

# R' Nachman of Breslov



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People of the Book

# Birth and Yichus



- ✧ Born on April 4, 1772 (1 Nisan)
- ✧ Died on October 16, 1810 (18 Tishrei)
- ✧ Lived only 38 years, but his name is household today and we still quote his teachings and sing his songs.
- ✧ He was born in Medzhybizh, Ukraine
- ✧ His mother Feige was the daughter of Odel, daughter of the Ba'al Shem Tov.
- ✧ Rebbe Nachman was born in the very house where his legendary great-grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, had lived.





# Birth and Yichus



- ❧ His uncle, R' Baruch of Medzhybizh was the leading student of the Ba'al Shem Tov.
- ❧ His father Simcha was son of R' Nachman of Grodenka and a descendant of the Maharal of Prague.
- ❧ R' Nachman had two brothers, Yechiel Zvi and Yisroel Mes, and a sister, Perel
- ❧ From the age of six, he would go out at night to pray at the grave of his great-grandfather, the Baal Shem Tov, and immerse in the Mikvah afterward.



# Childhood



- ❧ It is said that as a young child, he used his pocket money to pay his tutor for teaching him extra pages of the Talmud.
- ❧ The Rebbe said that as a child he had found his studies very difficult, and he used to beg and plead with God to have mercy on him and open his mind to his learning.
- ❧ It is said that he completed writing the first section of his book, *Sefer HaMiddos*, by the age of seven.
- ❧ *Sefer HaMiddos* is a collection of aphorisms and practical advice gleaned from Tanach and the Talmud.
- ❧ This work was very precious to the Rebbe. Once, when he saw one of his students holding it, he took it lovingly from his student's hands. He kissed it and said, "My good friend, this beloved friend made me into a Jew."





# Marriage



- ❧ At the age of 13, he married Sashia, daughter of R' Ephraim, and moved to his father-in-law's house in Ossatin (Staraya Osota) in the Western Ukraine.
- ❧ After the death of his mother-in-law, and his father-in-law's subsequent remarriage, he moved out and accepted a position in Medvedevka, several miles away from Ossatin.
- ❧ Since he was widely known as a descendant of the Baal Shem Tov, he attracted many followers.



# Trip to Israel



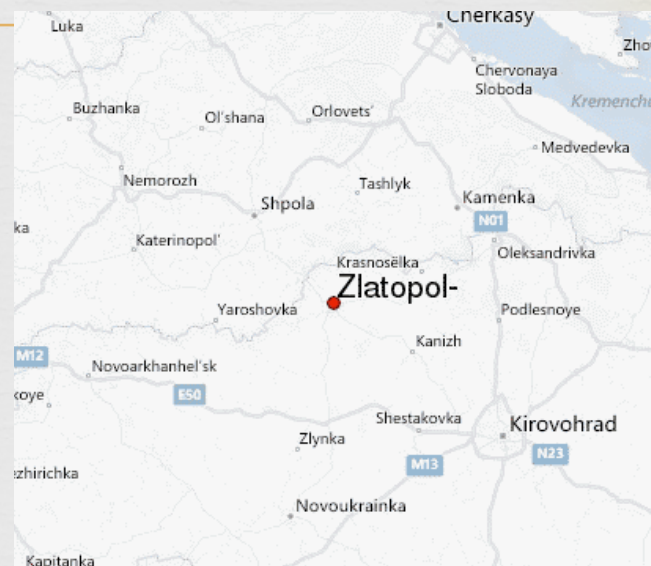
- ✧ In the spring of 1798, Rebbe Nachman traveled to Israel with only a single follower.
- ✧ They came to Haifa on the day before Rosh Hashana and after taking four steps in the Holy Land, Rebbe Nachman announced that he had accomplished his goal, and was ready to return home.
- ✧ He ended up staying in Israel for nearly six months. He visited Teveria and Tzfat where he was given great honor.
- ✧ R' Nachman praised the qualities of the land very highly and encouraged everyone to make their own pilgrimage.
- ✧ He would say, “My place is only in Eretz Yisrael, and wherever I go I’m going to Eretz Yisrael. It’s just that, in the meanwhile, I’m stopping in Breslov.”



