

## **Breslov Minhagim / Customs and Spiritual Practices**

### **Elul-Chanukah**

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### **Elul**

Most Breslevers Chassidim in Eretz Yisrael recite the prayers of *Yom Kippur Katan* every month on Erev Rosh Chodesh. (The three exceptions are the times when those who fast refrain from doing so: Erev Rosh Chodesh Cheshvan, Teves, and Iyar; see below re. Iyar.) However, even those who do not observe *Yom Kippur Katan* every month recite the prayers on Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul and Nisan. In addition, many Breslover Chassidim travel to Meron on Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul in order to recite the *Yom Kippur Katan* prayers beside the grave of the holy Tanna, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai.

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The Rebbe encouraged his followers to recite the *Tikkunei Zohar*, as well as additional prayers and supplications, during the month of Elul. It is also customary to remain in the synagogue and *Beis ha-Medrash* learning Torah later than usual at night. The Rebbe said, "The *niggun* with which the *Tikkunei Zohar* is recited, and the strain and fatigue produced by staying late in the *Beis ha-Medrash*, are all made into great and lofty things on high."

(*Sichos ha-Ran* 294)

\*

Reb Noson praises the custom of reading the entire *TaNakh* during the days of Elul and Tishrei, finishing on Hoshanah Rabbah.

(See '*Otzar ha-Yirah, Teshuvos ha-Shanah, Elul*)

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However, not everyone can do this. Once, while recovering from surgery, Reb Elazar mentioned that he hoped to complete the Rebbe's *Sippurei Ma'asios* before Rosh Hashanah. This is an example of how we must adjust our goals to our abilities and circumstances at every stage of life, and how more modest *'avodahs* are also meaningful.

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Breslover Chassidim recite Psalm 27 ("*Le-Dovid HaShem Ori*") immediately after *Tachanun*, or after *Shemoneh Esreh* when there is no *Tachanun*, prior to *Kaddish*. This seems to have been a regional custom, which is also observed by the Chassidim of Chernobyl-Skver.

(As to the source of this *minhag* in general, *Matteh Ephraim* cites *Midrash Shocheh Tov*, 27, that "*ori* [my light]" alludes to Rosh Hashanah, "*yishi* [my salvation]" alludes to Yom Kippur, and "*ki yitzpineni bi-sukkah* [For He will hide me in His shelter]" alludes to Sukkos. However, the *minhag* of reciting Psalm 27 daily during these weeks seems to have originated during the late 17<sup>th</sup> century; see Rabbi Nochum Greenwald, "*Yachsam shel Gedolei ha-Chassidus le-Sefer Chemdas Yamim*," *Kovetz Heichal ha-Baal Shem Tov*, vol. II, 2 [Brooklyn, NY 2004], p. 56. Rabbi Greenwald cites Rabbi Borukh Katz that *Sefer Shem Tov ha-Katan* [Salzburg 1705] by Rabbi Binyamin Beinisch Hakohen seems to be to be the earliest written source for this *minhag*.)

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Reb Noson *darshans* on the common custom to sound the Shofar every day at the end of Shacharis from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Erev Rosh Hashanah.

(See *Likkutei Halakhos, Birkhas ha-Re'ah* 5:18)

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It is customary to recite additional *Tehillim* during Elul and Ten Days of Repentance.

(*Likkutei Moharan* II, 73. According to the *mesorah* of Chabad-Lubavitch, this also was the custom of the Baal Shem Tov, who would recite three chapters a day until Yom Kippur, when he would finish the rest of *Tehillim*; cf. *Sefer Minhagim-Chabad*, Elul, p. 54 ff. citing *Kovetz Mikhtavim le-Tehillim*, p. 207. *Matteh Ephraim* 581:8 cites the widespread custom of reciting ten chapters per day beginning on Rosh Chodesh Elul, so that one completes *Sefer Tehillim* twice before Rosh Hashanah, and one more time during the '*Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*'; similarly Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira of Munkatch, *Darkhei Chaim vi-Shalom, Chodesh Elul*, 687.)

## Selichos

*Selichos* for Ashkenazim follow the Polish *minhag*. As the *Shulchan Arukh* stipulates, they are recited on the days prior to Rosh Hashanah, and throughout the 'Aseres Yemei Teshuvah until Erev Yom Kippur. Sefardim begin reciting *selichos* immediately after Rosh Chodesh Elul.

(*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 581:1. Reb Noson mentions this custom in *Likkutei Halakhos, Devarim Haba'im be-Seudah* 4:3; *Matanah* 5:20)

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In the passages that begin "E-l Melekh yoshev..." the *nusach* of the ARI *zal* is say "u-misnaheg ba-chassidus," adding the connecting letter *vav*, rather than "misnaheg," as in most printed texts. When asked about this custom, Reb Elazar replied, "It is not a difficult thing to do, and it does not require a kabbalistic *kavanah* [which might be beyond the ken of the average person] – so why not do it?" This reflects a general rule regarding the ARI *zal*'s customs.

(See Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Etz Chaim, Sha'ar ha-Selichos* 8, citing *Zohar* III, 228a, and *Tikkunei Zohar, Hakdamah*, 11c. Cf. *Siddur ARI Rav Shabbsai; Likkutei MaHaRiCH* III, p. 601; *Sefer Minhagim-Chabad*, et al.)

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The ARI *zal* recited *vidu'i* only once during *selichos* (although he did not omit the paragraphs between the other two repetitions of *vidu'i*), while the more common *minhag* is to recite it three times. Reb Elazar once remarked that most Breslovers probably follow the common *minhag*, adding "and for some of us, that's still not enough!" He explained that each time we recite the *vidu'i*, we should do so with greater sincerity.

(For the custom of the ARI, see Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Etz Chaim, Sha'ar ha-Selichos* 8 [end]; similarly the GRA, cited in *Sha'arei Rachamim*; Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira of Munkatch, *Darkhei Chaim vi-Shalom, Chodesh Elul*, 703; *Sefer Minhagim-Chabad*, et al. Re. the threefold recitation of *vidu'i*, see *Likkutei MaHaRiCH* III, p. 602, citing the *Baal ha-Roke'ach, Minhagim*, and *Levush*; also see the Butchatcher Rov, *Eishel Avraham, Orach Chaim* 581.)

## **Khof Elul**

The twentieth of Elul is the *Yahrtzeit* of Reb Avraham Sternhartz (1862-1955), grandson of the Tcheriner Rav, great-grandson of Reb Noson, and teacher of Reb Gedaliah and numerous other Breslover Gedolim. An orphan, Reb Avraham was raised by the Tcheriner Rov, and during his youth met all of the living *talmidim* of Reb Noson, including Reb Moshe Breslover. He was *Ba'al Mussaf* and *Ba'al Tokei'a* for many decades in Uman, and served as Rav of Kremenchug until he escaped the U.S.S.R. at the height of the Stalinist purges, arriving in Yerushalayim in 1936. Reb Avraham immediately became a key figure in the Yerushalayim community, attracting many *talmidim*, and soon established the Rosh Hashanah *kibbutz* in Meron. After his *histalkus* in 1955, Reb Gedaliah devoted himself to carrying on his revered teacher's legacy.

In Eretz Yisrael, *se'udos* are held in Reb Avraham's honor on the evening of Khof Elul. During the afternoon, Reb Elazar and a group of *talmidim*, among others, travel to Har Menuchos in Yerushalayim to recite Tehillim and pray beside Reb Avraham's *kever*. In *chutz la'aretz*, many Breslover Chassidim also light a candle, give *tzedakah*, share a *se'udoh* in his honor, and learn some of his teachings from *Tovos Zichronos*, etc.

(After Reb Avraham's *histalkus*, Reb Gedaliah published his teacher's *Tovos Zichronos*, Breslover *mesorahs* related to the first ten lessons in *Likkutei Moharan*, together with the Tcheriner Rov's *Yerach ha-Eisanim*, *chiddushim* on *Likkutei Moharan* related to Rosh Hashanah, and Reb Avraham's *Imros Tehoros* on the importance of traveling to *tzaddikim*, particularly Rabbi Nachman, for Rosh Hashanah. Some of Reb Avraham's letters were published by Reb Noson Zvi Kenig of Bnei Brak as *Rinas Tzion*. A scholarly biography of Reb Avraham is being prepared for publication in the near future by Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn of Jerusalem.)

### **The Rebbe's Rosh Hashanah: Introduction**

The Rebbe once declared: "*Gohr mein zach is Rosh Hashanah . . . My entire mission is Rosh Hashanah.*" He was particularly emphatic about his followers coming to him for Rosh Hashanah, and indicated on his last Rosh Hashanah in Uman that we should continue to do so even after his death.

(*Chayei Moharan* 403-406; *Likkutei Moharan* I, 211; *ibid.* II, 94; *Kuntres "Ha-Rosh Hashanah Sheli,"* citing numerous additional sources.)

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There is a Breslover saying: Everyone proclaims "*Ha-Melekh*" on Rosh Hashanah – but the coronation is in Uman!

