

# Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Vayishlach*



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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## Torah Wellsprings - Vayishlach

### Help is from Hashem

The parashah begins with the words (32:4-6) "And Yaakov sent malachim before him to Eisav." Rashi writes, "מלאכים ממש", that he sent real angels to Eisav.

He told them, "So shall you say to my master to Eisav, כה אמר עבדך, 'Thus said your servant Yaakov, 'I have lived with Lavan, and I have tarried until now.'"

Rashi gives two explanations for the word גֵרִי. One meaning for this word is גֵר, a stranger. He was telling Eisav that he didn't become an officer or a dignitary. Yitzchak blessed him (27:29) "הוּהוּ גְבִיר לְאָחִיךָ", "You shall be a master over your brothers," and he told Eisav that this brachah didn't transpire. He was still a very ordinary person, a stranger (גֵר), and therefore Eisav didn't need to be jealous of him.

Rashi's second explanation is if one looks at the letters of גֵרִי they are identical to those of תְּרִי"ג, which refers to the number 613. He was saying that although he lived with Lavan, he kept all of the 613 mitzvos, and didn't learn from Lavan's evil deeds.

וַיְהִי לִי שׁוֹר וְחִמּוֹר... וְאֶשְׁלַחָהּ לְהַגִּיד לְאֲדֹנָי לְמַצָּא חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ, "I have acquired oxen and donkeys... I have sent to tell this to my master, to find favor in your eyes." "

The Noam Elimelech asks the following questions:

(1) Why was it necessary for Yaakov to send actual *malachim* to Eisav? Why couldn't he send human beings to Eisav?

(2) When Yaakov was giving over the message, Eisav wasn't present. Why did Yaakov say "To my master, to Eisav"? Why did he refer to Eisav as "master", when he wasn't around?

(3) Why did he tell the malachim, כה תאמר, "To my master, to Eisav." He could have said "לאדני עשו", "To my master Eisav?"

(4) Rashi's second explanation for גֵרִי is that he kept the תְּרִי"ג mitzvos. Why would he want to tell this to Eisav? It wouldn't appease him. On the contrary, the implication is that he is telling Eisav that he isn't afraid of him because he kept the Torah.

According to Rashi's first explanation, that he is a *ger*, a stranger, and he didn't become important, and the brachos weren't taking effect, we understand how this would placate Eisav, but how do we understand the appeasement according to the second explanation of Rashi?

(5) The Midrash Tanchuma says that וַיְהִי לִי שׁוֹר וְחִמּוֹר refers to Yosef and Moshiach. Yosef is called שׁוֹר (see Devarim 33:17), and חִמּוֹר refers to Moshiach, as it states (Zechariah 9:9) עֲנִי וְרוֹכֵב עַל חִמּוֹר, "humble, and riding a donkey."

This explanation is also difficult because it seems he was warning Eisav that he isn't afraid of him because he has the merits of Yosef and Moshiach on his side. How are such words לְמַצָּא חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ, to find favor in Eisav's eyes? How could such words appease him?

The Noam Elimelech explains that when tzaddikim speak, they can sometimes intend a prayer. Their words can have two meanings: one is the conversation they are holding with someone, and the other is a prayer to Hashem. This is what happened here. Yaakov had two intentions with his words. One intention was a message to give over to Eisav, and the second intention was a tefillah to Hashem.

This is the reason Yaakov said "לאדני עשו", with two "לאדני". He was sending a message to Eisav, and also "לאדני", he was davening to Hashem. When Yaakov said "כה תאמר" to

Hashem, Yaakov was saying that he kept the 613 mitzvos of the Torah, and he requested that this merit should protect him from Eisav. Likewise, when Yaakov said, וידי, לי שור וחמור, he was asking Hashem to save him in the merits of the tzaddikim Yosef and Moshiach who will descend from him. However, when these words were told to Eisav, there was a totally different intention. To Eisav, he implied that he remained an unimportant גר, and when he said that he has שור וחמור, it is as Rashi writes, "Father told me that I will receive מטל השמים ומשמני הארץ, the dew of the heavens and the fatness of the earth, but [I have animals, oxen, and donkeys] which are not from heaven and not from the earth." He was saying that the brachos didn't come unto him, and there was no reason for Eisav to be jealous.

The Noam Elimelech explains that this is why Yaakov had to send actual *malachim*. He intended for the *malachim* to raise his tefillah and bring it before Hashem.<sup>1</sup>

We can learn an important lesson from Yaakov Avinu's ways. Yaakov Avinu did *hishtadlus*; he tried to appease Eisav, but he combined this *hishtadlus* with tefillos because Yaakov Avinu knew well that his salvation was in Hashem's hands. It was in Hashem's power to make peace between him and Eisav, as it states (Mishlei 16:7) ברצות ה' דרכי איש גם אויביו ישלם אתו, "When Hashem accepts a person's ways, He will cause even his enemies to make peace with him." He knew that he wouldn't succeed on his own. All his kind words and the gift he sent to

Eisav wouldn't have helped without Hashem's aid. Therefore, although he sent words of appeasement to Eisav, his primary intention was his prayer to heaven.

### Finding the Good Among the Troubles

We say in birkas hamazon, כמו שנתברכו, אבותינו אברהם, יצחק ויעקב בכל מכל כל, that Hashem should bless the host, and all of us, בכל מכל כל, as our forefathers Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov were blessed. About Avraham it states (Bereishis 24:1) וה' בירך את אברהם בכל, "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything." About Yitzchak it states (Bereishis 27:33) ואוכל מכל, "I ate of everything," and about Yaakov Avinu it states in this week's parashah (33:11) יש לי כל, "I have everything."

If we delve into the words and learn about when these brachos were given to the Avos, we will notice that they were all given at a time of distress. When it states וה' בירך את אברהם בכל, "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything," it was right after Sarah Imeinu was niftar, and it was before they were able to bring Yitzchak to his chuppah. Chazal tell us that Yitzchak was sitting and crying all this time over his mother's demise until he married Rivkah (see Bereishis 24:67, Siforno and Rashi). Furthermore, Avraham still had a son, a *rasha*, Yishmael, in his home. It doesn't seem like he had "everything". Yet, at this time, even under all these circumstances, it states וה' בירך את אברהם בכל, "Hashem blessed Avraham with everything."

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1. Chazal tell us that he sent the malachim Michoel, Gavriel, and Rafael, who are the malachim that always speak before Hashem in favor of Bnei Yisrael, and he wanted them to be מליצי יושר, to pray for Klal Yisrael. (Noam Elimelech)

When Yaakov succeeded in battle against the *malach* (in this week's parashah), he asked the malach for his name. The malach replied (32:30) למה זה תשאל לשמי, "Why is it that you ask for my name?" The Ramban (32:30) writes, "You will have no benefit in knowing my name, because only Hashem, alone has strength. If you call out to me, I won't answer you, and I won't save you from your tzaros."

The Yerushalmi (Brachos 9:1) states, "If a person has a tzarah, he shouldn't shout to Michael and not to Gavriel. He should shout to Me, and I will answer him immediately. This is as it states (Yoel 3:5) כל אשר יקרא בשם ה' ימלט, "Whoever shall call in Hashem's name shall be saved."

Regarding Yitzchak the pasuk says *ואוכל מכל*, "I ate from everything." This also wasn't uttered at a peak time of joy for Yitzchak Avinu. At this time, he was very afraid, as it states *ויחרד חרדה גדולה*, "[Yitzchak] shuddered a great shudder", and he saw the opening of Gehinom opened before him (Bereishis Rabba 67:2). This was when he discovered the truth about his son, Eisav, whom he had so loved. And at that time, it states *ואוכל מכל*, that he was blessed with "everything." Similarly, regarding Yaakov, when he met Eisav he said *יש לי כל*, "I have everything." This was at a time when Eisav wanted to kill him, with the help of his army of four hundred men. These don't seem to be the best scenarios. So why do we request in birchas hamazon that Hashem should bless us *בכל מכל כל* as He blessed the avos with these brachos? Why should we want such brachos, that come with bitterness and hardship?

Some explain that these brachos were special since the avos could recognize and say that they had everything, even when it seemed that they lacked so much. Their ability to focus on Hashem's kindness and believe that it was all good is a perfect brachah. When we request these brachos (of *בכל מכל כל*) in birkas hamazon, we call it *ברכה שלימה*, a complete brachah. It is a complete brachah when one can recognize the good, even amidst the tzaros.

