

Once, a king told his friend, the prime minister, "As an astrologer, I see that whoever eats any of the wheat that grows this year will go mad. Let us think of some solution." The prime minister answered, "Let us have some of last year's wheat set aside for us so that we will not have to eat the tainted grain."

The king replied, "If we do this, we alone will be sane in a mad world. Then it will be as though we are the ones who are mad and the others sane. But it isn't possible to set wheat aside for everyone either. So we will also have to eat the tainted wheat. But we shall make a mark on our foreheads, so that when we look at each others' foreheads, we will know that we are mad"

Rabbi Nachman Breslov (Avaneha Barzel, p. 27)

The Beggar with the Speech Defect goes around and gathers up all true kindness in the world and brings it to the True Man of Kindness, who presides over time. In the merit of the human acts of kindness he receives, the True Man of Kindness gives a new day to the Heart of the World, who gives it to the Spring, thereby sustaining the

universe.

How so? On the top of a certain mountain, there is a stone, out of which flows a wondrous Spring. At the other end of the world, stands the Heart of the World, which longs and yearns and cries to go to the Spring. The Spring also yearns for the Heart. However, the Heart cannot go to the Spring – for if it came too close, it would no longer be able to see the peak from which it flows. And if it stopped looking at the Spring for even an instant, the Heart would perish; and with it, the entire world, which receives its life-force from the Heart. Therefore, the Heart stands facing the Spring, yearning and crying out.

The Spring transcends time. Therefore it only possesses the time that it receives from the Heart as a gift for one day.

When the end of the day draws near, they begin to part from one another with great love and wonderful poetry. Watching over all this, the True Man of Kindness waits until the last minute and then gives the Heart a gift of one more day. The Heart immediately gives the day to the

Spring, and thus the world endures. Yet everything depends upon the Beggar with the Speech Defect, who collects all of the true kindness, in the merit of which time comes into existence. Therefore, all of the wondrous parables and lyrics are his, too.

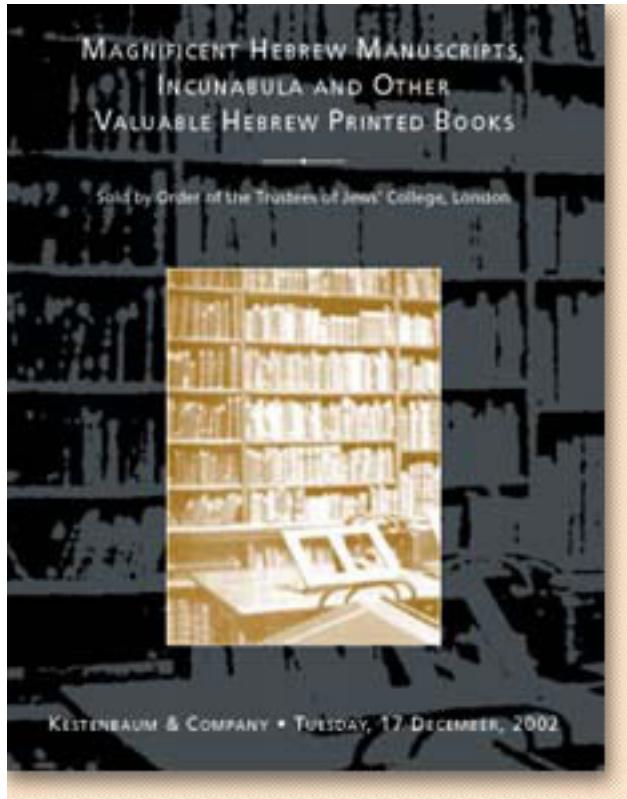
## Rabbi Nachman: The Story of the Seven Beggars



Illustrations for the *Meshal ha-kadmoni*. Second edition.  
Venice, 1546.

The question naturally arises - why does the Torah begin with the second letter *beit*, and not the first letter an *alef*? The *Zohar* answers in the following parable (Introduction to the *Zohar*: 23). When God wanted to create the world,

all the letters came before Him one by one, beginning with the last letter, asking that they have the merit of being the first letter in the Torah. Each letter had a good reason based on a positive word which began with itself, but God countered them one by one, exclaiming that a word signifying a negative idea also started with that letter and therefore the Torah could not begin with them. All the letters were disqualified till the letter beth came before God and said the word baruch, blessed, begins with it and through this word people will come to praise the Creator. God agreed to this argument and thus the first letter of the Torah became the beth. Then God asked the alef to present a claim. The alef, instead of objecting that it was not given a proper chance answered by saying that since it was already decided there was no need for it to present a claim. God replied that since the alef had so much humbleness, it would be the first letter of Anochi, the initial word of the ten commandments.



## Hebrew Manuscript Sale Trustees of Jews College London 2002

“Another book attracting an enthusiastic response was a second edition *Mashal Hakadmoni* (a rare Venetian edition of a collection of allegories, fables and puns with moral influences) by Isaac ibn Sahula, 1547. This exceptionally beautiful copy with pictures realized \$69,000, sailing over its pre-sale estimate of \$15,000-20,000.”

