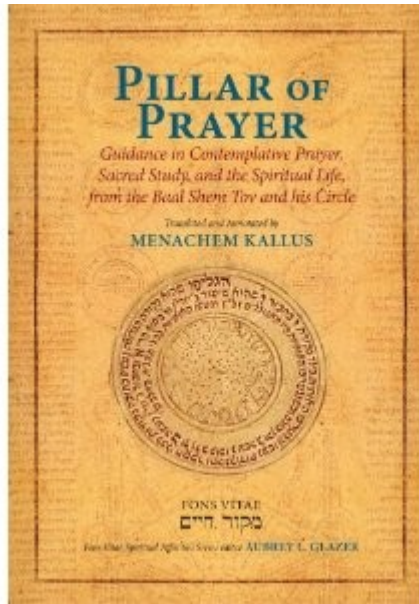


Chapter 5
of

Pillar of Prayer:
Guidance in Contemplative Prayer,
Sacred Study, and the Spiritual Life,
from the Baal Shem Tov and His Circle



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Fons Vitae, Sept. 2011
ISBN-13: 978-1891785795

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THE MATHESON TRUST
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Chapter 5

Prayer, Preaching, and Reproof

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65. PRAYING WITH THE COSMOS

Intend, in your prayer, that you are arousing the letters whereby the heavens and the earth, and all creatures, both the higher and the lower, and all realms were created. This being so when you recite your prayers and praises [to Divinity], you are saying them together with all the worlds and all creatures, because you are arousing the source of the inner life of all creatures, and are praying with [the inner energy of] all of them and raising all of them up—those of heaven and those of the earth—through this intention. By this means, the spiritual elite who pray with *Kavvanah* also arouse the inner “letters” of those of lesser stature so that they too can pray with more *Kavvanah* and enthusiasm, and can better themselves. The Ba'al Shem Tov revealed this to his disciples and said: “You must pray even for the sake of the flying chirping bird.” Also when one employs words of Torah for the sake of reproof, this type of *Kavvanah* is useful so as to raise [the spiritual state of] one's audience. He repeated this teaching often.³¹⁵

66. PREACHING REPROOF, AND PRAYER

I heard in this the name of the *Maggid* R. M^anachem Mendel [of Bar]: When preaching words of reproof to your congregation, be careful to connect yourself first, with His blessed Name. Then consciously connect with, and unify the congregation.

315. BP # 80; *Darkhey Tzedeq* # 39. And see below, # 67.2.

Include yourself with them, realizing that the leaders of the generation and the congregation they serve are of the same soul-root.³¹⁶ When you do this, the Lord will be with you and you will be successful in rising together with them, cleaving to His blessed Name. This is as the Zohar states [2:128a]: “Meritorious is one who holds the hand of the blameworthy”—one holds their hand to raise them up. In this way one already accomplishes something merely by preaching reproof to the people of Israel. . . . I also heard words to this effect with reference to prayer, in order to raise up the consciousness of the generation.³¹⁷

66.1 Uniting with Others by Discerning Commonality

I heard in the name of my teacher [the Besht] o.b.e.m. regarding how one unites with one’s companion so as to raise him or her up. If one can find a feature common in both oneself and one’s companion, then one can be bound so as to raise the person, through [the exegetic principle of] *G^zerah Shavah*.³¹⁸ However, if they see themselves as two opposites, such elevation is not possible. And [Eccl. 10:12] the words of the wise are gracious.³¹⁹

66.1.1 The Contemplative Practice of Teaching Torah in Public

When one teaches Torah to other people, one should first bind one’s thoughts together with the presence of the hearers to the blessed Creator, realizing that everyone draws life only from His effluence. And one should consider that she or he is speaking these words only for the sake of the blessed holy One, in order to please His Spirit. It is not I who am saying these words before my colleagues, lest I be affected by external praise or blame. All this, from the Besht.³²⁰

66.2 Two Aspects of the Elevating Functions of the *Tzaddiq*

I heard from my teacher and grandfather [the Besht] o.b.e.m. that all the spiritual ascensions of the person are made possible through the righteous leaders of the generation—whether these be the refinement of one’s moral attributes, or one’s speech. All of these are elevated by the *Tzaddiq*. In this there are two aspects: those that the *Tzaddiq* elevates by means of prayer and Torah study, and those that the *Tzaddiq* can elevate only by means of mundane speech. This is as the Talmud comments on the verse [Ps. 1:3] “and his leaves shall not wither”; that it refers to the mundane speech of sages, which is also worthy of scrutiny [BT Sukkah fol. 21b]. They may seem, on the outside, to be empty words, but actually, by the mundane conversation of the *Tzaddiq* with such a person, he or she is elevated, as I heard

316. See below, # 66.12.2, from BT ‘Arakhin fol. 17a.

317. BP # 81; TYY fol. 66c, 137a.

318. Derivation based on similitude of expression, and see below, # 101.3 near note 714.

319. *Besht Torah, Parashat ‘Ekev*, # 72; ZP fol. 26d.