(Rabbi Shmuel Horowitz, *Tzion ha-Metzuyenes, Hakdamah*)

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Reb Avraham Sternhartz possessed a tradition that Reb Noson once remarked, "Even if the road to Uman were paved with knives, I would crawl there – just to be with Rabbi Nachman for Rosh Hashanah!" This is also cited by Reb Avraham ben Nachman Chazan.

(*Tovos Zichronos*, p. 137; cf. *Kokhvei Ohr, Anshei Moharan*, 3 [Jerusalem 1983 ed.] p. 69)

\*

Reb Noson also said, "Whoever comes to Rabbi Nachman's burial place in Uman for Rosh Hashanah has a share in hastening the Redemption"

(*Kokhvei Ohr, Anshei Moharan*, 4 [Jerusalem 1983 ed.] p. 69)

\*

The Rebbe once told his followers: "Whether you eat or you don't eat, whether you sleep or you don't sleep, whether you *daven* or you don't *daven* [i.e. with proper concentration] – just make sure that you are with me for Rosh Hashanah!"

(*Chayei Moharan* 404)

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Rabbi Nachman promised: "I have already looked after the traveling expenses of my people who come to me for Rosh Hashanah – and also their expenses for the return trip." He also added, "*Bie mir, hott nokh keiner nisht derlaygt . . . With me, nobody has lost out yet!*"

(Cf. *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* II, 27, 28)

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In 1917, when the Breslover Chassidim of Poland were prevented from traveling to Uman due to the Bolshevik revolution, they wrote to Rabbi Shimshon Barsky in Uman, asking if they could establish their own *kibbutz*, or gathering for Rosh Hashanah. Reb Shimshon told them that he would consult Rabbi Avraham Sternhartz on this important question. Eventually the two Breslover elders assented to the establishment of a Breslover *kibbutz* in Lublin for Rosh Hashanah, which for a time was hosted by Rabbi Meir Shapiro in the Chakhmei Lublin Yeshiva. However, this gathering was meant as a temporary measure, not as a substitute for going to Uman. "The Rebbe's Rosh Hashanah is only in Uman," they cautioned. With these words, Reb Avraham and Reb Shimshon reiterated the central importance of going specifically to the *tzaddik* on Rosh Hashanah. The Lubliner *kibbutz* became a precedent for other such Breslov gatherings in the decades to come, when the "Iron Curtain" closed on Uman and the Ukraine.

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From the mid-1930s until the late 1980s, it was virtually impossible to travel to Uman (with only a few rare exceptions to this rule, documented elsewhere). Therefore, Breslover Chassidim would gather in various core communities in order to pray together on Rosh Hashanah and not forget the *'inyan* of "The Rebbe's Rosh Hashanah" entirely. As time passed, some well-meaning individuals in Eretz Yisrael developed the rationale that it was enough to pray with other Breslover Chassidim on Rosh Hashanah. They felt that the Breslover *kibbutz* in Yerushalayim had effectively replaced Uman. They justified this by arguing that the *kibbutz* need only be in a *shul* that was *nikra al shemo*, i.e. that bore the Rebbe's name. Others misinterpreted certain statements in Breslover *seforim* about reciting *Tikkun ha-Klalli*, etc., near the grave of the *tzaddik* on Erev Rosh Hashanah, taking these remarks to mean that being with the *tzaddik* on Erev Rosh Hashanah was the main thing. However, Reb Avraham had brought proofs that a Breslover Chassid must actually go to the *tzaddik* in order to be with him on Rosh Hashanah, and everything else is secondary. The question was: if one cannot go to Uman, is there any alternative?

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Soon after Reb Avraham Sternhartz was *'oleh* to Eretz Yisrael, he and his initial group of *talmidim* began to travel to Meron for Rosh Hashanah, in order to pray near the grave of the holy *Tanna* and author of the *Zohar*, Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai. Reb Avraham first went to Meron on Zayin Adar 5696 / 1936, one week after his arrival in the Holy Land. He entered the chamber where Reb Elazar ben Reb Shimon is buried, paused, and then declared to those accompanying him: "Since it is impossible to go to Uman for Rosh Hashanah, this is the place that *alleh unzerer leit* [all

Breslover Chassidim] should be *kovei'a* to *daven*." Due to Arab uprisings in the region, it was impossible to go to Meron for Rosh Hashanah until 5700 / 1939, so Reb Avraham remained in Yerushalayim and *davened* in the Churva Shul of Rabbi Yehudah he-Chassid. Thereafter, Reb Avraham and his *talmidim* traveled to Meron for Rosh Hashanah with determination, regardless of physical hardship.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn, in the name of Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn)

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Given the deep connection between the Rebbe and Reb Shimon, which pervades all of Breslov literature, Reb Avraham understood that one who cannot go to Uman to be with the Rebbe should go to Meron. To be sure, Reb Shimon is called the "*tzaddik yesod 'olam*." Moreover, based on numerous *mesorahs* from Reb Noson's *talmidim*, it was Reb Avraham's conviction that through Reb Shimon, one may spiritually bind himself to the Rebbe and his *tikkunim*.

(These ideas are presented by Reb Avraham in his *Kuntres "Imros Tehoros*," printed together with his oral traditions, *Tovos Zichronos*, and formalized by Rabbi Shmuel Moshe Kramer of Jerusalem, *Kuntres "Chadi Rabbi Shimon*." This work provides a number of historical precedents for Breslover Chassidim going to Reb Shimon on Rosh Hashanah; also see *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* I, 234, "*Ksav Yad ha-Rav mi-Tcherin*," regarding the connection between Rabbi Shimon and the Rebbe. Reb Avraham ben Nachman states: "Our entire hope for the imminent Final Redemption in these times, which are the 'heels of the Moshiach,' is through the *tikkunim* of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and the Rebbe, of blessed memory, which they accomplished on the day of their passing from the world." He also states: "Through our rejoicing and our love and our unity as a result of our connection to the soul of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai – through this specifically we derive the ability to draw and receive from the '*Nachal Novea*' ["Flowing Brook," a euphemism for the Rebbe]..." cited in *Chadi Rabbi Shimon*, p. 4.)

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Two weeks before his *petirah* on 20 Elul 5715 / 1955, Reb Avraham Sternhartz told Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender that he was experiencing *simanei gesisah*, and was afraid that he might not make it to Meron for Rosh Hashanah. Despite his mortal illness, he still burned with longing to be with the *tzaddik* for Rosh Hashanah.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

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Reb Elazar Kenig pointed out that because of Reb Avraham's clear *da'as*, the *'inyan* of traveling specifically to the *tzaddik* was not lost. After Reb Avraham's passing, Reb Gedaliah Kenig and Reb Avraham's other *talmidim* carried on his legacy by continuing to go to Meron for Rosh Hashanah. They did so with *mesirus nefesh*, and did not exchange the *'inyan* of *kibbutz*, which is secondary, with the *'inyan* of *tzaddik*, which is primary. Many decades later during the late 1980s, through HaShem's great kindness, it again became possible to travel to the Rebbe's *tziyun*. The same questions were still a source of heated debate. Not everyone initially agreed that the *'olam* should travel from Eretz Yisrael and all points on the globe in order to be in Uman on Rosh Hashanah. However, eventually these confusions and ideological conflicts subsided, and today the Uman gathering is bigger than ever.

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Unsure if he would be able to go to Uman or Meron, someone from Brooklyn, NY, once asked Reb Elazar Kenig if it would be better to pray on Rosh Hashanah with a living *tzaddik*, such as another Rebbe, or if he should *daven* with the local Breslov *minyán*. Reb Elazar replied that if one were prevented from going to Uman or Meron, G-d forbid, it would be better to *daven* in a local Breslov *minyán* on Rosh Hashanah. At least this would be an expression of the desire to go to the Rebbe for Rosh Hashanah. Yet a committed Breslover should not opt for this except when there is no other choice.

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Similarly, Rabbi Aharon Waxler once asked Reb Gedaliah if he was unable to travel to Meron for Rosh Hashanah and remained in Yerushalayim, should he *daven* in the Breslover *shul*, or at the *Kosel*, or elsewhere. Reb Gedaliah told him that in such a case, he should *daven* in the Breslover *shul*.

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In Reb Gedaliah's day, it was extremely hard to go to Uman, due to the Soviet bureaucracy. Israeli citizens were refused admission altogether. Therefore, some Breslovers resorted to obtaining false passports and visas, etc. However, Reb Gedaliah would not make use of such documents, and criticized this entire approach.

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Zeitlin)

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He also said that it is forbidden to violate the smallest *issur de-rabbanan* to go to Uman, or even to trim one's beard in order to appear more presentable to the authorities, etc. Rather, one should go

to the Rebbe in a manner that befits a religious Jew, who looks like a religious Jew and behaves like a religious Jew.

(Heard from Rabbi Shmuel Tukatzinsky)

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*Borukh Hashem*, most of these issues are no longer relevant for those who travel to Uman today. But they were concerns that loomed to Breslover Chassidim large not so long ago.

