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**NAḤMAN OF BRATSLAV** (1772–1810), ḥasidic *admor* (“master, rabbi, and teacher”) and fertile thinker in the fields of philosophy and literature. His personality and his work resonate to this day far beyond the boundaries of the ḥasidic stream he founded.

On his mother’s side, Naḥman was the great-grandchild of the Ba’al Shem Tov, Rabbi \*Israel ben Eliezer, considered to be the founder of ḥasidic Judaism. His mother, Feiga, was the daughter of Adil, daughter of the Ba’al Shem Tov. On the side of his father, Rabbi Simḥah, Naḥman was the grandson of \*Naḥman of Horodenka (Gorodenka), a disciple of the Ba’al Shem Tov and part of the first group of Ḥasidim headed by the Ba’al Shem Tov.

Naḥman was born in Medzhibezh, in the Ukraine, the town where the Ba’al Shem Tov worked and was buried, and where Naḥman’s uncle and the grandson of the Ba’al Shem Tov, Rabbi Baruch of Medzhibezh, continued to work. Naḥman

therefore grew up in the heart of the ḥasidic world, and from a young age already saw his destiny as being a ḥasidic rabbi. He was betrothed as soon as he reached bar mitzvah age, and married a year later, at the age of 14. At his wedding he met Rabbi Simeon, who became a student and loyal friend and accompanied him throughout his life. After his wedding, as was the custom at that time, he went to live in the home of his father-in-law, Rabbi Ephraim of Ossatin, in the Kiev district of Podolia. The rural nature of this place attracted Naḥman, and he often wandered among the fields and went off by himself to the caves and forests, to commune with God. He used to go out rowing by himself on the river, although he was not a very good oarsman. His life during this period had a considerable influence on the life he encouraged his disciples to live. Seclusion, walks in the countryside, and conversations with the Maker as if conversing with a friend, are the salient features of Bratslav Ḥasidism to this day.

After Rabbi Ephraim became widowed and remarried, Naḥman did not get on with his father-in-law’s new wife and moved to the town of Medvedevka, in the Kiev district. There he began to gather his first disciples around him, and embarked on the path of a ḥasidic leader.

In 1798 Naḥman set out on a journey to Erez Israel. He traveled anonymously, and only his friend Simeon accompanied him and knew his identity. On his way to Erez Israel he acted childishly, playing soldiers with youngsters and unnecessarily provoking other Ḥasidim traveling with him on the boat. These actions can be interpreted in various different ways. In Erez Israel he met the local ḥasidic leadership, who received him with great honor and respect, as befitting the great grandson of the Ba’al Shem Tov. He visited Acre, Safed, and Tiberias, as well as other places, but after a few months, when Napoleon’s army began to arrive in the country, he fled back home. His return journey was also accompanied by various adventures, since he mistakenly boarded a Turkish warship and was only released after payment of a large ransom.

After his journey to Erez Israel he returned to Medvedevka and to leadership of his ḥasidic community. During this period, the first disputes also began to take place with other ḥasidic leaders in the same area. At the same time, Naḥman began to develop his view of disputation as a source of growth and development and as something with positive aspects, arising in places where new paths are broken in the worship of God.

In Elul 5560 (1800) Naḥman moved to Zlatopol, in the Kiev district, not far from the town of Shpola, home of Reb \*Aryeh Leib, known as the Shpola Zeide (“the Grand Old Man of Shpola”), who was the oldest of the ḥasidic *admorim* in the region and whose authority also extended to Zlatopol. Shortly after Naḥman arrived in the town, a serious disagreement broke out with the Shpola Zeide, who apparently saw Naḥman’s arrival in town – which had not been coordinated with him as was customary – as an encroachment and an affront. In due course Baruch of Medzhibezh and other *admorim* in the Ukraine joined the dispute against Naḥman.

From a series of meetings that he had with ḥasidic rabbis in the area on his return from Erez Israel, it appears that Naḥman did not conceal his criticism of the *admorim*, most of whom were many years older than he. Naḥman told them bluntly that the revelations of which they were so proud were false, and frequently attacked the “erroneously famous” rabbis who did not know how to lead themselves, but wanted to lead others.

