראה אדם דאדם הוא רק ד"מ ד' מלכות שהדיבור שורה בו וכשמתדבק להקב"ה שהוא אלופו של עולם נעשה אדם וקב"ה עשה כמ' צימצו' דרך כמה עולמות שיהי' אחדות עם אדם שבלתי זה לא הי' אפשר לסבול בהירותו והאדם צריך לפרוש עצמו מגשמיות כ"כ עד שיעלה דרך כל העולמות ויתבטל ממציאותו ויהיו אחדים עם הקב"ה ואז נק" אדם וזהו ועל דמות כסא שהוא י"ת מכוסה שם ע"ד ענן ואש מתלקחת מקדם החשכו' שורה באדם שא"י להתפלל בהתלהבות וזהו ענן ואח"כ אש מתלקחת כשבא להתלהבות וזהו דמות הכסא שהוא י"ת מכוס' כמראה אדם כמו שמתעורר בו כך מתעורר עליו למעלה אצלו ית' אם נתעורר בצדיק אהבה כן נתעורר למעלה אהבה וכן כל המדות וזהו כשמביא עצמו בהתדבקותו למעלה מכל העולמות ויהי' אחדות עמו י"ת כמו שהוא י"ת אינו חושב רק את האדם דכל מה שחושב אינו אלא בשביל האדם כמו שאי' כל העולמות נבראו בשביל אדם וכל העולמות וכל המלכי' הם ברשותו הוא בהם כמלך בגדוד וכמ"ש דוד וחסדך ירננו ולווי' ירננו מב"ל אך כך רצה הקב"ה ואפי' ביאת האבות הכתובים בתורה ואלו נחסר בתורה ויאהב יעקוב את רחל היתה הס"ת פסולה דהכניסוה הקב"ה בהם והי' הקב"ה מתענג מהם

Figure 1a: Manuscripts

	JER NLI MS HEB 8°3282 דף מד ע"ב	JER NLI MS HEB 8°5979 דף כח ע"ב - כט ע"א	MOS RSL 182:353
	(נחסור כמה תיבו') [נ"א תיבות פסולה בהכנס ואת הקב"ה בהם גם זה הנוסח אינו מובן להקב"ה תענוג בהם ואורייתא וקב"ה כולא חד ואעפ"י שהוא גשמיות גדולה נתענג הקב"ה מהם וזהו שתי חצוצרות פ' שהאדם הוא חצי צורה שהיא רק דם ואות אלף לחודא כביכול גם כן אינו צורה שלימה אמנם כשמתדבקין יחד צורה שלימה כסף לשון תאוה שתהא תמיד מתאוה להק"ה וקב"ה יאהב אותך:	ממנו וזהו שתי חצוצר' שתי חצי צורו' נעשה שלימ' שהאדם הוא חצי צורה שהוא רק דם ואלוף לחוד כ"י ג"כ אינה צורה שלימ' אמנם כשמתדבקי' יחד נעשה צורה שלימ' כסף לשון תאוה שתהא אתה מתאוה להש"י והש"י יאהב אותך:	ואורית' וקב"ה חד ואע"פ שהיא גשמית גדולה נתענג הקב"ה ממנו וזהו שתי חצוצרות שתי חצי צורות ועשה שלימה שהאדם הוא חצי צורה שהוא רק ד"ם ואלו"ף לחוד כ"י ג"כ אינו צורה שלימה אמנם כשמתדבקי' יחד נעשה צורה שלימה כסף לשון תאווה תהא אתה מתאוו' להש"י והש"י יאהב אותך

Figure 1b: Manuscripts (cont.)

מגיד דבריו ליעקב דף ד ע"ב	אור תורה	אור האמת דף י ע"ב
עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף פירש שתי חצי צורות אדם עליו מלמעלה כי האדם הוא רק דל"ת מ"ם והדיבור שורה בו וכשמתדבק בהקב"ה שהוא אלופו של עולם נעשה אדם. והקב"ה עשה כמה צמצומים דרך כמה עולמות כדי שיהי' אחדות עם אדם, שלא הי' יכול לסבול בהירותו ואדם צריך לפרוש את עצמו מכל הגשמיות כ"כ עד שיעלה דרך כל העולמות ויהא אחדות עם הקב"ה עד שיבוטל ממציאות ואז יקרא אדם. וזהו על דמות הכסא שהוא י"ת מכוסה שם ע"ד וענן ואש מתלקחת וענן כי מקודם חשכות שורה באדם שאין יכול להתפלל בהתלהבות ואח"כ ואש מתלקחת שהוא התלהבות וזהו דמות הכסא שהוא ית' מכוסה דמות מראה אדם ר"ל כפי שנתעורר בו כך נתעורר למעלה אצלו י"ת אם נתעורר בהצדיק אהבה נתעורר בכל העולמות אהבה וכן כל המדות וזהו כשמביא את עצמו בהזדככות גדול למעלה מכל העולמות ויהא אחדות עמו שהוא ית' אינו חושב רק להטיב על האדם כמ"ש כל העולם לא נברא אלא לשמשיני וכל העולמות עליונים וכל המדות הם ברשותו והוא בהם כמלך בגדוד, וכמ"ש דוד המלך עליו השלום וחסידיך ירננו, ואיתא בזוהר הלא לויך ירננו אלא כמו שהצדיק רוצה כך רוצה הקב"ה ואפילו ביאות האמורים באבות היא תורה שלימה דהא כתובים בתורה ואלו נחסר ויבוא גם אל רחל וגו' או ויאהב יעקב את רחל, הי'	עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף. פי' ב' חצי צורות ע"ד על דמות הכסא דמות כמראה אדם עליו מלמעל' כי האדם הוא רק ד' מ' דיבו"ר מלכו"ת שורה בו. וכשמתדבק בהקב"ה שהוא אלופו של עולם נעשה אד"ם והקב"ה עשה כמה צמצומי' דרך כמה עולמות כדי שיהיה אחדות עם האדם, שלא יכול לסבול את בהירתו. והאדם צריך לפרוש א"ע מכל הגשמיות עד שיעלה דרך כל העולמות ויהי' אחדות עם הקב"ה עד שיבוטל ממציאות. ואז יקרא אדם וזהו על דמות הכס"א, שהוא ית' מכוסה שם ע"ד וענן ואש מתלקחת. וענן פי' מקודם החשכות שורה באד שאינו יכול להתפלל בהתלהבו' ואח"כ ואש מתלקחת שבא להתלהבות. וזהו דמות הכסא שהוא ית' מכוסה כמו מרא"ה אדם כמו שנתעורר בו כך נתעורר אצלו ית' אם נתעורר בצדיק אהבה נתעורר למעל' אהבה וכן כל המדו. וזהו כשמביא א"ע בהזדככות גדול למעל' מכל העולמות ויהי' אחדות עמו ית' כמו שהוא ית' אינו חושב רק את האדם שכל מה שחושב אינו אלא בשביל האדם. ע"ד כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא לשמשני. (הגה"ה כל העולם לא נברא אלא בשביל ישראל שיקבלו את התור') וכל העולמות וכל המלאכים הם ברשותו והוא בהם כמלך בגדוד וכמ"ש דוד המע"ה וחסידיך ירננו ואיתא בזוהר לויך ירננו הוה ליה למיכתב, אך כמו שהוא רצה כך רצה הקב"ה. ואפי' זיווג האבות היא תורה שלימה	עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף. ע"ד ועל דמות הכסא דמות כמראה אדם עליו מלמעלה דהאדם הוא רק דם דל"ת מ"ם הדיבור שורה בו. וכשמתדבק בהקב"ה שהוא אלופו של עולם נעשה אד"ם. והקב"ה עשה כמה צמצומים דרך כמה עולמות כדי שיהא אחדות עם האדם, שלא היה יכול לסבול את בהירתו. והאדם צריך לפרוש עצמו מהגשמיות כל כך עד שיעלה דרך כל העולמות ויהיא אחדות עם הקדוש ברוך הוא עד שיבוטל ממציאות ואם נקרא אדם לא יהיה יודע וזה ועל דמות הכסא, שהוא יתברך מכוסה ע"ד וענן אש מתלקחת וענן פי' מקודם החשכות שורה באדם שאינו יכול להתפלל בהתלהבות. ואח"כ ואש מתלקחת שבא להתלהבות. וזהו דמות הכסא, שהוא יתברך מכוסה. דמות כמראה אדם כמו שנתעורר בו כך נתעורר אצלו יתברך. אם נתעורר בצדיק אהבה נתעורר למעלה אהבה וכן כל המדות. וזהו כשמביא עצמו בהזדככות למעלה מכל העולמות ויהא אחדות עמו ית' כמו שהוא יתברך אינו חושב רק את האדם דכל מה שחושב אינו אלא בשביל האדם ע"ד כל העולם כולו לא נברא אלא לשמשני. (הגה כל העולם לא נברא אלא בשביל ישראל שיקבלו את התורה. וכל העולמות וכל המלאכים וכל המדות הם ברשות. והוא כמלך בגדוד, וכמ"ש דוד המלך ע"ה וחסידך ירננו, ואיתא בזוהר לויך ירננו הוי ליה למכתב, אך כמו שהוא רוצה

