

The First Two Rubles

written by Chaim Kramer
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For the first Rosh HaShanah after Rebbe Nachman's passing, about sixty chassidim traveled to Uman, where they were welcomed into the Shomrim LaBoker synagogue. The Breslovers prayed there for ten years until 1821, when there was simply not enough room anymore.

Next they prayed in the house of a Reb Mordekhai, and although he passed away, his family invited them to carry on holding their Rosh HaShanah services there. But the group outgrew Reb Mordekhai's house as well, and moved from place to place as their Rosh HaShanah gathering continually expanded.

Finally Reb Noson realized they had no choice but to build their own *kloyz* (synagogue). He came to Ladizin to rally support from the Breslovers there. A certain Reb Mendel told him, "Reb Noson, if you don't build our own shul, you won't

have accomplished anything.” Reb Noson knew this to be true, and he right away said to Reb Mendel, “If so, you be the one to start the mitzvah – give a contribution towards the building.”

Reb Mendel earned his meager living with the work of his own hands. He ran home, took two rubles – his entire savings – and brought them to Reb Noson.

Knowing how poor Reb Mendel was, Reb Noson refused to take the money. Reb Mendel started crying. He pleaded with Reb Noson to have pity on him and not deprive him of the great merit of being the first to contribute for such a worthy cause. Reb Noson could no longer refuse.

Reb Mendel’s self-sacrifice for the mitzvah was the firmest possible foundation for the *kloyz*, and Reb Noson was now certain it would be built. When he later visited the wealthy Breslovers in Tcherin, he told them about Reb Mendel’s contribution. “This poor man gave me everything he could. You match it!”

Reb Noson said later, “With those two rubles, I built the *kloyz*!” He once commented, “We should ask ourselves if it was the money of the wealthy that built the shul or the yearning of the poor man to see the job done. It would be fair to say that it was the yearning of the poor that built the shul!”

From “Through Fire and Water: The Life of Reb Noson of Breslov”