Naḥman saw himself as the greatest *\*zaddik* of his generation, and as a true saintly man. He considered his rank to be incomparably higher than that of the other rabbis of his generation, and also of *zaddikim* of previous generations, including the Ba’al Shem Tov, the founder of Ḥasidism. Naḥman even hinted that he was higher in rank, at least in some respects, than all the outstanding Jewish figures throughout the generations, from the creation of the world and the first man and right up to the days of the Messiah. This is the message that comes across from the conversations, sermons, and stories of Naḥman, and more explicitly from the esoteric material discovered and published only at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in particular from those parts that were censored and omitted in the printed version of the book *Ḥayyei Moharan* (“The Life of our Teacher Rabbi Naḥman”), but preserved in the manuscript version.

These bold pretensions naturally aroused opposition, which came as no surprise to Naḥman; he even said: “How could there not be disputes around me, since I am taking a new path that no one has ever taken before, not even the Ba’al Shem Tov, nor any being since the Torah was received, even though it is a very ancient path and even though it is completely new” (*Ḥayyei Moharan*, Jerusalem 5760, p. 338). Naḥman even saw himself as a potential messiah, and as the trailblazer for the coming of the Messiah, who would lead the world with the help of the tools and the advice that Naḥman had prepared and renewed, and the whole world would become Bratslav Ḥasidim.

As a result of the dispute, Naḥman was forced to move to Bratslav (1802). At this stage he was joined by Rabbi Nathan Steinhart (1780–1845), who soon became Naḥman’s scribe and the disseminator of his doctrine. Naḥman stayed in Bratslav for some eight years, until the last year of his life, and there he established and expanded his work as a ḥasidic rabbi and teacher. Even then, the disputes did not abate, accompanying Naḥman until his final days. The most notable of the ḥasidic rabbis who supported Naḥman during these difficult times was Rabbi *\*Levi Isaac* of Berdichev, who stood by him until his own death, about a year before Naḥman’s.

In 1805 Naḥman’s son Solomon Ephraim was born. Naḥman had messianic hopes for the infant, which increased in fervor during 1806. In the summer of 1806 the “Holy Child” died, and with him the hopes of coming redemption. Shortly afterwards Naḥman first revealed the *Megillat Setarim*, an esoteric discourse describing the “order of the coming of the righteous redeemer.” This scroll, to which Naḥman returned in 1809, was encompassed by walls of stringent secrecy, and Bratslav tradition claims that only one person in each gen-

eration should know it. The scroll was set out in writing but only in brief hints and acronyms. In the book *Yemei Moharanat*, which is Reb Nosen’s autobiography, it was claimed by the publisher that the scroll was lost. However it emerged that contrary to what was declared, the scroll is still in existence and is preserved by the Bratslav Ḥasidim. Recently, the scroll has also been exposed to research.

Naḥman regularly traveled between the towns where his supporters lived. One important journey that left an impression on him was his journey to Lemberg (Lvov). At the time, there were important doctors staying in Lemberg and Naḥman went to see them because he was suffering from tuberculosis, the disease from which he would eventually die. However, apart from the medical aspect, the encounter with the doctors in Lemberg, which continued for some eight months, was significant for Naḥman in that, for the first time, he came into lengthy and intensive contact with educated Jews. Naḥman also made other journeys, some of them incognito, whose purpose and meaning he did not explain.

Some six months before his death, in the spring of 1810, when he was already well aware that his days were numbered, Naḥman moved to the town of Uman. There were a number of reasons for the move. Naḥman, who had prayed for a long time for the privilege of dying a martyr’s death, apparently wanted to be buried in the cemetery in *\*Uman*, where many Jews martyred in the 1788 Gonta massacre were buried, and in this context declared that he had come to engage in *tikkun neshamot*, the perfection of souls. Naḥman was also interested in meeting with the Uman intellectuals. To the amazement of his disciples, he preferred to live in a house previously occupied by one of the important intellectuals of the town, Naḥman Nathan Rapaport, and not in the home of one of his followers. Naḥman even used to meet with prominent members of the circle of Uman intellectuals, and had a special connection with Hirsch Be’er Horowitz, who some time later immigrated to England, changed his name to Herman Bernard, and became a professor of Oriental languages at Cambridge University. It is not clear what they talked about at these meetings, but we know that the meetings were social in nature and that they played chess together. Naḥman saw them as an important mission and found them very interesting, even though they prompted surprise among his disciples. Bratslav tradition tells that these intellectuals “almost” returned to their religious roots, and had Naḥman not died an untimely death they would certainly have fully returned to the fold.

