

# The Road to Uman # 1

written by breslov.org

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As the summer days pass, Breslover Chassidim and others who heed Rabbi Nachman's clarion call are making preparations for the annual Rosh Hashanah pilgrimage to Uman, Ukraine, where Rabbi Nachman is buried. However, many people wonder why this event is such a "big deal." How do we even know that this is what Rabbi Nachman wanted? This classic story from *Tovos Zichronos*, oral histories preserved by Rabbi Avraham Sternhartz – a great-grandson of Reb Noson, grandson of the Rav of Tcherin, and one of the foremost Breslover gedolim of the twentieth century – sheds light on these issues, while lending chizuk and inspiration to those who aspire to undertake the long and sometimes arduous journey.

This unedited translation belongs to the Breslov Research Institute (BRI), which commissioned me to do a collection of such translations for the forthcoming revised edition of "Uman, Uman, Rosh Hashanah," a practical guide for travelers to the Breslover Rosh Hashanah Gathering in Uman. It is posted here by the kind permission of Rabbi Chaim Kramer, director of BRI.

That winter [in 1811, following Rebbe Nachman's passing], as the month of Shevat approached, Reb Noson began to yearn to travel with at least a minyan to the Rebbe's tziyun (grave site) in order to pray there on Erev Rosh Chodesh. This month is one of the four "Rosh Hashanahs" mentioned in the Mishnah, and the Rebbe had declared, "Gohr mein zakh is Rosh Hashanah . . . My entire mission is Rosh Hashanah." Therefore, Reb Noson wanted to use this opportunity to encourage the other Breslover Chassidim to start thinking about traveling to Uman for Rosh Hashanah the coming Tishrei, concerning which the Rebbe had spoken so urgently prior to his last Rosh Hashanah.

Reb Noson succeeded in persuading a few fellow Chassidim in the town of Breslov to join him on the journey. There were no trains to take in those days; so he hired a coach and horses and arranged to pay the driver by the day. The driver agreed to go wherever he was told, even if Reb Noson wished to go to Uman in a roundabout way, or to spend the night in one of the villages. When they had travelled only a mile or so from Breslov, Reb Noson instructed the driver to turn toward the village of Sidkovitz, and not to take the usual route through Heisen. No one in the coach understood what Reb Noson had in mind, including the driver, but the latter had to oblige in keeping with their agreement. They arrived in Sidkovitz when it was almost time for the Minchah prayer.

A Breslover Chassid lived in this village, a follower of Rabbi Shmuel Isaac of Dashev, who had come to Uman to be with Rebbe Nachman on his last Rosh Hashanah. Reb Noson told the group that there they could daven Minchah. When they came to this man and he saw Reb Noson and the other Breslovers at his door, he was so happy that he immediately covered the dining table with his best tablecloth and lit candles as on the Shabbos in honor of his distinguished guests, particularly Reb Noson. Full of joy, he placed a bottle of spirits and a bottle of wine on the table, as well as cakes and sweets.

After they concluded the Minchah prayer, they saw that it was still possible to continue on to the next village and spend the night there. However, Reb Noson told the Chassidim, "We have a 'business partner' here in the inheritance that was left to us. Nu, we must talk things over with him, so that he should know what a lucrative business this is!"

To be continued...

(Tovos Zikhronos, pp. 129-130)

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May Hashem provide all of the travelers to Uman this year and

every year with all of their needs, materially and spiritually; protect them all both coming and going; inspire them and enable them to make a new start in avodas Hashem; and bless them, their families, and all Israel to be “written and sealed for the good, amen!”

By Rabbi Dovid Sears

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