320. *Besht Torah, Parashat Va’Etchannan* # 41, from *Hanhagot Y^osharot* fol. 15a.

from my teacher and grandfather o.b.e.m. But not everyone merits to be able to comport oneself in this way, as he explained with regard to the Mishnah [BT K³tubbot 13a]:³²¹ “If he saw her conversing with a man in the marketplace.”³²²

66.3 For One’s Word Do Be Accorded the Force of Deed—Seven Levels in the Emergence of Sacred Speech

In the Midrash [Tanchumah’ Lev. beginning] we read [Ps. 103:20]: “Bless the Lord, you angels of His, you of mighty potency who perform His bidding, who hearken to the voice of His word.” This is to say, that one ought to cultivate the practice whereby one’s words are accounted as action. In other words, when you want to speak, you should have your words go through seven levels. First you need to be in the state of understanding—to consider *how* to speak. Then the words need to pass through the levels of love and awe,³²³ and then through beauty³²⁴—so as to intend to emerge whole. Then the letters become combined and display themselves in their desire for self-expression so as to be spoken in this particular way. For this, the way of victory³²⁵ must manifest—that those particular letters [phonemes] overcome other kinds of phonetic expression. Then the way of acclamation³²⁶ is achieved. And so, the way of foundation³²⁷ is achieved when your thoughts are connected with your words. Then such speech is called “the foundation.”³²⁸ Then the word emerges through the mouth—and this is *Malkhut*, the lower manifestation. You need to manifest this practice so that your words will be accounted as actions.³²⁹

321. *Besht Torah, Parashat ‘Ekev*, # 70 ZP fol. 77a, where we read: [The Besht provided an explanation of] “If he saw her conversing with some- ‘one’ [*‘im ‘echad*] in the marketplace” (BT K³tubbot 13a) and (an explanation of) the Mishnah (BT Shabbat 73a): “These are the principle forbidden forms of labor (on *Shabbat*); forty minus one”: I heard from my teacher (the Besht) o.b.e.m., that there are forms of unification (with the Divine) that one enacts through speech—be it the speech of Torah and prayer, or even the mundane speech of the marketplace. For even with these one can unite with the one to whom one is talking and raise up each one, in accordance the person’s level. Some are elevated through Torah, and some through plain speech, which is also composed of the twenty-two letters” (and see below, # 148.2).

And see *Besht Torah, Parashat B³re’shit* # 110, from *’Or hagGanuz* Parashat P³qudey, where we read: “Even when speaking with someone in the market, one’s words must contain the love and awe (of God), for words are composed of the twenty-two letters; as the Besht regarding the *Mishnah* (BT K³tubbot 13a), “If he saw her conversing with some- ‘one’ [*‘im ‘echad*] in the marketplace”—that it is proper that one’s speech with another be unified for the One.” And see below, the teaching immediately following, and # 80.4.

322. *Besht Torah, Parashat ‘Ekev*, # 69; DME Parashat M³tzora’.

323. Love and awe=*’ahava v³yir’ah*=*Chesed and G³vurah*.

324. *Tif’eret*.

325. *Netzach*.

326. *Hod*.

327. *Y³sod*.

328. As in *Tzaddiq y³sod ‘Olam*.

329. *Besht Torah, Parashat VayYiqra’* # 3; KShT fol. 22b, LY 17a.

66.4 Self-Observation to Determine One's Present State

“Judge your fellow righteously” [Lev. 19:15]—Our sages have stated [BT 'Avot 4:1]: “One is wise, who learns from every person.” This is because one who is wise recognizes his or her own faults, whereas a fool recognizes only the faults of others and berates them, but does not realize his or her own shortcomings. Indeed, each person has the capacity of self-knowledge, if she or her so desires, and as Rabbenu Tam stated in his *Sefer hayYashar*, this is essential [in one's service to God]. It is also indicated in the Zohar's section of the *Hekhalot*—the Heavenly Palaces.³³⁰

There is the Palace of Merit, in the Pure Divine Chambers [*Hekhalot*], and corresponding to this in the realm of impurity, in the Palace of Undeservedness. The difference between them is that in the Palace of Merit, when a person is being judged, all who are present begin by pronouncing his or her merits, and transform the interpretations of any contrary claims accordingly, so that even an evil person might be found to be righteous. Not so in the *Qlippot*'s Palace of Undeserving, where with regard to anyone, they begin by pronouncing one's shortcomings. This being the case, anyone can know his or her level in the immediate present: if you are judging other people meritoriously, then you are in the state of holiness, where the Palace of Merit abides,³³¹ whereas if you are in a vindictive state of mind, then you are in a state of impurity.³³² This is also the meaning of [BT 'Avot 2:4] “Do not judge the other person until you reach his or her state.”³³³

