

From the Rabbi's Desk  
**Rabbi Manes Kogan**

Hillcrest Jewish Center  
183-02 Union Turnpike, Flushing, NY 11366  
718-380-4145  
[rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org](mailto:rabbikogan@hillcrestjc.org)

**The Treasure**  
**(Unwrapping a Hasidic Story)**



Rabbi Nachman's Stories. Translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan. Breslov Research Institute. Jerusalem. 1983. Page 478.

## Background to Our Story

### Rabbi Nachman of Breslov



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nachman\\_of\\_Breslov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nachman_of_Breslov)

Nachman of Breslov (Hebrew נחמן מברסלב), also known as Reb Nachman of Bratslav, Reb Nachman Breslover (Yiddish: רבי נחמן ברעסלאווער), Nachman from Uman (April 4, 1772 – October 16, 1810), was the founder of the Breslov Hasidic movement.

Rebbe Nachman, a great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov, revived the Hasidic movement by combining the esoteric secrets of Judaism (the Kabbalah) with in-depth Torah scholarship. He attracted thousands of followers during his lifetime, and his influence continues today through many Hasidic movements such as Breslov Hasidism. Rebbe Nachman's religious philosophy revolved around closeness to God and speaking to God in normal conversation "as you would with a best friend." The concept of *hitbodedut* is central to his thinking.

Rebbe Nachman was born on April 4, 1772 (Rosh Chodesh of Nisan) in the town of Międzybóž, which is in the Podolia region of the then Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and which is now in Ukraine. In the same year, the First Partition of Poland was agreed on, and the region and surrounding ones were taken over by the Russian Empire.

Rebbe Nachman's mother, Feiga, was the daughter of Adil (also spelled Udel), daughter of the Baal Shem Tov, founder of Hasidic Judaism. His father Simcha was the son of Rabbi Nachman of Horodenka (Gorodenka), one of the Baal Shem Tov's disciples, after whom Rebbe Nachman was named. Rebbe 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 mikveh afterward.

At the age of 13, he married Sashia, daughter of Rabbi Ephraim, and moved to his father-in-law's house in Ossatin (Staraya Osota today). He acquired his first disciple on his

wedding day, a young man named Shimon who was several years older than he was. He continued to teach and attract new followers in the Medvedevka region in the years that followed.

In 1798–1799 he traveled to the Land of Israel, where he was received with honor by the Hasidim living in Haifa, Tiberias, and Safed. In Tiberias, his influence brought about a reconciliation between the Lithuanian and Volhynian Hasidim.

Shortly before Rosh Hashana 1800, Rebbe Nachman moved to the town of Zlatopol.

In 1802, Rebbe Nachman moved to the town of Bratslav, also known as "Breslov" and "Bracław". Here he 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."

His move to the town of Breslov brought him into contact with Nathan Sternhartz ("Reb Noson"), a 22-year-old Torah scholar in the nearby town of Nemirov, eight miles north of Breslov. Over the next eight years, Reb Noson became his foremost disciple and scribe, recording all of Rebbe Nachman's formal lessons as well as transcribing the Rebbe's magnum opus, *Likutey Moharan*. After Rebbe Nachman's death, Reb Noson recorded all the informal conversations he and other disciples had had with the Rebbe, and published all of Rebbe Nachman's works as well as his own commentaries on them.

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. Sashia died of tuberculosis on June 11, 1807, the eve of Shavuot, and was buried in Zaslov just before the festival began. 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.

In May 1810, a fire broke out in Bratslav, destroying Rebbe Nachman's home. A group of *maskilim* (Jews belonging to the secular *Haskalah* [Enlightenment] movement) living in Uman invited him to live in their town, and provided housing for him as his illness worsened. Many years before, Rebbe Nachman had passed through Uman and told his disciples, "This is a good place to be buried." He was referring to the cemetery where 2000 (or by some accounts as many as 20,000) Jewish martyrs of the Haidamak Massacre of Uman of 1768 were buried. Rebbe Nachman died of tuberculosis at the age of 38 on the fourth day of Sukkot 1810, and was buried in that cemetery.