### **Seder ha-Yom: Erev Rosh Hashanah**

One should arrive well before the *selichos* of Erev Rosh Hashanah ("*Zekhor Bris*"), and leave soon after Rosh Hashanah. "*Zekhor Bris*" is an important part of the *hakhanah* to Rosh Hashanah. This reflects the drawing forth of illumination preliminary to the revelation of the light itself, a concept that pervades the writings of the ARI *zal*.

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For kabbalistic reasons, Reb Gedaliah was particular that the *Ba'alei Tefilah* and *Ba'alei Toke'a* should arrive at least three day early.

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In Uman, the lengthy *selichos* of "*Zekhor Bris*" begin at 3:30 AM. Many go to the *mikveh* prior to this. Following the conclusion of *selichos*, one washes one's hands for *Shacharis*, and then *davens ki-vasikin*. After *Shacharis* most of the 'olam performs *hatoras nedorim*.

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If one has the strength, it is proper to fast on Erev Rosh Hashanah. However, most Breslovers do so only until noon.

(*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 581:2; *Kokhvei Ohr, Anshei Moharan, "Yesodos ha-'Ikkariyim,"* 34 [p. 79]; cf. *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* II, 565)

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It is customary to recite *Tikkun ha-Klalli* on Erev Rosh Hashanah, preferably beside Rabbi Nachman's gravesite. One should do so even if one is not in Uman.

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Once on Erev Rosh Hashanah in the morning, Reb Noson's son, Reb Yitzchok, did not feel well. Therefore he asked his father if he could eat something before going to the Rebbe's *tziyun*, in order to have the strength to express himself with greater fervor. Reb Noson told Reb Yitzchok to do the best he could – as long as it was before breaking his fast.

(See *Kokhvei Ohr, Anshei Moharan, "Yesodos ha-'Ikkariyim,"* 33 (p. 79); cf. *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* II, 565, for a slightly different version of this oral tradition.)

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For a certain period while the Rebbe was alive, on Erev Rosh Hashanah the Chassidim recited *vidu'i devarim* (confession of sins) in his presence. Today one does so at the Rebbe's *tziyun*, in keeping with the principle that "the *tzaddikim* after death are called 'living' " (*Berakhos* 18a). One should recite the confession verbally (although not audibly to others), trying to detail one's sins

and transgressions as far back as one can remember, and ask HaShem for forgiveness and the chance to make a fresh start in life. As a result of this *'avodah*, one may hope and be assured that the Rebbe, like a living teacher, will guide him along the path of *teshuvah*, according to the root of one's soul.

(Confession is a basic part of *teshuvah*; see *Yoma* 35b-37a; *Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Teshuvah* 1:1-2, et al. The specific *tikkun* of *vidu'i devarim* in the presence of a *tzaddik* is discussed in *Likkutei Moharan* I, 4. There it states that the *tzaddik* who has attained total self-nullification like Moshe Rabbeinu can bring about the cleansing of sin. The Tcheriner Rav, *Parpara'os le-Chokhmah*, ad loc., mentions the custom of reciting *vidu'i* at the Rebbe's *tziyun*. However, even one who cannot go to the Rebbe's *tziyun* may also be *zocheh* to a degree of this *tikkun* by reciting confession *be-hiskashrus* to the *tzaddik* wherever he may be; see *Likkutei Tefilos* I, 4 [in more recent editions, subsection 32, et passim].)

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This guidance may be reflected in the advice one subsequently receives from one's living Breslover teachers, or in other ways, *be-hashgochah protis*. This is implicit in *Likkutei Halachos, Shluchin* 5, and elsewhere.

\*

Someone once asked Reb Elazar about the origin of the custom to remove one's leather shoes when standing near the grave of a *tzaddik*. Reb Elazar explained that this is an expression of *yirah*. The Torah states that when Moshe Rabbeinu drew near to the *sneh* (Burning Bush), he was told to remove his shoes. This is evidently the source of this custom, which is followed by many Russian and Ukrainian Chassidim, including those of Chernobyl, Skver, Lubavitch, and Karlin-Stolin. Reb Elazar speculated that it may have once been followed by Breslover Chassidim. However, if we once had such a *mesorah*, it seems to have been lost. Moreover, the area surrounding the Rebbe's *tziyun* no longer has the status of a *beis ha-chaim*, and in recent years a *shul* has been built next to it. People wear their shoes there, as in any public place. Therefore, when the questioner asked if one should remove his shoes at the Rebbe's *tziyun*, Reb Elazar answered in the negative, adding that as a rule, one should avoid doing things that look strange to other people. Yet we should have the same *yirah* that lies at the root of this *minhag*.

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Reb Avraham Sternhartz used to recite *Likkutei Tefillos, Tefillah* 13, on Erev Rosh Hashanah. (This *tefillah* is based on *Likkutei Moharan* I, 13, one of the Rebbe's major Rosh Hashanah lessons.)

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The Rebbe said that on Erev Rosh Hashanah, one should give a *pidyon nefesh*, an unspecified amount of *tzedakah* appropriate to the individual's financial circumstances. The main rule in determining how much to give is that minimally it should be an amount that one feels is significant – that is, one should feel the "pinch." For one person, this may be \$5, for another, \$5,000 or more. It is also proper to write a *kvittel* with one's name and mother's name, as well as those of family members and others. In the Rebbe's day, the *pidyon nefesh* was given to him personally. Today it is given to a Breslover elder or teacher. It is customary to write the *kvittel* on plain white paper.

(See *Sichos ha-Ran* 214)

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The Rebbe once said, "Other *tzaddikim* wish they had a Rosh Hashanah like our Erev Rosh Hashanah..."

(*Imros Tehoros*)

### **Seder ha-Yom: Rosh Hashanah**

The Rebbe taught that by traveling to the *tzaddik* for Rosh Hashanah, the "head of the year," one attains purification of thought. This, too, mitigates harsh judgments. However, he added, we must use wisdom on Rosh Hashanah and think positive thoughts – for what we think about on Rosh Hashanah is potent.

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 211; *Sichos ha-Ran* 21)

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It is a Yerushalayimer custom to wear a white *caftan* on Rosh Hashanah, both by day and by night. In recent years, this has also become the prevailing Breslover custom in Uman and Meron. Those who do not wear a Yerushalayimer *caftan* wear a *kittel*, as on Yom Kippur. However, Breslover Chassidim of previous generations did not wear a white *caftan* or *kittel* on Rosh Hashanah.

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After the conclusion of Ma'ariv on the first night of Rosh Hashanah, it has become customary for the *mispallelim* to wish one another: "*Le-shanah tovah tikaseivu ve-seichaseimu le-alter le-chaim tovim u-le-shalom, be-sifran shel tzadikkim amitiyim!*" (However, those who find it difficult to say all this stick with the shorter version: "*Le-shanah tovah tikaseivu ve-seichaseimu.*")

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On the first night of Rosh Hashanah, we refrain from singing or dancing, since this is the most intense time of judgment. This restriction is observed until after the first *tekiyos*.

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The Rebbe said that one should limit one's speech on Rosh Hashanah. Therefore, it is proper to refrain from small talk, and concentrate on words of Torah and *tefillah*, each person according to his ability. Many Breslover Chassidim do not engage in any casual speech at all on the first night, when the heavenly judgment is most severe. Some maintain silence until the second day after Musaf. Still others restrict themselves until the end of Rosh Hashanah. In any case, one should be extremely careful in matters of speech on Rosh Hashanah (as well as at all times).

(See *Sichos ha-Ran* 21)

*Evening Meal:* After Kiddush and "*ha-motzi*," one dips the *challah* in honey, beginning on the first night of Rosh Hashanah and continuing until the end of Shabbos Bereishis.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

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Reb Gedaliah dipped the *challah* first in salt and then in honey.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

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In keeping with the *minhag* mentioned in the *Gemara* and *Shulchan Arukh*, Breslover Chassidim are accustomed to say a "*yehi ratzon*" on each of the various *simanim tovim* at the beginning of the meal. This is done on both nights.

(*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 583:1; also see *Darkei Moshe*, ad loc., citing Maharil; Abudarham, *Seder Arvis shel Rosh Hashanah*, pp. 265-266; Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos*. The *Gemara* mentions this custom in *Horayos* 12a and *Kerisos* 6a.)

\*

Shortly after "*ha-motzi*" and prior to the other *simanim*, one dips a slice of apple in honey and asks HaShem for a "*shana tovah u-mesukah*," a good and sweet year. The "*yehi ratzon*" is recited after tasting the apple, to avoid a *hefsek*.

(*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 583:1, RaMaH; *Mishnah Berurah*, ad loc., s.k. 3. This is the prevailing custom in most communities today. However, cf. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, *Shulchan Arukh ha-Rav, Orach Chaim* III-IV, *Hosafos: Kiddush le-Rosh Hashanah*, which mentions the custom of Chabad to recite the "*yehi ratzon*" after the *berakhah*, but before tasting the fruit. A precedent for this may be found in *Ma'agley Tzedek*, an old commentary on the *machzor*, which states that this was the common *minhag* in sixteenth century Poland, White Russia, and Lithuania.)