66.5 Rebuke out of Love versus Self-Serving Rebuke; and a Parable

“Do not hate your brother in your heart; rebuke—rebuke your fellow and do not bear sin on his account” [Lev. 19:17]. Scholars who lead the people and rebuke them in public places need to take heed when offering ethical reproof; that they feel love for those who they are reproofing and that this be offered from the side of love, as a father chastises his son early in his development [Prov. 13:24], and as it is written [Prov. 3:12], “God reproves those whom God loves,” and there are many other such verses that indicate this.

However, as I heard from my teacher [the Besht], about those who, heaven forefend, want to further their own careers through the business of rebuke, offering it for the sake of livelihood, for example, and not for the sake of Heaven, arousing the audience by the rhetorical flair of the voice, as in the verse [Ps. 42:4], “My tears

330. Zohar 2:244b–268b; and for the section discussed here, see fol. 251a–b, and see also Zohar vol. 2 fol. 6b.

331. See the Lurianic *Zohar haRaqa'* fol. 68b, where we read that the *Sh'khinah* abides in the Palace of Merit, and from there, She rises higher with the purified sparks into the Palace of Love, the place of union. And see Zohar 2 fol. 261 a–b.

332. See *ibid.* fol. 73a–b.

333. *Besht Torah*, Parashat Q'doshim # 6; KP fol. 16c.

have been my bread. . . .”³³⁴ These tears actually arouse the power of negativity on high, and bring about strife between Israel and their Father in Heaven; as I alluded to once, when explaining the verse [Num. 21:6]: “And God sent the vipers, the burning serpents, . . .” that there are two types of preachers.

This is also illustrated by a parable that I heard from my teacher: A king sent his only son away, removing him from his presence, and then sent two of his servants [to report on the prince’s doings]. One of them returned, offering the king a disparaging report. The second one, while reporting the same facts, expressed sorrow over the plight of the king and his son, the prince having been sent away for such a long time—so long that he even forgot the compartments of the court; and all who once held him in high esteem now demeaned him. By the means of the second report, the king was filled with compassion.³³⁵ Similarly, there are those who speak publicly of Israel’s disgraces, and—heaven forefend—arouse thereby the prosecution of the primal serpent, as is written [Lev. 17:9]: “And God sent the vipers, the burning serpents”—because these preachers burn by the poison issuing from their mouths! For if they offer rebuke for selfish and ulterior motives, then their mouths and their hearts are not of one accord. Their intent is for monetary gain, but they say that they are doing it for God’s honor, may His Name be blessed; and heaven forefend, they may be causing the further perpetration of evil. In addition, they evoke the embarrassment of their fellows, but not their own. Also, in that it is written [Lev. 17:9]: “Do not bear sin on his account,” such preachers remove themselves from the general community! In truth, the preacher must include himself in the rebuke being offered, as I once explained [paraphrasing Lev. *ibid.*], “Rebuke [yourself, when] you rebuke³³⁶ your fellow, [and thereby you will] not bear sin on his account.”³³⁷

66.51 The Hypocrisy of the Evil Inclination

“And unto you is its desire, but you can rule over it” [Gen. 4:7]: I heard from my teacher regarding the Talmudic discussion [BT Shabbat 75a]: “One who slaughters [on *Shabbat*] is liable on account of dyeing³³⁸ . . . as well as on account of having taken a life.” This refers to the Evil Inclination, who will be brought to judgment in the future-time [BT Sukkah 52a]. Although [he may claim] “I was created to do the job that I did!” he will, however, be rebuffed due to the fact that he sometimes

334. In other words, one earns “one’s bread” by means of the theatrical (and hypocritical) tears of the preacher.

335. And decided to reunite with his son, and “rehabilitate” him.

336. The verse reads *hokheach tokhiach*—a seemingly unnecessary repetition—“rebuke, you should rebuke.”

337. *Besht Torah*, Parashat Q’ldoshim # 14; TYY fol. 103a–b.