# Move to Breslov



- ❧ Right before Rosh Hashana in 1800, R' Nachman moved to Zlatopol.
- ❧ In 1802 Rebbe Nachman moved to Breslov and declared, "Today we have planted the name of the Breslover Hasidim. This name will never disappear, because my followers will always be called after the town of Breslov."
- ❧ The pasuk says, "And I will remove the heart of stone from within you, and I will give you a heart of flesh." (Yechezkel 36:26) The words, "A heart of flesh" (*"lev basar"*) have the same Hebrew letters as the word "Breslov."



# R' Nosson of Nemirov



- ✧ In Breslov, R' Nachman attracted his prime disciple and the one who would ultimately publish and spread his teachings - Reb Nosson Sternhartz of Nemirov.
- ✧ R' Nosson's father was a great Rabbi and Talmud Chacham but he craved more spirituality. He began to visit different Rebbes, including R' Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev and while impressed he couldn't emulate them.
- ✧ Breslov is located nine miles south of Nemirov (a three-hour journey by horse). Reb Noson went to hear R' Nachman, who was only 8 years his senior, and found the spiritual advisor he was seeking.
- ✧ Rebbe Nachman himself attested, "If not for my Nosson, no memory of my teachings would have survived." He also said, "If I had come to Breslov for no other reason than to draw Reb Nosson close to me, it would have been sufficient!"





# R' Nossan about R' Nachman



“He had every kind of charm in the world, and he was full of awe and love and an incredible holiness throughout every limb of his body. He was completely removed from all negative traits and desires, in such a way that the human mind simply cannot fathom. There was no one in the entire world to compare with him. He was absolutely unique, in a way that cannot be adequately expressed or understood.”

# Likutei Muharan



- From the very beginning of their relationship, Rebbe Nachman encouraged Reb Nosson to make a practice of copying down all of his teachings.
- Reb Nosson went further and even recorded Rebbe Nachman's informal discourses, since he realized that all the Rebbe's holy words required much study.
- Early in 1805, Rebbe Nachman instructed Reb Nosson to begin arranging his lessons in order, compiling them into the book that would be entitled "*Likutei Moharan*," "The anthology of our Master, Rebbe Nachman."





# Family



- ❧ Rebbe Nachman and his wife Sashia had six daughters and two sons.
- ❧ Two daughters died in infancy and the two sons, Ya'akov and Shlomo Efraim both died within a year and a half of their births.
- ❧ Their surviving children were Adil, Sarah, Miriam, and Chayah.
- ❧ After Shlomo Efraim died, R' Nachman set out on a long and mysterious journey in the winter 1807. It was during this journey that Rebbe Nachman's wife Sashia died of tuberculosis on June 11, 1807, the eve of Shavuot, and was buried in Zaslov.
- ❧ The following month, Rebbe Nachman became engaged to a woman from Brody whose father was the wealthy Joshua Trachtenberg. Right after the engagement, Rebbe Nachman contracted tuberculosis.

# Illness and Dying



- ❧ From the moment that Rebbe Nachman contracted tuberculosis, he began to speak with his followers about his impending death and the importance of the burial place he would choose.
- ❧ During the last three years of his life, he made it clear to his followers that he wanted them to visit his gravesite regularly after his passing and to recite *Tehillim* there and pray with a powerful concentration.
- ❧ Years before his death, when he moved from Zlatipolia to Breslov, he had passed the old cemetery of Uman. While riding past it in the wagon, Rebbe Nachman said aloud, “How pleasant and lovely it would be to lie in this House of the Living (cemetery).”