Figure 2a: Print Editions

מגיד דבריו ליעקב דף ד ע"ב	אור תורה	אור האמת דף י ע"ב
הס"ת פסולה כי עשו הכל בדביקות הש"י והי' להקב"ה תענוג בהם ונעשה מזה תורה, ואורייתא וקב"ה כולה חד ואע"פי שהוא גשמיות גדולה מתענג הקב"ה מהם וזהו שתי חצוצרות כסף שהאדם הוא חצי צורה שהוא רק דם והקב"ה נקרא אלופו של עולם אמנם כשמתדבקים יחד נעשה צורה שלימה כסף לשון תאוה שתהא תמיד מתאוה להקב"ה והקב"ה יאהב אותך.	ואילו נחסר ויבוא גם אל רחל ויאהב יעקב את רחל הי' הס"ת פסולה שהכניס הקב"ה בהם והי' להקב"ה תענוג בהם. ואורייתא וקב"ה חד. ואף על פי שהוא גשמיות גדול' נתענג הקב"ה בהם. וזהו שתי חצוצרות כסף. שהאדם הוא חצי צורה שהוא רק ד"ם. ואל"ף לבד כביכול ג"כ אינו צורה שלימ' אמנם כשיתדבקו יחד נעשה צורה שלימ'. כס"ף לשון תאוה שתהא אתה מתאו' להקב"ה. והקב"ה יאהב אותך. על דרך משל האב שאוהב את הבן והבן אוהב את האב שהם גוף אחד שיש להם געגועים זה על זה, וכ"א בעצמו אינו בשלימות ואינו רק חצי צורה ושניהם ביחד הוי צורה שלימה והנמשל מובן.	כך הקב"ה רוצה. ואפילו זיווג האבות הוא תורה שלימה ואלו נחסר ויאהב יעקב את רחל, היה הס"ת פסול, שהכניסו הקב"ה בהם והיה להקב"ה תענוג בהם ואורייתא וקוב"ה כולו חד. ואף על פי שהוא גשמיות גדולה יש להקדוש ב"ה תענוג בהם) וזהו שתי חצוצרות שהאדם הוא חצי צורה שהוא רק דם, ואלוף לחוד ג"כ אינה שלימה. אמנם כשיתדבקו יחד נעשו צורה שלימה. כסף. לשון תאוה שתהא אתה מתאוה להקב"ה, והקב"ה יאהב אותך.

Figure 2b: Print Editions (cont.)

דגל מחנה אפרים דף עב ע"ב	תורי זהב דף סה ע"א	תורי זהב דף עז ע"א	גנזי יוסף ע' רכד-רכה	חיים וחסד ע' כד
שמעתי בשם הרב המגיד המנוח מו"ה דוב בער זללה"ה חצוצרות הוא לשון חצי צורות ודברי פי חכם חן.	ע"פ ששמעתי אומרים בשם הישיש המקובל איש אלקי קדוש יאמר לו מה' דובער מ"מ דמזריטש דתיבת חצוצרות הוא לשון חצי צורת דהיינו האדם מתאוה לאיזה דבר הוא חצי צורה וכשישיג הדבר ההוא שמתאוה הוא צורה שלימה עם אותה דבר המתאוה לה.	שמעתי בשם הוותיק וחסיד המפורסם מוה' דוב בער זללה"ה מ"מ דק"ק מזריטש שתיבות חצוצרות נוטריקון חצי צורות ע"כ שמעתי ונראה לי לפרש דבריו ע"ד...	אמר הרב הגדול החסיד המנוח מוה"ר דוב בער פירוש בחצוצרות שיהיה כל אחד בעיניו כאילו הוא חצי גוף הוא חצי צורה. וזה בחצוצרות, חצי צורה ואין לו שלימות בלתי חיבור עם חבירו ולהסיר השנאת חנם אז נושעתם מאויביכם.	וז"ש ותקעתם בחצוצרות כי גם העובדא שמחמת ההכרח בא מחמת השכל שהשכל מחייבו וזה **חצי צורות** השכל והעובדות שאינם מחוברים להקב"ה וז"ש (במדבר י) ותקעתם ל' התחברות בחצוצרות פי' שתגביה העובדות שהוא מצד הכרח לבד ויעבוד להשיג תענוג להקב"ה ונק' חצי צורות כי השכל והעובדא א"א להם להיות זה בלא זה והוא צירוף של חדש אדר שעולה מפסוק עירה ולשורקה בני אתונו עצמיות הש"י נק' איתן לשון כח עירה לשון התעוררות הוא עוה"ז שאינו אלא איתערותא דלתתא ולשורקה הוא התענוג שנקרא שי"ן שורקת שורוק יש בו ג' נקודות כי דכר ונוקבא זה יש לו חשקות להשפיע וזה יש לו כח לקבל ומתחברים ע"י התענוג וזהו נקודה א' הוא דכר והב' נוק' והג' האמצעי הוא התענוג המחבר ומחמת זה בני אתונו פי' ע"י התעוררות תחתון בא ממנו ההולדה שנמשך אלינו עצמיותו. וזהו חייב אדם להקביל פני רבו ברגל שיקבל פני העצמיות של הקב"ה תוך הרגילות.

Figure 3a: The Maggid's Students and Contemporaries

חיים וחסד ע' נח	עבודת ישראל דף נו ע"ב
עשה לו שתי חצוצרות כסף (במדבר י) פי' כי אנו נקראים **חצי צורה** כי אין לנו שלימות אלא עם השי"ת והשי"ת כביכול נקרא חצי צורה כי השלימות שלו ג"כ ע"י ישראל וזהו עשה לו שתי חצוצרות פי' שתראה להבין שאתה בלא הקב"ה אינך כלום ואז יכול להיות כסף שתכסוף להקב"ה וחצוצרות לשון חצי צורות כנ"ל.	הנה קבלנו מאדומו"ר הגאון מוהד"ב זלה"ה **צירוף חצוצרות חצי צורות**, דהיינו שהיו מרמזים על כנסת ישראל עם דודה שהם כחצי צורה כל אחד לבדו כביכול כבודו לפי רצונו הנורא יתברך כל אהבתו והתדבקותו בתאומתו כנסת ישראל, והיא גם כן משתוקקת ומתדבקת בנפש רוח ונשמה לבוראה יתברך עד שהכל נכלל באחדות. וכיוצא הרבה מצוות שציונו הבורא ברוך הוא לרמז בהן היחוד והדיבור כמער איש ולויות, כמו הלולב ואתרוג הנזכר בזוהר ותיקונים וכן שאר ענינים, ואף על גב דאיהו בנצח ואיהי בהוד הם תרי פלגי גופא. ועל ידי היחוד נעשים דבר אחד שלם, וכדוגמתם היו משה ואהרן כנודע. ונקרא גם כן השפתים כמו נצח והוד. כי מלת שפתים הוא על משקל שנים כמבואר בספרי דקדוק, כי שפה אחת לא תוכל לדבר בלא חבירתה, וכן הרגלים אי אפשר ללכת באחד, מה שאין כן שאר איברים כנודע. והשפתים הם הנקראים שערים, מלשון שיעורין דליבא כמו שכתב הזוה"ק נודע בשערים בעלה עיין שם. והיינו כי מחשבת המלך אי אפשר להשיג ולעשות רצונו רק אחר כך שנתגלה על ידי השפוון והדיבור אז ממליכין אותו. ולכן נקראו שערים שעל ידם משער העובד אותו איך שיעבדהו. ולכן סומך המדרש עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף, זה שאמר הכתוב שאו שערים ראשיכם. כי השפוון מרמזים גם כן על היחוד שעל ידי שניהם נגמר מלוכת המלך כמו על ידי חצוצרות שנרמזים כנגד נצח והוד כנ"ל. וזה הכבוד שיתן למלך המשיח שאז יהיה התיקון כראוי. וזה הודוהדר תשוה עליו, כי הדר רומז לנצח דאיהו בנצח ומהדרים אליו שהכל בכוחו והוא בסוד מלך הדר והתיקון כראוי, הבן.

Figure 3b: The Maggid's Students and Contemporaries

אורח לחיים פ' תשא דף מח ע"ב	אורח לחיים פ' בחקותי דף כו ע"א	אורח לחיים פ' בהעלותך דף ה ע"א	אורח לחיים פ' מטות דף לג ע"א-ב	אורח לחיים פ' עקב דף יא ע"א
אמר הרב הגאון המפורסם בוצינא קדישא מוהר"ר דוב בער זללה"ה פירוש עשה לך שני חצוצרות כסף, כלומר שני חצי צורות, כי אדם בעצמו הוא חצי צורה, ואי אפשר לו לעבוד השי"ת אלא עם השי"ת, והוא לבדו כמו חצי צורה, וכשעובד להשי"ת בכוחו מקבל השי"ת תענוג ממנו ודפח"ח.	הנה הרב הקדוש בוצינא קדישא מו' דוב בער זלה"ה אמר פירוש הפסוכק עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף, כלומר שתחשוב תמיד שאתה חצי צורה בלעדו יתברך והוא המשלים אותך, וכן אתה משלים הצורה עליונה שהוא כמו חצי צורה בלעדך עכ"ד, וכן אמר בתיקונים צורה עליונה לא אשתלים עד דמברי אדם.	והנה הרב הקדוש בוצינא קדישא מו' דוב בער זללה"ה אמר על פסוק עשה לך שתי חצוצרות, נוטריקון חצי צורות, כלומר שיחשוב אדם שאי אפשר לו לעשות שום דבר גשמי ותחבולה בלתי רצונו, והוא אינו רק חצי צורה וכשהוא הולך בדרך הישר ומקיים התורה והמצות, הוא משלים הצורה העליונה, ובלעדו יתברך הוא רק חצי צורה, ויחשוב כמה גדול מחשבותיו ודיבוריו ומעשיו שהוא משלים הצורה העליונה עכ"ד ודפח"ח.	כתבנו בשם הרב הקדוש בוצינא קדישא מהור"ר דוב בער זללה"ה פירוש חצוצרות שני חצי צורות, שיחשוב תמיד שהוא חצי צורה, ולית ליה מגרמיה כלום, וגם צורה עליונה לא לשתלם עד בריאת עדם, כמ"ש בתיקונים, ודפח"ח.	כתבתי בשם הרב הקדוש בוצינא קדישא מו' דוב בער זללה"ה פירש עשה לך שתי חצוצרות, היינו שני חצי צורות, היינו שהאדם בעצמו הוא חצי צורה שמקבל עליו מדת מלכותו ויראתו של השי"ת ולית ליה מגרמיה כלום, וגם צריך להאמין באמונה שלימה כמו שכתב בתיקונים שהצורה עליונה לא נגמר אלא בבריאת אדם, והיא ג"כ חצי צורה, וכשהאדם כמקבל עליו מדת מלכותו ויראתו אז נגמר הצורה עליונה וזהו שני חצי צורות ודפח"ח.