\*

Reb Noson *darshans* on the custom of eating a slice of apple dipped in honey on Rosh Hashanah, relating this to various mystical themes.

(See *Likkutei Halakhos, Netilas Yadayim* 6:93-96; *Simanei Behemah ve-Chayah Tehorah* 4:45-46; *Devarim ha-Yotziyim Min ha-Chai* 2:5, 4:45)

\*

Reb Avraham used to make various wordplays in Yiddish during the Rosh Hashanah meal. While eating *reyterlakh* (radishes), he would say "*rehd ehrlikh* (speak sincerely)!" While eating *zeyerlakh* (sour pickles), he would say "*zei ehrlikh* (be sincere)!" While eating *beitzim* (eggs), he would say "*beyt em* (supplicate Him)!"

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig)

*Shacharis*: It is an old Breslover custom for the entire 'olam to clap when the *shaliach tzibbur* intones "Ha-Melekh" toward the end of *Pesukei de-Zimra*, at the end of "Keser Melukhah," and at a few other points in the service. This is an expression of our joy at participating in the "coronation" of HaShem (so to speak).

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender states that on Rosh Hashanah and during the 'Aseres Yemei Teshuvah in Uman, the *Shir ha-Ma'alos* after *Yishtabach* was recited all at once, not responsively verse by verse. This was a regional *minhag*, which is still observed by Skverer Chassidim, among others. Similarly, after *Ma'ariv* during the *Yomim Nora'im*, it was customary to recite *Li-Dovid Mizmor* all at once, not verse by verse. However, today in Uman and Meron both psalms are recited verse by verse, as in most communities.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 230)

\*

In the passage from *Shemoneh Esreh* that begins "U-vekhein tein pachdekha," the ARI *zal* omitted the word "ki'mo" that precedes "sheyad'anu." However, in Uman and Meron, the *minhag* followed by the *shaliach tzibbur* is to say the word "ki'mo," as printed in most *machzorim*.

(For the view of the ARI *zal*, see Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos, Drushei Rosh Hashanah, Drush* 6. The *nusach* "kimo" is supported by *Tur, Machzor Vitry*; also see *Likkutei MaHaRiCH* III, p. 612.)

\*

The *minhag* followed by the *shaliach tzibbur* in Uman and Meron is to say "ki-'ashan," not "bi-'ashan," during the *Shemoneh Esreh*.

(*Siddur Rav 'Amram Gaon; Kol Bo; MaHaRiL; Matteh Moshe; Siddur ha-RaMaK; Minhagei ha-GRA; Shulchan ha-Tahor-Komarno; Siddur Magen Avraham-Slonim*; et al. Alternatively, the *nusach* "bi-'ashan," based on *Tehillim* 37:20, is supported by *Abudarham, Siddur ha-Ya'avetz; Pri Chadash; Siddur ha-Rav Baal ha-Tanya; Siddur Tefillah Yesharah-Berdichev; Chayei Adam* 139:3; *Matteh Ephraim; Ru'ach Chaim; Kavannos ha-RaSHaSH*; et al. This is one of the rare instances in which Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira of Munkatch resorts to a double expression, saying both "bi-'ashan" and "ki-'ashan"; see *Darkhei Chaim vi-Shalom, Rosh Hashanah* 711, ff. 10; also *Likkutei MaHaRiCH* III, p. 613.)

*Tashlich*: One should recite *tashlich* at the end of the first day of Rosh Hashanah if possible, and not wait until later during the 'Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. The ARI *zal* states that it is preferable to perform *tashlich* on the outskirts of town. The Rebbe used to go to the Bug River in Breslov.

(Re. the ARI *zal*, see Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos, Drushei Rosh Hashanah*, 90b)

\*

In Meron, Reb Avraham Sternhartz used to walk down the steep hill from the synagogue atop Rabbi Shimon's grave to Megiddo. Once in his later years, he could not walk back up the hill, so one of the younger men carried him on his shoulders. On another occasion, Reb Avraham simply stopped part of the way, and delivered his Rosh Hashanah lesson from *Likkutei Moharan* by heart on the hillside, right then and there.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

\*

In Uman, *tashlich* is recited beside the reservoir down the hill from the New Kloiz. The entire body of water is surrounded by many thousands of Chassidim.

\*

On the second night of Rosh Hashanah following *tashlich*, it is customary for various Breslover teachers to give *shiurim* in *Likkutei Moharan*. This is when the Rebbe delivered his Rosh Hashanah lesson every year.

\*

In Meron, Reb Gedaliah was the only one who learned for the 'olam. Only after he was *niftar*, and everyone was confused, did multiple *shiurim* start. Reb Elazar did not begin learning in the *heichal* near Reb Shimon on Rosh Hashanah until several years later, but only downstairs in the dining area; and by that time the new *minhag* was already established. However, in Yerushalayim they always had multiple *shiurim*.

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Shapiro and Rabbi Dovid Zeitlin)

\*

*Motza'ei* Rosh Hashanah: After the conclusion of Ma'ariv of *Motza'ei* Rosh Hashanah, the Chassidim join hands and dance. This *rikkud* usually concludes with the Yiddish song: "*Tirer brieder, hartziger brieder, ven vellen mir zich vieter zehn? Ven vellen mir zich vieder zehn? Az Gott veht geb'n gezondt un lebben – vellen mir zich vieter zehn . . .* Dear brothers, beloved brothers, when will we see each other for longer? When will we see each other again? When G-d will give health and life – then we will see each other again!" This custom was started by Rabbi Yonah Lebel.

(This song may be heard on the "Listen" page of this website.)

\*

In Uman, Chassidic *klezmerim* and other musicians play until the early hours of the morning, and the *'olam* dances with great *hislahavus*. This takes place at several locations simultaneously, and the atmosphere is extremely joyous.

### **Shabbos / Rosh Hashanah**

Reb Gedaliah said in the name of Reb Avraham, "One does not recite '*ki-gavna*' when Shabbos falls on Rosh Hashanah. However, if one spends Rosh Hashanah in Meron, one does say '*ki-gavna*.' This is because it is a *shtickl* from the *Zohar*..." -- and Meron is the burial place of Reb Shimon bar Yochai, who authored the *Zohar*. The same rules apply when Shabbos comes immediately after Rosh Hashanah.

(Heard from Rabbi Shmuel Tukatzinsky)

\*

Rabbi Meir Wasilski, Gabbai of the Breslov Shtibel in Borough Park, also confirmed that it is not our custom to recite *ki-gavna* when Shabbos coincides with Rosh Hashanah or Yom Tov (besides in Meron).

\*

When Rosh Hashanah coincided with Shabbos, Reb Gedaliah would recite "*Shalom Aleikhem*" quietly. Then he would sing "*Eishes Chayil*" aloud, in the usual manner.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig, Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig, and Rabbi Ephraim Kenig)

### **'Aseres Yemei Teshuvah / Ten Days of Repentance**

Throughout the *'Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, Reb Noson did not eat or drink until after mid-day (*chatzos ha-yom*). He also mentions this practice in *Likkutei Halakhos* in the name of the Rebbe. However, Reb Elazar cautioned that not everyone is physically capable of emulating the Chassidim of previous generations who fasted during these days. "The main thing," he stressed, "is to be able to fast on Yom Kippur." This is a *mitzvah d'oreisa*. Therefore, one must carefully consider whether fasting prior to Yom Kippur will jeopardize his ability to do so on Yom Kippur itself.

(See *Kokhvei Ohr, Anshei Moharan*, 34 [p. 79]; *Likkutei Halakhos, Hilchos Rosh Hashanah* 2:8)

\*

During the *'Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*, the Breslover custom is to conclude "*Elokai netzor*," the paragraph after *Shemoneh Esreh*, with the words "*'oseh shalom*," and only to say "*'oseh ha-shalom*" at the end of Kaddish.

(*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 240)

\*

Reb Noson *darshans* on the custom to repeat the word "*le'eilah*" during the recitation of Kaddish throughout the *'Aseres Yemei Teshuvah*.

(*Likkutei Halakhos, Devarim Haba'im be-Seudah* 4:6.)