# Uman, Ukraine



- ❧ In May 1810, a fire raged through Breslov burning down R' Nachman's house among others.
- ❧ A group living in Uman invited him to move there and he saw it as a heavenly sign that his death was imminent.
- ❧ He lived in Uman half a year and died on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day of Chol Ha'Moed Sukkos, 1810, at the age of 38.
- ❧ R' Nosson was present and described:

"I came to his room and found him seated, not lying down. He was wrapped in his tallis sitting on the bed, and the Ari's *siddur* was resting on his holy knees. He finished reciting *Hallel* with the four species, and said the *Hoshanos* in a slightly raised voice. Everyone in the house could hear his words. Fortunate are the eyes that were privileged to see him then and hear his voice when he held the four species and said *Hallel* and *Hoshanos* on the last day of his holy life."
- ❧ He was buried in the cemetery in Uman.

# Uman



❧ R' Nosson described further:

“Afterward, it seemed as though he had already passed away, and I began to cry and scream, ‘Rebbe! Rebbe! Why are you leaving us?’ He heard our voices and woke up somewhat. He turned his awesome face to us, as if to say, ‘G-d forbid. I’m not leaving you.’ After that, it wasn’t long before he really did pass away in great holiness and purity, without any mental confusion at all. His body didn’t undergo any strange tremors, and his mind was composed in the most amazing and incredible way. He was buried in peace on the following day...in Uman, the town that he chose for his burial place while he was still alive...That is the main reason why he came to Uman a half year before his death. Hashem helped him, He did the will of those who fear Him, and he came to his rest in peace. For that is the place that was prepared for him from the very outset of creation, where he would work for the rectification of the world for the coming generations – for anyone who comes to him there and says the ten psalms that he indicated, as he promised when he was still alive.”





# Pilgrimage



- ❧ When R' Nachman was alive, thousands of his Chassidim would visit on yom tov.
- ❧ On the last Rosh Hashana of his life, he stressed the importance of being with him.
- ❧ In 1810, Rebbe Nachman called two of his closest disciples, Rabbi Aharon of Breslov and Rabbi Naftali of Nemirov, to act as witnesses for an unprecedented vow:

"If someone comes to my grave, gives a coin to charity, and says these ten Psalms [the *Tikkun HaKlali*], I will pull him out from the depths of Gehinom! It makes no difference what he did until that day, but from that day on, he must take upon himself not to return to his foolish ways."
- ❧ After his death, R' Nosson instituted an annual pilgrimage to be with R' Nachman in Uman for Rosh Hashana.
- ❧ Reb Noson once said, "Even if the road to Uman were paved with knives, I would crawl there — just so I could be with my Rebbe on Rosh Hashanah!"



# Pilgrimage to Uman



- ❧ From the 1960s until the fall of Communism in 1989, several hundred made their way to Uman, both legally and illegally, to pray at the grave of Rebbe Nachman.
- ❧ The fall of Communism opened the gates entirely. Between 700 and 900 Hasidim gathered in Uman for Rosh Hashana 1989. In 1990, 2,000 Hasidim attended. Large factory sites were called into service to house the crowd. The numbers have continued to grow incredibly.
- ❧ The Rosh Hashana kibbutz in Uman surpassed the 10,000-person mark in 2000. In 2005, approximately 20,000 men and boys from all countries and all backgrounds converged on the town for the annual event. In 2008, the numbers reached 25,000





# Controversial



**לקראת ההילולה**

## הרב עובדיה יוסף: לא לנסוע לקבר רבי נחמן באומן

**השיב: "שייסעו". הרב עובדיה הנהן בראשו והדברים התפרשו כאישור.**

השבוע הודיע הרב עובדיה לתקן והבהיר: "לא אמרתי. חס ושלום. לא ללכת!... כולם ראו בל-ווין שאני יושב על ידו ושותק, חשבו שאני ניכר ביטלתי את דעתי שהייתי אומר קודם. חשבו שאני חזרתי בתשובה... בשביל מה ללכת לאומן? מעשה ירי אומן. זה לא נכון. זה לא מנהגים שלנו".

הרב עובדיה הדגיש כי בראש השנה כל יהודי צריך להיות עם בני משפחתו, ולא לנסוע לקבר הצדיק: "אלו חסידים עושים מה שעושים, טוב, יבושם להם. יעשו. מה אכפת לי אני מהם? אני חסיד אומן? אני לא חסיד אומן. אבל תדעו לכם כל יהודי טוב, שהוא בר דעת, בעל שכל, ליל ראש השנה מקדיש אותו למשפחה. כולם אוכלים יחד ושותים יחד ושמחים יחד. זה חג. חג - צריכים לשמוח. בחג מה עושים? הולכים לבית הקברות או שמחים?".