*Mashal Hakadmoni*: Venice: Meir Parenzo, 1546 Isaac Ben Salomon Abi Sahula [also Written Solomon Ibn...]  
*Mashal Hakadmoni* [= Proverb or Fable of the Ancient]

The illustrated Hebrew book par excellence, *Mashal ha-Kadmoni* (The Fable of the Ancient), was written in 1281 by Isaac ben Salomon Abi Sahula (Also spelled Isaac ben Solomon ibn Sahula) , born 1244, a Castilian poet and student of Kabbalah. The first printing was in Brescia (1491) by Gershom Soncino. This edition, undated but generally believed to have been printed in or around 1546 also contains woodcut illustrations. This book of fables whose characters are animals is described by Galit Hasan-Rock thus: "Its sources were in the Talmud and Midrash.... their moral lessons are Jewish, and the animals, well versed in Jewish learning: the deer is an expert in Talmud, the rooster, a Bible scholar, and the hare knows the posekim [legal authorities]. They are also knowledgeable in such fields as logic, grammar, and biology." The work is the most profusely illustrated early Hebrew printed book. The 1546 Venice edition is influenced by its Italian provenance. The animals are drawn in the flowing fine lines of Italian fine cursive printing. Illustrations differ in the various editions. Thus, in the 1546 Venice printing, the animals are charmingly drawn in fine line illustrations. On pages fourteen and fifteen a crowned lion dines with his friends, the deer and

fox; the lion and deer consulting; the fox calling on the wolf, and a bear beheading the fox. Modern blind-tooled leather in the style of the period. Within richly designed woodcut borders on title, and half-page woodcuts in text, mostly of animals disputing. It was written in 1281 with the intention to replace the light foreign literature with an original Hebrew literary work. The fables came from India, from the 'Pantscha Tantra', very popular among Jews in the Middle Ages. Sahula imitated in his translation the structure and presentation of the original 'Pantscha Tantra' or 'Bidpai' fables, but inserted a large amount of popular and scientific knowledge into the fables. In the present series of satirical debates between cynics and moralists, put into the mouths of animals, the moralist always triumphs. The debates on subjects such as time, the soul, medicine, astronomy and astrology, largely reflect human foibles, political compromise and court intrigues. The fables provide a most unusual introduction into the intellectual and social universe of the Sephardic Jewish world of 13th-century Spain. The interesting series of 80 woodcuts are inspired by the illustrations of earlier editions of the 16th century. A complete copy sold at Kestenbaum on December 17, 2002 (Lot 7) for 69,000.00 . Rare

Venetian edition of a collection of allegories, fables and puns with moral inferences all written in rhymed prose.

Isaac ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-kadmoni*, a classic of medieval Hebrew literature, was composed in Castile during one of the most prolific periods in the development of classical Kabbalah. Collection of Jewish fables and tales completed in 1281. It was the greatest work of the poet, cabbalist and physician Isaac ben Solomon ibn Sahula (b 1244), who studied in Burgos and lived in Guadalajara (Castile). He wrote in Hebrew and drew his inspiration from Jewish culture, conceiving his work as a substitute for the Hebrew translations of *Kalilah and Dimnah* (a collection of fables of Indian origin; transmitted via the Arabic c. AD 750) and the *Voyages of Sindbad the Sailor*. The protagonists are both animal and human, and each fable or tale is preceded by an illustration, with a caption written by the author identifying the figures and explaining the action. The original illustrations included five astronomical diagrams and c. 76 images with figures. Lachter suggested that while ibn Sahula chose to avoid discussion of the ten sefirot and other forms of symbolism typically associated with kabbalistic writings from this

period, he nonetheless sought to promote a worldview in the *Meshal ha-kadmoni* that bears a distinct affinity to medieval Kabbalah. Throughout the text, ibn Sahula's articulations of matters relating to divine providence over individuals and the natural order, the origin and nature of the human soul, and the attainment of prophetic insight, all resonate deeply with kabbalistic texts from 13th century Castile. Moreover, ibn Sahula consistently emphasizes the importance of esoteric knowledge, accessible exclusively to Jews as a secret tradition or "kabalah" deriving from revelation in antiquity, which constitutes the inner core of Judaism. The *Meshal ha-kadmoni* thus serves as an important witness to the major concerns and values of the cultural context in which many of the classics of medieval Kabbalah, including the zoharic literature, took shape.

In my PhD thesis (2000 Brandeis University) I discussed the form and use of the *mashal*, the parable in Rabbinic literature. I was particularly interested in the way the Rabbis made use of the fictional narrative so as to hide any daring theological ideas such as protest. This thesis is about the relationship between literary discourse and theology, exegesis and narrative. The specific kind of

exegesis is midrash; that activity of biblical interpretation engaged in by the rabbis of Palestine in the first centuries of the common era, and expanded thereafter. I analyzed parables (meshalim) contained in this genre of discourse, specifically the king parables in an effort to determine how they differed from normal speech. I restricted my search to those midrashim that dealt with the Hurban or destruction of the Temple an event considered to be the greatest catastrophe for the Jewish people as it signified the end to their religious and political independence for two millennia.

Eikhah Rabbah and Pesiqta de Rab Kahana are the midrashim that comment on the Book of Lamentations and contain the greatest concentration of king-meshalim. These texts contained gross anthropomorphic imagery and the thesis first addressed the question as to the meaning of anthropomorphism and what reading strategies are useful in reading anthropomorphism. Classical approaches, literary readings, and psychodynamic theory was reviewed in order to suggest a way of reading anthropomorphism that avoided the usual difficulties.

The second question was what do the meshalim have to say about God? The genre of parable literature was reviewed as to whether a literary reading of the meshalim might open up a theological dimension hitherto unrecognized. Issues regarding Language and the divine in western thought were reviewed in order to find an articulation of rabbinic anthropomorphism in post modern terms. Continuing the work of David Stern and Daniel Boyarin, I went back to the texts of Eikhah Rabbah and Pesiqta de Rab Kahana and analyzed all types of discourse relating to the divine or semi-divine creatures about, to or by Israel. They were categorized by thematic content such as lament, hope and consolation, blame, justification, anthropomorphism, complaint and empathy. Simple statistical analysis was then applied to determine whether parabolic speech differed from regular discourse. All meshalim common to Eikhah Rabbah and Pesiqta de Rab Kahana were then translated and analyzed individually as to their literary structure, rhetorical themes and theological implications.