Yaakov Avinu always recognized Hashem's kindness, and therefore he was able to say *יש לי כל*, "I have everything," during the meeting with Eisav *harasha* who wanted to murder him. We ask *בברכה שלימה* אתנו, *כן יברך אותנו בברכה שלימה*, We ask

so we should also have this outlook in life, to focus on the good and to believe that everything is for the good.<sup>2</sup>

It states (32:32) *ויזרח לו השמש כאשר עבר את פנואל*, "The sun rose for [Yaakov] when he passed Penuel, and he was limping on his thigh." Rashi writes, "The Midrash explains: The sun rose for him to heal his limp, as it states (Malachi 3:20) *שמש צדקה ומרפא בכנפיה*, "The sun of mercy, with healing in its wings". The sun hastened to set for him when he left Beer Sheva and set a few hours early, now it hastened to rise for him."

Rashi and Chazal explain that the sun rose early that day to heal Yaakov. When Yaakov left Beer-sheva and came to Har HaMoriah (at the beginning of parashas Vayeitzei), the sun set two hours early so that Yaakov would sleep there. Now, the sun made up for lost time and rose two hours early to heal Yaakov. The Shevet Sofer writes in the name of the Chasam Sofer, quoting Reb Noson Adler zt'l that these pasukim give chizuk to those who feel that the sun has set for them. As people say, "There used to be better times, but now the sun has set; everything is dark." They don't see the light in their lives. They should learn from the Avos. The sun set for Yaakov Avinu in the middle of the day, and it looked like he and the world had lost two hours of daylight. But those two hours of lost sunlight returned twenty-two years later when Yaakov Avinu needed sunlight to heal his wound. His healing began two hours earlier. As Chazal say, *הקדים רפואה למכה*, Hashem prepares the healing before the wound. Years before

2. It states (Tehillim 147:8) *המכסה שמים בעבים המכין לארץ מטר*, "Who covers the heavens with clouds, Who prepares rain for the earth, Who causes the mountains to sprout grass." When dark clouds are in the sky, representing hard times, know that rain is being prepared. Be aware that good will come from it.

The renowned chasid Reb Leibel Kutner zt'l (who lived through the Holocaust) would often say the following thought:

Of all the Avos, Yaakov Avinu endured the most hardship. He suffered from Lavan, from Eisav, Dinah's kidnapping, and then losing Yosef. But about Yaakov it states (32:13) *ואתה אמרת היטב איטיב עמך*, "You said, 'I will surely do good with you.'" So we see that we don't know what is good. And indeed, specifically from Yaakov Avinu, and despite all the tzaros he went through, he established the twelve shevatim.

Yaakov was wounded, his healing was ready. We learn from this that even when something seems bad, it is all for our good.<sup>3</sup>

The final brachah (*brachah achrita*) said at a sheva brachos is אשר ברא ששון ושמחה חתן וכלה. Kol Bo (*siman 75*) teaches that this brachah is an overview of the brachos said before it. The first brachah of the sheva brachos is שהכל ברא לכבודו, "Everything was created for His honor." The chosson and kallah must know that the purpose of their marriage is to give honor to Hashem. Their marriage is not for their prestige, pleasure, wealth, or any other gain. The final brachah repeats the concepts of the brachos said before it. The idea of giving honor to Hashem is repeated in the final brachah when we say the words אשר ברא ששון ושמחה, "Who created joy and happiness." Happiness gives honor to Hashem because happiness enables the Shechinah to dwell with us. The Kol Bo explains:

"For it is Hashem's honor when people are happy because then they can receive His glory. This is because distress closes the soul and creates a barrier that separates the person from Hashem. A person shouldn't be angry but accept Hashem's decree with love... [Chazal tell us that] the Shechinah doesn't reside where there is laziness or sadness, only where there is joy, and this is Hashem's honor."

We learn from the Kol Bo how important it is to be happy and to accept everything that happens to us with love. This enables

the Shechinah to reside by him, which is Hashem's honor.<sup>4</sup>

### Hashem is with the Humble

It states (Koheles 3:15) אלוקים יבקש את נרדף, "Hashem seeks the pursued."

Chazal (*Vayikra Rabba 27:5*) say, "Even when a tzaddik pursues a rasha." Even then, Hashem cares for the נרדף, the pursued.

It states in this week's parashah (33:2) את השפחות ואת ילדיהן ראשנה ואת לאה וילדיה אחרנים ואת רחל ואת יוסף אחרנים, "[Yaakov] placed the maidservants and their children first and Leah and her children after, and Rachel and Yoseph last." Rashi explains that אחרון אחרון חביב, that those who were more beloved, were placed last. This was a situation of life and death, r'l. Eisav wanted to attack them, and those at the head of the line were probably at greater risk of harm.

The Shinover Rav zt'l says that Yaakov protected them all equally. The maidservants, and even Leah, were like a נרדף because they felt less loved than Rochel. אלוקים יבקש את נרדף, "Hashem seeks the pursued." Hashem gives special protection to those who feel heartbroken. Therefore, placing Rachel and her children at the end of the line wasn't giving them more protection than the others. They were all equally protected.

The Tzemech Tzedek of Vizhnitz zt'l (*Likutim p.533*) discusses the pasuk אלוקים יבקש את נרדף, "Hashem seeks the pursued." He explains that יבקש doesn't only mean "seeks".

3. It states (Tehillim 118:5) מן המצר קראתי י"ה ענני במרחב י"ה, "From the straits I called Hashem; Hashem answered me with a vast expanse." The Rokeach (*Siddur*) explains that when people call out to Hashem and say they are in a מצר, difficult situation. ענני, Hashem responds and says to the Yid, במרחב, that you are in a good situation. You think it is a bad situation, but it is all for the good.

The Chovos HaLevavos (*Introduction to Shaar HaBechinah*) writes that we should praise Hashem for the yesurim we suffer because we can be certain that concealed within the yesurim are many favors.

4. The Kol Bo goes through the brachos and shows where they are hinted at in the final brachah. He writes, "After [saying אשר ברא ששון ושמחה] we say חתן וכלה, this corresponds to [the brachah ויצר האדם], the creation of Adam and Chavah. גילה רנה corresponds to רני עקרה, which refers to Yerushalayim, the brachah שוש תשיש. Then we say שלום ורעות, this corresponds to the brachah רעים אהובים."

Another translation of יבקש is בקשה, request. He explains אלוקים יבקש את הנרדף that Hashem asks a request from the *nirdaf*, from the person who is pursued. Hashem requests that he shouldn't be sad because when a person is sad, Hashem is sad.

We quote:

"יבקש is from the word בקשה, request. [It is like] Hakadosh Baruch Hu is requesting of the נרדף (the person being pursued) that he shouldn't have tzaar [that he should somehow find it in his heart to be happy even when he is being pursued]. This is because [when people chase after someone to harm him] they are also chasing after Hakadosh Baruch Hu, keviyachol, because when a person has tzaar... the Shechinah says 'My head hurts' (see Chagigah 15:). [Hashem has tzaar together with us.] Therefore, [Hashem pleads to the *nirdaf*] accept it with love." Hakadosh Baruch Hu requests from the נרדף that he should try to overcome his distress because when the *nirdaf* has tzaar, Hashem has tzaar together with him. We repeat this to show the extent of how much Hashem partakes with the tzaar of a Yid who is suffering, r'l. Hashem is with him to support him, to help him.

The Gemara (Shabbos 12:) states, "The Shechinah is above the head of the ill." The Maharal (Gur Aryeh, Vayechi, ד"ה שהשכינה) writes that this isn't only regarding an ill person. Whoever feels weak and his heart is broken, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is with him. He explains that it states את דכא ושפל רוח אשכון, Hashem dwells with the humble and oppressed. Therefore, whoever has a broken heart, the Shechinah is with him.

Tanya (ch.26) writes, "Hashem is endlessly closer, without a limit [to the person who has yesurim]..." He explains that this thought, that he is close to Hashem, should help a person be happy when he has yesurim.<sup>5</sup>

### Positive Thinking

The Torah writes (32:33), על כן לא יאכלו בני ישראל את גיד הנשה אשר על כף הירך עד היום הזה כי נגע בכף ירך, יעקב בגיד הנשה, "Therefore, Bnei Yisrael mustn't eat the *gid hanasheh*...until this day, because the *malach* struck Yaakov on the *gid hanasheh*." This prohibition was given to remind us that Yaakov was smitten by the *malach* in his battle. Wouldn't it be better to commemorate that Yaakov *won* the battle against the *malach*? Why do we remember specifically that Yaakov was wounded in battle?

The same question can be asked regarding the name ישׂרָאֵל. The *malach* said to Yaakov (32:29) לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם ישראל כי שרית עם, אלקים ועם אנשים ותוכל, "Your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but ישראל because you have battled (בִּי שְׂרִיתָ) with [an angel of] Hashem and with men, and you have prevailed." Why is Yaakov/Yisrael remembered for the battle (בִּי שְׂרִיתָ), and not for the success (וּתְוַקַּל)?