**מאת אבישי בן חיים**

מחזות מחודש לפני הנהייה ההמונית לפסטיבל הרבי חני הגדול של ראש השנה בקבר רבי נחמן מברסלב באומן, יוצא הרב עובדיה יוסף במתקפה חריפה נגד התופעה ונגד ההערכה המוגזמת, לדעתו, לרבי נחמן. "יש פה, קבורים גדולי עולם, תנאים קדושים, שהקטן שבהם היה מחיה מתים. הולכים עוזבים את הגאונים האלה והולכים לאומן", אמר הרב עובדיה יוסף בדרשת מוצאי השבת שלו. הרב הוסיף גם מחאה על ההערכה בציבור דווקא לרבי נחמן: "מה אומן? לא יגיע להיות תלמיד תלמידיהם".

בעבר, יש לציין, יצא הרב עובדיה נגד העיסוק הנרחב בספריו ובהגותו של רבי נחמן והגדיר אותם כתואר המעליב "היגים".

לאחר דרשת השבוע שעבר, סברו אנשי ש"ס כי הרב דווקא מתיר לנסוע לאומן. בדרשה הופיע הרב הברסלבי שלום ארוש, וסיפר אל מול עיני הרב עובדיה כי שאל אותו אם מותר לנסוע לאומן וכי הרב



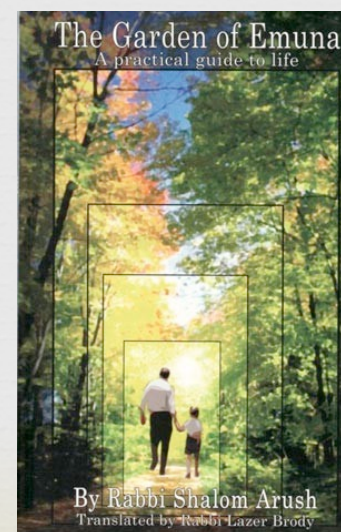
**הרב עובדיה**  
צילום ארכיון: פלאש 90



# Breslov Chassidus



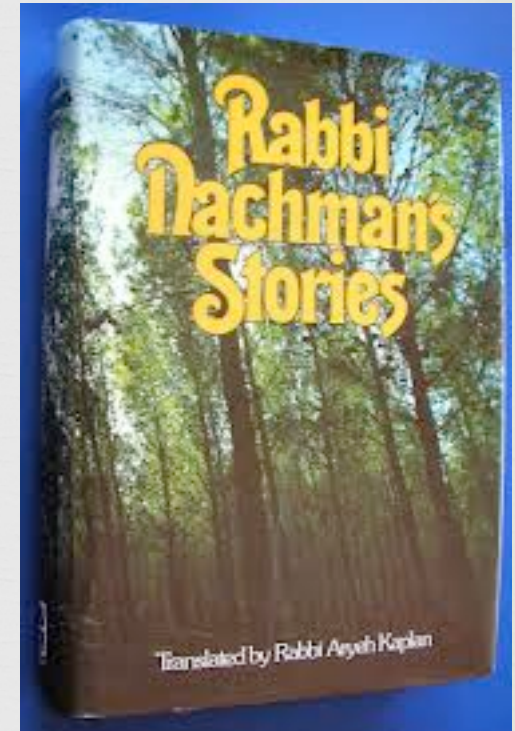
- ❧ Have had no Rebbe for last 200 years.
- ❧ Breslov communities in LA, NY, Paris, London, Montreal and even Lakewood.
- ❧ R' Eliyahu Chaim Rosen built the Breslov yeshiva in Meah Shearim in Yerushalayim in 1953.
- ❧ Big emphasis on Breslov Outreach
- ❧ R' Shalom Arush, leader of Sefardic Breslov and author of Garden of Emunah.