In this essay I would like to further my inquiry into the way

the hassidic masters made use of the mashal, specifically the quotation “mashal hakadmoni” first used in Samuel I, 24:23 :

יג בָּאֵשׁ יִאָמֶר, מַשְׁלֵךְ הַקְדָּמָנִי, מַרְשָׁעִים, יֵצֵא רְשֻׁעַ; וַיַּדִּי, לֹא  
תַּהֲרִיחַ-בָּנָן

13 As saith the proverb of the ancients: Out of the wicked cometh forth wickedness; but my hand shall not be upon thee.

Clearly the use in the biblical citation as an ancient proverb comes alive in the hands of the mystical masters. I will be presenting a few examples in which it is used to speak of some kind of primordial metaphor. The Torah itself is compared with this primordial metaphor since the Torah is, in a mystical sense prior to creation. In the midrash we are already told that the torah is God’s uman or artisan helping Him create the very architectural structure of the world.

“ The Holy One Blessed be He looked into the Torah and

created the world. As is stated ‘And I was for Him and uman’ (Proverbs 8:30) This is what is meant by ‘In the reishit’ (Gen. 1:1) meaning with the Torah he created the world. (for reishit means nothing other than Torah as ‘The Lord made me reishit’ as the beginning of His way’ (Prov. 8:22)”

### Midrash Tanchuma

God takes counsel with the Torah when He created the world using the counsel of wisdom which is personified in the citation from proverbs. A neat intertextual substitution of the word reishis ‘beginning’ from Gen,1:1 with Torah as the very artisan God consulted with allows for the closing of the hermeneutical circle. This personification of Torah then becomes a mystical primordial archetype that has the blueprint for creation as cited in later Genesis Rabba midrashim.

The use of the term mashal hakadmoni occurs in Rashi the supreme biblical commentator in his commentary to Exodus 21:13. The verse is as follows:

13. But one who did not stalk [him], but God brought [it] about into his hand, I will make a place for you to which he shall flee.

יג. וְאֵשֶׁר לَا צִדָּה וְהַאֲלֹהִים אֲנָה לִידָו וְשִׁמְתִּי לְךָ מָקוֹם אֲשֶׁר  
יָנוּס שְׁפָה:

Rashi comments as follows:

והאלים أنها לידו - ולמה תצא זאת מלפניו, הוא שאמר דוד (שמעאל א' כד יג) כאשר יאמר مثل הקדמוני מרשעים יצא רשע, ומثل הקדמוני היא התורה, שהיא مثل הקב"ה שהוא קדמוני של עולם. והיכן אמרה תורה מרשעים יצא רשע, והאלים أنها לידו. במה הכתוב בדבר, שני בני אדם, אחד הרוג שוגג ואחד הרוג מזיד, ולא היו עדים בדבר שיעידו, זה לא נהרג זהה לא גלה, והקב"ה מזמן לפונדק אחד, זה שהרג בمزיד יושב תחת הסולם, זה שהרג שוגג עולה בסולם ונופל בمزיד זהה שהרג בمزיד והורגו, ועדים מעידים עליו ומחיבים אותו על זה שהרג בمزיד והורגו, וזה שהרג בمزיד נהרג: לגלות, נמצא זה שהרג בשוגג גולה, וזה שהרג בمزיד נהרג:

But God brought [it] about into his hand: Now why should this go out from before Him? That is what David said, "As

the proverb of the Ancient One says, ‘From the wicked comes forth wickedness’” (I Sam. 24:14). The mashal hakadmoni of the Ancient One is the Torah, which is the mashal hakadmoni of the Holy One, blessed is He, Who is the Ancient One of the world.

Now where did the Torah say, “From the wicked comes forth wickedness” ? [This refers to:] “but God brought [it] about into his hand.” To what is the text referring? To two people, one who killed unintentionally and one who killed intentionally, but there were no witnesses who would testify to the matter. This one [who killed intentionally] was not executed, and that one [who killed unintentionally] was not exiled [to the refuge cities]. So the Holy One, blessed is He, brings them [both] to one inn. The one who killed intentionally sits under a ladder, and the one who killed unintentionally is ascending the ladder, and he falls on the one who had killed intentionally and kills him, and witnesses testify about him and sentence him to exile. The result is that the one who killed unintentionally is exiled, and the one who killed intentionally was killed. -[From Mechilta, Makkoth 10b]

Rashi quotes from the midrash in identifying the Torah as God's accomplice in the creation of the world but also identifies the mashal hakadmoni with Torah. The proverb used in Samuel is now privileged as a divine quotation note merely of local usage by humans. The mashal hakadmoni is of the "Ancient One" meaning God Himself and thus a divine proverb.

What is "the proverb of the ancients" (meshal hakadmoni)? Rashi (based on Chazal) explains that the reference is to the Torah, which is "the proverb of the Holy One, blessed be He." Thus, he is forced to find a source for the proverb in the Torah (for the proverb as it is worded here, "out of the wicked comes forth wickedness," does not appear in the Torah).

He explains that the idea finds expression in the verse, "But God allowed it to happen to him" (Shemot 21:13), and as the Gemara understands it (Makkot 10b): "What is Scripture talking about? Two people who [each] killed [another person], one unintentionally and the other intentionally. Regarding the first there were no witnesses and regarding the second there were no witnesses. The

Holy One, blessed be He, arranges that they come to the same inn. The one who killed intentionally sits under a ladder, and the one who killed unintentionally descends the ladder, falls upon the other person and kills him. The one who killed intentionally is killed, and the one who killed unintentionally goes into exile."