338. *Tzovea’*—dyeing—for the spilt blood is absorbed and invariably casts its dye.

disguised himself as the good-inclination.³³⁹ Thus, the “world-executioner”³⁴⁰ is liable because he cast himself with false dye,³⁴¹ and thereby was [sometimes] successful in taking someone’s soul.³⁴²

66.6 The Fellowship of All Creation

Do not say to yourself, “I am greater than my companion, for I serve with greater adhesion [*D³vequt*] to God.” This is because, like all other creatures, you were created for the sake of serving the Creator. And God gave a particular measure of intelligence to your companion, just as you were granted particular capacities. Indeed, why should one regard oneself as more worthy than a worm! For the worm also serves the Creator with all of its strength and capacity. And in the end, the person is also merely [consumed by] vermin, as King David declared [Ps. 22:7]: “I am a worm, and not a man.” For had the Creator not granted you greater capacity, you, too, would be able to serve Him just as a worm. And one may not be even as worthy as a worm, let alone a human being. Consider that you and all other creatures of the world, both great and small, are all companions, all having been created by God, and that all have the capacities bestowed upon them by God. This should always be in your mind.³⁴³

66.7 Each Individual Is the Center of the Cosmos

I heard in the name of my teacher [the Besht], a particularly all-encompassing teaching: “If you would talk disparagingly of any creature or human being, then speak disparagingly of yourself; and if you would speak high praise regarding any person, then speak higher praise regarding the blessed Name.³⁴⁴ And [Eccl. 10:12] the words of the wise are gracious.”

Although these words are self-evident, it is proper that when I mention the matter, I provide its reason. Once I explained the verse [Ps. 16] “I place God before

339. I.e., he engaged in hypocrisy—which in Hebrew slang is called a *Tzavua*’—one who is “falsely colored.”

340. A euphemism for the Evil Inclination, based on BT Babba’ Batra’ fol. 16a.

341. See KP fol. 12b (quoted in MMH B³re’shit # 128), where RYY quotes a teaching from his father-in-law, R. Chayyim of Sanz (the leader of the Kabbalistic *Kloiz* of Brody), where we read: “If you want to express an opinion in the public square for the sake of Heaven, first seclude yourself in your room and scrutinize your intention”—and see above # 44.9.

342. *Besht Torah*, Parashat B³re’shit # 147; BPY fol. 127a.

343. *Besht Torah*, Parashat M³tzora’ # 9; *Hanhagot Y³sharot* 14a. I would like to dedicate this chapter to the memory of Ya’aqov son of Avraham and Leah Sand, who was taken from this world before his time—in honor of whose Bar Mitzva I translated at least ten teachings in this anthology, including this one, some years ago.

344. See Heschel-Dresner, *Circle of the Ba’al Shem Tov*, the monograph: “R. Nachman of Kosow: Companion of the Ba’al Shem,” p. 129 and note 79, where we find a similar teaching in the name of R. Nachman of Kosov. But see below, note 346 and reference there.

me always” as referring also to aspects of the world that are in opposition³⁴⁵ to the service of the Divine—such as the waste of one’s time, not studying Torah or praying, or observing something unseemly in one’s companion. In such circumstances, activate your conceptual awareness in the faith that everything is from God, and that all is for your own ultimate good—and that this [experience is given to you] so that you discern how to rectify and improve your own deeds. For I have heard an important principle from R. Nachman,³⁴⁶ that no effacing experience would confound one: Esteem yourself to the point of regarding the entire world as created just for you. But if you were to be alone in the world, you would think of yourself as a trustworthy, straightforward, gracious, and righteous person. Whereas by seeing something unseemly in your companion, you are thereby enabled to realize that³⁴⁷ you must have something of this within yourself.³⁴⁸ Therefore, any disparagement you feel toward your friend, apply it first to yourself.

By doing this, you fulfill the *Mitzvah* [Lev. 19:18] “Love your neighbor as yourself,” an essential principle that relates to the entire Torah.³⁴⁹ The opposite applies in the accounting of praise. Apply all the praise to the One whose Name is blessed,³⁵⁰ as the verse attests [Job 41:3], “Who has preceded Me that I be indebted? Whatever is under heaven is mine,” and the verse [Ps. 51:17]: “God, open my lips. . . .” This being the case, the praise of all people belongs to Him, may His Name be blessed.³⁵¹

66.8 Silence in the Face of Disparagement

Another general rule: if people disparage you on account of your service of prayer or other worthy matters, do not reply—even to say good things—so as not to argue nor show pride. For these [attitudes and activities] cause distraction from the Presence of the blessed Name. So too, did our sages proclaim,³⁵² “The silence of the person [in the face of rebuke or ridicule] brings one to humility.”³⁵³

66.9 Equanimity

The Ba‘al Shem Tov said that if a person has no ulterior motives, all things being considered as equal to him or her, such a one will certainly attain to all levels—of

345. The word *ʔnegdi* in the above-mentioned verse bears the connotation “before me” as well as “in opposition to.”

346. Of Kosov [? see below # 143.2 and notes]—that enables one to proceed in the practice of constant contemplation, which was the practice of the aforementioned colleague of the Besht.