# Story Telling



- ❧ Sippurei Ma'asiyos, translated by R' Aryeh Kaplan in "Rabbi Nachman's Stories" and published by R" Nosson in 1814.
- ❧ In the introduction, R' Nosson explains that R' Nachman was like Shlomo Ha'Melech who used riddles and parables to communicate deep ideas and lessons. He told the stories in Yiddish.
- ❧ He said, "They say stories put you to sleep, but I say that through stories you can awaken people from their sleep."
- ❧ R' Steinsaltz said R' Nachman's stories contain: "layer upon layer of unrevealed symbolic meaning."
- ❧ The stories are original and if they borrow from "tales which other people tell," he added to, modified, or improved on them.



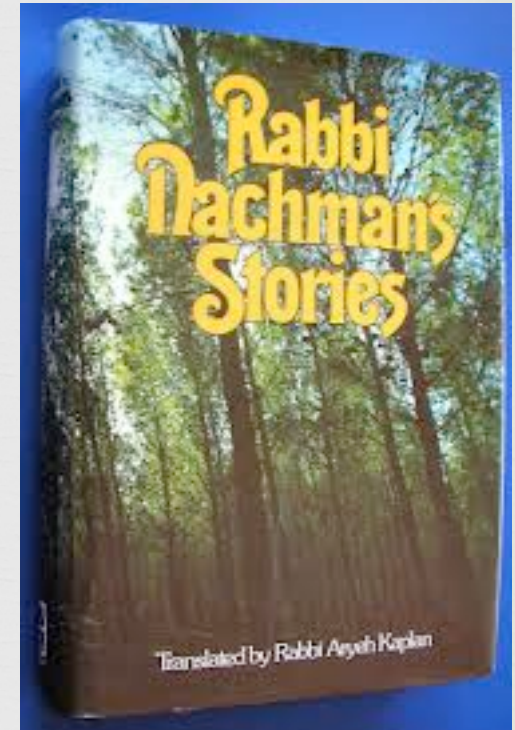


# Story Telling



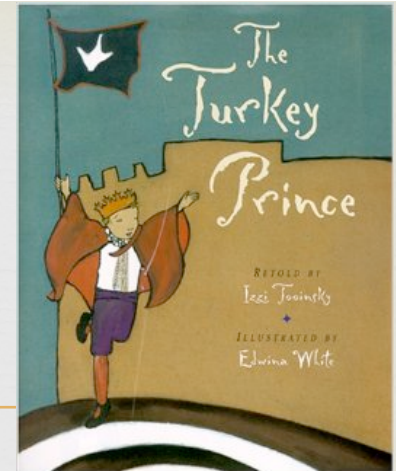
## ∞ The Thirteen Tales:

1. The Lost Princess
2. The King and the Emperor
3. The Cripple
4. The Bull and the Ram
5. The Prince of Gems
6. The Humble King
7. The Spider and the Fly
8. The Rabbi's Son
9. The Sophisticate and the Simpleton
10. The Burgher and the Pauper
11. The Exchanged Children
12. The Master of Prayer
13. The Seven Beggars





# Turkey Prince



A prince once became mad and thought that he was a turkey. He felt compelled to sit naked under the table, pecking at bones and pieces of bread, like a turkey. All the royal physicians gave up hope of curing him of this madness. The king grieved tremendously.

A sage arrived and said, "I will undertake to cure him." The sage undressed and sat naked under the table, next to the prince, picking crumbs and bones. "Who are you?" asked the prince. "What are you doing here?" "And you?" replied the sage. "What are you doing here?" "I am a turkey," said the prince. "I'm also a turkey," answered the sage.

They sat together like this for some time, until they became good friends. One day, the sage signaled the king's servants to throw him shirts. He said to the prince, "What makes you think that a turkey can't wear a shirt? You can wear a shirt and still be a turkey." With that, the two of them put on shirts.

After a while, the sage again signaled and they threw him pants. As before, he asked, "What makes you think that you can't be a turkey if you wear pants?"

