

# Neither Rain, Nor Sleet, Nor Snow...

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Many of the Breslover chassidim who lived in Uman in the twentieth century were meticulous about practicing *hitbodedut* in the fields and forests at night, in fulfillment of Rebbe Nachman's advice.

Led by R' Elyakim Getzel, a descendant of Rebbe Nachman, a group of *ovdim* (devotees) would gather at midnight and go down to the river to immerse, breaking the ice to use the river as a *mikvah*. Their greatest worry was finding the hole in the broken ice again in order to re-emerge from the water. They would take along bundles of straw and make fires on the riverbank so they would not freeze when wet. Afterward, they

would spend many hours in *hitbodedut* in the forest before returning to town in time for the morning prayers.

One icy night, even colder than the usual sub-zero Ukrainian temperatures, nearly everyone in the group was unwilling to go out to the forest. Only R' Elyakim Getzel and R' Hirsch Leib Lippel ventured forth. With gusting winds piling the snow several feet high, eventually R' Hirsch Leib could no longer keep pace and retreated. R' Elyakim was the only one to forge ahead, performing his devotions alone in the forest (*heard from R' Hirsch Leib Lippel*).

\* \*

R' "Shabsi" Breslover awoke very early and was one of the first to arrive in synagogue every morning, even in the freezing Ukrainian winters – and even when he was in his mid-eighties!

When asked about it, he said it would certainly be easier for him to stay in bed under the covers in the early morning in such freezing temperatures. "But when I wake up," he explained, "I hear a voice telling me to remain in bed and go back to sleep. I ask myself, 'Who is telling me this? Why, it is my evil inclination!' Then I reflect, "But he is as old as me, and he's already on the job! So I jump out of bed right away and come to synagogue!" (*Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Rosen*).

*From "Against All Odds:*

*The Incredible Story of an American Chassid Who Broke Through the Iron Curtain*

*to Reach Rebbe Nachman's Grave in Uman"*