We can answer that it is because the struggles are most precious to Hashem. More than winning and succeeding, the

5. It states (Tehillim 139:8) אם אסק שמים שם אתה ואציעה שאול הנך, "If I ascend to the heavens, there You are, and if I make my bed in the grave, behold, You are there."

The word שם is used to refer to something that is far away. הנך is when something is near. The pasuk is saying אם אסק שמים, when I have a lot of hatzlachah, and things are going well for me, שם אתה, Hashem is there, far away. However, ואציעה שאול, when I am going through hard times, הנך, Hashem is near. This is because when a person is going through hard times, he is humbled, and Hashem is with him to support him.

We can compare it to a parent who loves all his children equally, however, if one of the children is in the hospital, r'l, and an operation is taking place, the parent is only thinking about this child. The same can be said when a Yid is in a difficult situation. Hashem loves all Yidden, but there is a special love and focus for those struggling and suffering children.



battle we put up against the yetzer hara is precious to Hashem<sup>6</sup>

The root of the word *יָכַל* is *יכל*, "can do." This word should be remembered because when a person approaches avodas Hashem, he should feel *וְתוּכַל* you can succeed. You can do this. It isn't beyond you. With Hashem's help, you will succeed.

Just this past Elul, תשפ"ד, Reb Yaakov Meir Shechter Shlita told a story that wasn't known to people beforehand. He said, "I remember that I was once on a bus with the Rebbe, Reb Shalom Noach, the Nesivos Shalom zt'l of Slonim. It was a long trip. At that time, in Eretz Yisroel, they began producing Coca-Cola. It was advertised wherever you went. There was an advertisement on every corner, to the right and left. We heard the tune of the advertisement, "Coca-Cola!" We saw the large, colorful signs, "Coca-Cola!" When we got off the bus, Reb Shalom Noach said, "Did you understand? They say Coca-Cola again and again, over and over, until it goes into people's minds. Even people who have no idea what Coca-Cola is, begin to drink it and see that it is good. Even those not interested in Coca-Cola become loyal consumers and drink it at every opportunity."

Each person can do the same. He can repeat to himself, "I am an ehrlicher Yid. I am a G-d fearing person. I want to serve Hashem." Slowly, the idea will enter his mind and heart. Even if the yetzer hara will say, "What connection do you have with avodas Hashem?" He will taste it, he will try it, and he will see that it is good, and then he will reach high levels.

If he thinks positive thoughts about himself and views himself well, it will influence him to be good. A person must be cautious not to degrade himself and think negatively about himself. He shouldn't feel that he has no importance, that he doesn't have yiras Shamayim, and so on. These thoughts can ruin a person.

Reb Yitzchak Zilberstein Shlita related that the leaders of the Satmar Yeshiva once held a meeting in Williamsburg. One of the topics was how to teach bachurim to avoid severe aveiros and to go on the right path. The question was whether they should discuss with the bachurim the severity of the aveiros and the great punishment that comes from these transgressions or whether they should discuss the great reward that comes from being cautious. The Satmar Rebbe zt'l asked the mashgiach of the yeshiva, Reb Yisrael Dovid Neivoiner z'l, "You are a Novardiker (you come from the mussar yeshiva of Novardok). You learned a lot of sifrei Mussar. Tell me, how many times is Gehinom mentioned in Chovos HaLevavos?"

Reb Yisrael Dovid began thinking about that, and the Satmar Rebbe immediately replied, "Not even once. So, you see that also the baalei Mussar didn't elaborate on Gehinom and the punishment. Instead, they taught more about the greatness of a Yid, his strengths, and his importance, and that is what we should do, as well. We should teach students to consider how significant every good deed is, and then automatically, they will desire to do more good deeds.

### Growth from Tests

When you put a raw egg into fire, it becomes hard. If you throw wax into fire, it

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6. Rebbe Leibele Eiger zt'l answers that it is impossible for a person to win the war against the *yetzer hara* on his own. When he wins the war it is because Hashem helped him. Yaakov was named for *וְשָׂרִית*, for standing in war, because that is the part that man can do, but success comes from Hashem. He can't be called *וְתוּכַל* -for succeeding in the war, because that part was from Hashem and not from his deeds.

When one plays dreidel, the person does the first part – he spins the dreidel. But how it lands isn't in his hands. Similarly, a person begins the battle against the *yetzer hara*, and Hashem completes it for him.

melts. And if you throw paper into fire, it burns and disintegrates.

Fire changes each item, even though the changes are different.

This reality is an analogy to the hard times one experiences during his life. Difficult situations bring about change in people. We can take advantage of these opportunities to grow.

Often, when one is going through a crisis, be it small or large, the methods that worked for him in the past don't function now, and he has to learn to reconsider his lifestyle and readjust. So, the hardships are opportunities for growth.<sup>7</sup>

It states (35:17), ויהי בהקשותה בלדתה ותאמר לה, יהי בן המילדת אל תיראי כי זה גם לך בן, the *Rimzei d'Chachmasa* (written by a student of the Chidushei Harim zt'l, Reb Shmuel Leib Zack zt'l) explains, ויהי בהקשותה, when a person is having a hard time in *avodas Hashem*, we tell him, אל תירא, don't worry. כי זה גם לך בן, You are climbing to higher levels. בן means child, alluding to growth and success.

The Gemara (*Menachos* 29:) says, "Reb Akiva will teach many *halachos* קוץ וקוץ, על כל קוץ וקוץ, from each corner of the [letters of the] *sefer Torah*."

The *Or LaShamayim* (*Lech Lecha* ד"ה ויאמר ה' השני) says that קוץ can be translated as a thorn, pain, hardships. From every קוץ וקוץ, difficulty in life, Reb Akiva attained higher levels.

The Gemara (*Kiddushin* 81.) says that Rav Amram had a great test and overcame the *yetzer hara*. Rav Amram said to the *yetzer hara*, חזי דאת נורא ואנא בישרא ואנא עדיפנא מינך, "See! You are fire, and I am flesh, and I'm greater than you." We can explain that Rav Amram was saying אנא עדיפא, "I reached my levels, מינך, because of you." Because the challenges you put in my way helped me reach my high levels.

We daven אל תביאני לידי נסיון, that we shouldn't be tested, because we aren't confident that we will pass the tests. However, when one finds himself in a situation of a test (and we are always in some form of a test) recognize that this is an excellent opportunity for you. It is your opportunity to grow and to develop yourself, in ways you wouldn't have accomplished without the test.

So, be happy with your tests, embrace them, and pass them. You will grow immensely from these situations.<sup>8</sup>

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7. Reb Yechezkel Levenstein zt'l was serving as the mashgiach in yeshivas Mir (in Europe), and the Ponevezher Rav zt'l invited him to be the mashgiach of Ponevezh, Bnei Brak.

Reb Yechezkel was happy to accept the position. In Mir, his paycheck often came late, and he struggled to pay his bills. He figured that the Ponovitzer Rav would pay on time; he thought his financial woes were finally over.

However, there was one thing that worried him. In a way, he appreciated the financial struggles, because these circumstances forced him to trust in Hashem. He was worried that with a comfortable salary, he wouldn't need to work on his bitachon.

One day, in Bnei Brak, a friend noticed that Reb Yechezkel was extremely happy and asked him about that. Reb Yechezkel explained that he used to be worried that he wouldn't need to work on his bitachon anymore. But now he sees that also in Bnei Brak, his paycheck comes late, which is why he is so happy. He can work and develop his bitachon.

The Steipler Gaon zt'l once said, "It is easy for a bachur to have good middos. His shtender doesn't disagree with him. But when he marries, and there is another opinion in the home, his test on middos begins."

Without marriage, he wouldn't learn traits such as *vitur*, kindness, controlling anger, etc. The challenges help us grow and become the best people we can be.

8. I heard the following story from the baal hamaaseh (from the person to whom the story occurred). He is today

The Torah tells us (32:25), ויאבק איש עמו עד עלות השחר, "A man battled with Yaakov until the morning."

Who was this person?

Rashi tells us that this man was שרו של עשו, Eisav's *malach*, the *yetzer hara*. It wasn't a person but the *yetzer hara* battling with Yaakov Avinu. The wrestle is called ויאבק, which can also mean dust (see *Rashi*), and it alludes to the dust they raised by their wrestling. ויאבק is *gematriya* כסא הכבוד, Hashem's holy throne, as the Baal HaTurim points out because the dust of this battle rose up to Hashem's throne.

