

NAHMAN OF BRATSLAV

The Rabbi's Son

Patently the most polemical of these tales, "The Rabbi's Son" portrays the spiritual struggle of a brilliant son of a traditional non-Hasidic rabbi of great learning and family lineage. The son is attracted to the charismatic leadership of the *zadik* because he feels that something is missing in his spiritual life, which has been devoted to intensive study and ordinary ritual piety. Stories of this sort are legion in *Shivhe HaBesht* (The Praise of the Baal Shem Tov) which often discusses the resistance of the potential Hasid to the new spiritual leader.

In this Bratslav tale, the struggle takes on cosmic dimensions and ends in tragedy with the son's death. Supernal forces seem to attract the son to the *zadik*, but they are blocked—as in the previous story—by the will of Samael who realizes that the spiritual union of this young man with this specific *zadik* will bring the messiah and render Samael irrelevant. Samael, who appears in the guise of a reputable merchant, persuades the father to return home with his son by accusing the *zadik* of frivolous behavior, an unspecified but standard accusation leveled at *zadikim*.

Only after the son's death, when the deed cannot be remedied, is it revealed to the rabbi in a dream by the *zadik* himself that the rabbi's obstinacy and incredulity not only caused the son's death, but prevented the initiation of the messianic age. This obstinacy was the work of Samael.

ONCE there was a rabbi who had no children. Finally, he had an only son. He raised him and married him off. The son used to sit in an attic room and study in the manner of rich men and he always studied and prayed. The son had already performed a commandment by which he reached the aspect of "the small light." And yet he felt that there was some imperfection in himself, but he did not know what it was, so he felt no delight in his study and prayer. He told it to two young men and they advised him to go to a certain *zadik*. And the only son went to tell his father that since he did not feel any delight in his worship (his praying, his study, and other commandments) and felt something missing but did not know what, he wanted to go to the *zadik*. And his father answered him: "Why should you want to go to him? You are a greater scholar than he, and of a better family than he. It is not fitting that you should go to him. Turn away from this road!" Thus he prevented him from going.

The son returned to his study and again he felt that imperfection. Again he took counsel with those men, and they advised him as they had before to go to the *zadik*. And again he went to his father. His father dissuaded him and prevented him as before. And so it happened several times. The son felt he was missing something and he longed very much to fulfill this imperfection but did not know what it was. So he came once more to his father and implored him till his father was forced to go with him, because he did not want to let him go

by himself since he was an only son. And his father told him: "I shall go with you, and show you there is nothing real in him." They harnessed the carriage and set out.

His father said to him: "This is how I shall test. If the journey proceeds without mishap, it is from heaven. And if not, it is not from heaven and we shall return." They set out. They came to a small bridge and one horse fell down and the carriage turned over and they almost drowned. The father said: "You see that this journey does not proceed without mishap and is not from heaven." And they returned home.

The son went back to his studies and again he saw his imperfection and did not know why. He came again and implored his father as he had done before and the father was forced to go with him again. When they set out his father established the former test: "If it proceeds without mishap" And it happened that while they were traveling, the two axles broke. And his father told him: "You see that it does not proceed as if we should go, since, is it natural for two axles to break? They have traveled so many times with this carriage and nothing like that has happened!" And they returned home.

The son returned to his way of life, that is, to his studies, etc., and again felt that imperfection. And the men advised him to travel. The son told his father that they should not establish such a test, since it is natural for a horse to fall sometimes or for axles to break, unless there is something very bizarre.

They set out and came to an inn to spend the night. They found a merchant there, and they started talking to him like merchants, but they did not reveal to him where they were going, because the rabbi was ashamed to say that he was going to the *zadik*. They talked about the affairs of the world, until in the course of the conversation, they reached the subject of *zadikim*, and where *zadikim* were to be found. The merchant told them there was a *zadik* there, and there and there so they

started talking about the *zadik* they were traveling to. Then the other answered, in amazement, "But he is frivolous! I am coming from him now, and I was there when he committed a sin." The father answered and said to his son: "Did you see, my son, what this merchant has reported while speaking plainly with no intention to malign? And he is coming from there." And they returned home.

And the son died. And he came to his father, the rabbi, in a dream. When he saw his son standing in great anger, he asked him: "Why are you so angry?" He answered him that he should go to the *zadik* whom they had intended to go to, "and he will tell you why I am angry." The father woke up and said it was just a coincidence. Afterwards he dreamt again as before, and he said this, too, was an idle dream. And this happened a third time. Then he understood that there was something in it and he traveled there.

On the way he met the merchant whom he had met before when he had traveled with his son, and recognizing him said to him: "Aren't you the one whom I saw in that inn?"

He answered him: "Of course you saw me."

The merchant opened his mouth and told him: "I can swallow you if I want to." = really supernatural!!

He said to him: "What are you talking about?"

And he replied: "Do you remember? When you traveled with your son, first the horse fell on the bridge, and you returned. Then the axles broke. Then you met me and I told you that the *zadik* was frivolous. And now that I have done away with your son you are allowed to go on. For your son was in the aspect of 'the small light,' and that *zadik* is in the aspect of 'the great light,' and if they had united the Messiah would have come. But now that I have done away with him, you are allowed to travel."

In the middle of his words he disappeared, and the rabbi had no one to talk to. The rabbi traveled to the *zadik* and he cried: "What a pity, what a pity! A pity on those who are lost

refuses to be
guided by
"natural"
causes

and will never be found! May the Lord, blessed be He, return our exiles shortly, Amen."

(That merchant was Samael himself, who disguised himself as a merchant and led them astray. Afterwards, when he met the rabbi again, he teased him for having heeded his advice, because this is Samael's manner, as is known. May the Lord, blessed be He, save us!)

moralistic
gloss

"The Seven Beggars," Nabman's last and most-renowned tale, commences with a narrative representative of the cosmic catalysm attending creation according to Lurianic myth. In this tale, most of our attention is focused upon the celebration attending the process of tikkun, here the marriage of a young couple who had been lost during the mass flight following the cosmic cataclysm.

