

The Prince and The Rooster

Remembering Rebbe Nachman, 1772 – 1810,
the Chassidic story master

I dreamed I ran into Rebbe Nachman in Detroit.
There was a wildness in his coal-black eyes,
from within a dark thatch of beard
that had overgrown his face.
He instructed me to take off my shoes daily
and walk through the grass.
He then told me that not too long ago
he had lost his mind
and thought he was a rooster.
Where was this? I interrupted.
California.
In my dream
Nachman told me the following story:
I took off all my clothes,
Nachman said, lived under a table,
wouldn't eat anything but grain and chicken food.
Then Prince the guitar player came,
took off all his clothes,
got under the table and began to act
like a rooster too. He said,
I'm Prince, the rooster, I promise I will never leave you.
We swore friendship to each other,
and slowly slowly, Prince began the healing.
He put on a shirt, I put on a shirt.
Prince said just because you dress like a human being
doesn't mean you have to cease being a rooster.
The next day we ate at the lunch counter in the bowling alley.
Prince ordered a tuna sandwich.
You gonna eat like a person too? I asked Prince.
You can eat like a human being and still be a rooster, Prince told me.
You can do anything and still be the rooster you are.
That's how it worked for me,
Rebbe Nachman said in my dream,
Prince saved me slowly slowly.
He taught me I can do anything
and still remain
the rooster
I am.

james stone goodman