Rashi also follows the same approach in other places where a proverb is recited. He consistently avoids explaining that the proverb is a citation from sources outside the Torah. Thus, for example, on the verse, "Whereas it is said in the book of the wars of the Lord, Vahev in Sufa and Arnon among the brooks." (Bamidbar 21:14), Rashi does not explain that the reference is to a separate book that is not in our hands (as proposed by the Ibn Ezra), but rather he explains these words as a description of time: "Whenever people narrate the miracles that were wrought for our fathers." Twice, Rashi explains the term "the book of the righteous" as referring to the Torah (see his commentary to Yehoshua 10:13, against the Ralbag ad loc.; and II Shmuel 1:18 – there, too, against the Ralbag, who explains that the term refers to a book that we do not have in our possession.

The Radak, on the other hand, explains that the reference here is to a proverb expressed by an ancient (kadmon) ruler. According to the plain sense of the text, it would appear that the reference is to the people of the east (kedem) country, who were known for their wisdom and proverbs, as it is stated: "And Shlomo's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country (benei kedem)... And he spoke three thousand proverbs" (I Melakhim 5:10-12); and see Yesayahu 19:11 and Iyov 1:3.

In the Talmud there is also a similar use (Talmud Makkos 10b) as follows:

- (a) : We prepare roads between the cities... (Mishnah re: Cities of Refuge)
- (b) (Beraisa - R. Eliezer ben Yakov): We write 'Miklat' on every crossroads, so a murderer will know which way to go.
- (c) (Rav Kahana): He learns from "Tachin Lecha ha'Derech" - prepare the way.
- (d) Rav Chama bar Chanina would begin expounding the

Parshah concerning unintentional murder in the Torah with the following citation: "Tov v'Yashar Hash-m Al Ken Yoreh Chata'im ba'Darech" - He shows sinners the path, and all the more so Tzadikim! (Psalm: 25:8)

(e) Reish Lakish would begin with the verse from Exodus 21:13 "veha'Elokim Inah l'Yado", "Ka'asher Yomar Meshal ha'Kadmoni me'Rsha'im Yetzei Resha" -(Sam.l, 24:14) the verse discusses two men who killed without witnesses. One was Shoeg, and the other was Mezid; one unintentional the other intentional.

Hashem arranges that they come to the same inn. The unintentional murderer walks down a ladder and falls on the intentional murderer and kills him, as he deserved; (Witnesses saw this time, so) the unintentional murderer is exiled, as he deserves.

The Mashal Hakadmoni this represents divine justice where the wicked get their just desert and the innocent find solace.

Later mystical texts stretch the mystical personification of Torah as well as Schechinah. A midrash on the book of Psalms states: "Had the chapters of the Torah been given in their correct order, anyone who read them would have

been enabled to raise the dead and work miracles; therefore, the Torah's true order has been hidden and is known only to God."

The magical uses of the Torah are discussed in the book Shimmushei Torah ("Uses of the Torah"). According to the author(s) Moses received not only the accepted text of the Torah at Sinai, but another reading composed of Holy Names possessing magical significance. Reading the Torah according to the "Names" is a completely esoteric exercise. The Torah read in this manner focuses upon the concentration of divine power evinced in the various combinations of the letters of God's Holy Names. From this premise was derived the belief that the Torah consisted of nothing other than the Great Name of God Himself. This Great Name was an expression of God's being, which manifested itself through the act of creation.

This text also supposes a Torah that predated human existence. Here too God, in the process of creation, used the Torah as His instrument of genesis. This is another way of describing the process by which the archetypal Sefirot and the individual aspects of the Divine Names

were emanated from the infinite pleroma or Ein-Sof. In this image the Torah represents the inner life of God and is referred to as "the primordial Torah" (Torah Kedumah), which is sometimes identified with the emanation of "Wisdom." Once revealed, the Torah is made manifest into the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. The origin of these two Torahs, acknowledged in all rabbinic thought as a dual gift at Sinai, is seen by the kabbalists through the emanations of Tiferet ("Beauty") and Malkhut ("Kingdom"). This Torah Hakeduma sounds very similar to the mashal hakeduma bth being primordial in nature.

As we trace the use of the term into later hassidic literature we find an application of its use in the following masters.

### 1: Degel Machaneh Ephraim

"In order to understand the reason why the Torah is known as A Primordial Mashal (Samuel 1, 24-25), one must understand the notion of the mashal. The mashal is akin to when a wise man wishes to impart his wisdom to simple folk. He requires dressing up his words so that they can

understand according to their level. For instance, to merchants using industrial metaphors and to builders using construction metaphors so that they can understand the words of wisdom that he wishes them to understand in order to draw them close to the true wisdom. And through this technique, raise those simple folk to the level of wisdom which he himself understands.

The letters of the word “mashal” also form the word “shalem” (integration). For initially, this elevated wisdom is beyond them. However after the employment of the mashal, they are drawn close and there is a unification among them with the wisdom, implied by the letters “shalom”, meaning attachment.

Other times, the mashal is in fact a historical fiction and is employed to elevate those who understand it using fictional narratives to bring them close to the wisdom and a refining of the good so that the evil falls away automatically. However the Torah is truth and her meshalim are true as King Solomon said (Proverbs 1:6), ‘To understand the mashal and the figure,’ the mashal represents the whoring woman and the figure represents idol worship. In contrast, the mashal is the good wife and the figure is the Torah and both of them are as one, useful

to understand and become enlightened.

Torah is also (mystically speaking) the source of all upper and lower worlds and the source of all creation, as is stated (Proverbs 8:30), “And I was for Him as an artisan and as a plaything daily.” For the Torah, which God gave Israel, contains everything from beginning to end and therefore is deeper than the sea and the earth. It has no border or end, only according to the ability of each one to receive it according to the soul of his soul and his desire and love for her; she reveals him her mysteries.

God gave Israel the Torah with different permutations of letters consistent with access to it in This World so that people can understand and grasp it in its simple stories and journeys of the Israelites. Surely a wise man can grasp the divinity and exalted lights in it. Therefore it is known as “primordial mashal” just like a mashal allows one access to exalted wisdom and bring it close as it is dressed up, so too this primordial wisdom and so too is the holy Torah.”