### **Erev Yom Kippur**

On Erev Yom Kippur, Reb Avraham Sternhartz used to immerse in the *mikveh* three times: once before *kaporos*, prior to *Shacharis*; once before *Minchah*; and once before *Kol Nidrei*.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

\*

During the *se'udah ha-mafsekes* after *Minchah*, Reb Gedaliah would say the "*yehi ratons*" after partaking of the head of a fish and various *simanim tovim*, as on the nights of Rosh Hashanah.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

## Yom Kippur

In Yerushalayimer circles, it is customary for married men to wear a black *rekel* and a white *caftan* on Yom Kippur, with the *rekel* draped over the shoulders. The only times these garments are worn together are at one's *chasunah* and on Yom Kippur, since the two holy days are comparable to one another. This was Reb Gedaliah's *minhag*, and is also the custom of the Tzefas community. (Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig)

\*

Reb Noson mentions the custom for each person to light a 24-hour candle prior to Yom Kippur. (*Likkutei Halakhos, Matzranos* 3:12)

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender received a tradition that the melody to which Breslover Chasidim customarily sing "*Ya'aleh Tachanuneinu*" on Yom Kippur evening comes from the Baal Shem Tov. (The Chabad melody seems similar to that of Breslov, therefore both may have a common origin.) (*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 243)

\*

When Yom Kippur or Rosh Hashanah fall on Shabbos, it is not customary to prostrate oneself during " *'Aleinu*" or the *sefer ha-'avodah*. This applies both to the *tzibbur* and the *chazzan*. (*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 244)

\*

In Tzefas on *Motza'ei Yom Kippur*, *Kiddush Levanah* is recited after *Havdalah* and breaking the fast. Reb Elazar added that it would be make sense to recite *Kiddush Levanah* after everyone had gone home and eaten a *se'udah*, thus to perform the *mitzvah* with greater *simchah*. However, because this would be impractical, we do so while everyone is still in *shul*. (See RaMA on *Orach Chaim* 624:5, and *Mishnah Berurah*, ad loc. s.k. 15, that one should be *be-simchah* on *Motza'ei Yom Kippur*.)

\*

The *Shulchan Arukh* states that immediately on *Motza'ei Yom Kippur*, it is customary to begin to work on the *sukkah*, even if only by speaking about it. Reb Noson explains that this is because after Yom Kippur, when all of our sins are forgiven, we are in the state of purity required to build a *sukkah*.

(*Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 624:5, Rama, end; cf. Maharil, *Minhagim*, Mahari Weill, et al. Reb Noson speaks of this in *Likkutei Halakhos, Sukkah* 2:1; also see *ibid. Sukkah* 1:1, 3:1, 5:1, and 6:1, et passim.)

## Yom Tov

The Rebbe taught that by honoring the festivals and by celebrating them joyously, with delicacies and fine clothes, according to one's means, one attains *'anavah* (humility) and thus may receive the light of the *tzaddikim*.

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 135)

\*

Reb Gedaliah would buy some new article of clothing, however small (such as a new *yarmulke*, etc.) in honor of the Yom Tov.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man)

\*

The Rebbe also taught that by giving *tzedakah* before the festival, one is enabled to see through the illusion of nature and experience the true joy of Yom Tov.

(*Likkutei Moharan* II, 4:6)

\*

Reb Gedaliah told his *talmidim* to recite *Likkutei Tefillos* before each Yom Tov.

(Heard from Rabbi Noach Cheifetz and Rabbi Yaakov Moshe Schneck. A collection of excerpts from *Likkutei Tefillos* on Shabbos and the Yomim Tovim is available, published as *Tefillos le-Zemanei ha-Shanah*.)

\*

Reb Avraham used to say, "*Ich kum 'oleh regel zein tzu Yerushalayim drei mohl a yohr . . .* I make the pilgrimage to Yerushalayim for Yom Tov three times a year: I go to Meron for Zayin Adar and then return to Yerushalayim for Pesach; I go to Meron for Lag Ba-'omer and return to Yerushalayim for Shavuos; and I go to Meron for Rosh Hashanah and return to Yerushalayim for Sukkos."

(Heard from Rabbi Shmuel Tukatzinsky. This does not mean that Reb Avraham stayed in Meron until the coming festival, but only that he had the festival in mind when he returned home to Yerushalayim. Therefore it was as if he was *'oleh regel* to Yerushalayim on each occasion.)

\*

Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn pointed out that this accords with the words of the *Zohar* in *parshas Bo*: On the verse "Three times a year all of your males shall be seen before the Master, Hashem," the *Zohar* states, "This is RASHBY (Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai)." [Editor: In other words, because the *tzaddikim* are called "*anpei Shekhinta* (faces of the *Shekhinah*)," entering their

presence is comparable to appearing before Hashem.] Therefore, Reb Avraham was *'oleh regel* to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron, and then returned to Yerushalayim to fulfill the *'inyan* of *'aliyas ha-regel* in the classical sense.

### **Esrog / Arba'ah Minim**

The Rebbe greatly praised those who exert themselves to buy a beautiful *esrog*, adding that there are profound mystical reasons for this custom.

(*Sichot ha-Ran* 125; cf. Reb Noson's attentiveness to this *hiddur mitzvah* mentioned in *Yemei Moharnat*, Letters 91, 269, 322, 437, and 472)

\*

Nevertheless, Reb Gedaliah cautioned that a poor person should not spend beyond his means for an *esrog*. Often he would wait until Erev Yom Tov in order to buy an *esrog* after the prices had dropped.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig)

\*

Reb Gedaliah considered the beauty of an *esrog* to be more important than its *yichus*, since in any case there is no such thing as a *vadai bilti murkav*, but only *be-chezkas bilti murkav*. This was not an unusual attitude, but reflected the prevailing view of Yerushalayimer Poskim. Accordingly, one should look for a clean *esrog* with as many *hiddurim* as possible, even if it does not have a special *yichus*.

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Shapiro. From a historical perspective, the issue of grafting first became debated in the mid-1800s in connection with *esrogim* from Corsica and elsewhere. Those from Eretz Yisrael were generally relied upon as *bilti murkav*.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah was more stringent about *hadassim*, and would often go to great lengths to buy the finest *hadassim*, which conformed to one of the larger *shiurim* of *meshuloshim*.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig)

\*

The *minhag* of the ARI *zal* for the *Arba'ah Minim* is to place one *aravah* (willow branch) on each side of the *lulav* with the three *hadassim* (myrtle branches) covering them, and to bind them together with leaves of the *lulav*. Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn of Yerushalayim remembered that Reb Avraham Sternhartz bound the *Arba'ah Minim* together according to the *minhag* of the ARI *zal*. Rabbi Michel Dorfman concurred.

(Heard from Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn and Rabbi Michel Dorfman)

\*

Rabbi Noson Barsky, son of Rabbi Shimon Barsky, also bound the *Arba'ah Minim* like the ARI *zal*. His father probably did so, too, but this is not certain.

(Heard from Rabbi Shimshon Barsky of Bnei Brak)

\*

Nevertheless, most Breslover Chassidim follow the more common custom of placing the three *hadassim* on the right of the *lulav* and the two *aravos* on the left. Reb Elazar remembered that his father used to tie the *Arba'ah Minim* with leaves of the *lulav*, simply tying knots, not making the leaves into rings; however, Reb Gedaliah did not arrange them according to the *minhag* of the ARI *zal*. Reb Elazar said that this probably reflected the general rule of avoiding doing things in public that are conspicuously different than the common practice.

(For the *minhag* ARI, see Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos*. Cf. Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein, *Kitzur SHELaH, Masekhes Sukkah* [Ashdod 1998 ed. p. 322). Although the latter is a major early source of kabbalistic customs and *hanhagos*, it nevertheless instructs the reader to arrange the *arba'ah minim* according to the common *minhag*, not according to that of the ARI.)

\*

Reb Elazar also pointed out that that in *Likkutei Halakhos*, Reb Noson sometimes *darshans* on *minhagim* of the ARI *zal*, while at other times he cites the local Ukrainian *minhagim* of his day. Thus, it is apparent that Reb Noson did not do everything according to the ARI *zal*.

\*

Reb Gedaliah said in the name of Reb Avraham that the top ring should be one *tefach* from the tip of the *lulav* itself -- not from the end of the *shedra*, as stated in *Shulchan Arukh Ha-Rav*, which is quoted in the *Mishnah Berurah*.

(Heard from Rabbi Dovid Shapiro)

\*

Reb Avraham tied three rings on the *lulav*, and two on the entire bundle. This was Reb Gedaliah's *minhag*, as well.

(Heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Kenig)

\*

Reb Gedaliah was particular to recite the *berakhah* over the *Arba'ah Minim* in the *Sukkah*, following the view of the ARI *zal*. Reb Noson also mentions this custom.

(See *Likkutei Halakhos*, *Rosh Hashanah* 4:8; *Umnin* 4:18)

\*

Reb Gedaliah performed the *nanu'im* according to the *minhag* of the ARI *zal*. This is the common custom in most Chassidic communities. That is, while facing east (or toward the Aron Kodesh), one waves the *arba'ah minim* to the right, left, front, up, down, and over one's shoulder, over one's back. Some turn while doing so. When waving the *minim* in the down position, one should nevertheless keep the *lulav* upright.

(See Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Eitz Chaim*. These directions correspond to the six *sefiros* of *Ze'er Anpin*. See the "Learn" page of this website, "Kavanah for Waving the Lulav.")

\*

Reb Avraham used to perform the *nanu'im* according to the *minhag* of the ARI.

(Heard from Rabbi Nachman Burshteyn)

\*

Reb Gedaliah did not ask others to allow him to perform the *mitzvah* with their *lulav* and *esrog* on the first day of Sukkos, as has been commonplace today. (Those who do so are concerned that they may not have fulfilled the *mitzvah* properly, due to some undetected *p'sul* that their *arba'ah minim* might possess.) This seems to reflect Reb Gedaliah's attitude that one must do his best, but not become obsessive, which can easily lead to *'atzvut*.