Figure 4: The Works of R. Abraham Hayyim of Zlotshev

תולדות יצחק בן לוי דף סא ע"ב	זאת זכרון ע' קנה	אוהב ישראל ע' קצב
חצוצרות רומז על תורה שבכתב שניתן התורה שבכתב בשני לוחות. וכן שמעתי מפי אאמ"ו הגאון הקדוש נבגע"ע חצוצרות היינו חצי צורות כי יו"ד הדברות אשר בשני הלוחות הם כלל כל התורה נמצא כל לוח חצי כו' קול שופר רומז על תורה שבע"פ שהיא בקול וזהו שופר דמות אות וא"ו רומז על תורה שבע"פ ששה סדרי משנה...	וזה י"ל דהנה שמעתי מרבי רבי אלימלך ז"ל ע"פ עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף ואיני יודע אם הוא ממנו או בשם הרב ומגיד רבינו מראוונא זלה"ל ונ"ל התחלה בשם הרב וסוף משמו עשה לך שתי חצוצרות להיות מחזיק א"ע לחצי צורה וצורה השלימה הוא עם השי"ת. וזה כסף ע"י אהבה ויראה לה' יתברך כי כסף לשון כיסופא ובושה הוא יראה וכן לשון נכסוף נכספת לבית אביך לשון אהבה לה'...	עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף וגו' [י, ב]. **שמעתי בשם הרב הקדוש כו' מוהר"ר דוב בער זללה"ה שאמר אלו הדיבורים עשה לך שתי חצוצרו"ת נוטריקון שתי חצי צורות. אך פירושן של הדברים לא שמעתי.** וי"ל ביאור הדברים כי דבר גדול דיבר וסוד עמוק. כי הנה ידוע מזוהר הקדוש (בראשית כא ב) ומספרים הקדושים כי משה נקרא בבחינת בעלה דמטרוניתא בעלה דשכינתא קדישא כי הוא המשפיע למלכותא קדישא כנסת ישראל כלה קרואה בנעימה בסוד כלת משה נמצא כי בבחינה זו נקרא משה רבינו ע"ה בבחינת דכ"ר כי הוא המשפיע. ועוד נודע מספרים הקדושים כי משה רבינו ע"ה הוא בחינת דעת העליון והוא בבחינת מקבל בחינת נוקבא. כי מקבל השפעה והארה ממוחין עילאין קדישין ג' ראשונות סוד כתר חכמה בינה. נמצא שהיו לו למשה רבינו ע"ה שני בחינות, בחינת משפיע ובחינת מקבל, דכר ונוקבא. ועם כל זה אין אנו יכולין להשיג הדברים על בוריין איזה בחינה נקרא בבחינת מקבל ואיזה בבחינת משפיע. כי יש לומר שהמשפיע בעצמו נקרא מקבל לגודל התענוג שמקבל מזה שמשפיע. על דרך שאמרו חכמינו ז"ל (פסחים קיב א) יותר ממה שהעגל רוצה לינק הפרה רוצה להניק. **ועם כל זה ב' בחינות המה וכל אחד נקרא בבחינת חצי צורה כי צורה שלימה הוא דכר ונוקבא.** כמו שכתוב (בראשית ה, ב) זכר ונקבה בראם ויקרא שמם אדם. ונמצא כי משה רבינו ע"ה היה בבחינת שני חצי צורות. והנה תיבת חצוצרת חסר כמו שכתוב בתורה הוא נוטריקון חצי צרת כי שתי פעמים מספר מש"ה עולה מנין צר"ת: ועל פי זה נבוא לבאר הפסוקים. עשה לך שתי חצוצרת, היינו שמשה רבינו ע"ה יעשה מעצמו בחינת שתי חצי צר"ת שתי בחינות משה בחינת דכר ובחינת נוקבא וכמבואר. כסף, היינו שאלו הבחינות יהיו נכספים ונחשקים זה לזה מלשון (תהלים פד, ג) נכספה וגם כלתה נפשי...

Figure 5a: Students of the Maggid's Disciples

אגרא דכלה דף ז ע"א	ויחל משה דף כ ע"ב
עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף וכו' . הרב הקדוש מהרד"ב זצוק"ל פירש, חצוצרות מלשון חצא"י צורו"ת, עייש"ד כי מאוד עמקו מחשבותיו. ועפ"י דבריו הקדושים נ"ל לפרש דהנה הנפש היורדת לגוף האדם היא מהשכינה אם הבנים, וכבר ידעת כי הרוחניות לא יעתק ממקום למקום רק יתרבה, ואפילו שיורד ממקומו אעפי"כ ישאר במקום הראשון, והנה הנשמה גם כן הגם שיורדת לגוף האדם עכ"ז תשאר בצורתה במלכות שמים אם הבנים, על כן תקרא הנשמה שתי חצאי צורות, חציה למעלה וחציה למטה. והנה כבר ידעת שהנשמה כלולה מרמ"ח איברים רוחניים דמיון הגוף, והנה נתן הש"י לעמו רמ"ח מצות עשין להאיר על ידם רמ"ח איברי הנשמה, היינו שיאירו בה רמ"ח איברין דמלכא, היינו רמ"ח עליונים שבחלק הנשמה אשר היא ספונה למעלה בשכינה, ואז מתדבקין רמ"ח ברמ"ח בסוד הבן יקיר לי וכו' רח"ם ארחמנ"ו וכו' [ירמיה לא יט], וזה סוד אברה"ם אברה"ם [בראשית כב יא] ב' פעמים רמ"ח (כתוב אצלינו במקו"א), ובהיפך יובן הדבר בהיפך, בשומו מסך המבדיל ח"ו כשלא ישתוקק לדבק בחלק הנשמה העליונה על ידי המצות, אזי כמים הפנים לפנים, והבן. וזה סוד מלכות שמים שלימה [ברכות יד ב] כי ב' פעמים רמ"ח בגימטריא מלכו"ת, והבן. וזה עשה לך שתי חצוצרות (היינו השתי חצאי צורות) כסף שיהיו משתוקקים זה לזה זה לקבל וזה להשפיע ויהיה מלכות שמים שלימה, והכל על ידי קיום המצות, וגם שאר הפסוק יש לפרש על דרדזה, ולא הארכנו כעת.	א"י דהנה אאמ"ו זצללה"ה אמר בשם הה"ק דוב בער זצללה"ה מ"מ מראוונע תיבת **חצוצרות הוא נוטריקון חצי צורות, שהאדם עצמו הוא רק כחצי צורה. ועם הבוב"ה החונן לאדם דעת איך לעבוד אותו הוא צורה שלימה ע"כ** וזהו פיה"כ בחצוצרות כשהאדם הוא בבחי' חצי צורה שמעצמותו אין לו שום כח ושכל לעבוד אותו ית', אך עם הבוב"ה הוא צורה שלימה. וזהו ג"כ וקול שופר, דקול הוא פנימיות, והשופר מעצמותו הוא ג"כ אין ואפס. אך יש בו הכנה לקבל קול התקיעה כשנופח בו כמו כן האדם צ"ל שמעצמותו אין לו שום כח ושכל לעבדו רק מהשפעת הבוב"ה בו. והוא והנותן לו כח לעשות חיל וזהו וקול שופר מפנימיות החיות האלקי הנשפע בתוכו ממנו באים יופי הדבורים ואמרי שפר הנאמרים לפניו ית"ש ואז הריעו לפני המלך ד' יהיה לכם הריעות והתחברות עם מלך ה' צבאות וכנ"ל. גם י"ל עפ"י הקדמה הנ"ל חצוצרות הוא חצי צורה. שבשוב האדם ובצדקו מעשיו לא יאמר די להפקיע עצמו ומה לי להצטער על חבירי לא כן כי כל אדם צריך לראות שיזכה חבירי על ידי. לכ"א בחצוצרות. שאהי' תמיד בעיניך כחצי צורה. ועם חבירך כשיתקן מעשיו כמוך תהי' צורה שלימה וכשתהי' כך תזכו ובקול שופר הוא קול הפשוט המורה על הרחמים. שיופיע עלינו הרחמים והחסדים. הריעו לפני המלך ד' שתהי' ריעים לפני ד' אל הוי"ה והרחמים.