During the wedding banquet, six of the seven beggars whom the young children had met in the forest arrive to present them with wedding gifts and regale them with bizarre, circuitous tales, each of which purports to explain that the beggar's apparent deformity, for example, blindness, is actually a virtue somehow connected with the gift presented. In general, the six beggars who appear to present gifts are similar in one respect: They demonstrate, as delightful raconteurs, that the world of reality we live in is really an illusion.

The seventh beggar, the legless one, never appears, leading us to speculate that Nabman intended an abrupt, abbreviated closure as in "The Loss of the Princess." Following the principle of inversion embedded in the story, the legless beggar was really a consummate dancer and since dance was so central to Bratslav religious praxis, his appearance would have been associated with the joy of prayerful ecstasy, the completion of the wedding feast, or the concept of the Sabbath—all symbols of the messianic era which we have not yet earned.

Anti folktale: father's prophetic knowledge of son's fall should stimulate efforts to thwart that fall. Instead, the king is joyous!

I The Fall of the Prince

A. Transfer of power

I will tell you how our people were once joyous.

1

Once there was a king who had an only son. The king wanted to transfer the royal power to his son during his own lifetime. So he gave a grand ball. Now whenever the king gave a ball, it was surely a very joyous affair. But when he transferred the royal power to his son during his own lifetime, there was surely a great celebration. And at the ball were all the ministers, all the dukes, and all the nobles. And they were all very joyous at the ball. And the people, too, were greatly pleased that the king handed his royal power over to his son during his lifetime, because this was a great honor for the king, and indeed there was a great celebration. There were all sorts of things for the celebration—musical bands and comedians and the like—all things used for a celebration were present at the ball.

And when everybody had become very joyous, the king arose and said to his son: "Since I am a star-gazer, and I foresee that you, too, will at some time abdicate the royal power, see to it that you have no sadness when you abdicate. Only be joyous, for when you are joyous, I shall be joyous, too. Even if you are sad, I shall be joyous that you are no longer king, because you do not deserve to be king if you are the kind of person who cannot always maintain his joy even

Q: Why can the Zedick not remain joyous?

A: (1) Social responsibility

(2) falls from upper spheres to grapple w/ evil & is ensnared

when he abdicates the royal power. Only when you are joyous, shall I be exceedingly joyous."

And the prince assumed the royal power vigorously. He created ministers, and dukes, and officials, and an army. The prince was a wise man, he loved wisdom dearly, and gathered around him many wise men. Whosoever came to him with some sort of wisdom was highly esteemed by him. He gave them great respect and wealth for their wisdom. He gave each one whatever he desired. If one desired money, he gave him money. If one desired honor, he gave him honor. Everything for wisdom. Since wisdom was so esteemed, everyone adopted wisdom and the whole kingdom engaged in the practice of wisdom. One practiced wisdom because he desired money, and another, because he desired honor and esteem. And because they all engaged in wisdom only, people in that country forgot military tactics. They were all engaged only in wisdom until the least wise man in this country would be considered the wisest man in another country, and the truly wise in this country were marvelously wise.

Because of this wisdom, the wise men of the land fell into heresy and they drew the prince into their heresy. But the common people did not fall into heresy since there was a great depth in the wise men's wisdom which escaped the common people and they were not harmed. Only the wise men and the prince became heretics. And since the prince had goodness in him because he had been born with goodness and had good qualities, he always remembered: "Where am I in the world and what am I doing?" And he would groan deeply and remember: "What is this? I should be carried away by such things? What's happening to me? Where am I in the world?" Yet, no sooner had he begun to use his reason than the heretical ideas were strengthened within him. And so it happened several times. He would remember where he was in the world and what he was doing and would groan and sigh, but sud-

B. The heresy

הרס

his cost in life

"Heresy" - returns us to ideological realm of faith/doubt

denly he would again use his reason and his heretical tendencies would be strengthened as before.

The Flight

2

ה'תשנ"ג א"ב

And it came to pass that there was a mass flight from a certain country and everyone fled. And as they fled, they passed through a forest, and lost two children there, a male and a female. One family lost a male, and another lost a female. And they were still little children, four or five years old. The children had nothing to eat. They screamed and they cried because they had nothing to eat.

Meanwhile, there came a beggar who was going along with sacks in which he carried bread. The children began to badger him and cling to him. He gave them bread and they ate. He asked them: "Where do you come from?" They answered: "We don't know," because they were little children. He started to leave them, but they asked him to take them along with him. He said to them: "I do not want you to go along with me." Meanwhile they looked and noticed that the beggar was blind. And this was to them a marvel: "If he is blind, how does he know where to go?" (It was also a marvel that the children raised this question, because they were little children. But since they were clever children, this was a marvel to them.) And this blind beggar blessed them: "May you be as I am. May you be as old as I am." He left them more bread and went away.

The children understood that The Blessed One was watching over them and sent them a blind beggar to give them food. After a while the bread ran out and again they began to scream for food. Then night came, and they slept there. In the morning, they still had nothing to eat. They screamed and cried. In the meanwhile another beggar appeared who was deaf. They began to speak to him. He pointed with his hands

2

recognize divine intervention

ה'תשנ"ג = symbol of faith

and said to them: "I don't hear a thing." And this beggar also gave them bread and began to leave them. Again they wanted him to take them with him. He didn't want to, but he, too, blessed them: "You should be like I am." And he also left bread and went off. Then this bread also ran out, and again they began to scream.

③ Again a beggar appeared who stuttered. They started speaking with him, but he stuttered his words, so they couldn't understand what he said. He knew what they were saying but they didn't know what he was saying because he stuttered. The beggar also gave them bread and left them as before. He also blessed them, that they should be as he was, and he left.