347. The fact that you are able to recognize it implies that. . . .

348. See below, # 143.1–2.

349. See Midrash *Bʔreʔshit Rabbah* 24:7.

350. See above, # 66.6.

351. *Besht Torah*, Parashat Mʔtzoraʔ # 10; TYY fol. 33a.

352. *Reʔshit Chokhmah*, Gate of Humility, chapter 3.

353. *Besht Torah*, Parashat Mʔtzoraʔ # 11; *Hanhagot Yesharot* 12a.

which humility is the greatest. And humility even without pure motive is greater than rebuke with pure motive as indicated [in BT 'Arakhin fol. 16b].³⁵⁴

66.10 Humbleness Draws the Divine Effluence

It is said [Prov. 12:9], “Better a servant of low esteem than one who is honored but who lacks bread.” For there is no greater sign of the sincerity of the individual’s service to the Creator than in being aware of one’s own shortcomings. Such a person can be a sincere servant to Him who is blessed—as opposed to one who holds himself in high esteem but has no “bread”; i.e., no Divine effluence.³⁵⁵

66.12 Familiarize Yourself with All Things

Familiarize yourself with pride, but do not be proud; and with anger, but do not become angry. This is because each individual needs to become whole in all the Divine attributes, which include both judgment and compassion.³⁵⁶

66.12.1 The Human Being Is a Microcosm

The human being is a microcosm containing Mosheh and 'Aharon as well as the Egyptians. The wholly developed person is one who has the clear knowledgeable consciousness to be able to connect with all of the levels manifesting in his or her generation, raising them and uniting them with their roots, while also uniting himself or herself with them. Such a one is called “Mosheh” who contains in his person his entire generation. And she or he is called *Da'at*--Consciousness, and her generation is called “the conscious generation.” By contrast, the evil person is called “immature”—one who does not possess awareness.³⁵⁷

66.12.2 The Human Being Is a Microcosm II

The entire world is one whole Person with one face, in the secret of³⁵⁸ World-Year-Person,³⁵⁹ and what is within the individual is also reflected in the whole. Just as with regard to the individual there is form and matter, so too, with regard to a city, or to the land in which one lives. The “heads” of the nation constitute the “form”

354. *Besht Torah*, Parashat M'tzora' # 12; *Hanhagot Y'sharot* 14b. This teaching, however, seems to be contradicted by many other teachings of the Besht, in which he asserts that “false humility” is a ruse of the evil-inclination that disables the person from reaching his or her full potential (for example, # 104.2). See, however, # 101.2, whereby we may perhaps distinguish between “false humility” and “humility with impure motive.”

355. *Besht Torah*, Parashat M'tzora' # 13; TzRV fol. 14a.

356. *Besht Torah*, Parashat M'tzora' # 15; LY fol. 15c.

357. *Besht Torah*, Parashat Sh'mot # 19; TYY fol. 12b.

358. The shared dimensions of the microcosm and macrocosm, expressed in the three-fold space-time-person.

359. *Sefer Y'tzirah*, chapter 3, Mishnah 6ff—i.e., the outer world of the heavenly orbs; the passage of time; and the individual consciousness.

and soul of the people of the generation, and the masses of people are like the material manifestations of the form. It is because of this that the Sages said regarding the verse [Ps. 24:6—see BT ‘Arachin fol. 17a] “This is the generation of those who seek Him [*ze dor dor³shav*]”—every generation and its spokespeople—meaning that there is a reciprocal relation with regard to the level of each generation and that of its leaders, just as there is a correspondence between the purity and clarity of the soul in relation to the body. And if the soul is obstructed, then the body is even more so—and so too, in the opposite direction.

Thus with regard to Mosheh, who was the embodied manifestation of Knowledge, his generation was called “the Generation of Knowledge.” And this principle is operative in every generation. Because of this, one who wants to rectify the generation needs first to rectify himself or herself, so as to make spiritual forms from one’s materiality.³⁶⁰ Thereby, automatically, all those who are included within the person [who exhibits such qualities of leadership] will be aroused through such purification, toward their own repentance. And it would be easy to rectify them, once they themselves would transform their own materiality to conscious form. And as I mentioned elsewhere, regarding the Talmudic statement [BT ‘Arachin fol. 16b] “I wonder if anyone in the generation is able to receive rebuke”—if you want to rebuke the masses and cannot recognize and include yourself in this rebuke, then your rebuke will have no effect.³⁶¹

66.12.3 A Tzaddiq Can Raise the Generation Only by Facing His/Her Inner-Adversary

A saying of the Besht: Mosheh, peace be upon him, was accused of everything evil that Bil’am had ever done. This phenomenon is the case, for as long as the *Sh³khinah* has not risen to the level that She will manifest at the time of the coming of the Righteous Redeemer—may it be soon in our day, Amen; which will be the time when all the obscurations will be completely annulled and [Isa. 25:8] “death shall be swallowed in eternal victory.” Until such a time, all of the risings of the Divine Presence are effected only by means of the thoughts of worthy people. And worthy persons cannot rise up to their own roots except through [facing their inner] adversaries—which appear to the mind as negative thought. And the person who is roused on that account, to return to the blessed Creator, returns to his or her own roots.³⁶²

360. Matter is recognized only by the forms it manifests as, thus, self-awareness implies seeing the forms of one’s material manifestations.