Figure 5b: Students of the Maggid's Disciples

אור תורה במדבר ב, ע' שסט	המשך תרע"ב ב, ע' תשצ
ובאו"ת מהמגיד נ"ע פ' **שתי חצוצרות חצי צורות**, כי על דמות הכסא דמות כמראה אדם כו' שהאדם שלמטה הוא חצי צורה וכשמתדבק בהקב"ה נעשה צורה שלימה כו', ויש לבאר דבריו ע"ד זכר ונקבה יחד הם אדם משא"כ כל א' לבדו נק' פלג גופא, גם להעיר מענין מחצית השקל, ולפי"ז י"ל ג"כ שהם נו"ה דאיהו בנצח כו' כנ"ל ועמ"ש ע"פ ה' צלך בת"א בד"ה רני ושמחי, גם להעיר מענין ועשיתם אתם כאלו עשאוני בד"ה אני ישנה גבי רעייתי שממשיכים האור בהמדות להיות חו"ג כו', משא"כ האור מצד עצמו מסתלק למעלה, א"כ הם העושים הצורה וזהו שתי חצי צורות כו' וע"ד גדול כחן של נביאים שמדמים צורה ליוצרה, ולהעיר מענין וייצר, ומענין המה היוצרים, וכן נו"ה נקראים תרי פלגי גופא, ועיין מזה בספר שערי אורה שער ג"ד ושניהם נכללים לפעמים כאחד כו' ולפי שמשה אמר ונחנו מ"ה ותחסרהו מעט מאלקים כו' ע"כ זכה לבחי' שתי חצי צורות הנ"ל, אשר [משה] היינו יחוד זו"נ ולכן נתנבא באספה"מ משא"כ שאר הנביאים שלא נתנבאו כ"א באספא"מ לא זכו לשתי חצוצרות המורים על יחוד וגילוי אסה"מ בשא"מ, ולפ"ז שתי חצוצרות באים ליום שיש בו יחוד ו"ה, ולכן בר"ח תוקעים בחצוצרות שאזי יחוד שמשא וסיהרא אבל בר"ה שאזי המל' מקבלת מבינה שלמעלה מבחי' שמשא אזי תוקעים בשופר כו' וזהו תקעו בחדש שופר.	וביאור הענין בכללות ההפרש בין תפלה לתורה ילה"ק מ"ש **באו"ת מהה"מ ז"ל ע"פ עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף חצוצרות חצי צורות** (היינו הקב"ה וכנס"י הם כבי' חצי צורות שמשלימים זא"ז, ונראה הכוונה על בחי' האור והגילוי דא"ס ב"ה וכן בנש"י בחי' ההתגלות של הנשמה כו'. דהנה כתי' יונתי תמתי ואי' במד"ר תאומתי לא אני גדול ממנה ולא היא גדולה ממני והיינו בחי' ז"א ומל' כשהן שוין בקומתן וכתר א' לשניהם כו', ובנפש הוא בחי' יחידה שבנפש שדבוקה בבחי' יחיד כו', והו"ע ובו תדבקון דבקות עצם בעצם שהן כדבר א' ממש כו' וכמ"ש בסי' בד"ה אחרי ה' תלכו, ועל בחי' ומדרי' זו אינו שייך חצי צורות שמשלימות זא"ז שהרי זהו בחי' העצמות שזה בבחי' שלמות בעצם כו'. אמנם ענין צורה הוא בחי' ההתגלות לא העצמות ממש, ובזה הוא שמשלימות זא"ז כו'.

Figure 6: Habad Sources

גנזי ישראל דף ע' יא	אך פרי תבואה דף לה ע"ב
הנה **איתא בשם זקני המגיד הק' זצ"ל, עה"פ "עשה לך שתי חצוצרות של כסף" ואמר ע"ז "חצוצרות", שתי חצי צורות,** ולהלן (שם, ג־ה) אומר "ותקעו בהם ונועדו אליך כל העדה וגו' ותקעתם תרועה ונסעו המחנות החנים קדמה". וידוע, כי העיקר הוא שתהיה אחדות ואהבה ורעות בין בני ישראל, כי אז כולם יחד נאמר עליהם (שה"ש ד, ז) "כולך יפה רעיתי". והנה ישראל נמשלים לגוף אחד וצריכים להתאחד הגוף עם הראש, והראש הוא צדיק הדור, וכל אחד צריך לחשוב כי הוא אך כחצי גוף והכל תלוי רק בהתאחד יחד שבטי ישראל עם מלכם בראשם, ולזה ג"כ כוונת תקיעת שופר לעוררם על זה, ולכן תחילה תוקעים אך תקיעה פשוטה, להורות על האחדות, ואח"כ כאשר יתאחדו, תוקעים תרועה, להודיע כי כבר התאחדו ונעשו רעים אהובים, וזה מרומז בלשון תרועה, ואז לא ייבצר מהם מאומה. ועל זה מרמזת כוונת המגיד הקדוש על שתי חצוצרות, שתי חצי צורות, דהיינו כי כונת התקיעה להודיע להם כי כל אחד הוא אך החצי, ע"כ "ונועדו אליך כל העדה ונסעו המחנות" הלאה, עם המסילה העולה בית אל. ובזה כוונת חז"ל כי בפעם הראשונה אין השטן נתבהל, כי ידע שתחסר להם התאחדות ואינו ירא מפניהם, אבל בפעם השניה, בשומעו ע"י התרועה כי כבר התרועעו ונעשה ביניהם אחדות ואהבה, אז מפחד מאד ואמר, כי "ודאי זהו שיפורא דיתקע בשופר גדול" וכוי, כי אז אין מעצור לרוחם ורצונם וימלא ה' כל משאלות לבם.	שמעתי שבם הצדיקים דחצוצרות הוא לשון חצי צורות. ויש לומר דבאמת כ"א מישראל הוא רק חצי צורה ואינו נשלם רק עם השי"ת ולכן אם ח"ו מגיע עליו איזה דבר לא טוב צריך לדעת שדבר זה נוגע למעלה ג"כ ח"ו ולא יתפלל עבור עצמו רק עבור חלק שלמעלה משום דבכל צרתם לו צר ח"ו ועי"ז יש לו הישועה ואפשר שזהו הפי' המתפלל בעד חבירו והוא צריך לאותו דבר הוע נענה תחילה. וכן בהשמחה שיגיע לו ג"כ אל ישמח רק עבור חלק הגבוה... וזהו ג"כ בחי' השופר שהוא כלי ריקן והכל נעשה ע"י התוקע.

Figure 7: Ruzhin Sources

מאור ושמש דף רמד ע"ב	קול יעקב ע' קפח	קהלת משה דף קו ע"א-ב	ויקח משה דף כג
... חצוצרות הוא נוטריקון חצי צורות רומז, שזעיר אנפין ומלכות שהם חצי צורות קודם שמקבלין המוחין עומדים לקבל השפע שיורד מאריך אנפין על ידי השופר. וזהו שופר מאריך רומז, שהשופר פועל שיורד השפע מאריך אנפין אל הזעיר ונוקביה ונשלם שיעור קומתם, וחצוצרות מקצרות רומז, שהגבורות המעכבים השפע ועושין אתה זעיר ונוקביה בבחינת חצי צורות - מקצרות ומסתלקות תיכף, והבן.	עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף. עפימ"ש [ברכות נ"ל.] בכל לבבך בשני יצריך, שצריך לעבוד שגם היצר הרע יהי משתוקק לה'. וז"ש עשה לך שתתקן עצמך שתי חצוצרות שהיצר טוב והיצר הרע הם כל אחד חצי צורה זה הוא בימין וזה הוא בשמאל ותתקן ששתי חצי צורות וזהו אותיות חצוצרו"ת, כסף שישתוקקו שניהם לה'.	וזהו בחצוצרות וקול שופר הריעו לפני המלך ה', דידוע חצוצרות אותיות חצי צורות. ולדרכנו נראה לבאר דרומז על תרין ההין דהם חצי צורות כי אות ה' הוא ד' דאיתמלי ביו"ד או בוי"ו. וקול שופר רומז על י"ו כי קול הוא פנימיות הוא המחשבה היא היו"ד חכמה הקדומה לכל הקדומה ומתייחד הכל ע"י שופר דמות ו' בחי' זעיר אנפין.	וזה סמיכת הפסוקים על הצר הצורר אתכם זה יצה"ר והרעותם בחצוצרות שתי חצי צורות של אביו ואמו ונושעתם וגם וביום שמחתכם במועדיכם אם יעלה חידושים והיו לכם לזכרון.