④ After a while another beggar came, who had a twisted neck. The same thing happened as before. Then came a beggar who was a hunchback. Then a beggar without hands came. Then came a beggar without feet. Each one of them gave bread and blessed them, that they should be as he was, exactly as the previous beggars.

Then the bread ran out again. They started walking toward an inhabited place until they reached a path. And they walked along the path until they came to a village. The children went into a house. People pitied them and gave them bread. They went into another house and there they were also given bread. And so they went from door to door. They saw that it was good that people gave them bread. The children agreed that they would always be together. They made themselves large sacks and went from door to door and they used to go to all celebrations, to circumcisions and to weddings. They roamed through all kinds of towns and went from door to door. They also went to fairs and sat among the beggars on the benches with the beggar's plates, until the children became widely known among all the beggars, since everyone recognized them and knew them as the children who had been lost in the forest.

Jewish

C. The wedding in the pit
THE TALES

Once there was a large fair someplace in a large city. All the beggars went there and the children went there too. The beggars hit upon the idea to arrange a wedding match between the children. Immediately, as soon as a few of the beggars began to discuss the issue, it pleased them all and they arranged the match. Only how does one make a wedding for them? They decided that on a certain day, when there would be a feast for the king's birthday, all the beggars would gather there, and from the meat and bread which they begged there, they would make a wedding.

And so it was. All the beggars went to the birthday party and begged for bread and meat, and they also gleaned all the leftovers, meat and egg bread. And they went and dug a huge pit which could hold one hundred people, and they covered it with beans and earth and rubbish and they all went in, and there they made the wedding for the children. They raised the wedding canopy and were very, very joyous. The bride and groom were also very joyous. The bride and groom recalled the favors that The Blessed One had bestowed upon them when they were in the forest and they cried and longed: "How do we find the first beggar, the blind beggar, who brought us bread in the forest?"

3

Heavily kabbalistic, theoretical

① Just as they were longing for the blind beggar, he called out: "I am here, I have come to be with you on your wedding day. I present you with a wedding gift: You should be as old as I. Previously, I offered you my blessing but today I bestow this upon you outright as a wedding gift: You should be as old as I am. Do you think that I am blind? Not at all. It is just that the entire world does not amount to an eye's wink (moment) for me." (He looked like a blind man because he did not look at the world at all, since the entire world did not amount to an eye's wink for him. Therefore seeing and looking at this world

did not pertain to him.) "For I am very old and yet I am still young. I haven't even begun to live, yet I am very old. Not only do I say so, but I have an affidavit to that effect from the large eagle and I will tell you a tale:

"Once, people set sail upon the seas in many ships. A tempest arose and smashed the ships, but the people were saved. The people came to a tower. They climbed the tower and found all manner of food and drink and clothes and all the essentials. All the good things and pleasures of the world were there. They called upon each one to recite an old tale, one he remembered from his earliest recollection, that is, what he remembered from the inception of his memory.

"The old and the young were there. They honored the oldest among them by allowing him to be the first to recount. The oldest declared: 'What can I tell you? I can still remember when they cut the apple from the branch.' No one understood what he said, but there were wise men there who said: 'Surely that is a very old tale.'

"They invited the next to tell a tale. The second, who was not as old as the first, declared while asking: 'Is that such an old tale? I remember that tale, too, but I even remember when the lamp burned.' They declared: 'This tale is even older than the first tale.' They wondered how the younger could recall a tale that was older.

"They invited the third old man to tell a tale. He was younger still and declared: 'I even recall the forming of the fruit, that is, when the first fruit began to form.' They declared: 'This is an older tale still.'

"The fourth old man, younger yet, declared, 'I even remember when they brought the seed for the planting of the fruit.'

"The fifth, younger yet, declared: 'I can even remember the wise men who invented the seed.'

"The sixth one, younger yet, declared: 'I remember the

taste of the fruit before the taste entered the fruit.'

"The seventh one declared: 'I even remember the smell of the fruit before it entered the fruit.'

"The eighth one declared: 'I even remember the appearance of the fruit before it was on the fruit.'

"And I (the blind beggar) was at that time only a child. I was also there and declared: 'I remember all of these tales and I remember nothingness.' They all declared: 'That is a very much older tale, older than all the others.' It was a great marvel for them that the child remembered more than all of them.

"In the meanwhile a large eagle arrived and he knocked on the tower and said to them: 'Stop being paupers. Return to your treasures. Use your treasures.' And he told them to leave the tower in the order of their age, the oldest leaving first. He took them all out of the tower. He first took out the child, since truthfully he was the oldest of all. And so he took out the youngest ones first, and the oldest he took out last. For the younger one was older, and the oldest among them was the youngest of them all.

"And the great eagle declared to them as follows:

" 'I will interpret all the tales that were told. He who told that he remembered how the apple was cut from the branch implied that he still remembers when they cut his umbilical cord, that is what occurred as soon as he was born, when they cut his umbilical cord. This, too, he still remembers.

" 'And the second who said that he still remembers when the lamp burned implies that he still remembers when he was an embryo because that is the time when a candle burns over the head. (Thus it is written in the Gemara, that when a child is in the mother's womb a lamp burns over his head.)

" 'And he who said he still remembers when the fruit began to form, still remembers when his body began to form, that is, when the child was created.

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15人

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Heavily moralistic⁴

4.

On the second day of the seven feast days, the bride and groom recalled the second beggar, the deaf one, who nourished them and gave them bread. And they cried and longed for him: "How do we bring the deaf beggar here, the one who nourished us?"