361. *Besht Torah*, Parashat VayYishlach; TYY fol. 100a. And see above note 181 on # 41.4.

362. *Besht Torah*, Parashat Qorach # 2; *P²ri ha’Aretz* Parashat Mattot.

66.12.31 Facing the Inner Adversary

We read in the Talmud [BT Yoma' fol. 86b]: “What is required so that one may be regarded as a master of repentance? That one face the same circumstances.³⁶³ the same woman,³⁶⁴ the same season, the same timeframe, and the same place.” [Regarding this,] I heard in the name of R. Yisra'el Ba'al Shem o.b.m., who said that he had heard it asked in the Heavenly Academy: How can this be? When the man went initially to illicitly transgress with the woman, he went with an audacious attitude, arousing his lust until he transgressed. But now, upon having repented, when he comes to “the same woman . . .” he proceeds with a modestly bowed head, in order to despise the transgression. If this is so, how can a person ever achieve complete repentance?³⁶⁵ And the answer he heard in the Heavenly Academy was that [such a one]³⁶⁶ is actually permitted to enter into the earlier frame of mind³⁶⁷ and overcome the inclination from within, without transgressing the Divine Will; and with this, the person's sin is removed and one's shortcoming is forgiven.³⁶⁸

66.12.4 The True Nature of Mosheh's Humility, and His Sense of Responsibility

“And now, if you would only bear their sin—! But if not, pray blot me out of the record that You have written” [Ex. 32:32]: I heard in the name of my teacher, the well-known rabbi, the holy lamp of light, the Ba'al Shem Tov, of blessed memory, who asked the following question: “Is it in keeping with Mosheh's attribute of

363. As when she or he first transgressed.

364. See *Zohar Chai*, vol. 5 fol. 214c, where he says that this principle applies not only to sexual impropriety, but also for any other transgression, such as slander, theft, etc.

365. So as to be regarded as a “master of repentance.”

366. A person who intends to overcome the evil inclination.

367. That brought one to transgression.

368. *Besht Torah, Parashat Nitzzavim* # 7—*Sefer R. Yevi* on Psalm 36. There, the principle discussed here is applied to a Talmudic story about R. Shim'on ben Laqish (who started his adult life as a brigand and then repented and became one of the most important Talmudic sages). See *Besht Torah B're'shit* # 156–157 and MMH *Parashat B're'shit* note 138, from *Zohar Chai*, vol. 5 fol. 214c re Gittin 47a: “Reysh Laqish once sold himself to the Lydians. He took with him a bag with a stone in it, because, he said, it is a known fact that on the last day they grant any request (of the man they are about to kill) in order that he may forgive them his murder. On the last day they said to him, What would you like? He replied: I want you to let me tie your arms and seat you in a row and give each one of you a blow and a half with my bottle. He bound them and seated them, and gave each of them a blow with his bag, which stunned him. [One of them] ground his teeth at him. Are you laughing at me? he said. I have still half a bag left for you. So he killed them all and made off. . . .” This is interpreted by the Besht as referring to the fact that after a person achieves nonattachment by means of austerities, and thus was able to concentrate more efficiently and attain a higher spiritual status, one must then overcome the attachment to self-importance, due to one's sense of accomplishment. This will in turn enable one to gauge for oneself the extent to which one may proceed in this practice, which carries with it the dangerous possibility of self-deception and of falling into transgression.

humbleness, that he declares ‘blot me out,’ as if to say—that³⁶⁹ his death would be sufficient atonement for that grievous sin!? He, o.b.m., answered as follows: We need to understand the nature of the quality of Mosheh’s modesty, peace be upon him. We can readily understand the humility of ordinary people. It is due to having become clear to the person that she or he is similar to those people who clearly do not have much relative value. But Mosheh our teacher, peace be upon him, the very embodiment of the presence of consciousness—the one about whom it can clearly be said, that he possesses self-awareness, the root-soul of each and every Israelite, and the general repository of the innate value of each individual; all of these being what it is, which constitute the great value of his own soul as the realized totality of all the souls of Israel, as it is said [M^okhilta B^oshallach 9]: “One woman in Egypt gave birth to 600,000 in one belly—this refers to our teacher Mosheh. This being so, what is the meaning of Mosheh’s humbleness?!”