Bratslav Ḥasidism was never a large sect, and after the move to Uman it became even smaller, with only a few hundred loyal Ḥasidim remaining and not put off by the disputes and persecution, or by the strange actions of the rabbi.

The tuberculosis from which Naḥman was suffering for a third year became worse, and any conversation or speech cost him great effort and severe pain. Nonetheless, to his last days Naḥman continued his homiletic and literary activities, and even expounded doctrine to his congregation of disciples,

and some of his most complex and interesting teachings were given during this difficult period. During *Hol ha-Mo'ed* Sukkot of 1810 Naḥman died and was buried in Uman.

### Naḥman of Bratslav's Spiritual Work and Character

Naḥman of Bratslav is one of the most original creative minds of ḥasidic contemplation and oration and the most notable writer in the field of ḥasidic literature. His book *Likkutei Moharan* (1808) contains theoretical homilies which were, for the most part, written down by his disciple Reb Nosen, with a few written by Naḥman himself. In terms of genre, the book clearly belongs to ḥasidic homiletic literature, containing Naḥman's teachings presented in a manner that is full of imagination and vision. The innovation and imagination can be seen both in the content and the penetrating way in which the theological and existential problems are presented, and at the level of the literary qualities of the homilies, such as the surprising linking of characters and the unexpected way in which Naḥman quotes sources in order to build his sermon. Although on first reading the homilies appear to document Naḥman's disorganized flow of associations, at the end and on second reading it becomes clear that Naḥman has woven a colorful and changing tapestry into a tale whose end lies in its beginning, and which has both structure and a point to make.

The book *Sippurei Ma'asiyyot* (1815) presents 13 stories told by Naḥman during the last three years of his life, written down by his disciple Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov (Reb Nosen). The stories were published, on Naḥman's instructions, in a bilingual edition – Hebrew and Yiddish, with the Hebrew version above and the Yiddish version below. These stories represent an independent division in ḥasidic literature, and there is nothing else like them in the field. Unlike most ḥasidic stories, these were told by the rabbi and not by the disciples. However, a more important characteristic lies not in the identity of the author but in the character and content of the stories. Unlike other ḥasidic literature, which is entirely hagiographic, the tales of Naḥman are not paeans of praise dealing with an exemplary figure, and only one of the 13 deals with the ḥasidic world, while most of them make no mention at all of the Jewish world. The stories in *Sippurei Ma'asiyyot* are told about the daughter of a king captured by the Evil One, about a gang of pirates, about dust that makes anyone who steps on it mad, about the heart of the world and its pining, and about the love of birds, lovers' yearnings and their song. In addition to the tales collected in *Sippurei Ma'asiyyot*, there are dozens more short stories by Naḥman published in Bratslav literature down the generations. A group of stories was written down by Reb Nosen and disseminated in his various writings (mainly in *Ḥayyei Moharan*), while the other stories are scattered through later Bratslav literature. These stories are not all the same in character; they include parables and tales of praise, dreams and visions.

Other than the sermons and stories, Reb Nosen also collected conversations and short sayings of Naḥman which, although they are not as complex and well developed as his

homiletic and literary work, contain a clarity of thought and a directness that are not to be found in the work that is clad in literary and homiletic dress.

Naḥman attributed great importance to the rituals he established with the aim of amending man's sins and defects. He instituted a *Tikkun le-Mikra Laila* (nocturnal pollution), which mainly involved reciting ten psalms; the *Tikkun Kelali* (General Remedy), which does not deal with a specific sin but is intended to amend entire areas where man is defective, such as the subject of speech, money, and particularly eroticism; and a third *tikkun* which is visiting his grave after his death, and which also allows general amendment of all man's sins, and to which we will relate below.