טעם למה נקראת התורה משל הקדמוני (שמואל - א ב"ד, י"ג).  
והוא כי יש להבין מהו בחינת המשל כי משל הוא על דרך חכם

שروعה לומר דבר חכמה לפני אנשים פשוטים צריך להלביש את הדברים בכדי להבינם במקום אחיזתם כמו לשוחרים דרך שחורה ולבנאים דרך הבניון בכדי להבינם דברי החכמה אשר רוצה להבינם בכדי לקרבם אל חכמת האמת ועל ידי זה מעלה אותם האנשים למקום החכמה אשר הוא משיג ולכון אוטיות مثل היא אוטיות שלם כי בתחילת היה החכמה רחוכה מהם וחלוק מהם ואחר כך נעשה קרובה ואחדות בהם עם החכמה והוא אוטיות שלם בחינת המחבר והבן, ולפעמים המשל הוא מעשה אשר לא היה בכדי להעלות אותם האחים בבחינת השפלות והשקרים לקרבו משם אל החכמה ונברר הטוב, והרע נופל ממילא:

והתורה היא אמת ומשלים שלה אמיתיים כמו שכתב שלמה המלך ע"ה (משל אי, ו') להבין משל ומליצה המשל הוא אשה זונה ומליצה היא עבודת זורה, וכן המשל היא אשה טובה ומליצה היא התורה ושניהם הם כאחד טובים להבין ולהסביר, וכן התורה הוא שורש כל העולמות העליונים והתחTONים ושורש כל הנבראים כמו שכתוב (שם ח', ל') ואיה אצלם אמון ואיה שעשוים يوم יום בודאי לפיקות העולם וציחזו כנ הוא שם צירופי התורה והتورה שניתן הקב"ה לישראל בה בכלל הכל מראש ועד סוף ולכון היא עמוקה מני ים ורחבה מני ארץ (עיין איוב י"א, ט') כי אין לה גבול וסוף רק לכל אחד כפי קבלתו וכפי שורש נשמו כה

משיגו ולפי חisko ואהבתו אותה כה מגלה לו מסתורה וכאשר אמרתי על פסוק (תהלים י"ט, ו') והוא כחtan פירוש האדם נקרא חtan התורה לגנות לו מסטריה כאשר יוצא מחותפו מן המ██ים המבדילים ביןו לביןו והוא על ידי תשובה ומעשים טובים הנקרא ממש בשם חופה והבן:

זהו קדם ידעת מעדותיך כי לעולם יסdtם (תהלים קי"ט, קנ"ב) פירוש אני יודע הדבר מראשיתו קדם הויתו בעולם זהה וכן אני מכיר עולמותיך הנעלמים אשר בראת על ידי התורה כי לעולם יסdtם נמצא התורה היא שורש כל העולמות והקב"ה נתן לישראל בצירופים לפי העולם הזה בצד ישיגו ונעלם הדבר בספריו מעשיות ומאורעות שאירעו לישראל ובודאי החכם ישיג בה אורות ואלהות וכן כמו שאיתה בתיקונים (תיקון כ"א ס' ב) שטיין מסתכלין בלבושיה וכו' וכן נקרים משל הקדמוני כמו שהמשל הוא להבין החכמה הנוראה והנסגבה ובו מלבש שכל החכמה הקדמוני וכן היא התורה הקדשה וכי למבין:

## 2. Ohev Yisrael

And The Lord spoke to Moses saying “this is the law of the Torah, saying..” Num 19: 1-2

Firstly we need to understand what is the reason for

stating ‘saying’ twice. Moses did not find it proper to speak to Israel until given permission to speak by the Lord. The second mention refers to the imperative to instruct the Israelites. Nevertheless the second citation of the word is in fact redundant. Also we need to understand the word “chukat” hatorah as if it refers to the entire Torah not merely a specific law. It should merely have stated “this is the chukah which the Lord commanded.” i.e the law of the red heifer alone.

In truth the text is teaching us a deep mystery for the expression does in fact refer to the entire Torah. It is known that the torah preceeded creation itself by a thousand years (Gen. Rabba 8:2) and there were very refined lights in archetypal patterns of chochma and binah and was sourced in a primordial hidden wisdom with no ability to even grasp it being hidden of hiddeness. Then the Almighty wished it to become revealed until the nation of God might grasp it and benefit from the spiritual radiance of the the glorious Torah. Therefore our Holy Torah is called mashal hakadmoni which acts like a mashal (a fictional narrative exempla) when compared to the primordial hidden Torah prior to the existence of the world. The verse thus rightly states “this is the chukas of

the Torah" meaning the word zos or 'this' refers to the revelation of the worldly Torah is the same manifestation of the chukas Hatorah meaning the primordial (Chok) hidden Torah.

ויברך וגוי לאמר זאת חקמת התורה וגוי לאמר וגוי [יט, א - ב]. ראשונה צריכה להבין ולדעת מהו זה שתי פעמים לאמר. והנה לאמר הראשון הוא נכון כי משה רבינו ע"ה לא הורשה לאמר לישראל שום דבר ששמע מפיו הקדוש יתברך עד שיתן לו ה' יתברך רשות לאמר. ותיבת דבר אל בני ישראל הוא לחובב, שמחובי ומצווה לאמר להם. אך לאמר השני הוא לכוארה שפט יתר. גם נדרש לדעת מהו לשון חוקת התורה כי לשון זה מורה על כל התורה כולה ומהראוי היה לכתוב זאת החוקה אשר צוה כל והיה קאי על מעשה הפרעה בלבד. אכן בהעיר לב שום שכל יש לומר. כי בא הכתוב לרמז בכך רמז וסוד נפלא כי הנה ידוע כי תורהינו הקדושה קדמה לבריאת העולם אלפיים שנה (ב"ר ח, ב) והיתה אז אורות זכירים ומצווחחים בסוד חכמה ובינה ושורשה הרמה בקדוש היא חכמה סתימאה קדמה אשר לית השגה ומחשבה תפיסא ביה כלל והיתה סתימא דכל סתימין. אכן רצון הבורא ברוך הוא וברוך שמו היה שתבוא לידי התגלות עד אשר זכו בה עם ה' בני אל חי ליהנות מזיו הווה והדרה ואורה. ולזאת נקראת תורהינו הקדושה משל הקדמוני (ש"א כד, יד) שהיא כדוגמת משל נגד