Yaakov's struggle with the *yetzer hara* went up to Hashem's throne, because Hashem has immense pleasure from these battles.

A king's crown is made from gold, diamonds, and precious gems, but there are also areas on the crown where there is nothing at all. Those empty spaces add beauty to the crown. The crown wouldn't be so beautiful if the gems covered each inch of it without any separations. The empty spots hint at the tests we endure. They seem empty, insignificant, and undesirable, but these tests give our *avodas Hashem* its beauty and splendor.<sup>9</sup>

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a respected mechanech:

As a fourteen-year-old teenager, he learned in a yeshiva where a very strict mashgiach would punish the students for minor infractions because he wanted to maintain discipline in the school.

Once, for a minor matter, the mashgiach told the bachur that he was expelled for a few hours that day.

In the hallway of the yeshiva (as he was getting ready to leave the yeshiva), this young bachur met a bachur three years older than him. The older bachur convinced the young bachur to go with him, but it was to a place where yeshiva bachurim didn't belong. "I want to teach the mashgiach a lesson," he explained to the younger bachur. "He must know the danger of throwing a bachur out of the yeshiva, so he doesn't continue doing so."

The younger bachur had *yiras Shamayim*, and didn't want to go to that place. But he felt he couldn't disagree with "an older bachur."

The older bachur didn't have too much *yiras Shamayim* and, unfortunately, wanted to take him somewhere inappropriate.

Before they got to that place, they passed through a beautiful garden, and the gardener who worked there stopped them and spoke to them.

This gardener told them that he was a Holocaust survivor, and after the war, he dropped religion, r'l. He showed them what he does in the garden. He pointed and said, "I trim those shrubs and put fertilizer on those trees. But do you see this field over there? I don't touch that field. Recently, I planted seeds there; the seeds are rotting now, and soon they will blossom and grow. The crop is very delicate now; if I touch it, it will be ruined, and nothing will come from it."

And then the gardener gave them a lesson in mussar that the younger bachur never forgot. He said, "You are young bachurim, you learn in yeshiva, and sometimes you do something wrong. You are like the seeds that are rotting. But you must be cautious at this time so that you don't ruin yourselves. You are at a very delicate age, and a wrong move can ruin your future forever. Listen to my counsel and go back to yeshiva." The bachur returned to the yeshiva, and today he is a *talmid chacham*

This story reminds us that tests are also a dangerous and delicate time. We can grow immensely from tests, but if we don't pass the tests correctly, we can fall drastically. Therefore, we must be cautious.

9. A *bachur* who had gone off the *derech* was on his path of return. Once, he said to the *yungerman* helping him in his *teshuvah*: "I had difficult tests on Shavuos. The *yetzer hara* told me to go to the pubs I hung out

### Keep on Going

The Divrei Yisrael (ד"ר אבם יבוא) discusses how the "Polish ganavim" would steal:

They developed a technique to get the store owner out of the store and leave it unattended.

The thief comes to the store and takes an item off the shelves. He smiles at the store owner, sticks out his tongue at him, and then runs off with the item without paying.

The incensed store owner runs after him and leaves his store unattended. Several *ganavim* then enter and empty the store of its valuable merchandise.

The Divrei Yisrael writes, "What does a wise merchant do? He says, 'Let the thief have what he grabbed.' He doesn't run after him and, therefore, doesn't lose the rest of his money. He guards the store, which is much wiser."

The Divrei Yisrael explains that the yetzer hara uses the technique of the Polish *ganavim*. He causes a person to transgress a relatively minor transgression. The person becomes very upset and feels dejected, and now he is in the yetzer hara's hands.

As the Kotzker zt'l would say, "The yetzer hara doesn't want the aveirah. He wants the

depression that comes after the aveirah" because then the person can fall to very low levels.

The lesson is to keep on trying. Even if we lose a battle, we have to continue fighting, or we will lose so much more.

We can compare this to an airplane caught in turbulence. The plane is tossing up and down, but it must keep on flying. What else can it do? What is the alternative? To stand still? It will spiral downwards.

We can also draw an analogy from the business world: Someone's business was enduring a financial crisis. The expenses were greater than the income, and there were unpaid debts that needed to be paid up. The store owner has two options: He can give up and close his business, which will still leave him in debt and make it impossible for the company to recover. Another approach is to borrow more money and to keep the business alive. The tide can turn, and he can be successful again.

The Divrei Yisrael zt'l said that this lesson is alluded to in this week's parashah (32:9) אבם יבוא עשו אל המחנה האחת והכהו והיה המחנה הנשאר לפליטה, "If Eisav comes to one camp and strikes it down, the remaining camp will escape."

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in when I wasn't religious. Baruch Hashem, I didn't listen. Instead, I stayed home and read a novel. I'm happy about that. But when I compare myself to other young men my age, I feel so far behind. I'm sure others had an inspirational Shavuos, studying Torah all night long, and then they davened Shacharis with *hislahavus*. After Shacharis, they danced with joy. But all I did was read a novel. How do I compare with them?"

This is indeed a good question. How would we answer this *bachur*? Certainly, the young men who spent hours serving Hashem in beis medresh had a better Shavuos.

The wise *yungerman* replied:

"In the Beis HaMikdash, the *levi'im* sang inspirational music while the *kohanim* put fats and blood on the *mizbeiach*. Who brought greater pleasure for Hashem, the *levi'im* or the *kohanim*? The Torah writes ריח נחוח (a pleasant scent for Hashem) in reference to the *kohanim*, but it doesn't state ריח נחוח about the *levi'im*'s music. It seems Hashem had more pleasure from the *kohanim*'s service, with blood and fats, than the wonderful, inspirational singing of the *levi'im*. Similarly, we can feel certain that your struggles against the *yetzer hara* created a greater *nachas ruach* before Hashem than the exalted avodah of your peers because you passed a great test, and that is most precious to Hashem."

If Eisav, the yetzer hara, wins a battle, don't allow yourselves to fall into his hands. Salvage whatever you can.

Another hint from this week's parashah is in the following words (32:26, 32) וירא כי לא יכל לו ויגע בכף ירכו ותקע כף ירך יעקב בהאבקו עמו... ויזרח לו "When [the malach] saw that he could not prevail against [Yaakov], he touched the socket of his hip, and the socket of Yaakov's hip became dislocated as he wrestled with him. And the sun rose for him when he passed Penuel, and he limped on his thigh."

The Avodas Yisachar zt'l explains that although Yaakov was hurt, he kept on walking. And then Hashem healed him. He writes, "A primary aspect of avodas Hashem is to keep on moving without stopping. The holy sefarim explain that one must do his obligations, and not pay attention to his wounds (aveiros) r'l... Sometimes, there is darkness, and he almost can't speak a word of Torah and tefillah. Nevertheless, he should not give up. He must do whatever he can to be strong."

Another hint is from the pasuk (33:3) וישתחו [Yaakov] went ahead of them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came close to his brother." The Midrash (Bereishis Rabba 78:8) asks: Why did Yaakov bow specifically seven times? It is to correspond to (Mishlei 24:16) שבע

יפול צדיק וקם, "Even if a tzaddik falls seven times, he will get up again."

By bowing down seven times, Yaakov was teaching us that even if one bowed to Eisav seven times (which means he obeyed the yetzer hara and bowed his head to its influence), he could lift himself again and begin again as if nothing ever happened.

It states (32:29) ויאמר לא יעקב יאמר עוד שמך כי אם " [The malach] said, 'Your name shall no longer be called Yaakov, but Yisrael, because you have commanding power with [an angel of] Hashem and with men, and you have prevailed."

Rashi writes that אנשים, men, refer to Eisav and Lavan. But we wonder, is this called ותוכל, prevailing and winning the battle? He was lamed by Eisav, and Lavan tricked him a hundred times. Is that called winning a fight? The answer is that he continued even after being lamed and tricked, and with that attitude, one prevails.

#### The Bas Ayin (Rebbe Avraham Dov ben Rebbe Dovid zy'a)

Chazal (Chulin 7:) "Tzaddikim are greater after their passing than when they were alive." This is particularly so on their yahrtzei<sup>10</sup> because that is when their holy ruach (spirit) hovers and rests on their grave to bring salvations to those who daven there and seek Hashem's compassion<sup>11</sup> The

**10.** We must know and believe with emunah sheleimah that every year, on the yahrtzeit, the tzaddik in heaven rises to even higher levels. This means that the salvations that will come this year, on the 12th of Kislev, on the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit, will be greater in quality and quantity than ever before.