The figure of the *zaddik* is very important in Naḥman's work, and he emphasized rank and virtue and the importance of believing in the *zaddik*. And yet, Naḥman's teachings and conversations were spoken and written in a personal and confessional tone, including the reader not only in the *zaddik's* moments of elation but also in his moments of crisis. Naḥman often refers in his conversations to his struggle with evil inclinations and his times of weakness, bordering on despair and depression. Even questions of belief and denial are presented in all their seriousness, and the feelings of helplessness that even a *zaddik* feels when faced with the skepticism which has no answer are brought up openly. Despite the noticeable presence of the threat of skepticism, weakness, and despair, it would not be correct to say that the Bratslav climate is pessimistic. Naḥman declared war against sadness and despair in a unique way. He called upon his disciples not to ignore and escape sorrow and anguish but to draw them too into a joyous dance and turn pain and suffering into a source for the awakening of life, elation, and happiness. In Naḥman's work there is a rare combination of a pessimistic sense of reality and a positive and optimistic response to the question of what a man can accomplish in life and whether it is given to a man to achieve joy in his life. These extremes are also expressed in Naḥman's theological world and in his sermons, which place side by side the strong feeling of distance and absence of God on the one hand, and at the same time the ability to sense the divine in everything. The role of the *zaddik*, according to Naḥman, is to know the *ḥasid* standing before him and to adapt his words accordingly. With a spiritually arrogant *ḥasid*, the feeling of distance and the question "Where is God's place?" should be emphasized, whereas with a *ḥasid* who is feeling distant from God, it is the divine presence that should be stressed, and the saying that "The earth is filled with the Lord."

Naḥman is one of the greatest of the mystics of the Jewish people who have left written records of their mystical experiences. He gave voice to his mystic world in his sermons, in stories, and in direct documentation of the revelations he experienced, both while awake and when dreaming. One of these intense experiences, which undoubtedly had considerable weight in shaping Naḥman's self-awareness, was documented in the secret tale called "*Ma'aseh me-ha-Lehem*." In this tale, Naḥman describes a mystic experience in which he

received a new Torah, with a re-statement of the ten commandments and the Torah as a whole. This story was kept secret for over 200 years, and only in recent years has it been published. In the published Bratslav literature there are also reports by Naḥman of various revelations he experienced and teachings he developed as a result. Naḥman's self-confidence in this respect was so great that he even dared to attack other *zaddikim*, even those who were many years older than he, who claimed to have seen revelations and angels, saying to them: "This is not how Metatron appears ... many have anticipated expounding on the Chariot, but have never actually seen it" (*Ḥayyei Moharan*, 113, p. 148).

When Naḥman's disciples raised doubts as to the ability of *zaddikim* to experience revelations such as Ezekiel's chariot, Naḥman replied: "Why are you so surprised? Ezekiel was only human" (*Ḥayyei Moharan*, 553, p. 437). In his sermons and conversations, Naḥman often related to devotion to God and to the states of awareness that are derived from this. He dedicated long sermons in clarification of the issue of devotion, the Holy Spirit, and prophetic visions. Belief and prophecy, for Naḥman, are part of a single spiritual scale whose basis is man's simple faith and whose highest point is the prophetic experience. Both belief and prophecy, each at its own level, require man to be willing to cast aside his intellect in order to reach a state of awareness without knowledge, in which the power of imagination, which is an active and vital part of belief and prophecy, is the central and dominant power at work in his consciousness. Naḥman considered mystic devotion to be a main aim, and all Bratslav work and customs are directed towards helping man to achieve it. Seclusion and conversing with the Creator, shouting and clapping hands, paying attention to the song of the wild grass and searching for hints – all of these modes lead to devotion to God.