Indeed, it is by this very realization itself that Mosheh was able to hold himself in humility. For our sages have said [BT Shavu‘ot 39a], “All of Israel are mutually responsible [‘*arevim*]”—this is because they are intermixed [*m^o’uravim*], and have one common root.³⁷⁰ [The Besht continued]: Accordingly, when a positive arousal of energy from the good inclination toward holiness comes into the world, this arousal affects each and every one of Israel, working within each person in accordance with his or her level. The *Tzaddiq* is intensely awakened to the service of the Divine, with great holiness and powerful love. One who is a lesser *Tzaddiq* is not aroused to such an extent, but is somewhat awakened. Even an absolutely wicked person is aroused to have a thought of repentance, however fleeting—and indeed, it may be possible that this awakening would lead such a one to complete *T^oshuvah!*

The opposite is also true. If an arousal of energy from the evil inclination comes into the world, it also reaches and affects each and every person. The wicked person is led astray by this in a major way, and acts accordingly; and even the *Tzaddiq* succumbs to a fleeting thought. Therefore, when we observe that evil is enacted by the wicked, we may speculate as to who is to blame. We can say that the *Tzaddiq*

369. He regards himself as so important that. . . .

370. In this connection it is worth quoting another teaching of the Besht derived from an important early source (see above, # 60, and below, # 95.2 and 140.2) regarding mutual responsibility in the relationship between Israel and the nations. See *Besht Torah, Parashat B^ore’shit* # 120, taken from *Sefer R. Yevi* (in Brooklyn 1994 ed. fol. 58a), *Parashat vayYeshev*: “‘And the Lord God commanded humanity . . .’ (Gen. 2:16)—The Talmud (BT Sanhedrin, 56a) derives the Seven Noahide Laws (from this verse). And I heard in the name of R. Israel Ba‘al Shem Tov, that regarding these Seven Mitzvot of the Noahides, Israel bears the responsibility of a guarantor (‘*arevim*), on the part of the Nations of the world; see *Besht Torah B^ore’shit* # 120.” This accords well with several pronouncements by the Besht and his circle that exhibit a more universal attitude toward non-Jews, as I have discussed elsewhere. For now, see TYY 4a, where Israel and the Nations together, are described as the “One Whole Macrocosm” [‘*Adam’Echad Shalem*]; and see below #148.51 and notes.

is liable, for she or he, too, entertained a negative thought, and perhaps, had she or he from the beginning been vigilant enough, she or he could have been able to neutralize the negative power in it, so that the wicked person would not have come to transgression.

Or we can say, the wicked one is responsible because he or she actually transgressed as soon as the thought was entertained, making it so that the *Tzaddiq* did not have the power to neutralize the negativity. This, then, was the substance of Mosheh's humility. Whenever he saw something unseemly in Israel, he would place the blame on himself and think that most likely it was he who was at fault. This is why he said, "Blot me out . . ."—because he accounted *himself* to blame, and not them. Therefore, His Blessedness answered him [Ex. 32:33]: "Whoever has sinned against Me, he or she (alone) . . ." ³⁷¹—meaning, Before Him, it is known who was responsible [in this case]—this concludes his gracious holy words, o.b.m. ³⁷²

66.12.41—*The True Nature of Mosheh's Humility II*

"And God spoke to Mosheh face to face" [Ex. 33:11]—It is written [Prov. 27:20], "As in water face answers to face, so the heart of one person answers to the other." In the name of the Ba'al Shem Tov, his soul in the arcane heights: When a person stands near water, his shadow looms large on the water. And when the person bends over to the water, the shadow [which becomes a reflection] becomes smaller—and the more he or she bends over and moves closer to the water, the smaller the reflection becomes, so that if he or she places her face on the water then the reflection in the water will precisely correspond to the face. So too, it is with the heart of one person to the other. If one considers himself great, with self-importance, then his companion will consider himself in the same way. And if he regards himself humbly before his friend, so too, will his friend be humble toward him. And when they can no longer decrease their image of self-importance, they will indeed be with each other as equals. This is the meaning of the verse, "And God spoke to Mosheh face to face just as a person would speak to his friend"—i.e., corresponding to the degree of genuine humbleness that one manifests toward a friend, so too, will the friend react in kind, so that they become equal and really face each other. This was the case with Mosheh, who humbled himself before the blessed Creator, and so too, did the Creator humble Himself so-to-speak vis-à-vis Mosheh, and conversed with him face to face. So it was, that the "face" of God became like a reflection of the face of Mosheh. This is a level that no one but Mosheh was able to attain, because Mosheh was the perfect human manifestation of pure consciousness. *'Or HaChokhmah VayYaqhel; Ki Tissa' # 15*