The Gemara (Brachos 34:) states, "Whoever is greater, he must humble himself more." (The Gemara explains that most people bow down four times in Shemonah Esrei (twice by the first brachah and twice at the brachah of Modim), but the kohen gadol bows at the end of each brachah of Shemonah Esrei, and a king bows down at the beginning and end of each brachah of Shemonah Esrei. The greater the person, the more he has to humble himself.) The Noam Eliezer of Skulen zt'l said, quoting the holy Ruzhiner zt'l, that on the day of a yahrtzeit, when a tzaddik rises to a higher level, he has become greater, and therefore, he needs to increase his humility. This means that he must lower himself and come down to this world, more than ever before, to help the people living here and grant them the salvations they need.

**11.** The Gemara (Bava Basra 16:) states, "A good stone hung on the neck of Avraham Avinu. When an ill

Yismach Yisrael (Me'oron shel Yisrael 14 Shevat 2) says that the yahrtzeit is called הלולא because, in Aramaic, a chasunah is also called hilulah. The celebration of a yahrtzeit is compared to the joy of a chasunah. And just like at a chasunah, the *kesubah* is read before the

*chosson* to remind him of his obligations to the *kallah*, so too, on the day of the hilulah of a tzaddik, the tzaddik is reminded of his obligations to the people who are החוסים בצלו reside under his shade (which means those who are students of this great tzaddik).<sup>12</sup> And this doesn't

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person saw the stone, he was immediately healed. When Avraham was niftar, Hakadosh Baruch Hu hung the stone in the sun." The Rashba (quoted in Ein Yaakov) explains that the "good stone" on Avraham's neck refers to Avraham's voice. With his voice, he brought many people to the true emunah." The Minchas Yitzchak (Drashos p.199) adds that this stone, which hung from Avraham's throat, also alludes to Avraham's tefillos. His voice of tefillah healed people and saved them. Regardless of whether they needed a refuah or spiritual healing, Avraham had that "Special stone in his throat," which means he had the power of tefillah.

When Avraham was niftar, Hashem placed this stone in the sun. The Minchas Yitzchak explains that the sun returns once every year to the place where it began, and also a tzaddik, on the day of his yahrtzeit, when people daven at his kever, they can have their salvation. Whether they suffer spiritual or physical ailments, they can have their salvation. The Minchas Yitzchak adds that when we can't go to the kever, we can also attain yeshuos "when we gather in his honor."

**12.** Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l explained that when a tzaddik goes to heaven, looks down, and sees the suffering in this world, he understands very clearly how everything we go through is all for our benefit. From his viewpoint in heaven, he sees everything in a much more positive light. As it is told about the Rebbe Reb Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l, he said to his student, Rebbe Mendel of Raminov zt'l, that he promises that when he is niftar, he will annul a particular decree that was then on the Jewish people. Time passed, and Rebbe Elimelech came in a dream to Rebbe Mendel of Raminov and said, "Now that I am in heaven, I don't see that the decree is bad anymore. Every decree is good. So how can I annul it?" But on the yahrtzeit, the tzaddik comes down to this world, and then he can see and perceive the great tzaros we endure in the way we experience them. When this occurs, he is motivated to annul all the harsh decrees and to daven for salvations for Bnei Yisrael. This is why the yahrtzeit is called hilulah, an expression of joy. There is a lot of joy and salvations on this day because the tzaddik understands our tzaros and prays for our salvation.

The Gemara (Pesachim 51.) states, "Rav Yosef, the son of Reb Yehoshua ben Levi, became ill and was niftar (and then he came back to life). When he returned to this world, his father asked him, 'What did you see in heaven?' He replied, 'I saw an upside-down world. Those above [in this world] are below [in heaven], and those below here are above there. His father told him, 'You saw a true world.'" On a yahrtzeit, when those who are above come below to this world, that is a time when the people of this world below can go above. This means we can live better, as if we are in heaven and everything becomes good.

The Sifri (Eikev 38) teaches, "Tzaddikim bring blessings wherever they go. When Yaakov came to Lavan, he brought blessings... When Yosef came to Potiphar, he brought blessings... Yaakov came to Pharaoh and brought blessings because the hunger ended before its time..."

The Sifri then discusses whether a salvation from a tzaddik is eternal. The Sifri writes, "After Yaakov was niftar... the hunger returned. Reb Shimon Bar Yochai said, 'This isn't a kiddush Hashem. The words of tzaddikim exist when they are alive and don't cease after they are niftar. The bounty that comes from a tzaddik is eternal, forever.'" Based on the above, we can be certain that the tzaddikim continue to perform miracles after their passing, as they performed miracles when they were alive. Many brachos come to the Jewish nation in the merit of tzaddikim.

ישראל נושע בה' תשועת עולמים, "Yisrael receives their salvations from Hashem, an eternal salvation." The roshei teivos spell בת עין. This is a hint that salvations will come to the Jewish nation on the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit. Also (Tehillim 34:3) states, בה' תתהלל נפשי ישמעו עניים וישמחו, "My soul boasts of Hashem; may the humble hear and rejoice." The roshei teivos spell בת עין.

mean solely those who were the tzaddik's students when he was alive; it includes those who try to go in this tzaddik's ways and learn from his divrei Torah after his passing. If someone living in our times in the year, תשפ"ה, desires to learn from the ways of the tzaddik and wants to study his divrei Torah, he can be called הַחוּסִים בְּצִלוֹ, 'under the shade' and a student of this great tzaddik. On the

day of the hilulah, when the tzaddik is reminded of his obligations to help those who are under his shade (הַחוּסִים בְּצִלוֹ) this certainly also includes the new students, who didn't know the tzaddik. Perhaps they didn't even see the tzaddik when he was alive, but they seek to learn from this tzaddik<sup>13</sup> and to become influenced by his ways and from his divrei Torah<sup>14</sup>

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**13.** The translation of hilulah is chasunah. At a chasunah, the custom is to give gifts. At the hilulah/chasunah, Hashem gives a gift to the tzaddik, which is that Hashem enables the tzaddik to provide goodness to Bnei Yisrael. Obviously, those who are closer to the tzaddik will be from the first to receive the brachos. Therefore, everyone should try to make themselves close to this great tzaddik, either by making a seudah, a l'chayim, or by coming to the kever, each person in his own way. And most important, is to learn from this tzaddik's ways and serve Hashem accordingly. Those who do so will be first in line to receive the yeshuos that the tzaddik will distribute on this day.

The Beis Avraham (Noach) teaches, "On the yahrtzeit of tzaddikim, even if you didn't know them in your lifetime, and you never heard divrei Torah from their mouths, nevertheless, those who go in their ways and gather together, and tell holy stories, and review their lessons, and learn how to serve Hashem, through these means they attain a connection with these tzaddikim.

When the Bas Ayin left Avritz to travel to Eretz Yisrael, many of his chassidim accompanied him to the port of Odessa. The Rebbe was already on the ship, and his chassidim asked him, "How can we maintain our connection with you?"

The Bas Ayin replied that Chazal tell us that we connect with Hashem when we practice Hashem's attributes. "As Hashem is compassionate, you shall be compassionate..." "Similarly," the Bas Ayin said, "if you emulate the *middos* I excel in and have trained myself in since my youth, we will be united. Even when we are miles apart, we will be connected as though we are face to face. I have three primary *middos* that I trained myself to be cautious with since my youth. They are never to speak *lashon hara*, never to tell a lie, and to be distant from *gaavah*. If you also take on yourselves these three attributes, we will remain united."

Indeed, these three *middos* are primary themes in his holy *sefer Bas Ayin*.

(The Bas Ayin is buried in a cave. To come to his *kever*, one needs to bend down low. Tzaddikim said that this exemplifies the Bas Ayin's humility. Even to get to his grave, one must lower himself.)

**14.** We will discuss some of the salvations and deeds of chesed that the Bas Ayin performed in his lifetime:

There was a tragic earthquake in Tzefas and Teveria on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Teves, 5597/1836. The houses in Tzefas were built on a slope, one next to the other, and their foundations were weak. When the earthquake hit, the foundations collapsed, and the houses fell.

About two thousand Yidden were *niftar*, and many more were wounded.

The Bas Ayin was in his *beis medresh* davening Minchah when the earthquake began, and the walls shook. Some people wanted to rush out of the *beis medresh*, but the Bas Ayin instructed everyone to gather around him, and he fell on the ground and davened. Most of the dome roof collapsed, and the four walls fell, but the people around the Bas Ayin were saved. In this spot of the *beis medresh*, the ceiling remained intact.

(Today, visitors to the Bas Ayin's *beis medresh* can notice that the ceiling has two levels. This is because half of the roof collapsed and needed to be rebuilt. The following words are engraved on a plaque in the *beis medresh*, "How holy is this place! The *beis medresh* of Reb Avraham Dov, the Rebbe of Avritz *zt'l*, who witnessed the great earthquake in Tzfas, 5597. In his great merit, half of the *beis medresh* remained intact, and the Rebbe and his students survived.)