### Bratslav Ḥasidism after the Death of Naḥman

Naḥman's view of himself as the *Zaddik le-Dorot*, the likes of whom would not be seen again until the coming of the Messiah, left no room for the appointment of a successor after his death, and the Bratslav Ḥasidim remained a ḥasidic community without a living rabbi. This phenomenon, which had not been seen before in Ḥasidism, provoked astonishment and mockery, manifested in the nickname that adhered to the community: the *Toete Ḥasidim* – the Dead Ḥasidim. It was Rabbi Nathan of Nemirov (Reb Nosen), Naḥman's disciple and scribe, who took it upon himself to lead the community and ensure its continuity. At first the older Ḥasidim objected, but Reb Nosen's leadership gradually took shape. Although Reb Nosen did not try to take the place of Naḥman, he played a central role in shaping Bratslav literature and customs for the following generations. Apart from the fact that all the Bratslav literature about Naḥman was written by Reb Nosen, he also continued his own creative momentum, following in the spirit and footsteps of Naḥman, especially in his greatest work, *Likkutei Halakhot*. Reb Nosen set up an independent printing press and ensured that the writings of his rabbi would be pub-

lished and distributed, while completely neglecting his own affairs. Reb Nosen wandered among the disciples and encouraged them to continue adhering to the path of their rabbi even after his death, and even succeeded in attracting new disciples and infusing a new spirit into the community, which had been in deep crisis after Naḥman's death. Reb Nosen initiated the construction of a new *bet midrash* for the Bratslav Ḥasidim in Uman, and also established the Rosh Ha-Shanah gathering at Naḥman's grave. During this period the dispute over Bratslav Ḥasidism was rekindled, with Reb Nosen at the center of the disputes and persecution this time, the persecutor being Rabbi Moses Zevi of Savran. At the height of the dispute, many left the path of their master and did not return even after the dispute died down. After the death of Reb Nosen, the unofficial leadership passed to Rabbi Naḥman of Tulchin (1814–1884), who acquired this status as Reb Nosen's student and right-hand man. In the next generation, the outstanding figure accepted as having authority and continuing the Bratslav tradition was his son, Rabbi Abraham Ḥazan (1849–1917), who was a prolific writer. In addition to expositions on the work of Naḥman, he and his students wrote up many Bratslav traditions which until then had been preserved only orally. After his death, Rabbi Levi Isaac Bender (1897–1989) achieved prominence and was considered by many as the main channel for passing on the Bratslav tradition to the next generation, and as the most devoted student of Abraham Ḥazan. From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and until World War I, there was an improvement in the standing of Bratslav Ḥasidism, and Bratslav centers also sprang up in Poland alongside those in the Ukraine. However, the instability in Eastern Europe, World War I, the Holocaust, and then Soviet rule all had a serious effect on this small ḥasidic community and the only center that survived was a small group of Ḥasidim in Israel.

Since the 1970s there has been a surprising renaissance in the strength and scale of Bratslav Ḥasidism and the status of Naḥman in Israeli culture. Thousands of new disciples joined the community, and wider circles of students and admirers of Naḥman also developed who are not counted as his disciples. Bratslav Ḥasidism split up into a number of factions, some of which have a very tense relationship with each other. During this period, from being a small and persecuted group Bratslav Ḥasidism became a large and influential community. Most of the outstanding figures of this generation were students of Rabbi Levi Isaac Bender.

The following are the different factions of Bratslav Ḥasidism at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century:

The main faction, also known as Bratslav Me'ah She'arim, comprises veteran Bratslav families, a small minority of them the descendants of Naḥman and Reb Nosen and the majority the descendants of families which joined Bratslav Ḥasidism in later generations. This sect does not have a single leader, and has a number of influential rabbis, including Rabbi Ya'akov Meir Schechter, Rabbi Shemuel Moshe Kramer, Rabbi Nathan Libermunsh, and others. The head of the World Bratslav Ḥasidism Committee, which constitutes the official leadership

of this sect, is the elderly ḥasidic rabbi Mikhal Derfman, head of the Bratslav yeshivah Or ha-Ne'elam in the Me'ah She'arim neighborhood of Jerusalem.

Unlike this sect, the majority of members of the other Bratslav factions are new Ḥasidim with no previous family connection to Bratslav Ḥasidism. The vast majority are *ba'alei teshuvah* from secular families, and a minority are from an ultra-Orthodox or religious Zionist background. A large number of them are from Oriental communities.

The largest faction is led by Rabbi Eliezer Berland, the head of the Shuvu Banim Yeshivah, and his student Rabbi Shalom Arush, head of the Hut shel Heseḏ institutions. The center of this sect is in Jerusalem, on the outskirts of the Me'ah She'arim neighborhood, and its communities are scattered throughout Israel.