Figure 8: Unattributed Sources After the Maggid's Students

אמרי אלימלך דף קלב ע"ב -קלג ע"א	דברי אלימלך דף קסד ע"א-ב
יבואר עפ"י מבואר בשם הרב האלהי מו"ה דב זללה"ה, חצוצרות הוא חצי צורות, ויבואר כי הנה עיקר בריאת העולם היה ע"י שעלה ברצונו הפשוט התענוג והשעשועים ונח"ר שיקבל מנשמות בנ"י, כי הגם שאין מספר לגדודיו בצבא מעלה ורבוא רבוון ישמשוני' באימה ויראה וששים ושמחים לעשות רצון קונם, מ"מ עיקר תענוג ושעשועים הוא משוכני בתי חומר אשר בעפר יסודם, והיצה"ר שוכן בקרבם ואורב עליהם תמיד והם מתגברים על יצרם ומהפכים חשוכא לנהורא וטעמא מרירא למתקא, מזה מגיע לו ית"ש תענוג ונח"ר יותר מכל צבא מעלה. וא"כ עיקר מעלת האדם וצורתו היא ע"י בחי' יצה"ר ויצ"ט שמגביר כח היצה"ט על היצה"ר וכח כ"א מהיצרים הוא בחי' חצי צורה. והנה כתיב ואהבת את ה' אלהיך בכל לבבך בשני יצריך ביצה"ט וביצה"ר כי הנה בראשונה צריך האדם להרגיז היצה"ט על היצה"ר, כי ידע ויבין כי רע ומר עזבו את ה' אלהיו והחטא בעצמו אשר הוא המרחקו מאור פני מלך חיים הוא יותר רע מכל עונשין שבעולם. והגם כי כ"ז אשר האדם מלובש בחומר העכור אין מרגיש זאת, אבל באמת כשיתבונן האדם היטב במעוז שכלו ודעתו ידע ויבין כי כן הוא האמת, וזה הוא בחינת יראת חטא וע"ז יסיר ויפריד הרע וכח היצה"ר ממדותיו. אמנם בזאת אינו מקיים עוד בכל לבבך בשני יצריך, כי אינו עובד ביצה"ר רק שמרחיקו ומפרידו מאתו. אמנם העבודה בשני יצריך הוא, שיקח האהבה והחמדה, כח היצה"ר, לעבודתו ית' שיתלהב לבו בכח האהבה הלזו לשמו ית' ומהפך בחי' חשוכא חשכת היצה"ר לנהורא וטעמא מרירא למתקא. וכן בכל המדות יהפוך את רעת היצה"ר לטוב. והנה אח"כ כשכבר תיקן כל מדותיו והפך הרע שבהם לטוב, יוכל לזכות ולבוא למדרגה גבוהה, בחי' ביטול ואפס ואין בחי' כלות נפש ודביקות נפלאה באלהים חיים בסוד מחשבה עילאה למעלה מן המדות. ועפ"י המבואר יפורש הכתוב עשה לך שתי חצצורות, ור"ל עשה ותקן בחי' השתי חצי צורות היצה"ר והיצה"ט, שיהיה לך לטובתך, כי גם היצה"ר יהיה לטובתך, כי עיקר ע"י היצה"ר.	[א] וזהו עשה לך שתי חצוצרות. עשה הוא בחי' אהבה כנ"ל, חצוצרות הוא חצי צורות כנודע ממרן אלקי מהד"ב זצ"ל, ור"ל שתבוא לאהבה כשתתבונן כי לך ניתן שתי חצי צורות והוא חסד וגבורה, כי כל אחד הוא חצי ואין שלימות זה בלא זה כנ"ל. ושניהם בידך לאנהגא עלמין. כסף מקשה תעשה אותם, כסף הוא לשון נכסף נכספתי והוא תשוקה ואהבה, מקשה לשון חיבור ואחדות כמו דא לדא נקשן, ור"ל ועוד תבוא לתשוקה ואהבת ה' ביותר כשתתבונן מקשה תעשה עותם, כי כח בידך שתעשה אותם היינו החו"ג להיות מקשה וחיבור אחד, כולו חסד, להפך הגבורה לחסד או מקשה תעשה אותם, אשר כח בידך לחבר ב' אהבות כאחד, שע"י אהבתך להשי"ת תמשוך אהבת ה' אליך וכשתתבונן בזה צריך שתבוא לאהבה את ה' אכי"ר. [ב] ... עשה ותתקן הבחי' לך שלא תכוין בעבודתם בשבליל לך להנאתך ולטובתך, כי תדע ותבין שתי חצוצרות שתי צורות, שנשמתך הוא א' משתי חצאי צורות, חלק וניצוץ מהכל הוא א"ס ב"ה, וא"כ איך תחשוב בשביל החלק ולא בשביל הכל. לכן כסף מקשה תעשה אותם כסף הוא תשוקה ואהבה ומקשה הוא חיבור והשוואה, ור"כ לכן צריך שתעבוד רק מאהבה בלתי מחשבת טובת עצמך, כמו אהבת הקב"ה לישראל. [ג] א"י כי תבואו למלחמה בארצכם. כי יש לך אדם אשר רצונו ורעותא דלבי' הוא טוב ושלם עם ה', ורצונו לעשות רצון ה'. אלא שהשאור שבעיסה מעכב מלהוציא רעותא דלבי' דילי' אל הפועל על כל האברים דיל' אמנם יש אדם אשר כח הרע גובר עליו מבית ומחוץ אשר אין לו גם בחי' רצון הטוב. כי גם נפשו הי' לו לבחי' יצה"ר. אמנם גם האדם הלזה אין לו לייאש עצמו, וצריך לערוך מלחמה וקרב, כי יתבונן כי כל א' מישראל יהי' מי שיהי' היא חלק אלקי ממעל בחי' חצי צורה. לכן ודאי הבא לטהר מסייעין אותו. וה' יהי' בעזרו לנצח המלחמה. וזהו כי תבואו למלחמה בארצכם היינו ברצונכם כנ"ל, ורצ"ל גם כאשר תבואו למלחמה גם על רצונכם כי גם הבחי' רצון הוא רע ח"ו. על הצר הצורר אתכם היינו כי אתם בעצמכם נעשו צר הצורר ח"ו. מ"מ והרעותם בחצוצרות תריעו ותתרוצצו הצר הצורר ע"י חצוצרות שתי חצי צורות שתתבוננו כי אתם וקב"ה כביכול המה ב' חצאי צורות כנ"ל. ועי"ז ונזכרתם לפני ה' אלהיכם להושיע אתכם והבא לטהר מסייעין לו והבן.

Figure 9a: Later Traditions

שפתי צדיקים
דף נז ע"א

בפסוק וידבר ד' אל משה לאמר. עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף מקשה תעשה אותם... ונראה ליישב על פי מה ששמעתי מרבותי הקדושים זללה"ה. ובתחילה אקדים מה ששמעתי מש"ב הרב הקדוש מאפטא ז"ל שאמר על פסוק אתם נצבים היום כו' וזה לשונו, עיקר גדול אצלנו שכל צדיק הגדול שבדור צריך לקשר את עצמו עם כלל ישראל להשפיע לכל אחד מישראל שפע קודש לפי ערך נשמתו של המקבל, והרמז על זה מה שאנו אומרים והאופנים וחיות הקודש מתנשאים לעומת השרפים, כי הצדיקים הגדולים שבדור הם מכונים בשם שרפים לפי שהם דבוקים תמיד בהשי"ת בהתלהבות גדול ולבם בוער בקרבם בהשתוקקות גדול מים רבים לא יוכלו לכבות את האהבה, ותלמידי חכמים העוסקים תמיד בתורה ובחקים ומשפטים הם נקראים חיות הקודש לפי שהם נותנים חיות וקדושה בעולם על ידי הבל הקודש היוצא מפיהם, וכל שאר בני ישראל הפשוטים הם נקראים אופנים, לפי שהם נגררים אחר תלמידי חכמים כאופן הנגרר אחר הסוס המנהיג ומושך אותו כך הם שומעים בקול הורים לשמור ולעשות ולקיים כל אשר יאמרו אליהם על פי דברי התורה הקדושה. וכל השני כתות האלה שהם האופנים וחיות הקודש צריכים לדבק ולקשר עצמם בקשר אמיץ וחזק אל השרפים שהם הצדיקים גמורים בני עליה המועטים כדי שישפיע עליהם חכמה בינה ודעת מהשי"ת. וזה שאמר משה רבינו ע"ה לישראל קודם מותו אתם נצבים היום כלכם לפני ד' אלקיכם ראשיכם כו' כל איש ישראל ר"ל כך הייתי דבוק וקשור עם כל אחד מישראל עד שהבאתי אתכם למעלה הזאת שתהיו נצבים כולכם לפניו יתברך להשפיע עליכם שפע קודש כל אחד לפי ערכו ע"ש באריכות. ועיין מה שכתבתי לעיל בשם אדמ"ו זללה"ה.

וגם קרוב לענין זה שמעתי מאדמ"ו הרב הקדוש מוהר"ם מקאסוב על פסוק ויוצא משה את העם (שמות יט, טז) וגם מאדמ"ו הרב הקדוש מוהר"ר נפתלי מראפשיץ זללה"ה בפרשת ויצא, שצריך כל צדיק הגדול שבדור להשפיל את עצמו אל בני דורו לעיין בצרכיהם ולדבר עמהם בנחת כדי שיקבלו את דבריו באהבה וידע את כל צרכיהם מה שנחסר לכל אחד הן בגוף או בנפש ואחר כך כשחוזר במחשבתו הקדושה אל העולמות הקדושים בתורה ובתפלה הוא משפיע להם על ידי זה כל הטובות ומשלים לכל אחד את חסרונו.

ולכן אמר הרב החסיד מוהר"ר צבי הכהן נ"י שזה הוא ענין החצוצרות שצריך הצדיק לחלק את צורת נשמתו על שני חלקים, דהיינו חצי צורה ישפיל למטה אל החומר כדי לעיין בצרכי ישראל, וחצי צורה יהא דבוק למעלה להשלים להם כל חסרונם על ידי הבל פיו שזה דומה ממש לתקיעת החצוצרות כי התקיעה בא מן הבל פה היוצא משני החצי צורות.