I heard from Reb Shmaya Toisig Shlita, who heard from his grandmother, who repeated a story that occurred with their ancestor, the head of their family, Reb Moshe Leib Heller zt'l. He was the brother of Reb Shmuel Heller zt'l the Rav of Tzfas and a chasid of the Bas Ayin.

The last day of Reb Moshe Leib Heller's life was a Friday, and Shabbos was approaching. For a long time, he was a גוסס, on the verge of death. His brother, Reb Shmuel Heller, was concerned that if his brother continued in this state into Shabbos, it would result in some *chillul* Shabbos, so he said to his brother, "It is already late. It's almost Shabbos." At that moment, Reb Moshe Leib rolled over to the other side and returned his *neshamah* to his Creator, and he was buried just moments before Shabbos arrived.

On Motzei Shabbos, the niftar came to his brother, Reb Shmuel, and told him what occurred in his judgment. He said that since he was buried just moments before Shabbos arrived, the court of heaven didn't have

enough time to check what his judgment would be. So, he had a very calm and good Shabbos (as it is known, even Gehinom isn't functioning on Shabbos). When Shabbos passed, a *malach* came to him and said, "Come with me."

Reb Moshe Leib told him, "As long as I lived, I never did anything without asking my Rebbe for his counsel. I don't want to go with you before asking my Rebbe his counsel."

The *malach* agreed to grant Reb Moshe Leib his request, and he brought him to the *heichal* (heavenly abode) of the Bas Ayin. Reb Moshe Leib entered, and the *malach* waited outside. The Bas Ayin asked him about his petirah, and Reb Moshe Leib told him that the *malach* was waiting outside. His Rebbe, the Bas Ayin, replied, "Who is this *malach*? You are here! Stay here!" And he did.

The lesson for us is that whoever merits coming to the *heichal* of the Bas Ayin, he can remain there. Fortunate are those who merit to be "under his shade" (החוסים בצלו). He will receive all blessings, b'ruchniyus and

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The Bas Ayin explained why he prayed while lying on the ground: "I saw that the stones were falling sideways, not downwards. It was like one wall was throwing stones at the opposite wall. I understood that this meant the *samech mem* (the Satan) was executing this disaster. When this occurs, the only protection is total humility. That's why I fell to the ground."

When they left the beis medresh, the Bas Ayin, his chassidim (and all survivors of the earthquake in Tzefas) tried to save as many people as they could from under the rubble because many homes collapsed. It was raining and cold, but they had to save lives, and there were *niftarim* who needed to be extricated and brought to their burial.

After things calmed down a drop, the question was where to go. Most of the homes were destroyed, and rebuilding them would be very costly. Many rabbanim thought it was time to leave Tzefas and move to Yerushalayim. Most of the Prushim communities did so. However, the Bas Ayin toiled and succeeded in re-establishing the Jewish community in Tzefas. He sent messengers to chutz la'arets to raise funds. The city of Tzefas was rebuilt, this time on top of the mountain instead of on the slope, with space between each home.

In the year 5601, there was a plague in Tzefas. The Bas Ayin became ill and was sick for a few days. He requested that his student, Reb Shmuel Heller zt'l, visit him before his demise, as he wanted to share the secrets and profound lessons he had heard from his teachers. However, Reb Shmuel Heller's family was afraid to allow Reb Shmuel to visit the Bas Ayin because the Bas Ayin was ill with the contagious plague. Reb Shmuel Heller always regretted that he lost this opportunity.

Before his passing, the Bas Ayin proclaimed, "I'm the last victim of this plague. After me, no one will die." And that is what happened. His demise brought atonement to the people of Tzefas, and the plague ended.



b'gashmius, for his body and for his soul, for his entire life

If you ask, how does one enter the heichal of the Bas Ayin and merit to reside in his shadow and draw from there handfuls of salvations? The first answer is to believe with emunah sheleimah in the greatness of this tzaddik. Reb Yehoshua of Belz zt'l explained the pasuk (Bereishis 30:1-2) **הָבָה לִי בָנִים וְאִם אֵין מֵתָה אֲנִי, וְיָחַר אָף יַעֲקֹב בְּרַחֵל וַיֹּאמֶר הִתְחַת אֱלֹקִים אֲנִי,** "Rachel said to Yaakov, 'Give me children, and if not, I am dead.' Yaakov became angry with Rachel, and he said, 'Am I instead of Hashem, Who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?'"

When Yaakov said **הִתְחַת אֱלֹקִים אֲנִי**, "Am I instead of Hashem?" Yaakov was explaining to Rachel that there is a difference between when a person goes to Hashem for a salvation and when one goes to a tzaddik.

Hashem can help him even if his emunah isn't perfect, but a tzaddik can only help when the person truly and fully believes in the tzaddik. Rachel said **וְאִם אֵין**, "and if not..." this is a sign that she doubted whether Yaakov could bring her salvation. She didn't completely believe in the tzaddik's abilities, so Yaakov couldn't help her. He told her **כִּי אֲנִי הִתְחַת אֱלֹקִים אֲנִי**, "Am I instead of Hashem? Hashem can help you even when your emunah is weak, but I can't."

This is as the Chozeh of Lublin zt'l taught on the pasuk (Devarim 28:6) **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּבוֹאֶךָ וּבְיוֹצֵאֶךָ**, "You shall be blessed when you come, and you shall be blessed when you depart," that when one believes in the tzaddik when he comes to him, he can bless him with salvation, and he is guaranteed that it will also be **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה בְּצֵאתְךָ**, that he will be blessed when he leaves and he will receive a yeshuah.<sup>15</sup>

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**15.** We have an example of yeshuos that come when one's emunah is perfect from the following story that we heard from the baalei hamaaseh:

In Kislev, תשפ"ב, a family read in our *kuntreisim* about the great benefit of studying the holy sefer Bas Ayin, and that this study is *mesugal* for all types of yeshuos. This family had two older daughters, and they were waiting anxiously for them to get engaged. The family decided that they would study Bas Ayin every Shabbos, and they hoped that in this merit, their daughters would get engaged.

This went on for about a year. One day, the older daughter said to her mother that she wanted to take a trip with her. The purpose of the trip was to take a break from the heaviness that they were feeling due to the circumstances at home. The mother agreed and she took a day off of work, and they took a bus up to Tzfas. When they arrived in Tzfas, they discovered that it was the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit. It was the 12th of Kislev! They hadn't realized that when they set out on their outing. Of course, they went to the Bas Ayin's kever to daven that there should be shidduchim in their family.

It wasn't easy to get to the kever of the Bas Ayin that year due to the heavy rains. But with siyata dishmaya and Hashem's wonders, they got to the kever around ten minutes before shekiyah. They poured out their hearts there and made a kabbalah that when they became engaged, they would return to praise Hashem for the miracle.

As soon as they left the cemetery, they waited for the bus to take them back to their home. While waiting for the bus, the father/husband called to tell them that someone had just called him with a shidduch offer. It took just a few days, and the shidduch was finalized. Needless to say, they continued studying the Bas Ayin. A few months later, the second daughter was engaged, as well.

Now, we come to the part of the story related to our subject. At the end of Av, they traveled to the kever of the Bas Ayin to praise Hashem for the miracles that occurred to them and davened there so that the next daughter in line should also find her bashert. And they made a kabbalah that they would return during the week of the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit to praise Hashem when the salvation comes. And because they believed so much in the salvation, they added that if this daughter's chasunah will be scheduled for the week of the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit, they would return some other time to the kever to praise Hashem for His salvation.

## The Seudah

There is a renowned segulah to prepare a seudah in honor of the baal hilulah, the Bas Ayin. In the merit of this meal, comes great and wonderful yeshuos.

The Rebbe of Tosh zt'l (Avodas Avodah) said, "I know a family in Eretz Yisrael who needed a yeshuah and rachamim. They made a seudah in honor of the holy baal hilulah and were saved above the rules of nature <sup>16</sup>

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A shidduch offer came immediately, and the chasunah was scheduled for the 16<sup>th</sup> of Kislev. This story shows the strength of pure emunah. They were davening at the end of Av, and they already had a doubt that perhaps their daughter would be engaged and that the chasunah would be held during the week of the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit! But they had already seen the miracles that this tzaddik performs, and they trusted in Hashem that the salvation would come quickly. They believed that it was feasible that the chasunah would be in Kislev, and so it was.