Another sect is led by Rabbi Eliezer Schik (Moharash), who travels between the two main centers of his followers in the town of Yavniel in Galilee and in New York City. Rabbi Schik's literary activity is extensive and includes free distribution of his booklets. It is worth noting his correspondence, which includes over 40 volumes of letters to his disciples. In his writings there are hints that indicate that he sees himself as a kind of incarnation of Naḥman and as continuing not only his path but also his personality.

A faction that is small in number but has a large public presence in Israel are the followers of Rabbi Yisroel Ber Odesser, known as the "*Na Naḥim*." Odesser (1888–1994) claimed to have found a note personally sent to him by Naḥman of Bratslav. Among other things, the note contained the expression "*Na Nah Nahm Nahman mi-Uman*," which became the mantra and charm of Reb Yisroel's disciples. These Ḥasidim believe that repeated chanting and dissemination of this phrase play a key role in speeding up redemption, which is why they spread it by means of stickers and graffiti and in any other way they can. White knitted yarmulkes with this phrase embroidered on them have become the dress code of this faction. After the death of Reb Yisroel "*Baal ha-Petek*," his followers split up and have no agreed leadership, and their main occupation is spreading word of the note and Bratslav literature.

One of the main characteristics of these factions, as opposed to the mainstream, is the considerable status accorded to their living *zaddik* leader. For the first time in Bratslav tradition since the death of Naḥman, the respect and honor given to the leader is not significantly different from that given by other ḥasidic communities to their living rabbi. However, it is still the case among these factions that the figure of Naḥman is the unequivocal center of the ḥasidic experience.

The great expansion of Bratslav Ḥasidism is part of broader processes that took place in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of which is the increasing resonance of the figure of Naḥman in Israeli culture outside Bratslav ḥasidic circles. Both in secular circles and in national religious and traditional circles there is increasing interest in the works of Naḥman, manifested among other things in study of his writ-

ings in the national religious yeshivah framework and in informal secular frameworks, and in the ever-increasing presence of his personality and writings in Israeli literature and culture. This phenomenon in itself is part of the wider phenomenon of the rise of mysticism in Israeli and Western cultures as part of the "New Age" phenomenon. Yet even against the background of the New Age, the Bratslav renaissance provokes astonishment in its scale and power, and it seems today (2006) that we are still in the midst of the process and that it is too early to summarize it and predict its future.

The main and most significant event in Bratslav Ḥasidism, bringing together all the different factions, is the Rosh Ha-Shanah pilgrimage to Naḥman's grave in Uman. Naḥman felt a special connection with this holiday and instructed all his disciples to gather together every Rosh Ha-Shanah, even if this involved great effort and devotion. Not directly connected to this matter, Naḥman also expressed his wish that his followers come to visit him even after his death, and in preparation for this he laid down a special ritual for the pilgrims visiting his grave, offering great benefits in return: Naḥman promised anyone who comes to his grave, no matter who he is and what his sins are, providing he undertakes not to repeat his sins, gives charity for the elevation of Naḥman's soul, and says 10 particular verses of Psalms, that he will intercede on his behalf and will drag him up from the depths of Hell by his sidelocks. After his death, his followers put these two dictates together and, under the leadership of Reb Nosen, made Rosh Ha-Shanah the holiday when all the Bratslav Ḥasidim gather in Uman at their rabbi's graveside. And indeed, throughout the generations the Bratslav Ḥasidim made great efforts to maintain this tradition. When they were not able to reach Naḥman's grave in Uman, the Ḥasidim gathered in Lublin, Jerusalem, or Meron.

