

Rebbe Nachman's kever stays in Uman

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December 8, 2011



In the last few years the issue of re-locating Rebbe Nachman's kever (grave) to Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel) has been bandied about a number of times. Usually, those who suggest the move are vociferous, well-meaning, but ignorant of Breslov tradition and, often, not even affiliated with Breslov in any way. Various reasons, many of them quite reasonable and sensible, are put forward as to why re-interring the Rebbe would be a good idea. More on this below.

However, I have yet to see in any article reporting on the proposed re-location a discussion, or even a mention, of the following:

1. Who owns the grave?
2. Who is responsible for the grave?
3. Where in Eretz Yisrael would it be re-located? Jerusalem (if so, which cemetery)? Meron? Tzfat?

What is most shocking is that the following point is totally ignored. What did Rebbe Nachman himself want in regard to his final resting place? Did he ever say where he would like to be buried? If so, did he give a reason? Or did it “just happen” that he died in Uman and so was buried in Uman?

Reb Noson, Rebbe Nachman’s closest and foremost disciple, writes the following in his autobiography, *Yemei Moharanat* (§66; emphasis added):

“[The Rebbe] was buried on Wednesday, the fifth day of Sukkot. Countless times in his life we heard from his holy mouth that he chose to be buried in the city of Uman. He told many people that he thought Uman was a good place to be buried because of the many martyrs there. This is why he moved to Uman a half-year before his passing. God helped him and ‘does the will of those who fear Him’ (Psalms 145:19). [The Rebbe] came in peace and was laid to rest in the place prepared for him from the Six Days of Creation, to engage there in fixing the world (tikkun haolam) for generations, for anyone who comes to him there and says the [Tikkun HaKlali], per his guarantee.”

This is echoed in a number of chapters of *Chayei Moharan* (translated as *Tzaddik*), just a few of which I will quote here.

“He was buried the next day, Wednesday, in the place he chose for himself while alive ... He thought it good to be buried in Uman because there had been a great sanctification of God’s Name there ... and because of the martyrs....” (§191).

“Many times he [Rebbe Nachman] told me [Reb Noson] and many

others, how good it would be to be buried there" (§217 [end]).

So, on one hand it is quite clear that Rebbe Nachman wanted to be buried specifically in Uman, specifically in the cemetery with the martyrs. On the other hand, Rebbe Nachman did mention that he had thought of being buried elsewhere, Lemberg (Lvov, Ukraine) and Eretz Yisrael? Nu? So doesn't it make sense, now that Jews from all over the world travel to Eretz Yisrael, millions of Jews live in Eretz Yisrael and the overwhelming majority of Breslov Chassidim live in Eretz Yisrael that Rebbe Nachman should be in Eretz Yisrael?!

The answer to that is again, what did the Rebbe himself want? In addition to the above "written Torah" which states clearly that his ultimate choice was to be buried in Uman, "the place prepared for him from the Six Days of Creation," there is "oral Torah," a *mesorah* (oral tradition) that Rabbeinu zal wanted to remain buried in Uman *until the coming of Mashiach*.

Now the reasons we mentioned two paragraphs ago are good and there are other good reasons we could add. But since Rebbe Nachman wanted to remain buried there until Mashiach arrives, he certainly also had good reasons. And just as his reasoning was far superior to ours, his reasons are far superior to ours. To put it a bit more succinctly and bluntly, one Rebbe Nachman is smarter than a million of his chassidim (and other Jews) combined.

In fact, there was a very good opportunity to bring Rebbe Nachman to Eretz Yisrael during the presidency of Jimmy Carter. The local government wanted to build an apartment building on the site of the cemetery. Through the yeoman efforts of many of the great contemporary rabbis and Agudas Yisroel of America, the issue was raised at a meeting between then President Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. *Baruch Hashem* (thank God) the cemetery and Rabbeinu zal's

kever were saved.*

In one of the strategy sessions that the rabbis had in deciding on how to deal with the crisis, Reb Moshe Feinstein, of blessed memory, said to Reb Michel Dorfman, of blessed memory, "Perhaps this is a good opportunity to bring the Rebbe *zal* to Eretz Yisrael?" Reb Michel, representing the elders of Breslov and the Breslov community answered, "We have a *mesorah* that Rabbeinu *zal* is to remain there till Mashiach comes."

The *mesorah* Reb Michel mentioned was common to all the Breslover leaders of that time: Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender, Reb Shmuel Shapiro, Reb Eliyahu Chaim Rosen and Reb Tzvi Aryeh Rosenfeld. It is the *mesorah* of the Breslover leaders of today, Reb Yaakov Meir Schechter, Reb Tzvi Cheshin, Reb Moshe Kramer (no relation to Breslov Research Institute director, Reb Chaim Kramer).

Those privileged with the responsibility of bearing and transmitting a *mesorah* do not tell us what *they* think or want. They tell us *what Rabbeinu zal said and wanted*. And we Breslover Chassidim tell the world what the Rebbe wants: **until Mashiach comes, Rebbe Nachman's *kever* stays in Uman.**

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*One of my colleagues was closely involved in this episode. God willing he will one day share the details with the general public.