Now we will tell a story of the opposite extreme, to what occurs when there isn't emunah. Fifteen bachurim sat together and made a kabbalah that if they got engaged by the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit, they would make a seudah in his tzaddik's honor. Indeed, fourteen of them became chassanim before the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit, תשפ"ב. One of the bachurim laughed at the idea; he didn't believe that this segulah (of making a kabbalah to make a seudah in honor of the bas Ayin) could bring yeshuos). Indeed, this bachur was the only one who didn't get engaged. This bachur told us this story, and with tears, he begged that we write it to increase emunah among Yidden, so he should have a kaparah.

A story related to our topic occurred with the Bas Ayin himself. He went with a group of people to daven at kivrei tzaddikim in Tzfas. When they came to one of the kevarim, he heard one man say to his friend, "Who says that this tzaddik is actually buried here?"

The Bas Ayin turned to him and said, "Whoever doubts a mesorah accepted by Klal Yisrael is an apikores." We tell this story to remind all those who think they are wise and ask questions, "Who said," and the like, that this cools off the emunah.

**16.** Some years ago, there was a Slonimer chassid in Tzefas named Reb Shlomo Gross z'l. He sold kerosene for his *parnassah*, but barely earned a living.

On the night of the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*, Reb Shlomo davened at the Bas Ayin's grave. That night, the Bas Ayin came to him in a dream and said, "I appreciate that you davened at my grave, but why didn't you make a *seudah* for me?"

In the morning, Reb Shlomo Gross gathered ten people, and they made a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. He couldn't afford to make the *seudah* alone, but he put out a white tablecloth, and each person brought something to the meal. At the *seudah*, they discussed *divrei Torah* and stories of the Bas Ayin.

After the *seudah*, Reb Shlomo bought a lottery ticket and won a huge sum of money. He donated a portion of it to the Slonimer Yeshiva and requested that the yeshivah use the funds to pay for an annual *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin.

Reb Shlomo Gross specified some conditions for the *seudah*: There should be a white tablecloth, *divrei Torah*, and stories of the Bas Ayin should be discussed so the *seudos* would resemble the *seudah* he made on the day he had his salvation.

This tradition continues until today in the Slonimer Yeshivos and is still funded by a portion of the money Reb Shlomo Gross earned on the Bas Ayin's *yahrtzeit*.

Thousands of people had their yeshuah because they made a seudah in the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit. We will bring just a few:

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, a tragedy occurred in Jersey City, New Jersey, when murderers entered a Jewish supermarket with weapons. There were casualties, r'l. We received a letter from one of the people who was saved:

Y. B. Goldberger writes that he owns a travel agency, which he runs together with his brother, who lives in Union City, New Jersey. One day, he met with one of his clients in Jersey City. The initial plan was that after the meeting, his brother would drive in from Union City to Jersey City, and they would meet and talk in the grocery about matters related to their business. But that morning, his brother called him, saying, "We are having a seudah here [in Union City] in honor of the Bas Ayin. Perhaps you can come here, and we will discuss business here?" That arrangement saved them because they weren't at the site of the attack.

A similar story occurred with a chashuver yungerman who lives in Jersey City. He planned to go to the grocery that morning, immediately after shacharis, but when he saw that there was a l'chayim in the beis medresh, in honor of the Bas Ayin, he decided to stay, and they spoke about the baal hilulah. That is when the shooting began. The seudah, in honor of the Bas Ayin, saved him.

An older bachur (his younger sister had already skipped him and gotten married) used to go to a cheder occasionally to work as a substitute. (He was the only bachur left from his class, so he sometimes left the yeshiva to work in the cheder.) One year, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, he was subbing at the Sadigura cheder in Bnei Brak, and during recess, there was a seudah in the rebbes' room. The bachur was inspired at the meal, and he announced so everyone could hear, "I accept on myself that if I find my shidduch before the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev next year, תשפ"ד, I will bli neder sponsor a seudah next year."

The melamdim told him, "Why don't you request that you should be married by next year the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev? Why do you limit it to becoming a chosson only next year?"

The bachur corrected himself and said that if he is married by next year's yahrtzeit, he will pay for the meal. Soon after this kabbalah, he forgot about the matter. He became a chasan in Iyar, and they began looking for a date for the chasunah. From heaven, it was arranged that the chasunah should be scheduled for Thursday, the 11<sup>th</sup> of Kislev. The chasan took out his notepad to mark down the day of the chasunah, and he found in his notebook what he had written months before - that if he gets married before the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, he will sponsor a seudah in honor of the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit.

We heard the following story from the baalei maaseh, who lives in Tzefas with many children. Every year, their home became smaller and smaller. For a long time, they searched for an apartment that would be roomier for them. They toured many for-sale homes, but for one reason or another, they never found what they sought. As the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit was approaching, in the year תשפ"ב, they read in these *kuntressim* about the segulah of making a *seudah* in honor of the Bas Ayin. The family made a kabbalah, bli neder, that if they find a home before next year's yahrtzeit, they will sponsor a yahrtzeit seudah in the Bas Ayin's honor. Baruch Hashem, during aseres yemei teshuvah, they found a suitable apartment, and the price was reasonable. Only, they would first have to sell their old home, so they can have funds to buy the new apartment, and they were having a hard time selling their old apartment.

At the beginning of Kislev, the owners of the new apartment informed them that if they didn't come up with the money in a few days, they would sell their apartment to others.

On Friday the 8th of Kislev, days before the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit, the family made another kabbalah. They accepted that if they succeeded in selling their apartment in time to continue with the purchase of the apartment they wanted to buy, they would make another seudah in honor of the Bas Ayin in the following year, on the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit, תשפ"ד.

On Sunday, a Yid from Bnei Brak came to see their apartment, and he agreed to buy it! It was truly hashgachah pratis that he came to see their home. He had come to Tzefas that day after a real estate broker in Tzefas told him to come, and he said that he would show him apartments. But on that day, the broker fell ill, and couldn't take him around. A friend of the broker's knew of this family's home because he was a neighbor. In this manner, they were able to sell their home in time to finalize the purchase of their new home. The sales contract was finalized on 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev!

It is worth noting that the baalas habayis told her neighbors and friends about the wonderful hashgachah pratis they had in the buying and selling of their apartment, and she told of the miracles that occurred after they made a kabbalah to make a seudah in honor of the Bas Ayin. Some of her friends also wanted to buy a new home, so they also made a kabbalah to make a seudah in honor of the Bas Ayin, and they also had their yeshuos.

I also heard a story from a mashgiach of a renowned yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael. I know this person well. He came to Tzefas after Succos, in the year תשפ"ג, and he went to kivrei tzaddikim. He came into the cave where the Bas Ayin is buried. When he was there, he remembered his nephew, a good bachur, who was many years in shidduchim... He hadn't planned to say it, but from heaven, the words came out of his mouth. He said that if the bachur becomes a chosson before the yahrtzeit, he will make a seudah on the yahrtzeit in honor of the Bas Ayin. After saying this, he realized how unlikely it was for this to occur. For years, this nephew was in shidduchim, and there wasn't any success; nothing seemed to be happening, and how could it be that in just six weeks, he would already be engaged? But it occurred. Two weeks later, the bachur became a chosson. The kallah was very young; she had just turned seventeen. No one understood why the father rushed to make this shidduch. He had recently married off a daughter, and there was another kallah in the home. Why did he rush to engage this daughter, and why so young? But the answer is that the Bas Ayin was pushing things in heaven so this bachur could have his yeshuah.

A similar story I heard from a chosson, who was already quite old. It was hard for him to find a shidduch (due to a specific problem). In the year תשפ"א, two weeks before the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit, he was by the Bas Ayin's kever, and he made a kabbalah that if he will be engaged before the yahrtzeit, he will return by the yahrtzeit to praise Hashem and he will make a seudah. Ten days later, he became a chosson.

There is a benefit in this פרסומי ניסא, revealing the miracles that occurred and our performing the mitzvah of שיהו בכל נפלאותיו, to tell the wonders that Hashem performs because, in addition to the obligation to praise Hashem for all the kindness He gives us, there is also the benefit that others can see the miracles, and learn to do the same. Many of our brothers in Bnei Yisrael need a yeshuah when they hear of the miracles that occurred to these baalei maaseh, they will also want to do something similar, and they too will have their salvations, soon, and they will come out from darkness to light.

An example of this is from the story we wrote above about a family in Tzfas who found an apartment and sold their old apartment after making kabbalos to make seudos in honor of the Bas Ayin. When this salvation occurred, the mother/wife of this story told her mother about it. Her mother had older children in her home. She hadn't done a shidduch in ten years, and several children were waiting for their shidduch. She performed this segulah and in one year, three of her children got married and established their homes.