In the 1990s, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the gathering in Uman was reestablished and the number of participants gradually increased. In 2004–05 over 20,000 people arrived in Uman for Rosh ha-Shanah. The vast majority came from Israel, by air, on the eve of the holiday, and a minority came from the United States, Canada, and France. A new synagogue was built. On the top floor and in the surrounding courtyard over 4,000 people pray in the traditional Bratslav manner, and on the ground floor some 2,000 people pray in Mizrahi style. The other worshipers pray in smaller *minyanim* nearby. On Rosh Ha-Shanah it is not only Naḥman's Ḥasidim who come to Uman but also people who clearly belong to other streams of Judaism, both religious and secular, and yet take an interest in this gathering. Only men are allowed in Uman on Rosh ha-Shanah. Not all Bratslav ḥasidism are able to join the gathering on Rosh ha-Shanah and various Bratslav gatherings are held in parallel in Israel and other parts of the world. Due to the fast-changing dynamics of the movement, it is difficult to estimate the number of Bratslav Ḥasidim in the different factions. It is harder still to estimate the scope of the widening circles of people who see Naḥman as a figure of authority and inspiration with a significant influence on their lives but who do not belong to any particular Bratslav community. The processes of change

in Bratslav Ḥasidism are still in formation and it is too early to speculate on the future of this lively branch of Ḥasidism.

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[Zvi Mark (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)]

**NAḤMAN OF HORODENKA (Gorodenka;** d. 1780), disciple of \*Israel b. Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov; his son married Feige, the granddaughter of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and their son was \*Naḥman of Bratslav. Little information is available on the personality of Naḥman of Horodenka and his teachings. From the scattered quotations in the early ḥasidic literature attributed to him, it appears that he occupied himself essentially with practi-

cal questions on the method of divine worship. His encounter with the Ba'al Shem Tov became the turning point of his life, as he himself confirms: "When I was a great pietist I immersed myself every day in a *mikveh*, so cold that nobody else could bear. When I came to my house and found the place so warm that the walls were almost burning, I did not feel the warmth for almost an hour. Even so, I could not rid myself from impure thoughts until I was compelled to seek the wisdom of the Besht [Ba'al Shem Tov]" (*Shivḥei ha-Besht* (1961), 112). This change of attitude expresses the complete reversal of his world outlook from ascetic to non-ascetic Ḥasidism. In 1764 Naḥman emigrated to Erez Israel with \*Menahem Mendel of Peremyshlany at the head of a group of Ḥasidim and settled in Tiberias.

His journey was described by Simḥah b. Joshua of Zalozhtsy in *Ahavat Ziyyon* (Gorodnya, 1790; published a second time under the title *Doresh Ziyyon*, Jerusalem, 1887). Some teachings are recorded in his name by his father-in-law \*Moses Ḥayyim Ephraim of Sudyklow in *Degel Maḥaneh Efrayim*, as well as in the *Toledot Ya'akov Yosef* by \*Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye.

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[Esther (Zweig) Liebes]

**NAḤMAN OF KOSOV** (d. 1746), kabbalist and one of the early Ḥasidim. A wealthy land contractor and grain dealer, he lived for a time in Ludomir (Vladimir \*Volynsky) where he built a *bet midrash* with adjoining bathhouse; Naḥman was associated with a group of Ḥasidim in Kutow (Kuty) which was active even before the appearance of \*Israel b. Eliezer Ba'al Shem Tov and possibly remained independent of him even later. At first Naḥman was opposed to the Ba'al Shem Tov, refusing to accept him as a religious leader. Even after recognizing the latter's authority Naḥman preserved his spiritual independence, and his connections with the Ba'al Shem Tov were apparently weak. It is known that among the Kutow group "there was a condition that none of them should prophesy" (*Shivḥei ha-Besht*) but Naḥman did not always observe this condition. He was considered a "man of the spirit," possessing contemplative power and known for his ecstatic manner of praying; he was one of the first to introduce into public prayer the *Nosaḥ ha-Ari* (prayer rite of Isaac \*Luria).

Naḥman was among the foremost teachers of devotion (\**devekut*), emphasizing constant contemplation of God; *devekut*, according to him, does not contradict the requirements of social life and is not confined to moments of spiritual concentration or a propitious occasion. It is carried out by a visual technique, the letters of the Tetragrammaton and the other names of God appearing before the eyes of the person meditating (the visual method of seeing letters). Naḥman recognized the importance of the dialectical fabric of a society composed of "men of matter" (the masses) and "men of form" (i.e., of the spirit), holding that man's spiritual elevation from his lowliness will take place by his association with the great