

[Wise stories \(click/hover to email for information\)](#)



Grandchild of Jewish Hasidism's founder, Nahman from Uman wrote creative folktales and parables with life guidance. Over a year, we'll read around/into these wise stories, letting them inspire writing exercises.

Designed and facilitated by Anna Morvern, this programme offers a way in to the study of wise stories with enduring applicability, anchored in a holy tradition of spiritual and practical guidance.

Later Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor, Elie Wiesel, in a 1967 lecture on Nahman's legends, described their power and relevance. Referencing the difficulties of travel in America on the snow-filled, wintery date of the in-person lecture, Wiesel could also have been alluding to the challenges of sharing these stories' teaching over the generations, an undeniable reality.

Nahman's writing is thought to have influenced Franz Kafka. And, like Kafka, Nahman ordered that much of his writing be destroyed rather than maintained after his death. However, a large number of stories survive thanks to his follower, Reb Noson, publishing them and sharing them.

"I can only approach teaching these mystical tales with significant humility, if I claim to be following in the footsteps of legends who have taught them, like Elie Wiesel," says Anna Morvern, "Yet not to teach them at all—these stories which I have nonetheless cherished since childhood—would be a useless practice of humility. So I continue to teach them, discovering new depths of richness within them in dialogue with my students."

It's true that Rabbi Nahman's stories may most often be shared in the single-sex study rooms of orthodox Jews, or within specialised literary studies within university programmes. However, they were arguably written with the widest audience in mind, to share kabbalistic learning with all.

Some of the questions addressed in Nahman's stories are:

- What happens if you find something of very great worth, and you lose it?
- How can a dream about the prior journey of the soul inform a person's self-development in this life?
- If we experience setback after setback, due to the actions of another, how can we stay strong and joyful?

Time: Sunday evenings, 7 PM British time (GMT). 2 June 2024 start date.

Length: Each session lasts one hour, with the first 30 minutes of group reading and discussion on Zoom, followed by a period for individual writing and the opportunity to share it on WhatsApp during the second half of the hour. Participants will therefore need to be able to access Zoom and Whatsapp. Bring pen and paper or electronic equivalent.

The programme will last for one year, but sign-up is for 5 weeks at a time. A minimum of four people is required for the course to run, and the maximum number is twelve.

Cost: The cost for 5 weeks is 50 GBP per person to be sent by PayPal or Bank Transfer (receipt will be issued), before end May for June start. [Email](#) to arrange payment, or for any further information. Initial dates: 2 June 2024, 9 June 2024, 16 June 2024, 23 June 2024, 30 June 2024.

Additional needs? If you have a disability, or are learning English as a foreign language, or have other needs, do not hesitate to communicate your needs in order to be able to participate.

Teacher bio: Anna Morvern has previously presented her work to the U.K. National Association of Writers in Education on facilitating writing projects with prisoners, using activist-linked writing with survivors of rape, childhood sexual abuse and trauma, and the writing of lament. Having lived and worked in America, Germany, Ireland, and the UK, she currently lives in France. A graduate of Oxford University, she holds the Open College Dublin QQI Level 5 Certificate in Creative Writing as well as qualifications in Modern Languages, Literature and Law and has been teaching writing in prisons and the community since 2012.

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