התורה הקדומה סתימאה קדמוני של עולם. ודבר זה הוא מרמז באלו התיבות זאת חוקת התורה. היינו בחינת זאת, שהוא בחינת התגלות התורה הוא חוקת התורה הקדומה חכמה סתימאה אשר שם לא נוכל לתאר כי אם בסוד חקיקה. והבן. ומשם נאצלה ונתגלה בחינת זאת התגלות התורה הקדושה.

### 3. NOAM ELIMELECH

#### Section I

“It appears to me that the bed is an expression of coupling in that the Zaddik is able to couple and unify (spiritual) worlds with his holy works and worship. And King David of blessed memory, had an even greater ability from his abundant attachment (d'veykut) the songs would emerge automatically from within him with melodies and praise. This is the meaning of “and a harp was suspended...above his bed” As midnight approached, (when the Schechina which is called midnight as it states in the Holy Zohar) since the time for unification of the Schechina approached, “a northern wind (ruach tz’fonis) blew across it”, meaning

the Holy Spirit (Ruach Hakodesh) which was (tzafun) hidden within him would blow in him by force, meaning in d'veykut and inflammation (hitlahavut) so that it was able to play automatically (menagen mei-eilav) as I have expounded on the verse (Psalms 49:5): Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises unto our King, sing זמרו. זמרו כנו אלהים זמרו; למלך. praises literally ‘praises God’, rather than ‘to God...’ for the Zaddik has to sanctify with all his holiness until the point that the Schechina sings praises directly from his throat. This is the same meaning of mei-eilav, the Ruach HaKodesh playing him directly not suspended above him rather within him.

## Section II

This is also what King David of blessed memory meant when he said (Psalm 49:5)

.I will incline mine ear to a parable; I will open my dark saying up the harp 5. ה אֲתָה לְמַשָּׁל. אֶפְתָּח בְּפִנּוֹר, חִידְתִּי אֶזְנִי; The Torah is called a primordial mashal (parable). and a person needs to incline his ear to understand the content of the words of the Holy Torah and not imagine that it is merely stories (fables?) as the foolhardy suggest

that the Torah is merely fables.

"I will open my dark saying (a koan?) my riddle" meaning even this I will work on in my service in truth through the harp as mentioned above, through song and praise I will open up an even higher greater world which is higher in spiritual elevation than this one, which is called the dark saying or my riddle.

For a riddle is a thing that is greater than that which one can hear (comprehend?) with his own ears.

Harav Chana Morrison likewise discussed the use of the mashal versus the riddle in Rav Kook's writing on Psalm 49:

The psalmist announces that he will introduce his words of wisdom by way of a parable and a riddle: "I will incline my ear to a parable; I will open my riddle to the accompaniment of a harp." (Psalms 49:5)

Maimonides similarly wrote that the method of truly great thinkers is "to employ the style of riddle and parable." (Introduction to Chelek) Why do the wise speak in parables and riddles? And what is the role of the harp?

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook explained that there are two tools for presenting complex spiritual ideas.

## The Parable

The first tool is the mashal, the parable. The parable is similar to the concept we wish to explain; but it itself is clear, and allows the audience to grasp the difficult idea. This method only requires one to 'incline an ear.' No great intellectual exertion is necessary. Just hearing the parable is sufficient; the idea immediately becomes clarified.

Sermons often make use of parables. The master of this method was the famed Maggid of Dubno (Rabbi Jacob Kranz, 1740-1804). His unrivaled success with brilliant, incisive parables stemmed from his thorough grasp of the ways of the world. His encyclopedic knowledge enabled him to find the exact parable to use.

## The Riddle

The second tool, the chidah (riddle) works in a different fashion. The listener must work out the riddle for himself. The intellectual challenge stimulates the mind, enabling it to perceive deeper aspects of the idea to be grasped.

Simply 'inclining an ear' is not enough to decipher the riddle. The listener needs a special inspiration - and that is the role of the harp. We find that the prophets utilized music in order to clear their minds and attain a prophetic state (see I Kings 3:15; I Samuel 10:5; I Chronicles 25:1). Music has the ability to stimulate and inspire. It assists us in solving the riddle, and we are granted a more profound insight into the original matter.

He seems to maintain a rational approach to the use of these literary devices.

However no one explored the mashal, stretching it to its limits like Reb Nachman in his sippurei maasiyot his fables taken from shanim kadmoni'im from primordial times.

There is a primordial thought that underlies all creation and

represents the tachlis the underlying purpose and intent. Reb Nachman explains his need to tell stories and parables rather than persist in his torah explications because as he states (Likutei Mehoran I:64) by clothing Torah in stories one is able to hide like a healer uses folk remedies the patient can understand or the tzaddik needs to hide his wisdom so as to allow the ordinary person to understand the meaning. The mashal, parable or primordial story then provides access to the secrets of torah for the uninitiated. “He must disguise his inner essence of Torah as secular tales so as to enable ordinary people to receive the hidden remedies contained in them”. Elsewhere (L.M. I:60) he suggests that people have fallen into a spiritual Isumber and only such tales fables and stories might waken them.