7

said: "I am here." And he embraced and kissed them saying: "Today, I present you with a gift that you shall be like me, that you should live as good a life as I. Previously I offered you this blessing, today I bestow my good life upon you outright as your wedding gift. And you think I am deaf? I am not deaf at all. It is only that the whole world is not worth my hearing its deficiencies. All sounds in the world are due to its deficiencies since people cry out about what they are lacking, about what they haven't got. Even all the world's celebrations are about deficiencies since one rejoices over the deficiencies which have been filled. As for me, the whole world is not worth my listening to its deficiencies, because I live a good life that has no deficiencies. And I have an affidavit from the Country of Riches that I live the good life." His good life was that he ate bread and drank water.

And he told them:

“There is a country where there are great riches and they have many treasures. One day these wealthy men gathered to boast how they live the good life, and each one told of his style of good living. And I declared to them: ‘I live a good life which is better than your good life, and here’s the proof. If you are living such a good life, let me see if you can save a certain country. For there is a land where they had a garden, and in this garden there were fruits that had all the flavors in the world. And all the odors in the world were also there, all the forms, all the colors, and all the blossoms in the world were all there in that garden. Over the garden there was a gardener and the people of that land lived a good life because of this garden. But then the gardener disappeared, and, of course, everything in the garden withered and died since the gardener was no longer there. However, they were still able to live off the aftergrowth of the garden.

“ ‘But a cruel king arose in the country, and since he was unable to do anything to them personally, he spoiled the good life of the country which they had derived from the garden.

He did not spoil the garden itself, but left three groups of servants in the land and ordered them to do his bidding. And through their actions they spoiled the people's sense of taste. Consequently, anyone who wished to taste anything sensed only the taste of the carrion. And likewise they spoiled their sense of smell, so that all the odors smelt of galbanum. Likewise they spoiled their sense of vision, so that they dimmed their eyes as if there were heavy clouds. What they did there was as the cruel king had ordered.

"Now, if you live the good life, help that country. And I say to you," so said the deaf beggar, "that if you do not help them, their deficiencies will harm you."

"These rich men started out for that country, and I also went along with them. Even along the way each one lived his good life because they had great treasures. As they approached that country their sense of taste and their other senses, too, began to spoil. And they themselves felt that their senses were spoiled. Then I said to them: 'If you haven't even entered the land and your senses of taste and smell and sight have already spoiled, how will it be when you enter? Furthermore, how will you be able to save them?' And I took out my bread and my water and gave it to them. In my bread and water, they felt all the tastes and smells, and that which had been spoiled was repaired.

"And the inhabitants of that country where the garden was began to seek to repair the country where the sense of taste had been spoiled. They came to a decision: Since there existed a country of great riches (the very same country which the beggar had mentioned) it seemed that their lost gardener through whom they had lived the good life was of the same stock as those people of the Country of Riches who also lived the good life. Thus they counseled that they should send to the Country of Riches, for surely they would help them. And that is what they did. They sent out emissaries to the Country of Riches. As the emissaries left, they met with the rich men

from the Country of Riches, and the rich men asked the emissaries: 'Where are you going?' They answered: 'We are going to the Country of Riches so that they might help us.' They replied: 'We ourselves are inhabitants of the Country of Riches and we are on our way to you.' I (the beggar who is telling this story) declared: 'You really need me because you cannot go there to help them, therefore remain here and I will go with the emissaries to help them.'

"So I went with the emissaries until I came to the country. I entered a city, and I saw some people telling jokes and then more people gathered around them until there was a whole crowd telling jokes and they all laughed. I listened and heard that they were speaking obscenities. One tells an obscene joke; another one is slightly more subtle. This one laughs; that one enjoys the fun, etc. Then I went further to another city. There I saw two people quarreling over business. They went to court to bring suit. The court decreed: 'This one is innocent and that one is guilty.' They left the court. Later, they quarreled again. This time, they said they would not go back to that court, but they wished another court. They selected another court and brought their case before it. Later, one of this pair quarreled with someone else. They chose a different court this time. And this way they continued to quarrel and to choose different courts each time until the whole city was full of courts. I observed that the reason was that the truth did not exist there. Today this man distorts the judgment and favors his friend; afterwards, his friend favors him, since they take bribes and there is no truth in them. Then I noticed that they were full of lechery and there was so much lechery there that it became permissible.

"I told them that was why their senses of smell and taste and sight were spoiled. The cruel king left them with those three groups of servants who spoiled the country, for they wandered about spreading obscenity and introduced it into the country. And through the obscenity, the sense of taste

was spoiled, all the tastes had for them the taste of carrion. And they also introduced bribery into the land. Through this their sight was dimmed and their sense of sight was spoiled as it is written: 'Graft blinds the eyes of the wise.'¹⁰ And thus they also introduced lechery into the land and through that the sense of smell was spoiled since the sense of smell is spoiled through lechery. 'Therefore,' I said, 'see to it that you cure the country of those three sins, seek out those people and banish them. And when you cleanse the country of these three sins, not only will your sense of taste and sight and smell be cured, but even the gardener who mysteriously disappeared will be found.'

"And that is what they did. They began to cleanse the country of these three sins and to seek out those people. They would seize an individual and question him: 'Where do you come from?' until all the people of the cruel king were discovered and banished and the country was cleansed of these sins. In the meanwhile there arose a tumult: 'Perhaps that madman is really the gardener. For there is a madman who wanders about crying he is the gardener and whom everyone considers mad and stones him and chases him away. Perhaps he is really the gardener.' They went and brought him in and I said: 'Of course he is the true gardener.'

"Consequently, I have an affidavit from the Country of Riches that I live the good life because I cured the Country of the Garden. And today, I grant you my good life outright as a wedding gift."

There was great rejoicing and a fine celebration and everyone was very happy. The first gave them long life as a gift and the second gave them a good life.

On the third day, the couple again remembered and cried and longed: "Where can one find the third beggar, the one who stuttered?" Meanwhile, he entered and said: "I am here."