ועל פי זה נוכל לפרש את מקראי קודש הנאמרים כאן בתורתינו הקדושה שהקב"ה לימד את משה רבינו ע"ה שהוא היה צדיק הגדול שבדור איך יקרב ויקשר את עצמו עם כל ישראל הקטנים והגדולים ואמר לו **עשה לך שתי חצי צורות**, כסף הוא לשון אהבה כמו שכתוב נכסוף נכספת (בראשית לא, ל) ר"ל התקשרות שני החצי צורות יהא באהבה עזה, דהיינו חצי צורה למטה באהבת ישראל וחצי צורה למעלה באהבת השם. מקשה תעשה אותם ר"ל שני האהבות האלה יהא תמיד קשה בעיניך להשיג אותם היינו מחמת גודל אהבת ישראל יקשהבעיניך תמיד החסרון שלהם ותשתוקק מאד למלאות חסרונם בגוף ובנפש וגם אהבת השם יקשה בעיניך תמיד איך להשיג אותו בשלימות,שאם תשיג איזה שכל טוב לעבודת הבורא ית"ש יקשה בעיניך איך להשיג החכמה והשכל שלמעלה מזה כדי לדבק בו באהבה יתירה וכובכל פעם תעלה מעלה מעלה עד אין סוף. והיו לך למקרא העדה ולמסע את המחנות ר"ל השתי חצי צורות האלה יהיו לך כדי לקשר עצמךתמיד עם כל העדה אפילו אנשים הפשוטים, וגם למסע את המחנות הם תלמידי חכמים ההולכים מחיל אל חיל ויכולים בקל לעלות למעלה על ידי עוסקם בתורה רק שהם צריכים סיוע מהצדיקים גמורים כנ"ל. ותקעו בהן ונועדו אליך כל העדה אל פתח אוהל מועד ר"ל אם תעשה כן ותתקשר עמהם באהבה עזה, אזי תיכף ומיד כשישמעו שום דיבור מהבל פיך לעבודתו יתברך הדומה לתקיעה בעלמא הבאמהבל הפה מיד יאספו אליך כולם כאחד לקבל עליהם השראת קדושה העליונה הדומה לאוהל מועד ויעשו רצון קונם באמת ובלב שלם.

Figure 9b: Later Traditions

תולדות יצחק דף יג ע"ב	פרי העץ ד' טז ע"א	מאמר דוד	פרי צדיק ד' צ ע"ב
עוד יש לרמז כי כתיב גבי פנחס וחצוצרות התרועה בידו. ופי' הרה"מ זצוקלה"ה ממעזריטש. על שתי חצוצרות. פי' שתי חצי צורות וזהו תלוי בנו לתקן את זה. ופנחס היה תמיד לבו נשבר ע"ז לתקן זה. וז"פ וחצוצרות היינו חצי צורות. התרועה לשון התחברות. וגם לשון שבירה שהיה לבו נשבר ע"ז. שיתחברו השתי חצי צורות. ולזה רומז היו"ד זעירא. על הקטנת ושברון לבו. כדי לתקן תיקון הנ"ל.	והנה הקדוש מהרד"ב כ' שתי חצוצרות שתי הצי תורות וכל הצדיקים בכל ספריהם איש לפי דרכו חסרו לפרש כוונתו וגם אני הצעיר אענה חלקי שיהי' דבריו מותאמים עם דברי מהרח"ו.	מצאתי רמז מן התורה ע"ז שאמר הקב"ה למשה עשה לך שתי חצוצרות ע"ז אמר רבינו הקדוש רבי ר' שמעלקא מניקעלשפורג זללה"ה חצוצרת הוא חצי צורות כי האדם בלא השי"ת אינו יכול לעשות שום דבר רק הכל בעזרת הש"י א"כ הוא חצי צורה זה שאמרנו שהנדיבי לב שבחו"ל הם חצי צורה והלומדי תורה שבאה"ק המה חצי צור השנית ושניהם ביחד המה משלימים הצורה לחבר את האוהל להיות אחד. ולפ"ז מתורץ הגמרא מ"ש הדר בחו"ל דומה כמי שאין לו אלו' והדר בא"י דומה כמי שיש לו אלו' וקשה מה לשון דומה דמשמע שאין לו אבל באמת יש לו וזה פשיטא מי שדר בחו"ל דומה שאין לו אבל באמת יש לו אם הוא בחבורה תמכי דאורייתא כי חבירו החצי צורה שלו הוא באה"ק והוא עוסק בתורה דומה כאלו הוא בעצמו עוסק בתורה אבל מי שדר בא"י ואינו עוסק בתורה דומה שיש לו א' אבל באמת אינו כן כי אינו מלומדי תורה.	וחצוצרות מורה על אהבה כמו דאיתא בספר רמזי תורה מרבינו הרבי ר' בער זצ"ל דלשון חצוצרות חצי צורות היינו שורש יחוד קודשא בריך הוא ושכינתיה.

Figure 9c: Later Traditions

בני בנימין דף ס ע"ב	ברכת אברהם דף יב ע"א	חיי יצחק דף יב ע"א-ב	ערוגת הבשם דף קעד ע"ב
תמים תהי' עם ד"א. ת"א פירש שלים תהא בדחלתא ד"א עפרש"י על לשון תמים. ול נראה לפרש הלשון תמים כי איתא מהרב הקדוש המגיד רבינו דוב זלה"ה עה"פ עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף מרמז על שתי חצי צורות ופרשו תלמידיו הק' כי רימז בזה דהנה ידוע דהגוף הוא החומר והנשמה נקרא צורה והנה הנשמה היא חלק אלקי ממעל נמצא כי הנשמה שבגוף האדם שרשה בגבהי מרומים וכל עבודינו לדמות החצי הצור שבגוף להחצי צורה העליונה שבמקום שרשה. וזהו עשה לך שתי חצוצרות היינו להשתדל כל ימיך שיהי' השני חצי צורותשוות ע"כ. ולהסביר דבריו הק' כי הכתוב אומר כי חלק ד' עמו א"כ הצורה היא הנשמה היא חלק אלקי ממעל ואם אדם עושה עבירות אזי מזיק להנשמה שנתפגמה לכן כשתרצה הנשמה לשוב לבוראה למקום שנחצבה לא תוכל להשוות א"ע למקום שנחצבה כי הוא זה כמו מקל שנחלק ונעשה ביניהם רפש וטיט שאין יכולין אח"כ השני חלקים להתחבר בלתי אם ירחיצו מקודם הרפש והטיט המפסיק כ"כ אם אדם עושה עבירה אזי נעשה כביכול על הנשמה שהיא חלק אלקי ממעל כעין רפש וטיט א"ז אינה יכולה עוד להתחבר למקום שרשה באילן הקדוש. עפי"ז פירוש הכתוב כך הוא שהתורה מזהיר להאדם שלא יעשה עבירה או עכ"פ יעשה תיכף תשובה עלי' כדי שהיהי' תמים עם ד"א היינו שיהי' מתאים חלק שלו הנאצל לנשמתו עם עיקר שורשו למעלה בלי הפסק ביניהם ודו"ק.	או יאמר בהקדם מ"ש (פ' בהעלותך) עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף כי ידוע שהתורה בכללותה תפרוש לד"ח פרד"ס, נגלה ונסתר רמז סוד ולזאת האדם שהוא מבחר הבריאה, יוכל להגיע במעלות להבין עמקה וסודותי' וז"ש הארץ היתה תהו ובהו וחושך ע"פ תהום רומז לנ"ת סד"ר שקשה להבין מאוד מעמקי תהומה וזש"א עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף, כי כידוע מכתבי האר"י ז"ל חצי צורות, שיעשה לו כסף וחשק לחבר הואהל להיות השחים אחד צמודים בנגלה ונסתר.	ומה שהשי"ת כביכול תולה החסרון בו ואומר אשר הרעותי וכדומה, זה נותן קיום להארץ. וזהו כעין מ"ש בגמ' הביאו עלי כפרה על שמיעטתי את הירח וד"ל. וע"כ הקשת הוא חצי עיגול, כמ"ש האר"י ז"ל בס' עץ החיים, שעיגול שלם מורה על השלימות ע"כ רומז חצי עיגול של הקשת לומר שהאדם לא נברא בשלימות. א"כ אין להעניש לאדם החוטא. וזשה"כ בחצוצרות וקול שופר הריעו לפני ה' **ואמר הרה"מ מהרד"ב זצ"ו ממעזריטש חצוצרות היינו חצי צורות.** וזה נותן קיום לארץ שלא יענשו כ"כ משום שלא נברא בתכלית השלימות. וזהו דכתיב ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים, היינו שהשי"ת מקבל החסרון ע"ע כמו שהנשר אומר מוטב יכנס החץ בי ולא בבני.	ע"ד נ"ל בס"ד עפ"י מ"ד כי תבואו למלחמה בארצכם וגו' והרעותם בחצוצרות ונזכרתם לפני ה"א ונושעתם מאויביכם ופירשתי בס"ד **עפ"י דברי המגיד הק' בס' ליקוטי אמרים חצוצרות היינו שני חצי צורות** דישתדל שיהא ענפים דומים לשרשם ולא יהי' בחי' עונותיכם מבדילים ביני לבינכם וזה והרעותם ענין רעות בחצוצרות ועי"ז ונזכרתם לפני ה"א והנה כ"ז שערלה מכסה את הלב נמצא מחיצה מבדלת והיינו דהבטיח השי"ת ומל ה"א את לבבך וגו' וממילא ונושעתם מאויביכם וה"ד למען חייך וא"ש בס"ד.