No story defies rational decoding than the The Seven Beggars. Dovid Sears has eloquently expressed the resistance as follows:

In Rabbi Nachman’s story of the Seven Beggars, each one of the wandering holy men gives the young bride and groom his most essential quality as a wedding present,

this being his most fitting empowerment. If our hypothesis is correct (see Part I of this posting), each gift is an aspect of the fully-realized state of being that is the tachlis, or ultimate spiritual goal. Together, these qualities paint a symbolic portrait of what Rabbi Nachman calls the “tzaddik emes,” the perfected human being.

## 1. The Blind Beggar

The blessing of the Blind Beggar is: “You should be old like me; that is, you should have a long life, like mine. You think that I’m blind, but actually, I’m not blind at all. It is just that for me, the entire duration of the world’s existence doesn’t amount to even the blink of an eye . . . I am extremely old, but I am extremely young. In fact, I have not yet begun to live – but nevertheless, I am very old.” He goes on to describe a contest with other sages about whose memory is the greatest. The Blind Beggar alone remembers the primal Nothingness (Yiddish: “Ich gedenk gohr-nisht!”) that altogether precedes creation. (He is therefore the “Elder on the Side of Holiness” and the “Elder of Elders”; see Chayei Moharan 123 and 272, citing an expression of the Zohar.) And this sublime realization is his gift to the newlyweds – and to us all when we reach

the hour of “finding” or spiritual discovery, the unification that is comparable to a wedding. (In Likkutei Moharan I, 65, the tachlis is related to the paradigm of closed eyes, which can perceive the transcendental reality and not be distracted by worldly illusion.)

## 2. The Deaf Beggar

The blessing of the Deaf Beggar is: “You should be like me; that is, you should live a good life, like mine. You think that I’m deaf, but actually, I’m not deaf at all. It is just that the entire world does not amount to anything to me, that I should listen to its deficiencies. All sounds come from deficiencies, since everyone cries out about what he is lacking. Even the world’s joys are due to deficiencies, since one only rejoices when his lack is filled . . . However, I have a good life in which nothing is lacking.” In the story he tells as proof of his claim, he alone is capable of saving a mythical Land of Wealth, once perfect in its delights, but now corrupted by an evil king and his emissaries. The Deaf Beggar guides the populace to purify themselves of the three poisons of profane speech, which had ruined the sense of taste; bribery, which had ruined the sense of sight; and sexual immorality, which had ruined the sense

of smell. Purged of these evils, the ill-tended garden in the midst of the land reverts to its former Eden-like state, and the lost gardener, who had been taken for a madman, is discovered and restored to his former position. Implicit in this sub-plot is the idea that the “good life,” which is the spiritual life, may be experienced through our very senses, if only we would purify ourselves of these toxins.

### 3. The Beggar With a Speech Defect

The blessing of the Beggar With a Speech Defect is: “You should be like me. You think that I have a speech defect. I don’t have a speech defect at all. Rather, all the words in the world that do not praise God lack perfection.

[Therefore, I seem to have a speech defect, since I cannot speak such imperfect words.] But actually, I don’t have a speech impediment at all. Quite the contrary, I am a wonderful orator and speaker. I can speak in parables and verses that are so wonderful that no created thing in the world doesn’t want to hear me. For the parables and lyrics that I know contain all wisdom.” In the course of the tale he tells to “prove” his claims, the Deaf Beggar indicates that his parables and verses sustain the entire universe – and they reflect the animating wisdom of all seven days of

creation, which was brought into being through the divine speech. (In Likkutei Moharan I, 65, the tachlis is also related to the perfection of speech, in the Rebbe's description of "making echad / unity of the words of prayer" in the course of davenning.)

#### 4. The Beggar With a Crooked Neck

The blessing of the Beggar With a Crooked Neck is: "You should be like me. You think I have a crooked neck, but actually, my neck isn't crooked at all. Quite the contrary, it is very straight. I have a most beautiful neck. However, there are vapors in the world, and I don't want to exhale and add to these vain vapors. [This is why my neck seems to be crooked: I twisted my neck to avoid exhaling into the atmosphere of the world.] But in fact, I have a most beautiful, wonderful neck, since I have a wonderful voice. There are many sounds in the world that are unrelated to speech. I have such a wonderful neck and voice that I can mimic any of these sounds." In the extremely obscure tale that the Beggar With a Crooked Neck goes on to relate, this power seems to be the root of all music and prophecy. This is suggested by the symbolism of the two estranged birds that the Beggar With a Crooked Neck reunites, which

allude to the two K'ruvim, or winged angelic forms that hovered over the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy Temple and, according to Chazal, served as the channel for prophecy. The Rebbe also implies that this power brings about the spiritual unification associated with the Messianic Redemption.

## 5. The Beggar With a Hunchback

The blessing of the Beggar With a Hunchback is: “You should be like me. I am not a hunchback at all. Quite the contrary, I have broad shoulders (Yiddish: breiter pleitzes, which also means the ability bear difficult responsibilities). My shoulders are an example of the ‘little that holds much’ (a concept found in the Midrash).“ Reb Noson later adds: “The hunchback was on the level of the intermediate zone between space and that which is beyond space. He possessed the highest possible concept of the ‘little that holds much,’ at the very end of space, beyond which the term ‘space’ no longer applies . . . Therefore, he could carry [his companions] from within space to a dimension that transcends space.” In the tale the Beggar With a Hunchback tells to prove his point, this dimension is symbolized by the wondrous “Tree That Stands Beyond

Space,” evocative of the biblical Tree of Life, in the branches of which all beings find repose and peace.

