

# What Is Breslov?

written by Yossi Katz

January 7, 2014

Breslov is the name of the town in the western Ukraine where Rebbe Nachman spent most of the last eight years of his life, and which gave its name to the Chassidut that he founded. One can travel to Breslov today and get a good feel for what it was like to live there in the early 1800s. Aside from a few square meters of cracked asphalt and several telephone and electrical wires, the town looks exactly as it did during Rebbe Nachman's lifetime.

Breslov is sometimes transliterated as Bratslav or Braclav; it should not be confused with Bratislava in Czechoslovakia or Breslau (Wroclaw in Polish) in Poland. Breslov is situated on the Bug River midway between Nemirov and Tulchin, in the area previously known as Kaminitz-Podolia.

It was usual for Chassidic groups of Eastern Europe to take their name from the name of the town where their rebbe and leader lived. When Rebbe Nachman first settled in Breslov in 1802, he said that his followers would always be known as Breslover Chassidim. This is the case today, even though Breslov is now a worldwide movement and there are no known Breslover Chassidim in the town of Breslov itself.

Those who study gematria, the system of assigning numerical values to Hebrew letters, find that the name Breslov suits the Breslov movement to a T. Rebbe Nachman once pointed out that the name BReSLoV has the same letters as the Hebrew words LeV BaSaR (the Hebrew letters "samekh" and "sin" are interchangeable).

LeV BaSaR is the "heart of flesh" every Jew should have, as in the prophecy of Ezekiel: "I will take away your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). Indeed, Rebbe Nachman's teachings have the unique power to turn a "heart of

stone" into a caring, feeling "heart of flesh."

Additionally, the name BReSLov has the same gematria (294) as NaChMaN BeN FeIGA (Nachman the son of Feiga), the Rebbe's Hebrew name and matronymic. It's as if the town was waiting for its Rebbe to arrive and, from there, spread light and knowledge to the entire world.