The sage continued in this manner until they were both completely dressed. Then he signaled for regular food, from the table. The sage then asked the prince, "What makes you think that you will stop being a turkey if you eat good food? You can eat whatever you want and still be a turkey!" They both ate the food.

Finally, the sage said, "What makes you think a turkey must sit under the table? Even a turkey can sit at the table." The sage continued in this manner until the prince was completely cured.

# Emunah – Simple Faith



- ❧ Two approaches to Chassidus developed:  
Mystical Chassidus and Chassidus of Faith
- ❧ The Maggid of Mezritch, R' Shneur Zalman of Liadi and others created Chassidus based on seeing God in mysticism, immanence, taking up the whole universe, impersonal divinity, and entering the world through emanation.
- ❧ These approaches place contemplation or ecstasy as the highest value.
- ❧ Rav Nachman put faith on top of its hierarchy of values and emphasizes a personal, close, somewhat casual relationship with the Almighty as a confidant, friend and parent.
- ❧ In other chassidus, prayer is an opportunity for an ecstatic connection to the Divine. In Breslov, it is an opportunity for a conversation.

# Emunah – Simple Faith



- ❧ Breslov see absolutely all that occurs from major to minor, significant to insignificant as coming directly from Hashem.
- ❧ One can never be disappointed, sad or worried because everything is meant to be and ultimately is the will of the Almighty.
- ❧ Even our own failures and mistakes are the will of Hashem and therefore we must not harp on them or be overly saddened by them.
- ❧ His views were not accepted by all and in fact were opposed strongly by R' Aryeh Leib of Shpola, the Shpolar Zeide.



# Simcha - Happiness



מצוה גדולה Mitzvah gedola  
להיות בשמחה תמיד. lihiyot b'simcha tamid.  
It is a big mitzvah to always be happy.

- ❧ An extension of R' Nachman's approach to faith is the emphasis on the mitzvah to always be happy.
- ❧ For Breslov, happiness is a primary value and a necessary prerequisite to proper service of Hashem.
- ❧ He encouraged singing, dancing and clapping in prayer.
- ❧ Rav Nachman went through periods of his life with great sadness bordering on depression and felt the damage it does.

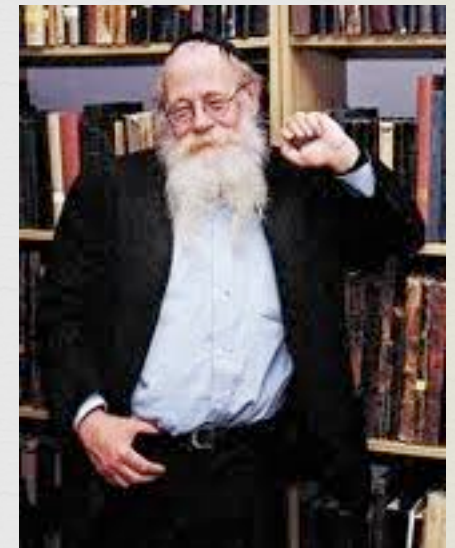
# Was R' Nachman Healthy?



Interview with R' Adin Steinsaltz -

Q: Some have observed that Rabbi Nachman was a troubled person, disturbed or manic-depressive. Is there true reason to believe that Rabbi Nachman was not an emotionally healthy individual? How are we to understand these aspects of his biography?

A: Much of what has been written about Rabbi Nachman is connected with the fact that he was, on the one hand, very open to describing his moods, his thoughts, and his ideas to the people around him, and the fact that his disciples wrote down almost anything they could remember of his utterances. That created, in itself, a very uneven picture, because obviously, any person who reveals his inner life to some extent will show conflicts, problems, and pain within his life. So one has to remark that the amount of autobiographical writings in Jewish literature is astonishingly small, and the number of autobiographies, or - so to say - confessions of Jewish literary figures can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Therefore, comparisons and estimates are in a way very biased, as people do not have enough material with which to make a comparison. On the other hand, one has to remember one thing: any genius is almost by definition not a healthy, normal person; had he been such, he would possibly have become a successful salesman or dealer in real estate. The fact that he was a genius means that his mind was different from that of other people, having heights, and possibly depths, that other people don't have.