Figure 9d: Later Traditions

שפתי צדיקים (של י' ליינער)	ישמח ישראל דף לט ע"ב	תפארת שמואל דף סד ע"ב
בשם הרב הק' וכו' ר"ר זלה"ה נבנ"מ זי"ע פירש עשה לך שתי הצוצרות היינו שני חצי צורות היינו שהאדם בעצמו הוא חצי צורה שמקבל עליו מדת מלכותו ויראתו של השי"ת ולית ליה מגרמי' כלום ונם צריך להאמין באמונה שלימה כמו שכתב בתיקונים שהצורה עליונה לא גנמר אלא בבריאת האדם והוא ג"כ חצי צורה. וכשהאדם מקבל עליו מדת מלכות ויראתו אז נגמר הצורה עליונו. וזהו שני חצי צורות.	וענין עירובי הצירות עפ"י דרכי העבודה היא ע"ד שכ' המגיד הגדול הק' מהרד"ב ממעזריטש זצללה"ה על פסוק "עשה לך שתי חצוצרות", צירוף חצוצרות היא חצי צורות. ולפי קט שכלינו כוונתו נ"ל כנס"י עם דודה, שהם כחצי צורה כאו"א לבדו, כביכול כבודו לפי רצונו ית"ש ע"י התדבקותו כתאומתו כנס"י, כי אין מלך בלא עם, והנפש החיוני משתוקקת ג"כ לבוא למקור מחצבתה, ומחצבתה היא מתחת כסא הכטד כמאחז"ל נשמותיהם של ישראל חצובה מתחת כסא כבודו, עד שהכל...	היוצא לנו מדברי הזוה"ק הנ"ל דמלד צריד להיות שלם בדין ורהמים, ואם לאו לא הוי מלד כדברי הזוה"ק מלכא וראי שלים הוא מכולא. והנה שני חצאין יחד נעשה דבר שלם, וזהו כונת דברי המניר הק' ממעזיריטש בביאור הכתוב עשת לך שתי חצוצרות, שתי חצי צורות, שאמר הקב"ה למשה רבינו ע"ה שהיה מלך שיהיה שלים מכולא מדין ורחמים כראוי למלך כי כל אחד משני אלו דין או רחמים הוא הצי צורה ע"כ יעשה שיהיה לו אלו השתי חצי צורות ויהיה שלים מכולא. והנה המדרש הבין נ"כ כן דשתי חצוצרות הכונה כדברי המגיד שתי תצי צורות, היינו דין ורחמים, וזהו שאמר המדרש שביום פטירת משה רבינו ע"ה לא השתמש בהן, מחמת אין שלטון ביום המות, כיון דאלו שתי תצי צורות הנ"ל שייכים רק אצל מלד ואין שלטון ביום המות, וזהו מה שמסיים המדרש, הוי עשת לד שתי חצוצרות כפף, והבן וזהו ג"כ כונת המדרש מה שאמר עשת לך אתה משתמש בהן שאתה מלך והבן ובזה נבוא ג"כ לביאור המרש הנ"ל עשה לך שתי תצוצרות כסף, זש"ה ירא את ה' בני ומלך, מהו ומלך המליכהו עליך, דהיה קשה להמדרש האיך משוה מורא מלכית למורא שמים, וכשבא בעל המדרש לפסוק עשה לד שתי תצוצרות, והבין הכונה דקאי על השתי תצי צורות הנ"ל דין ורחמים שראוי למלך להיות שלים בכולא.

Figure 9e: Later Traditions

אשי ישראל דף עו ע"א	דברי שלום דף סו ע"א	פה אליהו דף יא ע"ב-יב ע"א	משנה שכיר ע' שסה
עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף וכו' והי' לך למקרא למקרא העדה וכו' ותקעו בהן ונועדו אליך כל העדה וכו' ואיתא בסה"ק אוהב ישראל בשם רבינו הק' מו"ה דוב ממעזריטש זצוק"ל שתי חצוצרות שתי חצי צורות וצ"ב ואפשר לומר עפ"י דאיתא באלשי"ך הק' טעם למחצית השקל בשם רבינו מהר"ש אלקב"ץ זל"ה להורות אחדות בין ישראל למען ידעו כי כל אהד רק פלג גופא ורק בהצטרף עם חבירו אז הוא גוף שלם ונוכל ללמוד מזה איך צריכים להיות באחדות יע"ש והנה צורך החצוצרות היו למען יעמדו יחדיו ויהי' באחדות במקום אחד כמ"ש ונועדו אליך ולזה צריך כ"א להחזיק א"ע רק לחצי צורה ועי"כ יוכל לבא לאחדות וע"כ באה המצו' בזה בחצוצרות לרמז ע"ז שלהיות באחדות צריך כ"א להחזיק א"ע בחצי צורות כנוטריקון של חצוצרות וא"ש	ואפ"ל עפ"מ שכ' בסה"ק בני"ש ע"פ דברי הרב הקדוש מהרד"ב זצוק"ל שפי' עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף שתי חצי צורות כסף שיהיו נכספים זל"ז וכתב הוא ז"ל שהנפש נחלק שנים חלק א' באת לעוה"ז וחלק א' נשאר שם במקורה בשמים ממעל ואותו חלק אשר בשמים ממעל מאיר לאשר בארץ בגוף האדם והחלק אשר בארץ מחוייב להשתוקק למקור אשר בשמים (וזה ענין מסה"נ באהבה) ולפ"ז יתפרשו דברי הרב היינ חלק הנפש אשר הוא בעוה"ז מלובש בגוף תכסוף למקורה לחלק השמיימי ואז חלק השמיימי יכסוף להאיר לחלק אשר בעוה"ז כנ"ל ולזה צוה השי"ת ליתן מחצית השקל דייקא.	משחרב ביהמ"ק אישתני שם שופרת"א לשם חצוצרת"א ע"ש הכוונה עפי"ד רבינו קוה"ק המגיד ממעזריטש הרר"ב זי"ע מובא בסה"ק אוהב ישראל פ' בהעלותך חצוצרות נוטריקון חצי צורות ע"ש הכוונה לדעתי כי מי שאינו שוה בשוה עם חבירו מביט בו בחצי פנים והא פתגם העולם, ער קוקט איהם אן מיט א האלב פנים. ומלפנים בזמן שביהמ"ק קיים הי' שלום במחנה ישראל הי' נקרא שופ"ר כנ"ל רמז העדר השטן. לא כן אחר חורבן ביהמ"ק ואין שלום נקרא חצוצרות חצי צורות אי אחדות.	בספרי הצדיקים תלמידי בעש"ט זלה"ה [עי' עבודת ישראל ד"ה עשה לך] הביאו בשם רבינו קדש הקדשים מו"ה דובער המגיד הגדול ממעזריטש: 'עשה לך שתי חצי צורות," עיי"ש בדבריהם כוונה אמיתית בזה. אבל לי נראה לומר ג"כ כוונה פשוטה בזה, דמבואר במדרש [במדב"ר טו, טו] וברש"י דהקב"ה רצה לעשות בזה כבוד למשה רבינו ע"ה כמו שעושין למלך, וידוע מה דכתיב אצל מלך [דברים יז, יח] וכתב לו משנה תורה, והכוונה נראה לומר דידוע דלכל איש מוטל עליו חיוב אחד היינו להשלים את עצמו וצורתו, משא"כ על מלך ישנם שני חיובים השלמת העם והשלמת צורתו, וזה שאמרה התורה וכתב לו משנה תורה שעליו מוטל חיוב משנה וכפול מעל שאר העם. וידוע דהאדם השלם בכל מדרגה שהשיג יחשוב בעיני עצמו כאילו עוד לא השלים עצמו ועוד לא הגיע למעלה עליונה ושהוא הוא רק חצי צורה ולא השלים עוד צורתו, וא"כ במלך שיש שני חיובים בהשלמת צורת העם וצורת עצמו א"כ תמיד יהיה כאילו לא השלים חיוביו לא לגביהעם ולא לגבי עצמו, וזה הכוונה עשה לך שתי חצי צורות, היינו שעוד אינו צורה שלמה וגם העם עוד ג"כ לא נשלמה בצורתו, ועי"ז ישתדל להשיג שלימות יותר בין אצלו ובין אצל העם, וא"ש והבן.

Figure 9f: Later Traditions

גנת הביתן ע' סה-סו	תפראת ישראל ע' כ	אהל שם ע' קנד
וזהו שנותן כל אחד חצי שקל ואחר כן יתחברו השקלים לשקלים שלימים. ובהפסוק עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף רמז בזה "חצוצרות" נוטריקון שתי חצי־צורות. ועד"ז מפרשים את פעסוק וכי תבואו למלחמה בארצכם על הצר הצורר אתכם והרעותם בהצוצרות והרעותם מלשון אחדו' וריעות, בחצוצרות בחצי־צורות כי כל אחד בפני עצמו הוא רק חצי צורה, וכשהם באגודה אחת אין כל אומה ולשון יכולה לשלוט בהם.	א"י ויקרא משה להושע בן נון יהושע וברש"י התפלל עליו י"ה יושיעך מעצת המרגלים, להבין למה תפס בזה השם י"ה, וי"ל עפ"י הידוע בשם הרבי ר' בער זצוק"ל עה"פ (במדבר י') עשה לך שתי חצוצרות שתי חצי צורות עכלה"ק, ויש לומר הענין בזה, בהקדם להבין מהו כח החצוצרות, בעת המלחמה על הצר הצורר, להיות תשועה להתגברות ולנצחון כמ"ש ותקעתם בחצוצרות ונושעתם מאויביכם, אלא על זה הכוונה של שתי חצי צורות, כלומר הגוף והנפש הם שתי חצי צורות והם כח החומרי והרוחני, והעיקר לחבר אותן שתי חצי צורות כאחד יחד, כמו שע"י הגוף והנפש יחד נעשה אדם חי ושלם, ואם תחלש גופו או נשמתו אין כחו שוה כלום, כן ע"י התחברות כח החומרי והרוחני גם יחד יש יכולת להתגבר על האויב. ובזה יובן מה שנאמר לו למשה: עשה לך שתי חצוצרות, ובמדרש עשה לך משלך, ירצה, כי משה נקרא איש אלקים שהי' מחציו ולמעלה אלקים ומחציו ולמטה איש (דב"ר פי"א), על זה שפיר עשה לך שתי חצוצרות, היינו שתי חצי צורות מבחי' שתי המדרגות שלך, של חציו איש וחציו אלקים, מכח הרוחני והחומרי שניהם כאחד.	עשה לך שתי חצוצרות אפשר לומר שהמלה מחולקת לשנים חצי צורות לרמוז לישראל כמו ענין מחצית השקל שיזכור כל יהודי בימי חייו שהוא רק חצי צורה והסר [צ"ל חסר] לו שלימות שזה יוכל להשיג דק אצל חבירו כשיתחברו שניהם יחדיו וישתלמו בהשגת המושכלות הראשונות.