### **No'i Sukkah / Sukkah Decorations**

It is common practice among Breslover Chassidim to decorate the Sukkah. Most hang various fruits and other objects from the *s'khakh*, according to their family *minhagim*. There does not seem to be any *hakpeidah* to refrain from hanging things from the *s'khakh* due to *chumros*.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

Reb Gedaliah used to hang a pomegranate from the *s'khakh*, which he would save in the refrigerator until Pesach and, if it was still good, use it in the *charoses*. (Pomegranates were not usually available in Eretz Yisrael at Pesach time during those years.)

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

\*

He also had a family *minhag* to take an onion and put a few feathers into it and hang it from the *s'khakh*, as a *remez* to the *posuk*: "*Be-tzeyl kenafekhah yechesoyun . . . In the shadow of Your wings I take refuge.*" ("*Bet-zeyl*," meaning "in the shadow," is similar to the word "*batzel*," meaning "onion.")

\*

According to Reb Yossel Sofer, he did not use one of these feathers for *bedikas chometz*. His mother, Mrs. Mirel Sofer, stated that he did not use a feather at all for the *bedikah*.

\*

Reb Gedaliah also had a family *minhag* to hang a *magen Dovid* from the *s'khakh*. (Note that this predated the secular state of Israel and its choice of the *magen Dovid* as its symbol.)

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

## Ushpizin

It is customary to invite the *Ushpizin* / Holy Guests to join one in the Sukkah before each meal, both by night and by day.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

There does not seem to have been any particular *nusach* for inviting the *Ushpizin*, just what is stated in the *nusach Sefard machzor*.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn. The first part of this *zimun* is derived from *Zohar* III, 103b.)

\*

It would seem that Breslover Chassidim follow the order by which the seven *Ushpizin* correspond to the seven lower *sefiros*: Avraham-*Chesed*, Yitzchak-*Gevurah*, Ya'akov-*Tiferes*, Moshe-*Netzach*, Aharon-*Hod*, Yosef-*Yesod*, and Dovid-*Malkhus*. This assumption is supported by Rabbi Avraham b'Reb Nachman's remarks connecting the day of the Rebbe's *histalkus*, which is the fourth day of Sukkos, to Moshe Rabbeinu, the fourth of the *Ushpizin*. It is also supported by common practice.

(See *Kokhvei Ohr, Chokhmah u-Binah* 35, with note 43, ad loc. Neither *Siddur ARI Rav Asher* nor *Siddur ARI Rav Shabsai* specifies the order of the *Ushpizin*. However, *Siddur ARI Kol Yaakov* redacts the Ashkenazic order, which mentions Yosef fourth instead of Moshe. *Siddur Tefillah Yesharah-Berditchev* and *Siddur Ohr le-Yisrael*, both of which were popular in the Ukraine, similarly follow the Ashkenazic order. Nevertheless, virtually all Chassidim today mention Moshe as the fourth of the *Ushpizin*. This reflects the view of the *ARI zal* and *Siddur SheLaH*, as cited in *Likkutei MaHaRICH*, vol. III, *Seder Chag ha-Sukkos*, p. 684.)

## **Chol ha-Moed**

Breslover Chassidim follow the view of the ARI *zal* and Baal Shem Tov, based on the *Zohar* and many Rishonim, not to wear Tefillin on *Chol ha-Mo'ed*. Reb Noson also mentions this in *Likkutei Halakhos*.

(Re. the Baal Shem Tov, see: *Imrei Pinchos* 751; *Shivchei Baal Shem Tov* 6; *Shulchan ha-Tahor [Komarno]*, *Hilchos Tefillin* 31:1. Re. the *Zohar*, see *Zohar Chadash*, *Shir ha-Shirim*, 64b; also note Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos*, *Drushei Chazoras ha-'Amidah*, *Drush* 2, 38b. Rishonim who take this position include: *Tosefos* on *Menachos* 36b; *Teshuvos ha-Rashba* and *Ra'avad*, as cited in *Shulchan Arukh*, *Orach Chaim* 31:2. Cf. *Likkutei Halakhos*, *Tefillin* 6:4; *ibid.* *Chol ha-Moed* 1:3.)

\*

Reb Elazar once told someone from an Ashkenazic background that for a Breslover Chassid, it is *assur* to put on Tefillin on *Chol ha-Mo'ed*, despite any family *minhag* to the contrary. Evidently this is due to the deep connection between the *Zohar* and the Rebbe's *derekh*.

\*

It is proper to wear Yom Tov clothing on Chol ha-Mo'ed.

\*

As in most communities, on Shabbos Chol ha-Mo'ed Sukkos, *Sefer Koheles* is recited prior to *kriyas ha-Torah*, while on Shabbos Chol ha-Mo'ed Pesach, *Shir ha-Shirim* is recited. Reb Noson mentions this in *Likkutei Halakhos*.

(See *Likkutei Halakhos*, *Netilas Yadayim* 6:100)

\*

When Yom Tov and Chol ha-Mo'ed coincided with Shabbos, Reb Gedaliah did not sing the usual Shabbos *zemiros*, except the three *zemiros* of the ARI. Before Kiddush on Friday night, he would recite "*Shalom Aleikhem*" as always, followed by "*Eishes Chayil*" (except on Rosh Hashanah, when he would recite "*Shalom Aleikhem*" quietly).

### **Rabbi Nachman's Yahrzeit**

On the second day of *Chol ha-Moed* Sukkos, it is customary to commemorate the *yahrzeit* of our holy teacher, Rabbi Nachman ben Feige of Breslov, *zatzal*, by lighting a 24-hour candle and gathering with others in the Sukkah to share *divrei Torah*, sing, and participate in a *se'udah*, according to one's means. In larger Breslov communities, this event is usually held in the Sukkah of the local Breslov synagogue. Various speakers discuss the Rebbe's life and spiritual legacy, and say *divrei hischazkus*. The event concludes with a lively *rikkud*. It is also proper to study the Rebbe's teachings more than usual on the day of his *yahrzeit*.

Reb Noson's account of the Rebbe's final months in Uman and his *histalkus* may be found in *Chayei Moharan*, sec. 185-229. In Rabbi Avraham Greenbaum's English translation, "*Tzaddik: A Portrait of Rabbi Nachman*" (Breslov Research Institute) this material is presented in pp. 87-125. (Concerning the *Yahrzeit* of a *tzaddik*, cf. Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Likkutei ha-Shas*, *Berakhos* 11. The late Rabbi Aryeh Kaplan compiled "*Until the Mashiach*" (Breslov Research Institute 1985), a biography of Rabbi Nachman in English organized in the form of a dateline. After Rabbi Kaplan's death, Rabbi Dovid Shapiro completed this work.)

## Hoshanah Rabbah

On Hoshanah Rabbah the heavenly decree initiated on Rosh Hashanah is sealed. Therefore, this is a time of *teshuvah*. At night, is customary to remain awake until dawn. One recites the entire *Sefer Devarim* – or more commonly today, one listens to the *Baal Korei* do so.

\*

In Tzefas, they adopted the custom of reading *Sefer Devarim* publicly in recent years, since it is easier on the *tzibbur*. The reading of *Sefer Devarim* takes place immediately upon the conclusion of *Ma'ariv*. Then everyone goes home. After midnight, the men and older boys return to the synagogue to recite the entire *Sefer Tehillim*.

\*

However, Reb Gedaliah did not attend the public reading of *Sefer Devarim* on Hoshanah Rabbah night. Instead, he read it himself at home.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man)

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchak would come home from *shul*, eat the *se'udah* in his Sukkah, read *Sefer Devarim* privately, and then lay down for a little while. After this, he would arise at *chatzos* to recite *Sefer Tehillim*.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

During the early 1990s, the custom to read *Sefer Devarim* from a *Sefer Torah* in *shul* on the night of Hoshanah Rabbah began to become popularized in Me'ah She'arim and elsewhere in Yerushalayim. Although at first Rabbi Moshe Burshteyn resisted this change, it was nevertheless instituted in the Ohr Avraham *shul* in Katamon. As in the Tzefas community, this innovation was accepted because of practical considerations.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

The ARI *zal* also stresses the importance of *davenning be-kavanah* on Hoshanah Rabbah, since it is a time of judgment. This is one of the five times during the year when Breslover Chassidim are particular to *daven ki-vasikin be-tzibbur*.

(See Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavannos*, 'Inyan Sukkah, beginning; *ibid. Drush 6*)

\*

Reb Gedaliah wore a white *caftan* on Hoshanah Rabbah, as well as on Simchas Torah and every Yom Tov when there is an *'inyan* of *prishus*. These days include Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, First Day of Pesach, and Shavuot (although one does not wear white on Pesach morning, but only at night and by the Seder). Most Yerushalayimer communities do not wear white *caftans* at all of these times, although many do on Hoshanah Rabbah. Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender also followed the same custom as Reb Gedaliah, as did Reb Elyah Chaim Rosen and Reb Shmuel Shapiro. Therefore, it seems to be a Breslover *minhag*. However, today it is practiced on all of these Yomim Tovim only in the Tzefas community.