He embraced them and kissed them and also said to them: "Previously, I blessed you that you might be as I am. But today I present you as a wedding gift that you should be as I am. And you think that I am a stutterer? I am not a stutterer at all. It is only that worldly words which are not praises of the Holy One have no perfection." That is why he looked like a stutterer, for he stuttered those worldly words which have no perfection. "In fact, I am really not a stutterer at all. On the contrary, I am an extraordinary orator. I can recite riddles and poems and songs so marvelous that there is no creature in the universe who would not wish to hear them. And in these songs lies all wisdom. I have an affidavit to that effect from the great man who is called the True Man of Kindness. There is in this an entire story.

"Once all the wise men were sitting and boasting of their science. One said that with his science he had invented the production of iron from ore; another, that he had invented the production of another metal; and still another boasted that he had invented the production of silver, which is even more important. And yet another boasted that he had invented the production of gold. One boasted that he had invented weapons. Another boasted that he could make all these metals from material other than those used for making these metals. And another man boasted of other sciences, for there are numerous things that were invented through science, like saltpeter, and powder and the like. Each boasted of his science.

"One came forth and said: 'I am wiser than all of you, for I am as wise as the day.' They could not comprehend what he was saying, that he was as wise as the day. And he declared to them that if all their sciences were gathered together, they would only amount to one hour. Even though each science derived from a specific day, according to the creation which took place on that day (all these sciences are only combinations of materials which God had created on specific days), nevertheless, through science one can gather all these inven-

tions into one hour. But I am as wise as an entire day.

"That is how the last wise man boasted. So I (the stutterer) asked him: 'Like which day are you wise?' The wise man declared: 'This man (the stutterer) is wiser than I, because he asks, "Like which day?" But I am as wise as whichever day you wish.' And now the question arises: Why is he who asks 'Like which day?' wiser than the wise man who is as wise as any day he wishes?

"There is an entire tale about this. The True Man of Kindness is indeed a very great man. And I (the stutterer) travel around and collect all true deeds of kindness and bring them to the True Man of Kindness. For the very becoming of time—time itself is created—is through deeds of true kindness. So I travel and gather together all those true deeds of kindness and bring them to the True Man of Kindness. And from this time becomes.

EN "Now there is a mountain. On the mountain stands a rock. From the rock flows a spring. And everything has a heart. The world taken as a whole has a heart. And the world's heart is of full stature, with a face, hands, and feet. Now the toenail of that heart is more heart-like than anyone else's heart. The mountain with the rock and spring are at one end of the world, and the world's heart stands at the other end. The world's heart stands opposite the spring and yearns and always longs to reach the spring. The yearning and longing of the heart for the spring is extraordinary. It cries out to reach the spring. The spring also yearns and longs for the heart.

"The heart suffers from two types of languor: one because the sun pursues it and burns it (because it so longs to reach the spring); and the other because of its yearning and longing, for it always yearns and longs fervently for the spring. It always stands facing the spring and cries out: 'Help!' and longs mightily for the spring. But when the heart needs to find some rest, to catch its breath, a large bird flies over, and

spreads its wings over it, and shields it from the sun. Then the heart can rest a while. And even then, during the rest, it still looks toward the spring and longs for it.

"Why doesn't the heart go toward the spring if it so longs for it? Because, as soon as it wants to approach the hill, it can no longer see the peak and cannot look at the spring. (When one stands opposite a mountain, one sees the top of the slope of the mountain where the spring is situated, but as soon as one approaches the mountain, the top of the slope disappears—at least visually—and one cannot see the spring.) And if the heart will no longer look upon the spring, its soul will perish, for it draws all its vitality from the spring. And if the heart would expire, God forbid, the whole world would be annihilated, because the heart has within it the life of everything. And how could the world exist without its heart? And that is why the heart cannot go to the spring but remains facing it and yearns and cries out.

"And the spring has no time; it does not exist in time. (The spring has no worldly time, no day or moment, for it is entirely above time.) The only time the spring has is that one day which the heart grants it as a gift. The moment the day is finished, the spring, too, will be without time and it will disappear. And without the spring, the heart, too, will perish, God forbid. Thus, close to the end of the day, they start to take leave one from the other and begin singing riddles and poems and songs, one to the other, with much love and longing. This True Man of Kindness is in charge of this. As the day is about to come to its end, before it finishes and ceases, the True Man of Kindness comes and gives a gift of a day to the heart. And the heart gives the day to the spring. And again the spring has time.

"And when day returns from wherever it comes, it arrives with riddles and fine poetry in which all wisdom lies. There is a distinction between the days. There is Sunday and Monday; there are also days of New Moon and Holidays. The

poems which the day brings depend upon what kind of day it is. And the time that the True Man of Kindness has, all derives from me (the stutterer) because I travel around, collecting all the true deeds of kindness from which time derives.

"Consequently, the stutterer is wiser even than the wise one who boasted that he is as clever as whichever day you wish. Because all of time, even the days, come about only through him (the stutterer) for he collects the true deeds of kindness from which time derives and brings them to the True Man of Kindness. He in turn gives a day to the heart. The heart gives it to the spring, through which the whole world can exist. Consequently the actual becoming of time, with the riddles and poems and all the wisdom found in them, is all made possible through the stutterer.

"I have an affidavit from the True Man of Kindness that I can recite riddles and poems, in which all wisdom can be found, because time and riddles come into being only through him. And now, I give you my wedding gift outright that you should be like me."

Upon hearing this, they had a joyous celebration.

6

In the morning, when they finished the celebration of that day and had slept through the night, the couple yearned for the beggar with the twisted neck. Meanwhile, he entered and said: "I am here. Previously, I blessed you that you may be as I am. Today I present you a wedding gift that you should be as I am. Do you think my neck is twisted? My neck is not twisted at all. In fact, I have a straight neck, a very handsome neck. Only that there are worldly vanities (empty breaths) which are so numerous that I do not want to exhale the least breath." (It seemed like his neck was twisted, since he twisted it because of the vanities of the world and did not want to exhale any breath into the vanities of the world.) "But

I really have a handsome neck, a wonderful neck because I have such a wonderful voice. I can imitate with my voice every speechless sound made on earth because I have such a wonderful neck and voice. And I have an affidavit to that effect from a certain country.

