

The Burnt Book

written by Chaim Kramer
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While Rebbe Nachman left us many original and practical teachings, he ordered one of his works to be burned. This was the *Sefer HaNisraf*, “the Burnt Book.”

In 1807 Rebbe Nachman called his main disciple and scribe, Reb Noson, to his room to continue the transcription they had begun over two years earlier. Reb Noson writes:

“I sat with the Rebbe for several hours. He dictated the work word by word, and I wrote. All the other chassidim waited outside. When I finally came out, I scarcely knew the difference between day and night. Even though I had no idea what I had written, the little distant glimmer of understanding I had of the awesome greatness of this work filled me with such fire and passion that I hardly knew where I was in the world.”

But he would never have the chance to study it. In 1808, when the Rebbe was critically ill in Lemberg, he told his disciple, Reb Shimon, that he had a decision to make: either he had to burn the book, or else die in Lemberg. The answer seemed obvious to Reb Shimon, but the Rebbe hesitated, because he, and only he, knew of the exaltedness of the teachings contained in the book.

Finally the Rebbe said, "If that is the case, here is the key to my drawer. Go quickly! Hurry! Don't delay! ... Go as fast as you can to Breslov. When you get there, take two books – one of them is lying in my drawer, the second is in my daughter Adil's chest. Take them and burn them. But for God's sake, be as quick as you can!"

Reb Shimon ran out to hire a coach. When he reached Dashev, not far from Breslov, he suddenly fell ill and was bedridden. He ordered that he be carried out to the coach and laid inside. As soon as the coach arrived in Breslov, his health returned. He took the two books (the original and Reb Noson's copy) and burned them both.

Reb Noson concludes, "The Rebbe said this book would not come into the world again. We lost something that will never return. The Rebbe said that this book had to be burned, and his other work, the *Likutey Moharan*, would be the one to be printed and spread throughout the world."

[From "Through Fire and Water: The Life of Reb Noson of Breslov"](#)