

Superhuman Strength

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After the Israeli War of Independence, when access to the Kotel (Western Wall) was cut off by the Jordanians, Breslover chassidim in Yerushalayim would spend Thursday nights at the tomb of King David on nearby Mount Zion. There, they would recite the Tikkun Chatzot (Midnight Lament), spend time in hitbodedut, and study Torah until sunrise. One time, Reb Shmuel Shapiro and Reb Shmuel Tchetchik were overheard discussing Rebbe Nachman's tziyun (gravesite) in Uman.

"Do you mean there is actually a chance that in our times, one can travel there?" Reb Tchetchik asked Reb Shapiro.

"One has to pray," replied Reb Shapiro.

"I have already prayed so much that I have no more words left," said Reb Tchetchik.

“At the very least, you should recite the prayer composed by Reb Yitzchak Breiter,” Reb Shapiro said.

“First one has to remember to carry the prayer around with him!” Reb Tchetchik retorted.

Reb Shapiro looked at Reb Tchetchik in shock. “What? You don’t know that prayer by heart? I recite it every single day!”

Reb Shmuel Shapiro’s greatest desire was to visit Rebbe Nachman’s tziyun. In 1970, he traveled to America to get a special stateless passport so he could apply for a visa to Russia. Even with this so-called “white passport,” it took nearly three years to obtain a visa, but finally he succeeded. Not satisfied with the one trip, he longed to spend Rosh HaShanah by the Rebbe’s tziyun.



Rebbe Nachman’s tziyun in Uman

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In the last decade of his life, Reb Shmuel suffered from Parkinson’s disease and was confined to a wheelchair.

Nevertheless, in 1988, shortly before his passing, he was asked if he wanted to join the Rosh HaShanah pilgrimage despite the physical challenges. He immediately replied, "My entire life, I invested superhuman efforts into reaching Uman. Now that people want to wheel me there, should I refuse to let them?"

Reb Shmuel made it to the Rebbe's tziyun that year, and the most incredible thing happened. Reb Michael Dorfman and Reb Moshe Burstein, two Breslov elders, were dancing hand in hand near Reb Shmuel's wheelchair. All of a sudden, Reb Shmuel got up on his own two feet, walked over to them, and grabbed their hands. For fifteen minutes straight, he joyfully danced with them. Those who witnessed this were astonished. Reb Shmuel explained, "Rebbe Nachman himself gave me abilities beyond nature!"