"For there is a country where everyone is skilled in the art of music. Everyone practices these arts, even little children. There isn't a child there who is unable to play some kind of instrument. The youngest in that country would be the wisest in another country in the art of music. And the wise men, and the king of that country and the musicians are experts in the art of music.

"Once, the country's wise men sat and boasted of their expertise in the art of music. One boasted that he could play on one instrument; another, on another; and still another, on all instruments. This one boasted that he could imitate with his voice the sound of one instrument, and another boasted that he could imitate with his voice yet another instrument. And still another boasted that with his voice he could imitate several instruments. Another one boasted that he could imitate the sound of a drum, just as it is being beaten. Another one boasted that with his voice he could make the sound of cannon firing.

"I, too, was there, so I declared saying, 'My voice is better than all of yours. And here is the proof. If you are such wise men in music, see if you can save these two countries. There are two countries one thousand miles apart from each other where no one can sleep when night falls. As soon as night falls, everyone begins to wail with such anguish—men, women, and children—because they hear a certain wailing sound of mourning. Stones would melt because of this wail. And thus they behave in the two countries: In one, they hear the wail and all wail; and likewise in the other country. And the two countries are a thousand miles apart. So if you are all so very wise in music, let us see if you can save these two

אמנם אין שם אדם אחד שיכול לשמוע את כל השמות
האשר נקראו בשם ה' אלהינו

countries, or at least imitate the sounds of the laments heard there.' And they said to him: 'Will you lead us there?' He answered: 'Yes, I will lead you there.'

"And they all arose to go there. They left and reached one of those two countries. When they arrived, and night fell, as usual, everyone began to wail and the wise men also wailed. And so they saw that they were of no help at all to the two countries. And I (the one with the twisted neck) said to the wise men: 'Can you, at least, tell me where the sound of the wailing comes from?' They asked: 'Do you know?' And I (the beggar with the twisted neck) answered: 'Of course I know. There are two birds, a male and a female. There was only one pair of this species on earth. The female was lost and the male roamed about seeking her. She was also seeking him. They searched for each other for such a long time that they lost their ways and realized they could no longer find one another. They remained where they were and made nests. The male built a nest close to one of those two countries—not too close by, but considering the bird's voice, close enough. From where he built his nest, his voice could be heard in the country. In the same way, she also built her nest near the second country, also not too close by, but close enough for her voice to be heard. And when night fell, each one of this pair of birds began to lament with a very great wail. Each wailed for its mate. This is the wailing that is heard in these two countries, and because of the sound, everyone must wail and no one can sleep.'

"But they didn't want to believe me, and said to me, 'Will you lead us there?' 'Yes,' he answered. 'I can lead you, but how can you get there? You cannot get there by night because you will not be able to bear the wailing when you approach. Even here you cannot bear it and you must also wail. When you get there, you will not be able to bear it at all. And you cannot get there by day, for by the day, the joy is unbearable. During the day, birds gather around each one, around him and her, and console them and gladden each one of the pair

with great rejoicing. They speak words of comfort: "It is yet possible that you will find each other." That is why it is not possible to withstand the great rejoicing that is found there by day. The voices of the birds that gladden them are not heard from far off, but only when you get there. But the sounds of moaning arising from the pair is heard from far off. That is why you cannot get there.'

"The wise man said to me: 'Can you set it right?' I answered: 'Yes, I can set it right, since I can imitate all the sounds of the world. I can also throw my voice, so that in the place from where I throw my voice, nobody hears, but it is heard far, far away. Thus I can throw the voices of the birds, from her to him. I will imitate her voice and throw it close to him. I will also throw his voice close to her, and this way I will bring them together and so everything will be put right.'

"But who could believe me? So I led them into a forest. They heard somebody open a door, and shut it, and lock it with a bolt. Then I shot a gun and sent my dog to retrieve what I had shot. And the dog struggled in the snow. These wise men heard it all and looked around, but they saw absolutely nothing. They heard no sound from me (whose neck was twisted though it was I who had thrown those sounds and thus they had heard them), so they understood that I could imitate all the sounds and could throw my voice and thus could set everything right." (Here he skipped in his narrative.)

"And therefore I have an affidavit from that country that I have a very fine voice and can imitate all the sounds in the world, and today I grant you this outright as a gift in honor of your wedding, that you should be like me."

And there was great celebration and joy there.

7

On the fifth day they also celebrated. The married pair remembered the beggar who was a hunchback. And they yearned greatly, "How do we bring the hunchback beggar

here? If he were here, our happiness would be great indeed." Meanwhile, he arrived and said: "Here I am. I came to be with you at your wedding." He embraced and kissed them and said: "Previously I blessed you that you might be like me. Today, I present you a wedding gift that you should be like me. I am not a hunchback at all. On the contrary, I have shoulders that are characterized *the-little-that-bolds-much*. And I have an affidavit to that effect.

"Once there was a discussion where people prided themselves on having this characteristic. Each one boasted that he possessed the characteristic of *the-little-that-bolds-much* (that is, a small space that should contain much). One of them was ridiculed and laughed at. The words of the others who boasted about having *the-little-that-bolds-much* were acceptable. But *the-little-that-bolds-much* that I have was greater than all the others.

"One of them boasted that his mind was like *the-little-that-bolds-much*. He carried in his mind multitudes of people with all their needs and all their behavior, with all their gestures and traits. Since he kept all these things in his mind, he was *the-little-that-bolds-much*, for his little bit of a mind carried so many people. And they made fun of him and declared: 'Your people are nothing and you are nothing.'