## 6. The Beggar Without Hands

The blessing of the Beggar Without Hands is: “[You think there is something wrong with my hands.] Actually, there is nothing wrong with my hands. I have vast power in my hands – but I do not use the power of my hands in this physical world, since I need it for something else.” In the course of the story he tells, this other purpose turns out to be the healing of the Queen’s Daughter – another symbol of the collectivity of souls. This healing is accomplished through the Ten Types of Song, corresponding to the Ten Types of Charity, Ten Types of Pulse (mentioned in the Tikkunei Zohar – which seem to be a little different than those used in Chinese medicine), and the beggar’s ten invisible fingers. Then he tells the newlyweds, “And I am giving this power to you as a wedding present.”

## 7. The Beggar Without Feet

The blessing of the Beggar Without Feet remains a mystery. This final section of the story remains untold until the Mashiach – who in kabbalistic symbology is

associated with the feet – arrives and reveals it to us, may it be speedily in our days!

To sum everything up, the gifts of the Seven Beggars are: long life / transcendence of time (eyes); good life / transcendence of need and desire (ears); oratory that contains all wisdom / transcendent speech (mouth); wondrous voice that can produce all sounds / transcendent sound or cosmic music (neck); ultimate degree of “the small that contains the great” / transcendence of space (shoulders); miraculous healing power / transcendence of mortality and sadness (hands); and presumably either perfect faith, or kingship, or joy (all of which are aspects of Malkhus / Kingship), corresponding to transcendence of self, or ego (feet). They make up one structure, just as the parts of the human anatomy to which they correspond form one structure. Acquiring these sublime powers through the grace of the tzaddikim enables one to reach the tachlis at the individual spiritual level.

This is supported by a few more descriptions of the ultimate goal in the Rebbe’s teachings. In Likkutei

Moharan I, 18, the tachlis equals the “primordial thought,” or divine intention that underlies all of creation. This primordial thought is revealed only at end of the process it sets into motion, and is the aspect of “ayin lo ra’asah / no eye has seen it” (another hint to the symbolism of the Blind Beggar in our story). (Cf. Likkutei Moharan I, 8, citing Berakhos 34b, where this phrase indicates Chokhmah and the non-dualistic level. This is supported by the principle that “He and what He enlivens are one, He and what He causes are one – in the ten sefiros of Atzilus / World of Emanation” [Tikkunei Zohar, Introduction, 3b], the realm which corresponds to Chokhmah; see the explanation of this in Sefer Ha-Tanya, Iggeres Ha-Kodesh 20).

In Likkutei Moharan II, 83, the tachlis is related to the paradigm of “Mekomo shel Olam / Place of the World” — the ohr makkif (encompassing light) or “supra-domain” of creation altogether. And in Likkutei Moharan II, 39, the tachlis is related to Shabbos, the olam ha-neshamos / world of souls, and at the experiential level, the lucid perception of God. This may correspond to the “Tree That Stands Beyond Space” in the tale of the Beggar With a Hunchback.

The qualities that the Seven Beggars confer upon the bride and groom are various expressions of being rooted in the “whole” — the transcendent Divine Unity — and not being stranded in the “part,” the illusion of creation as something autonomous, hopelessly conflicted, separate from God. The preeminent tzaddikim represented by the beggars in the Rebbe’s story are those who have fully attained this wholeness and who have seen through worldly illusion. Therefore, they are uniquely capable of correcting our confusions and elevating us from the spiritual quagmire, so that we, too, may reach the luminous goal for which we were created.

### Afterthought

In Likkutei Moharan (quoted above), the Rebbe teaches that we must engage in the avodah of Torah study, performance of the mitzvos, prayer (especially hisbodedus) and self-improvement in order to reach the tachlis. However, in the story of the Seven Beggars, the main factor seems to be the tzaddikim who bestow their wondrous gifts upon the newlyweds. Is there a correspondence between what the Rebbe is saying in each body of work, or not?

Maybe we can read avodas atzmo, personal spiritual work, into two elements of the story. First, the children must attain maturity before their companions escort them to the chuppah and beg leftovers from the royal banquet in order to put together a wedding feast. Maybe this maturation process equals personal avodah, which elevates one from a lower level to a higher level. Second, the bride and groom express their yearning for each beggar to join them before the desired guest miraculously appears. This yearning is a key factor, too. We must make what the Zohar calls an “isarusa de-le’sata / awakening from below” before we can experience a reciprocal “isarusa de-le’eila / awakening from above.” The longing for the beggars on the part of the bride and groom indicates hiskashrus le-tzaddikim, creating a spiritual bond, which is up to us, as well. These two factors are the prerequisites for our ability to receive the greatest gifts of the tzaddikim: to become “just like them mamash.”

## Afterword

I leave with an enigmatic passage from the Zohar.

So it is with a word of Torah: she reveals herself to no one but her lover. Torah knows that one who is wise of heart hovers about her gate every day. What does she do? She reveals her face to him from the palace and beckons him with a hint, then swiftly withdraws to her hiding place. No one there knows or reflects - her lover alone does, and heart and soul and everything within flows out to her. This is why Torah reveals and conceals herself. With love she approaches her lover to arouse love within. Come and see the way of Torah. At first when she begins to reveal herself to someone, she beckons with a hint. If he perceives, good! If not she sends him a message calling him simple. Torah says to her messenger: "Tell that simple one to come closer, so I can talk with him." He approaches. She begins to speak from behind a curtain she has drawn, words he can follow, until he reflects a little at a time. Then she converses with him through a veil, words riddled with allegory. Once he has grown accustomed to her, she reveals herself face to face, and tells him all her secrets,

all the hidden ways, since primordial days secreted in her heart. Now he is a complete human being, spouse of Torah, master of the house. All her secrets she has revealed to him, withholding nothing, concealing nothing. She says to him, “Do you see that word, that hint with which I first beckoned you? So many secrets there! This one and that one!” ... Human beings should become aware, pursuing Torah to become her lovers.

Zohar II, 99b