\*

In the Me'ah She'arim Breslov *kehillah*, white *caftans* are worn on Hoshanah Rabbah for Shacharis-Musaf, and some do not remove the *caftan* for the morning *se'udah*. However, they do not wear it all day.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

In *chutz la-aretz*, only the Baal Tefillah wears a *kittel* on Hoshanah Rabbah.

\*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender stated that it is not our *minhag* to recite "*Vi-se'arev...*" on Hoshanah Rabbah.

(Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh IV, 248)

\*

On Hoshanah Rabbah, it is customary to remove the top two rings on the *lulav* immediately prior to Hallel.

(Similarly cf. *Darkei Chaim ve-Shalom* [Munkatch], 791; *Minhagei Chabad*; *Minhagei Komarno*; *Minhagei Skver*; *Minhagei Gur*; et al. Some communities do so in the middle of Hallel, just before the *nanu'im*. However, Chernobyler Chassidim do not remove the rings at all.)

\*

It is not our *minhag* to blow the Shofar during the *hakafof* of Hoshanah Rabbah.

(As a rule, Russian and Ukrainian Chassidim do not observe this custom. Those who do include the communities of Munkatch, Satmar, and other Galitzianer and Hungarian Chassidim.)

### **Shemini Atzeres / Simchas Torah**

In one of his letters, Reb Gedaliah writes that on Shemini Atzeres in *chutz la-'aretz*, Reb Avraham Sternhartz would eat in the *sukkah* at night, but not sleep there. After *Shacharis*, he made *Kiddush* in the *sukkah* and ate some cake. Then he recited a *berakhah acharonah*, and washed for *ha-motzi*, which he also made in the *sukkah*. However, after eating some *challah*, he retired to the house to finish the meal. This seems to have been a regional custom, or a variation on the regional custom. It is unclear if Reb Avraham recited the prayer of farewell to the *sukkah* before retiring to the house to finish his *se'udah* or at some later time.

(Heard from Rabbi Yehudah Lichter, who possesses a copy of the letter originally written to the late Reb Shlomo Dovid Fried. *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 668:1 states that one should eat in the *sukkah* on *Shemini Atzeres* in *chutz la-'aretz*. However, Ukrainian Chassidim such as those of Skver-Chernobyl typically eat in the *sukkah* at night, then make *Kiddush* and eat some cake by day, after which they retire to the house to wash for the mid-day meal. The only difference between this custom and that of Reb Avraham is that he made "*hamotzi*" in the *sukkah*, as well. The Ukrainian custom seems to be a compromise between the *minhag* of the Baal Shem Tov, who did not eat in the *sukkah* on *Shemini Atzeres*, and the *Maggid* of Mezeritch, who did; for further discussion, see Rabbi Chaim Elazar Spira of Munkatch, *Minchas Elazar* IV, 31; *Eser Oros* 70b; *Minhagei* Beis Rizhin; *Minhagei* Skver-Chernobyl; et al.)

\*

However, Reb Levi Yitzchok Bender apparently disagreed with this *mesorah*, and stated that in Uman, all the *se'udos* of *Shemini Atzeres* were eaten in the *Sukkah*, and one bade farewell to the *Sukkah* during the late afternoon, before *Minchah*. Therefore, some *Breslover Chassidim* in *chutz la-'aretz* follow this custom.

\*

On *Shemini Atzeres* one does not recite the *berakhah* "*leishev ba-Sukkah*." Some no longer dip the *challah* in honey in order to "sweeten" harsh judgments. However, Reb Gedaliah continued to do so until the end of *Shabbos Bereishis*.

(Heard from Rabbi Elazar Kenig)

\*

On the morning of *Simchas Torah*, the '*olam* makes *Kiddush* in *shul* after reciting *Hallel*, prior to the *hakafos*.

\*

On Simchas Torah, Breslover Chassidim do not drink intoxicants (aside from the wine used for Kiddush, and maybe a "*le-chayim*" during the *se'udah*).

\*

Reb Levi Yitzchak Bender was particular that the *'olam daven* Musaf before the end of the seventh hour.

(Heard from Rabbi Avraham Shimon Burshteyn)

\*

Reb Noson expounds on the concept that Simchas Torah alludes to the ultimate goal of creation. At this time, an illumination is drawn into the world of the "Torah of the Hidden Ancient One" that will be revealed in the Messianic Age. This is why we conclude the *Sefer Torah* and begin reading it again, as well as why we dance in circles and rejoice. All of this alludes to the transcendent reality, which is compared to a circle, and which will then be openly perceived.

(*Otzar ha-Yirah, Teshuvos ha-Shanah, Elul-Rosh Hashanah-Yom Kippur-Sukkos* 89, citing *Likkutei Halakhos, Sukkah* 2)

## Chanukah

### Introduction:

The Rebbe states: "Through the *mitzvah* of the Chanukah lights, we come to recognize G-d's Glory, which is elevated and magnified throughout the world. Those who are distant from holiness are awakened to return to G-d; and we attain awe of G-d, peace in our homes, and the power of prayer. All strife and evil speech are nullified, and universal peace spreads through all of the worlds."

(*Likkutei Moharan* I, 14)

\*

He also states that through the *mitzvah* of lighting the Chanukah lamp, we internalize holy *da'as*, which is the awareness of G-dliness. This is the paradigm of "good oil," the paradigm of "remembrance." That is, through the Chanukah lights we are privy to "remember" the World to Come -- the transcendental realm that is the point of origin of the soul and its ultimate destination -- even in the midst of this world.

(*Ibid.* I, 54)

\*

The Rebbe states that by virtue of lighting the Chanukah and Shabbos candles, one will be worthy of having sons who are Torah scholars.

(*Sefer ha-Midos*, "Banim" I, 54)

## Chanukah Menorah

Reb Gedaliah Kenig was particular to use olive oil for lighting the Chanukah Menorah. This is the *mitzvah min ha-muvchar*, the optimal way to perform the mitzvah.

(See Rama on *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 673:1. However, wax or paraffin candles are also acceptable, as the *Shulchan Arukh* states.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah used to light inside the house below ten *tefachim*, but not near a door or window. He said, "Today the main *pirsumei nisa* is for ourselves and families." However, we have often seen Reb Elazar light in a doorway, opposite the *mezuzah*.

\*

He used a small silver Menorah with glass cups, not a large, elaborate Menorah, like various Chassidic Rebbes. There were years when he did not own a metal Menorah and used shot glasses instead.

\*

However, in recent years, Reb Elazar was given a large silver Menorah by one of his *talmidim*, which he lights publicly in Tzefas.

\*

Most Menorahs have an extra place for a ninth light set apart from the rest, called the "*shamash*." In addition, Reb Gedaliah would use a second *shamash*, a beeswax candle, to light the wicks. When finished, he would place it in a separate holder beside the Menorah. This reflects a *hiddur* in *halakhah*, since adding the light of the *shamash* prevents one from inadvertently making mundane use of the Chanukah candles.

(See *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 673:1 regarding the custom of lighting an extra candle)

\*

The conclusion of the blessing before lighting the Menorah is "*le-hadlik ner Chanukah*," in keeping with the custom of the ARI *zal*. The initial letters of these three words spell the Divine Name "*NaCHaL*" (literally "river" or "brook"). Reb Noson homiletically relates this to the "*Nachal Novea Mekor Chokhmah* (A Flowing Brook, the Source of Wisdom)," a euphemism for the Rebbe. (The initial letters of this phrase from Proverbs 18:4 spell the name "Nachman.")

(Cf. Rabbi Chaim Vital, *Pri Eitz Chaim, Sha'ar Chanukah*, chapter 4, which explains that this Divine Name brings about an outflow of the supernal light of *Binah* to *Ze'er Anpin*; Reb Noson relates this to "*Nachal Novea Mekor Chokhmah*" in *Likkutei Halakhos, Betzias ha-Pas* 5:27; *ibid. Kiddushin* 2:3)

\*

Reb Gedaliah did not wear Shabbos clothes while lighting the Chanukah Menorah (except on Erev Shabbos Chanukah and Motza'ei Shabbos Chanukah). However, some Breslovers wear a *bekitcheh* in honor of Chanukah.

(To refrain from wearing Shabbos clothes seems to have been the common custom of Russian and Ukrainian Chassidim, e.g. Skver-Chernobyl, Chabad, Karlin-Stolin, Boyan-Rizhin, et al. However, many Hungarian Chassidim wear a *shtreimel* and *bekitcheh* while lighting the Chanukah Menorah; see *Likkutei MaHaRiCH, Seder Dinei u-Minhagei Chanukah*, p. 718.)

\*

Reb Gedaliah would begin chanting "*Ha-neiros hallalu...*" after lighting the first candle, while the flame began to arise by itself.