"Another one declared and said: 'I saw *the-little-that-bolds-much*. For once I saw a mountain that was covered with rubbish and filth. This was a marvel to me: Where did this rubbish and filth come from? There was a man close by the mountain. He told me, "All this comes from me." Since he dwelt so close to the mountain he threw everything onto the mountain, rubbish and filth from his eating and drinking. From him the rubbish and filth increased on the mountain. Therefore, this man was obviously *the-little-that-bolds-much*. Because one man could create so much rubbish.'

"Another boasted that he had *the-little-that-bolds-much*, since he had a piece of land which produced much fruit. The

fruit produced by that land was later counted and it turned out that the land was not as large as the amount of fruit it produced. Therefore this was *the-little-that-bolds-much*. His words were pleasing, and accepted as truly being *the-little-that-bolds-much*.

"And one said, 'I own a wonderful orchard wherein fruits grow. Many people and lords visit it since it is such a beautiful orchard. And when summer comes, many people and lords journey there to stroll in the orchard. Truly, the orchard is not so large that it can accommodate many people. Therefore, it is *the-little-that-bolds-much*.' And his words were also pleasing.

"And one said that his speech possessed the characteristic of *the-little-that-bolds-much*, since he was the secretary for a great king: 'Many people come to the king. One comes with praise and another comes with petitions. The king cannot listen to all of them so I gather together all their speeches and shorten them and present to the king this digest of all their praises and petitions. Thus my brief words are *the-little-that-bolds-much*.'

"Another one said that his silence possessed the characteristic of *the-little-that-bolds-much*. There were accusers and slanderers who informed against him severely. They quarrel with him and talk about him a great deal. And he refutes all slanders and accusations against him with silence, only with silence. Therefore, his silence was *the-little-that-bolds-much*.

"Another one said that he was *the-little-that-bolds-much*. There was a very poor man who was both blind and very big. He (the boaster) was very small and led about the poor blind man who was very big. Therefore, he was *the-little-that-bolds-much*. Because the blind man could slip and fall, and he maintains him upright by leading him. Because of this he was *the-little-that-bolds-much* because he was small and held up the big blind man.

"And I (the hunchback) was also there. I retorted, 'The

truth is that you all have the characteristic of *the-little-that-holds-much*, and I understand everything that you meant. The last one who boasted that he led the big blind man is greater than all of you. But I am by far superior to all of you, since he who boasted that he leads the big blind man means that he leads the lunar sphere. For the moon has the characteristic of a blind man for she has no light of her own. And he who boasted of this, leads the moon even though he is small and the sphere of the moon is extremely large. Through him the world survives because the world must have a moon. Thus, he is surely *the-little-that-holds-much*. But I am superior to all of you and *the-little-that-holds-much* which I have is superior to all. This is the proof.

“There was once a sect which reasoned that every beast had its own shade where it wished to rest, and so, too, each bird had its branch where it rested and not on any other branch. Because of this, the sect reasoned that there might exist such a tree in whose shade all the beasts could choose to rest, and on whose branches all the birds could rest. They declared that such a tree did exist. They wanted to travel to the tree, because the pleasure found around the tree should be limitless since all the birds and the beasts were there. No beast harmed any other beast, but all the beasts were intermixed and they gamboled there. Surely it would be a great pleasure to be at the tree. They reasoned in which direction to go to reach the tree. A controversy arose among them and one said, ‘We must go west.’ This one said, ‘Go here,’ and that one said, ‘Go there.’ They couldn’t possibly decide which way to go to reach the tree.

“A wise man came by and said to them, ‘Why are you reasoning which way to go to reach the tree? Reason first which are those people who can reach the tree. For not everyone can reach the tree. Only he who possesses the virtues of the tree can reach it. For this tree has three roots. One root is faith in God; the next root is reverence; and the third root is

humility. Truth is the body of the tree from which the branches emerge. Therefore no one can reach the tree unless he has those virtues.’

“Now, not everyone in the sect possessed these virtues; only a few had them. And since the sect was well united, they did not want to separate so that one group should go to the tree and the rest remain behind. So they agreed to wait while each one of them labored and struggled to attain the high degree of all the virtues so that all of them would reach the tree together. This is exactly what they did: They labored and struggled until they all achieved those virtues. And no sooner had they achieved these virtues, than they all agreed upon the one way to go in order to reach that tree. They all set out and after they had traveled a while, they were able to see the tree from afar. When they looked, they noticed that the tree was not rooted in any space. The tree stood on no specific space. And if it had no space, how could it be reached?

“And I (the hunchback) was also there with them. So I declared to them: ‘I can lead you to the tree. For this particular tree has no specific space; it is entirely above (superior to) the earth’s space. And yet, the characteristic of *the-little-that-holds-much* still involves some space. Although it is a *little-that-holds-much*, it still has a little space in it. And my *little-that-holds-much* is at the very end of space, and beyond it there is no space at all.’ (For the hunchback was like the middle stage between space and what is entirely above (superior to) space because he had the highest degree of *the-little-that-holds-much* which is at the very end of space and after it the term space does not exist at all. Therefore, he could lead them from that space to the aspect of *above-all-space*.) ‘That is why I can lead all of you to this tree which is totally above (superior to) the space it stands on.’

“And I took them and led them there to that tree. Thus I have an affidavit from it that I have the highest degree of *the-little-that-holds-much*.” (And that is why he appeared to be

hunchbacked; he carries a heavy load since he himself carries within himself *the-little-that-holds-much*.) "And now I grant you this trait that you be as I am."

And great joy was expressed and there was very great bliss.