371. Shall I erase.

372. *Besht Torah, Parashat Ki Tissa' # 9; Divrey Mosheh Sh'mini.*

66.12.5 The Souls of the All-Encompassing Tzaddiqim Transcend Time

“And I shall remember My covenant with Ya‘aqov and also My covenant with Yitzchaq . . .” [Lev. 26:42]. From the Besht, remembered for eternal life, regarding why we mention the merit of specifically these [*Tzaddiqim*] but not, say, of R³’uven or Shim‘on, and so on, even though they too were perfectly righteous. And so too, do we find in the Zohar that the souls of some Tana‘im such as R. Hamnuna’ Sabba’ came to teach R. Shim‘on, whereas this was not so regarding all the saints mentioned in the Zohar.³⁷³

The Besht explained that when a *Tzaddiq* during his life served Divinity and prayed constantly for the sake of the entire generation, then after such a one’s demise, he or she continues with this mode of service and rectifies the coming generations by teaching them Torah. This is as the Zohar³⁷⁴ recounts regarding Mosheh, that his soul is present for all generations within each sage and *Tzaddiq* because during his lifetime he was willing to give up his life for his entire generation. This was also the case with ‘Avraham, Yitzchaq, and Ya‘aqov and their like. Therefore, their cosmic repair continues for all generations,³⁷⁵ whereas with *Tzaddiqim* who served God mainly to rectify themselves, their merit and service do not directly extend to all other generations.³⁷⁶

66.13 Despondency as a Form of Pride

In the name of the Ba‘al Shem Tov o.b.m.: Any person is able to attain to all the levels reached by the sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud. It is only one’s pride that does not allow one to reach them. And despondency [over lack of spiritual achievement] is also caused by pride, for a person thinks: “One with my great spiritual capacity and importance ought to be more enthusiastic in Divine service.”³⁷⁷

66.20 How to Pray in Solitude and Be Accounted as if One Prayed with the Congregation

I heard from my teacher [the Besht] the meaning of [BT ‘Avot 1:6 & 16]: “Make for yourself a ‘Rav.’”³⁷⁸ This means connect yourself with “the multitude,” as in [Gen. 50:20] “to sustain the multitude of the nation” [*l’Hachayot ‘Am Rav*]. This is to say,

373. This teaching is derivable from various Lurianic sources. See *Sha‘ar hayYichudim* fol. 3b–c, and *Sha‘ar Ruach haqQodesh* fol. 13a and 28a, and see *Sha‘ar Ma‘amarey Rashbi* fol. 12b–d, where we read that there are *Tzaddiqim* who are permanently aligned with the Divine throne, and the *Sh’khinah* never appears without them. These *Tzaddiqim* are the ones who during their lifetimes were constantly striving to “unite the part with the whole.”

374. See *Tiqquney hazZohar* fol. 114a.

375. See *Sefer hagGilgulim*, chapter 4, fol. 6b7a, and *Sha‘ar hagGilgulim*, chapter 36, p. 312.

376. *Besht Torah*, Parashat B’chuqqotay # 12; ‘Or hagGanuz latzTzaddiqim, Parashat Ki Teitze.

377. *Besht Torah*, Parashat M’tzora’ # 7; *Hanhagot* in *Sefer Tol’dot ‘Aharon*.

378. Bearing the connotations of both “a teacher” and “a multitude.”

when you are compelled to pray in solitude, realize that there are many wayfarers who pray alone, or land-leasers living in isolated areas.³⁷⁹ Unite with them. This is also the meaning of [BT 'Avot 1:6] “acquire for yourself a companion”; thereby, one will be able to [ibid.] “account each person as meritorious.”³⁸⁰ Through this form of connection, many individuals come together to be accounted as a congregation, and on account of the prayers of the many [Job 36:5; and see BT B'rakhot fol. 8a], “God is mighty, and will not despise [them].” Thus, the multitude of individuals is favorably judged. So too, when you are repenting, connect yourself in a like manner. The wise will hear and add further conclusions.³⁸¹

379. It is likely that RYY had in mind R. Nachman of Kosov, a colleague of the Besht and the leader of a pietist group in Kutov, who earned his livelihood as a traveling farm-tax collector and grain dealer. See in Heschel-Dresner, *Circle of the Ba'al Shem Tov*, the monograph: “R. Nachman of Kosov: Companion of the Ba'al Shem” p. 118 ff.

380. For how else can one remain in companionship.

381. MMH # 55 on BP # 81; TYY fol. 95c.