(This reflects the view of the *Shulchan Arukh, Magen Avraham, Elyah Rabbah*, et al.; however, some begin "*Haneiros hallalu*" after the first candle is fully lit. Other communities, such as Chabad, Skver-Chernobyl, et al., follow the view of the *Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham*, et al., to begin after one finishes lighting all the candles; see *Likkutei MaHaRiCH, Seder Dinei u-Minhagei Chanukah*, p. 718.)

\*

After reciting "*Haneiros hallalu*," Reb Gedaliah would gaze at the lights in silence for approximately thirty minutes. He stated that this was the *minhag* of Reb Avraham.

\*

He would also sing *Ma'oz Tzur*, and recite *Vi-hi Noam* and *Yoshev be-Seser* seven times, followed by *Lamenatze'ach be-Neginos, Ana be-Koach*, and various *zemiros*. However, he always spent much time sitting and gazing at the lights in silence.

(The *minhag* to recite these psalms and *zemiros* is not unique to Breslev, but is common practice in many Chassidic communities; see *Likkutei MaHaRiCH, Seder Dinei u-Minhagei Chanukah*, p. 709.)

\*

Reb Noson *darshans* on the custom of singing praises to HaShem on Chanukah.

(See *Likkutei Halakhos, Birkhas ha-Mazon* 4:15)

\*

Reb Gedaliah would often learn *Likkutei Moharan* I, 3 ("*Akrukta*") at this time of year, although he sometimes chose a different lesson for Chanukah.

(Other Chanukah lessons include *Likkutei Moharan* I, 8, 14, 17, 30, 49; II, 2, 7, as well as *Sichos ha-Ran*, 40)

\*

Reb Gedaliah used to study the Rav Yaakov Emden Siddur and recite the *tefillah* printed therein before lighting the Chanukah candles. Reb Elazar does so, as well.

\*

Shabbos Chanukah was one of the three fixed times during the year when the Chassidim used to come to the Rebbe. In commemoration of this, many Breslover Chassidim today travel to Uman for Shabbos Chanukah. (However, the only time of year when it is obligatory for a Breslover Chassid to come to the Rebbe is Rosh Hashanah.)

\*

In Reb Noson's time, on Shabbos Chanukah the Chassidim came to him in Breslov, and did not travel to Uman. Once Reb Dovid Shapiro asked Reb Gedaliah about going to Meron for Shabbos Chanukah, and he replied, "*Ner Chanukah, Ish u-Veiso...*" That is, it would be preferable to remain with one's family.

\*

Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender states that on Erev Shabbos Chanukah in Uman, the Breslover Chassidim would *daven* Minchah with a *minyán* earlier than usual, prior to lighting the candles. (*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* IV, 255. This is consistent with *Shulchan Arukh, Orach Chaim* 679:1, 2; also see *Mishnah Berurah*, ad loc.)

\*

However the *minhag* of Yerushalayim, which is also the *minhag* of the Breslov community in Tzefas, is to light the Chanukah Menorah and Shabbos candles prior to *Minchah*, and then go to *shul*.

(*Kitzur SheLaH, Hilchos Chanukah*, s.v. "*Ve-yesh le-hazhir*" states that this is preferable to praying Minchah alone at home in order to maximize the time that the candles will burn. This custom probably reflects practical difficulties of going back and forth to the synagogue twice so close to Shabbos.)

\*

In any case, the Chanukah Menorah should be lit before the Shabbos candles, and the candles should burn until at least 30 minutes after *tzes ha-kokhavim* (about 90 minutes after sundown in America, and somewhat less in Eretz Yisrael).

(Mishnah Berurah on Orach Chaim 679:2)

\*

On Shabbos Chanukah, the psalms and *zemiros* usually recited and sung immediately after lighting the Menorah are sung during the evening meal.

\*

Shabbos Chanukah is also the main time that the Tzefas *chaburah* gets together to rejoice as a community, including sharing a communal Melaveh Malkah. This was the focal point of Chanukah for the *talmidim* of the Rebbe and Reb Noson, as well.

\*

The eight day of Chanukah is called "*Zos Chanukah*" after the daily Torah reading. After lighting the candles in the evening, the *yeshivah bochurim* in Tzefas share a communal meal, accompanied by singing, *divrei Torah*, and *rikkudim*. Rejoicing on "*Zos Chanukah*" is a *minhag* of the Baal Shem Tov observed by many Chassidim. However, the Tzefas Breslov *kehillah* does not do so as a whole. Rather, Shabbos Chanukah is the focal point of communal celebration.

(Cf. *Likkutei MaHaRiCH, Seder Dinei u-Minhagei Chanukah*, p. 714)

### **“Chanukah Gelt”**

It is customary to give extra *tzedakah* during the days of Chanukah. Reb Noson states that this is because during Chanukah, we are engaged in drawing the light of holy altruism into the world, as indicated by the verse “the tzaddik is beneficent and giving” (Psalms 37:21).

(*Likkutei Halakhos, Birkhas ha-Mazon* 3:16; also see *ibid.* 4:18; *Hashkamas ha-Boker* 4:15; *Chanukah* 2 and 3:6).

\*

Reb Gedaliah used to give “*Chanukah gelt*” to his children on the last night of Chanukah (“*Zos Chanukah*”). This is Reb Elazar’s custom, as well.

### **Khof-Tes Kislev / Fifth Day of Chanukah**

This is the *yahrtzeit* of Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman Chazan (1849-1817), son of Rabbi Nachman of Tulchin, who was the mainstay of the Uman community after Reb Noson's passing. Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman was fiery soul who spent most of his days in Torah study, meditation, and prayer. He authored *Bi'ur ha-Likkutim* on *Likkutei Moharan*, *Kokhvei Ohr*, Breslov oral traditions, and *Chokhmah u-Tevunah* on *Sippurei Ma'asiyos*. Reb Avraham Sternhartz and he were close friends, and it is said that Reb Avraham Sternhartz edited the manuscript of *Bi'ur ha-Likkutim*. Even after Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman moved to Yerushalayim, he would make the difficult and expensive journey back to Uman for Rosh Hashanah to pray near the Rebbe's *tziyun*.

In Yerushalayim and other communities a *se'udah*, accompanied by *divrei Torah* and spirited singing, is held in his honor in the evening, after lighting the fifth Chanukah light.

(Some biographical material about Reb Avraham b'Reb Nachman may be found in Rabbi Levi Yitzchak Bender's *Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh*, vol. III, pp. 169-210. In English, see Rabbi Chaim Kramer, *Crossing the Narrow Bridge*, pp. 423, 441.)

### **Nittel Nacht**

Like all Chassidim, Breslovers do not study Torah on "*Nittel Nacht*." Our custom is to refrain from doing so from *sh'kiah* until *chatzos* (although some Chassidic communities such as Skver and Chernobyl are more *machmir*). Ideally, one should go to sleep as early as possible and arise to recite *Tikkun Chatzos*. However, Reb Gedaliah stated that if one remains awake, it is permissible to read the Rebbe's *Sippurei Ma'asiyos*.

(Heard from Rabbi Chaim Man)

\*

Reb Noson and his *talmidim* used to play a certain game on *Nittel Nacht* by which they would cast some sort of cubes or dice on a board.

(Heard from Reb Elazar Kenig in the name of Reb Avraham Sternhartz)

\*

In the Ukraine and in Eretz Yisrael, *nittel* was observed in January. However, it is not clear if this applies to countries in which the prevailing practice is to observe *nittel* in December. Therefore, today's Breslover Chassidim follow different customs on this issue.

### **Reb Noson's Yahrtzeit**

On the evening of Asarah Be-Teves, Reb Noson's *yahrtzeit* is commemorated by lighting a 24-hour candle and sharing a communal meal. In some communities it is customary to read the description of Reb Noson's *histalkus* (passing from the world) from *Alim le-Terufah* (Jerusalem: Toras HaNetzach 2000 ed., pp. 913-918). It is also proper to study an additional portion of Reb Noson's teachings on his *yahrtzeit*, and to give *tzedakah* in his name according to one's means.

The Rebbe referred to Reb Noson as "my Yehoshua," and compared their relationship to that of the sun and the moon. Shortly after Reb Noson's arrival, he also remarked, "Now not another page of my teachings will be lost." Reb Noson is uniquely responsible for the survival of Breslover Chassidus until the present day. He edited all of the Rebbe's published works; and his original *seforim* include his eight-volume masterwork, *Likkutei Halakhos*, based on *Likkutei Moharan* and organized according to the topics in *Shulchan Arukh*; his collected prayers, *Likkutei Tefillos*; his diaries, *Yemei MoHaRNAT*; and collected letters, '*Alim le-Terufah*.

(For a biography of Reb Noson in English, see Rabbi Chaim Kramer, *Through Fire and Water*, Jerusalem: Breslov Research Institute. His *histalkus* is described in chapter 48.)

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We have tried our best to make certain that what we have written is correct. However, this is still a work-in-progress. Therefore, we welcome any additions or corrections from our readers that are based upon reliable sources. If you have any constructive comments, please send us an email: [meoreiohr@yeshivanet.com](mailto:meoreiohr@yeshivanet.com)

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