8

On the sixth day they were all very joyous and yet they yearned: "How do we bring here the beggar without hands?" Suddenly he arrived and said, "Here I am. I come to you on your wedding." And he spoke to them as the others did. And he embraced them and kissed them and said to them: "You think that I am crippled in my hands. I am not at all crippled in my hands. I do have power in my hands, but I do not use the power in my hands in this world. I need this power for something else and I have an affidavit to that effect from the Water Castle."

"Once a few of us were sitting, each one boasting of the power which lay in his hands. This one boasted that he had a certain prowess in his hands, and that one boasted that he had another type of prowess in his hands. For instance, one man boasted that he had such power and prowess in his hands that when he shot an arrow from his bow, he could pull it back to him. For the power of his hands was such that even though he had shot the arrow, he could still turn it around and make it return."

"And so I asked him: 'What type of arrow can you pull back?' There are ten different sorts of arrows because there are ten different types of poison. When an arrow is smeared with one poison, it does a certain type of harm, and if an arrow is smeared with another type of poison it does more harm. There are ten different types of poison each more deadly than the first and this is why there are ten different types of arrows. (The arrows themselves are all alike, but because

they are smeared with ten different types of poison they are called ten different arrows.) That is why I asked him: 'What sort of arrow can you pull back?' I also asked him whether he could pull back an arrow before it hit its mark or could he also recover it after it had hit. To this he answered that even after the arrow had hit its mark he could pull it back, and to the question, what type of arrow can you pull back, he declared: 'Such and such an arrow.' So I replied: 'If this is the case, you cannot cure the Princess. Since you can only pull back one type of arrow, you cannot cure the Princess.'

"One boasted that he had such power in his hands, that no matter from whom he took, he gave. By the very fact that he took something from someone, he was giving because his taking was giving. This automatically made him a giver of charity. Then I asked him, 'What kind of charity do you give?' (Because there exist ten sorts of charity.) He answered that he tithed. I replied: 'If that is so then you cannot heal the Princess. You cannot even reach her place. You can enter only one wall where she dwells and so you cannot come to her place.'

"One boasted that he had a special power in his hands. For there were in the world officials who needed the wisdom which he could impart by laying his hands on them. I asked him, 'What kind of wisdom can you impart through your hands? For there are ten measures of wisdom.' He answered: 'Such and such a kind of wisdom.' I declared: 'You can't heal the Princess at all; you can't even take her pulse. You are aware of only one pulse and there are ten types of pulse, but you know only one, because you know of only one type of wisdom.'

"One boasted that he had such power in his hands that when a tempest arose, he could contain the tempest with his hands. He could catch the wind within his hands and contain it. He could give the wind the proper counter-force that was needed. So I asked him: 'What kind of wind can you catch

with your hands? There are ten types of wind.' He answered: 'Such and such a wind.' I replied: 'You cannot heal the Princess because you cannot even play her tune. The cure for the Princess is through music, and there are ten types of tunes and you can only play one tune for her from these ten.'

" 'And what can you do?' they all questioned. I answered: 'I know what all of you don't know, that is all of the nine parts of all that you don't know, I know. I know all.'

"There is a tale. Once upon a time a King fell in love with a Princess. He tried to capture her through stratagems until he succeeded and then he kept her by his side. One night he dreamt that the Princess rose up against him and killed him. When he awoke, this dream remained in his heart. He called together all the interpreters of dreams and they interpreted as follows: 'The dream will literally become reality; she will kill him.' The King was unable to find any counsel: What could he do with her? Should he kill her? That would sadden him. Should he banish her? That would irk him, for someone else would have her. He had worked so hard to get her and now she would be someone else's. And especially if he banished her and she asked another's help, the dream could surely come true; she would kill him, since she would then be with somebody else. On the other hand if he kept her with him, he feared the outcome of the dream.

"And so the King didn't know what to do about the Princess. Meanwhile his love for her was spoiled somewhat because of the dream; he didn't love her as much as before, each day his love for her was spoiled. And so, too, her love for him was spoiled, each day more and more, until there existed within her a hatred toward him, and she ran away from him. The King sent word to search for her. People came and said to him that she was circling about the Water Castle. For there was a Water Castle, with ten walls, one inside the other. All the ten walls were made of water, and the ground that was trod upon was also of water. There were trees and fruits, all of

water. The beauty and the marvel of the Castle was indescribable. For surely it was an extraordinary wonder for the entire Castle to be made of water. To enter the Castle was obviously impossible. He who would enter would drown, because the Castle was formed of water. So when the Princess fled, she went to the Castle. The King was told that she was circling about the Water Castle.

"The King and his soldiers set out to capture her. No sooner did the Princess see this than she decided to run into the Castle. She would rather have drowned than be captured by the King and remain with him. And perhaps, she would be saved and would slip into the Water Castle. As soon as the King saw her running into the water, he said, 'If that is so ' He ordered her shot: 'If she dies, let her die.' She was shot at and hit with all the ten kinds of arrows that had been smeared with the ten poisons. The Princess fled into the Castle and came inside. She passed through the gates and walls made of water, for there were gates and walls of water. She passed through all the gates of all the ten walls of the Water Castle until she was inside the Castle where she fell in a dead faint.

"And I (the handless one) am curing her. For he who does not possess within his hands all the ten types of charity cannot enter the ten walls of the Water Castle. For he will drown in the water. The King and his soldiers pursued the Princess and they all drowned. But I am able to enter past all the ten walls of the Water Castle. These walls of water are the billows of the sea that stand like walls. The winds raise up the billows of the sea and lift them up high, and the billows that are the ten walls always stand there. The winds hold up the waves and lift them, yet I can enter through the ten walls. And I can remove the ten different arrows from the Princess. And I know all the ten kinds of pulse through my ten fingers. For through each one of the ten fingers one can feel a specific pulse out of the ten different pulses. I can cure the Princess

through the ten types of music. And that is how I am curing her. Therefore I have this power in my hands.

"And this is my gift to you this day."

And there was great rejoicing and everyone was very happy.

COMMENTARIES