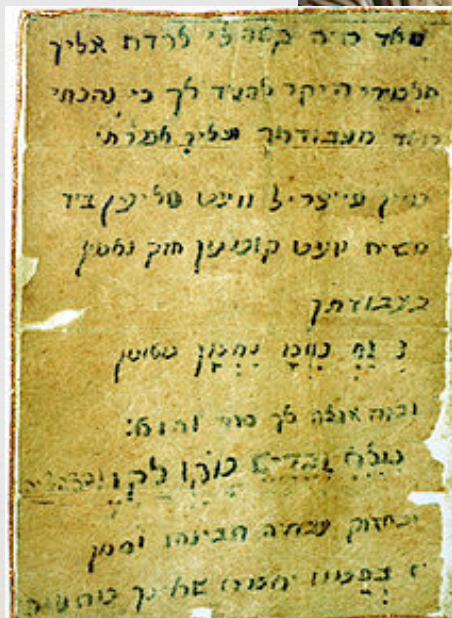


# Na Nach Nachman



✧ In 1922, R' Yisroel Ber Odesser, a Breslover Chassid claimed to receive a note addressed to him from Rebbe Nachman. The seventh line is signed Na Nachma Nachman Mei'Uman.

✧ R' Odesser made the signature his personal meditation and song and taught the phrase to a group of students.





# Na Nach Nachman



✧ In early 1980's R' Odesser met with R' Moshe Feinstein about the petek.

R' Moshe wrote to him:

I am writing on behalf of a most unusual individual, R' Yisroel Dov Odesser from Israel. This individual is a gaon in Torah. I had the pleasure of recently meeting with him. I saw a secret document he possesses and it is something very wonderful.

R' Odesser is soliciting funds to enable him to print R' Nachman's sefarim and it is a great mitzvah to assist him in this endeavor. Hashem will reward all those that so assist him.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein



# Na Nach Dancers

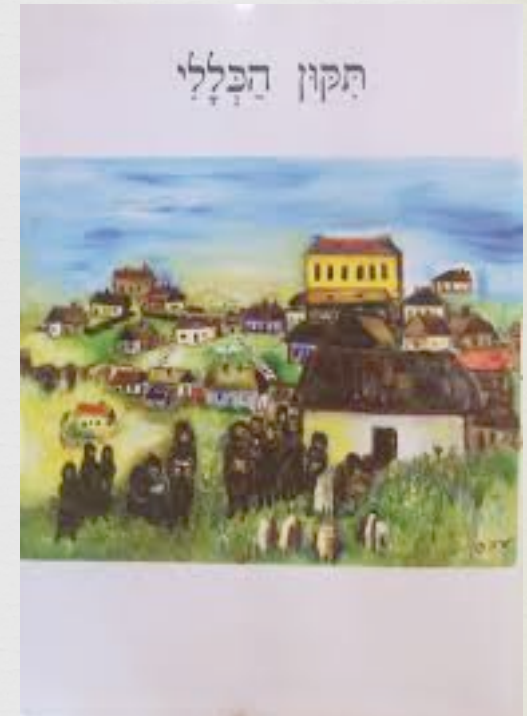




# Tikkun Ha'Klali



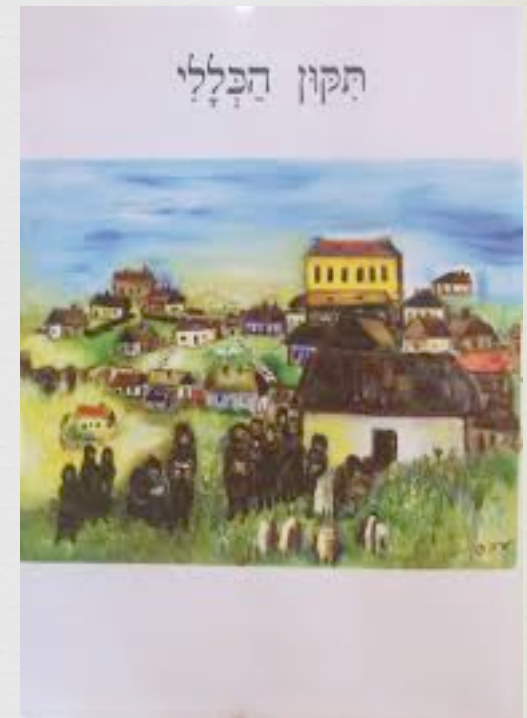
- ❧ Rebbe Nachman taught that reading ten specific chapters of tehillim can serve as a special tikkun, a repair for the spiritual harm done by giving in to the yetzer ha'rah.
- ❧ The tikkun specifically constitutes a remedy for the mistake of wasting seed among other indiscretions.
- ❧ The chapters are: 16, 32, 41, 42, 59, 77, 90, 105, 137 and 150.
- ❧ Most Breslover Chassidim say the tikkun klali every day.



# Tikkun Ha'Klali



- ❧ Rebbe Nachman knew that this area of temptation and sin was most challenging.
- ❧ He saw depression as the antithesis of joy and therefore the biggest obstacle to serving Hashem.
- ❧ The Tikkun would rectify the error and allow the chassidim to return to serving Hashem with joy and not be sad or depressed.
- ❧ These chapters contain the ten ways of praising Hashem: *Ashrei, Beracha, Maskil, Nitzuach, Shir, Niggun, Mizmor, Tefilla, Hoda'ah, and Halleluyah*





# Tikkun Ha'Klali

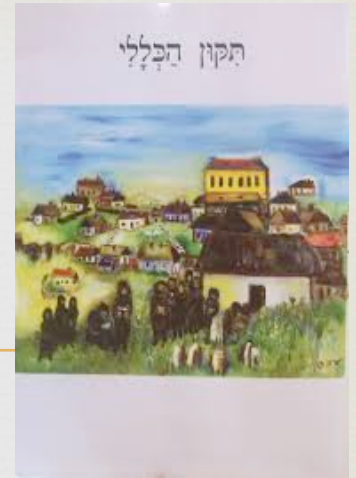


It is prefaced with this prayer:

In saying these ten psalms I am binding myself to all the true Tzaddikim in this generation and all the true Tzaddikim who have departed, "the holy ones who are in the earth", and especially our holy Rebbe, Tzaddik, foundation of the world, the "flowing brook, source of wisdom", Rabbi Nachman the son of Feiga, (may his merit protect us,) who revealed this remedy.

Come let us sing to G-D, let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving; let us sing to Him joyously in song. For GOD is a great GOD and a great King over all gods (Psalms 95:1-3).

I prepare my mouth to give thanks and praise to my Creator, to unify the Holy One, blessed-be-he, and His *Shechinah* in awe and love, through the Hidden and Concealed One, in the name of all Israel.



# Hisbodedus



- ❧ "It is very good to pour out your heart to God as you would to a true, good friend"
- ❧ Rebbe Nachman taught that we must dedicate time each day to establish a close, personal relationship with Hashem by talking to Him.
- ❧ Hisbodedus is done in a private area, preferably outdoors in nature.
- ❧ R' Nachman taught, "When a person meditates in the fields, all the grasses join in his prayer and increase its effectiveness and power."
- ❧ Hisbodedus should be done in the vernacular
- ❧ Nothing is too mundane to discuss or reflect upon.



# Gesher Tzar M'od



Rebbe Nachman taught:

“The whole world is a very narrow bridge, but the main thing is to have no fear at all.”



# Role of the Tzaddik



- ❧ R' Nachman emphasized the role of attaching oneself to a Tzaddik.
- ❧ He saw himself as the tzaddik of the generation.
- ❧ On various occasions in his life, he suggested he was the fifth in the line of unique Tzaddikim, each the leader of his times: Moshe, R' Shimon Bar Yochai, Arizal, Baal Shem Tov and him.
- ❧ Some academics try to prove that he thought he was Moshiach.
- ❧ His Chassidim say he was Tzaddik Ha'Dor who in every generation could be Moshiach.