Rebbe Nachman's Torah lessons and stories were published and disseminated mainly after his death by his disciple, Reb Noson:

- *Likutey Moharan* ("Collected Teachings of Our Teacher, Rabbi Nachman") (vol. i., Ostrog, 1808; vol. ii., Moghilev, 1811; vol. iii., Ostrog, 1815)—Hasidic interpretations of the Tanakh, Talmud and Midrashim, Zohar, etc. This work has been completely translated to English and annotated in fifteen volumes by Rabbis Chaim Kramer and Moshe Mykoff of the Breslov Research Institute.
- *Sefer HaMidot* (*The Aleph-Bet Book*) (Moghilev, 1821)—a collection of practical advice gleaned from Torah sources, presented as epigrams or maxims and arranged alphabetically by topic.
- *Tikkun HaKlali* ("General Remedy")—Rebbe Nachman's order of ten Psalms to be recited for various problems, plus commentary by Reb Noson. Published as a separate book in 1821.
- *Sippurei Ma'asiyot* (*Tales of Rabbi Nachman or Rabbi Nachman's Stories*) (n.p., 1816)—13 story tales in Hebrew and Yiddish that are filled with deep mystical secrets. The longest of these tales is *The Seven Beggars*, which contains many kabbalistic themes and

hidden allusions. Several fragmentary stories are also included in Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan's translation of the complete tales, *Rabbi Nachman's Stories*.



## **Reading the Story.**

**Rabbi Nachman's Stories. Translated by Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan. Breslov Research Institute. Jerusalem. 1983. Page 478.**

A man once dreamed that there was a great treasure under a bridge in Vienna. He traveled to Vienna and stood near the bridge, trying to figure out what to do. He did not dare search for the treasure by day, because of the many people who were there.

An officer passed by and asked, "What are you doing, standing here and contemplating?"

The man decided that it would be best to tell the whole story and ask for help, hoping that [the officer] would share the treasure with him. He told the officer the entire story.

The officer replied, "A Jew is concerned only with dreams! I also had a dream, and I also saw a treasure. It was in a small house, under the cellar." In relating his dream, the officer accurately described the man's city and house.

He [the man of our story] rushed home, dug under his cellar, and found the treasure.

He [the man of our story] said, "Now I know that I had the treasure all along. But in order to find it, I had to travel to Vienna."

The same is true in serving God. Each person has the treasure, but in order to find it, he must travel to the tzaddik.

## Comprehension Questions

**?** Why did the man in our story travel to Vienna after he dreamt a treasure was buried under a bridge there?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** Why did the man share the whole story with the officer?

**?** Why didn't the officer go after the treasure in his dream?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**?** *"Now I know that I had the treasure all along. But in order to find it, I had to travel to Vienna."* What did the man have all along? What didn't he have?

**Bonus ?** If we understand our story as a metaphor, what do you think is the treasure?

Answer 1 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 2 \_\_\_\_\_

Answer 3 \_\_\_\_\_

**Bonus ?** What is the tzadik's job?

### ***"The Twist" – Or the Lessons We Can Learn from the Text***

**!** *The treasure is always within you. How to get it, is a different story.*

## EPILOGUE

Where am I? Who am I? What is "my call" in life? The answers to the most important questions lie within us. The special people (teachers, rabbis, good

friends) and unique circumstances we encounter along the way in our life journey can help us find the answers.

### **Martin Buber's Version of Our Story**

Buber, Martin: The Way of Man According to the Teachings of Hasidism.

Vincent Stuart. London. 1963. Page 36.

Rabbi Bunam used to tell young men who came to him for the first time the story of Rabbi Eizik, son of Rabbi Yekel of Cracow. After many years of great poverty which had never shaken his faith in God, he dreamed someone bade him look for a treasure in Prague, under the bridge which leads to the king's palace. When the dream recurred a third time, Rabbi Eizik prepared for the journey and set out for Prague. But the bridge was guarded day and night and he did not dare to start digging. Nevertheless, he went to the bridge every morning and kept walking around it until evening. Finally, the captain of the guards, who had been watching him, asked in a kindly way whether he was looking for something or waiting for somebody. Rabbi Eizik told him of the dream which had brought him here from a faraway country.

The captain laughed: 'And so to please the dream, you, poor fellow wore out your shoes to come here! As for having faith in dreams, if I had had it, I should have had to get going when a dream once told me to go to Cracow and dig for treasure under the stove in the room of a Jew-Eizik, son of Yekel, that was the name! Eizik, son of Yeke!! I can just imagine what it would be like, how I should have to try every house over there, where one half of the Jews are named Eizik and the other Yekell' And he laughed again.

Rabbi Eizik bowed, travelled home, dug up the treasure from under the stove, and built the House of Prayer which is called 'Reb Eizik Reb Yekel's Shul'.

'Take this story to heart,' Rabbi Bunam used to add, 'and make what it says your own: There is something you cannot find anywhere in the world, not

even at the zaddik's, and there is, nevertheless, a place where you can find it.'