Figure 9g: Later Traditions

אש דת ד, ע' קפא	ים החכמה ע' קנו
ועוד בענין החציין, כדרך שכתב באור תורה להרר"ב ז"ל בענין חצוצרות כי חצוצרות - חצי צורות, כסף לשון תאוה, שתהא מתאוה לה' וה' יאהב אותך, וכל הבריאה בשביל ישראל, רצ"ל רק בשבילו ית', על דרך משל האב אוהב הבן והבן האב, ויש להם געגועים לזה על זה, וא"כ בכל אחד חצי אהבה, שהוא חצי צורה, ושניהם ביחד הוי צורה שלימה, ע"כ תו"ד. ובדרך זה הוי גילוי האהבה וחצוי הצורות בהחצאות הדם. ובזה יוסבר לך מה שהערנו לעיל שמקודם אמרו רק נעשה, ואח"כ אמרו גם נשמע. והוא מטעם שמצות חצאת הדם, חצי על העם וחצי על המזבח שזהו חלק ה', מראה על הכסופים המרובים מעל ישראל לה', ועל האהבה מה' אל ישראל.	הנה בחינת עמידת הדכר והנוק' דעתיק, זה מימין וזה משמאל, ושניהם שוים, יבואר על פי המובא בסהייק עבודת ישראל עהייפ 'עשה לך חצוצרות', וז"ל, הנה קבלנו מאדומו"ר הגאון מוהד"ב זלה"ה צירוף חצוצרות חצי צורות, דהיינו שהיו מרמזים על כנסת ישראל עם דודה שהם כחצי צורה כל אחד לבדו כביכול כבודו לפי רצונו הנורא יתברך כל אהבתו והתדבקותו בתאומתו כנסת ישראל, והיא גם כן משתוקקת ומתדבקת בנפש רוח ונשמה לבוראה ית' עד שהכל נכלל באחדותי. ולבאר הדברים נקדים לבאר ע"ד העבודה, ב' בחינות ביטול להשי"ת, בחי' אין, ובחי' אני ואין. ביטול דמדרגת חכמה נקרא 'אין', לשון 'כח מה', ועניינו הכרת הנבראים שאין זולתו ית"ש ואין כח מה לנאצלים מבלעדו ית"ש, ועל ידי זה באים לידי ביטול אליו ית' ממש. ביטול זה הוא ראש וראשון לכל דרגה שהיא, בקדושה, כפי שהאריך בעל התניא בשם המגיד ממעזריטש זי"ע, כי תחילת כל דרגה שבקדושה אינה אלא על ידי הביטול דבחינת חכמה, וכן ספי' החכמה נקראת קודש כדאי' בזוה"ק, כי אין הקדושה שורה אלא על דבר שבטל לפניו יתברך בבחי' אין הגמור ובבחי' קודש [ואילו הסט"א אף על פי שודאי יש בהם דרגת ביטול כל שהוא להשי"ת, ועל ידי זה ממשיכים לעצמם חיות, מיימ אין זה ביטול הגמור, שנקרא אצלם אלקא דאלקיא]. ולמעלה מזו, ביטול דמדרגת כתר, הנקרא ביטול דאני ואין. ועניינו היות לנאצל שני הדרגות יחדיו, כי מצד א' יש בו איזה ישות, אני, ואעפ"כ הוא אין ובטל למאצילו עם כל הישות שבו, ובהמשך הדברים יתבאר היטב. ביטול זה דבחי' כתר, גבוה מביטול דבחי' חכמה, שבהכרת והרגשת אין וכח מה, אין אהבה וייחוד בין המאציל והנאצל, שיש לתחתון יראה והתרחקות לגודל רוממותו יתיש ולרוב הרגשתו בעצמו כי כח מה לו, ואין אהבה אלא בשוין. אולם בדרגת ביטול של אני ואין, יש ייחוד ואהבה, שיש לו עם הביטול איזה הרגשה של שוה בשוה, כביכול. וזהו שאי' מהמגיד הגדול ממעזריטש עה"פ "עשה לך חצוצרות" מלשון חצי צורות, שכביכול משים השי"ת עצמו באופן של שוה בשוה עם הצדיקים, ועל ידי זה יש מציאות של תפילות הצדיקים, והרשות נתונה להם לדבר לפניו ית' כדבר איש אל רעהו, וצדיק גוזר והקבייה מקיים. שלכאורה יפלא איך יתכן כדבר הזה כלל שיהיה הנברא פונה אל מי שאמר והיה העולם אשר לרוממותו אין קץ ואין כל השגה אפי' באורו יתייש, ומה גם לדבר כלפיו באופן של כדבר איש אל רעהו. אלא שזה גופא החידוש, שחפץ השיית שיהיה איזה מציאות לצדיקים, ואף על פי כן נשארים הם בביטול אליו ית' על ידי שיודעים שאין זה מכוחם העצמי, ושכל מציאותם וכל כח תפלתם הוא מחמת שכן הוא רצונו ית' שבתפילותיהם ימשיכו השפעות לעולם. וכמייש מהארייי הק' בדרושי קייש שעל המטה, שתכלית כל הכוונות שיהיו צדיקים שעל ידם ימשך כל השפע לעולם. וזהו ענין ביטול דאני ואין, ומכח זה יכולים לפעול.

Figure 9h: Later Traditions

מאור עינים
ד׳ ט ע״א

אך דנודע שהכל תלוי באתערותא דלתתא והוא בחינת מ״ן כי תיאובתא דנוקבא לגבי דדכורא ואנחנו עם בני ישראל נקראים בחינת נוקבא לגבי קב״ה וכשאנו מתעוררים לדבק בבוראינו יתברך מלמטה למעלה אנו מעוררים כביכול תשוקה בבוראינו יתברך להשפיע לנו כל טוב סלה ומורידים השפעה מלמעלה למטה בשפע וברכה ורחמים וחיים ושלום והנה אנחנו כנסת ישראל עם הבורא יתברך דבר אחד שלם כשאנו דבקים עמו יתברך וזה בלא זה כב״יכול אינו נקרא שלם כמאמר אין השם שלם ואין הכסא שלם שאנחנו נקראים כסא להבורא יתברך כי כב״יכול הבורא ברוך הוא בלעדינו אינו נקרא שלם ופשיטא אנחנו זולתו יתברך רק כשאנו מעוררים תחלה מ״נ דהיינו תשוקתינו ממטה למעלה לדבק בו יתברך על ידי זה אנו מעוררים תשוקתו יתברך מלמעלה למטה ואז כשהשני תשוקות באים ביחד אז הוא דבר א׳ שלם וזהו תמים תהיה עם ה׳ אלהיך (דברים יח, יג) ר״ל אתה עם השי״ת נקרא דבר שלם והנה עיקר הבריאה היה על מנת כן שנלך אל השי״ת על ידי אתערותא דלתתא מתחילה ואם לאו ח״ו דהיינו כשאין אנו מתעוררים באתערותא דלתתא וצריך השי״ת לעורר אותנו מלמעלה אז אין אנו עושין כלום והנה בנח לא היה אתערותא דלתתא רק מחמת שהשי״ת היה חפץ בקיום העולם שיתקיים על ידי נח לכן הוצרך השי״ת לעורר אותו מלמעלה והוצרך להשפיע בנח תשוקה לדבק בו יתברך וזהו נח היה צריך סעד לתומכו אבל אברהם אבינו עליו השלום היה מתחזק בצדקו והולך מאליו באתערותא דלתתא והשתא ניחא שנקרא צדיק תמים כיון שהיה דבק בו יתברך אבל לא באתערותא דלתתא ולכן כתיב אלה תולדות השמים והארץ בהבראם אותיות אברהם דהיינו כנ״ל שעיקר הבריאה היה על ידי כן שיהיה ההילוך כהילוך של אברהם אע״ה באתערותא דלתתא כנ״ל.

Figure 10: Parallel Traditions

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Figure 1a-b: Manuscripts

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Figure 3a: The Maggid's Students and Contemporaries

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Figure 3b: The Maggid's Students and Contemporaries

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Figure 4: The Works of R. Abraham Hayyim of Zlotshev

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Figure 5b: Students of the Maggid's Disciples

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Figure 9a: Later Sources

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Figure 10: Parallel Traditions

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