We can also learn from these stories that the Bas Ayin is standing and praying for Bnei Yisrael to save them. And therefore, open your mouth wide and ask for great things. Don't be satisfied with small requests; you can ask for a lot, and Hashem will grant it to you, as it states (Tehillim 81:11) והרחב פיהו ואמלאהו, "open your mouth wide [to ask for a lot], and I shall fill it."

A *yungerman* was walking around Meah Shearim (where there are many second-hand stores), looking for a store that sells second-hand washing machines.

As he went from store to store, he met up with Reb Motel Rothman Shlita. The *yungerman* expressed his financial hardships to Reb Motel, and he told him about his washing machine that broke, and that he couldn't afford to buy a new machine.

Reb Motel tried to convince him not to buy a second-hand machine because you never know what problems will suddenly come up. But the *yungerman* insisted that he couldn't afford a new machine. His only option was to buy a used machine.

Reb Mottel Rothman told him, "Today is the Bas Ayin's yahrtzeit. Many miracles happen through the *tefillos* said at his grave. Let's go there, and *b'ezras Hashem*, you will have a *yeshuah*."

Throughout the trip, this *yungerman* had one thought: washing machines. He was considering whether he should buy a new machine or a used one, and if he bought a new one, he contemplated where he could get the money, which size and brand to buy, and so on.

Finally, they arrived at the *tzion*, and each person prayed and expressed their personal needs, aspirations, and desires. They davened that Hashem grant them salvations in the merit of the holy tzaddik, the Bas Ayin.

Then they went to Meron and davened at Reb Shimon bar Yochai's kever. It was then time for the celebration. They went to the supermarket in Meron to buy food for the *yahrtzeit seudah*, which they planned to make in Meron.

It is well known that lighting a candle li'iluy nishmas is a great favor and segulah and benefit, for the neshamah and for the person who lights the candle. It states (Tehillim 119:105) נר לרגלי דברך and we take a message that the primary נר is דברך, when one studies his divrei Torah which is אור לנתיבותי, sheds light on one's path.

Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l said in the name of his father, the Steipler, that when he was young, his father, Reb Chaim Peretz would wake him early every morning to learn with him Bas Ayin, to teach him mussar and yiras Shamayim.

I heard a clever idea from a respected person. In the middle of the year (not exclusively on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Kislev) when one encounters *nisyonos* with guarding one's eyes, and fights his yetzer hara, closes his eyes and avoids seeing what he shouldn't, he can make a Bas Ayin seudah (to celebrate that he guarded his בת עין, the pupil of his eye). He can make a seudah with music, drums and dancing, and be happy that he succeeded in overcoming the yetzer hara, and he can praise Hashem. Such a seudah is certainly also mesugal for yeshuos b'ruchniyus and b'gashmiyus, miracles beyond the rules of nature.

Rebbe Shlomo Karliner zt'l said, "The reason yungerleit don't grow in our times is because they don't recognize the greatness of their good deeds. After walking in the street and passing this nisayon, we can come home and break out in a dance (Tehillim 30:2),

ארומוך ה' כי דליתני, "I will exult you Hashem, for You have raised me."

By the akeidah it states (Bereishis 22:6) ויקח בידו את האש ואת המאכלת וילכו שניהם יחדו, "And he took into his hand the fire and the knife, and they both went together." The Divrei Yisrael says that אש, fire, represents yiras Shamayim, and מאכלת, the knife, represents parnassah. The pasuk says את האש ואת המאכלת וילכו שניהם יחדו, that the fire and the knife go together, that yiras Shamayim and parnassah go together. Because according to the amount of yiras Shamayim one has, that is the degree of parnassah there will be.

### Humility without Losing Hope

One of the central themes the Bas Ayin teaches is humility. He wondrously finds lessons in humility from the parshiyos of the Torah and from various Chazals, and studies the subject of humility from many angles. One important lesson he teaches is that a person must be cautious that his humble feelings don't cause him to lose hope. The Bas Ayin said that this lesson is found in the words (Devarim 4:9) רק השמר לך. It is known that Chazal say that רק is an expression of מיעוט, excluding or limiting something. The Bas Ayin therefore explains that רק is an expression of humility, when one feels limited and imperfect. He translates the pasuk as follows. רק, your humble feelings, השמר לך, be cautious with them so that they don't cause you to lose hope.<sup>17</sup>

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As they left the supermarket, the *yungerman's* cell phone rang. A while back, he had given tzedakah for a Chinese auction. They called to tell him he had just won a new washing machine!

Reb Motel Rothman says he also had a *yeshuah* on that day - a far greater one. Because he davened for more important matters than a washing machine. The lesson is: When the gates of heaven are open, and we can ask for whatever we want, we should be wise and ask for great things. We can also ask for the small things, but we shouldn't limit ourselves. There's no limit to how much Hashem can give us. In the Bas Ayin's merit, may all of Klal Yisrael merit all types of salvations, b'gashmiyos and b'ruchniyos, with the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days.

17. The Bas Ayin (הוספות מהדו"ח) taught that if a person doesn't believe that Hashem is with him even when he is at a low level, as it states (Vayikra 16:16) השוכן אתם בתוך טמאתם, "Who dwells with them amidst their tumah," he is an apikores. Hashem always loves Bnei Yisrael, His beloved children, and waits for them to return to Him.

It states (Vayikra 21:1) לֹנֶפֶשׁ לֹא יִטְמֵא בְעַמּוּי, "Let none [of you] defile himself for a dead person among his people." The Bas Ayin (Emor) teaches that עַמּוּי is gematria עני, and the pasuk is saying that you must be cautious not to make your soul *tamei* due to your excessive humility,<sup>18</sup> which can cause you to feel down and can prevent you from serving Hashem, chalilah. You hewn should comfort

yourself with what Hashem says (Devarim 14:1) בְּנִים אַתֶּם לַיהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, "You are children of Hashem, your G-d." And just like a father has compassion on his children like they are, so will Hashem have compassion on us and He will accept our service as it is.

This is hinted at in the following pesukim (Vayikra 21:1-2) לֹנֶפֶשׁ לֹא יִטְמֵא בְעַמּוּי כִּי אִם לְשֹׂארוֹ הַקָּרֵב

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There is a mashal of someone who asked a group of people, "What was the happiest moment of your life, the moment that is worth a million dollars to you?"

One person stood up and said, "I unfortunately went through a difficult divorce, and the judge ruled that for four years, I couldn't meet with my oldest son, whom I love so much. It was so hard for me not to see my son. I used to go to the cheder where my son learned and climb onto the roof or a large tree so I could watch my son from a distance. If I couldn't speak with my son, I wanted to see him at least. I always sought opportunities to see him.

"Once, I was walking down the road, and my son was walking in the opposite direction, and we met! My son shouted, "Ah, Tatty!" I have no words to describe my emotions when I heard my son's sweet voice and our eyes met. I cherish this moment every day."

So, too, Hakadosh Baruch Hu yearns for his son, His only son... And every Yid is Hashem's only son. Hashem desires to meet us; He has much tzaar when we are distant. But the moment a son raises his eyes to heaven and calls out, "Tatte! Tatte!" the Father turns to him and comes close to him. There is no greater joy in all the worlds than that moment.

Another mashal is told about a factory worker. He was an expert in his field, but once he wasn't careful and broke an expensive piece of equipment worth a million dollars. The worker was very embarrassed and didn't have the courage to return to work. He stayed at home, at first, because he couldn't face his boss after the significant loss he caused him. However, after a while, he realized that he had to work to earn a living. He didn't have the heart to return to his old boss, so he worked for the competitor, who owned a similar factory.

His first boss invited his former worker to speak with him. The boss told him, "You caused me a million-dollar loss, but that loss doesn't bother me so much since you broke it by accident. But why did you add insult to injury by joining my competitor? This is a bigger problem! Why do you continue to cause me losses?"

The nimshal is that when a person does an aveirah, it causes a great loss and *pgam* in all worlds. But HaKadosh Baruch Hu forgives and finds merits, that he did it by accident, etc. But for losing hope, there is no forgiveness. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "It isn't enough that you sinned; you went to work for My competitor because you began working for the yetzer hara!"

There is no reason to lose hope because when one does teshuvah, he becomes like a newborn child. The Bas Ayin (Re'eh) explains the Mishnah, אֵיזוֹהוּ חֶסֶד הַרְוָאָה אֶת הַנוֹלָד, that teshuvah is so high that it reaches the kisei hakavod, Hashem's throne. Teshuvah reaches the place from where the Jewish souls are out, and HaKadosh Baruch Hu gives him a new, pure soul. The wise person recognizes this opportunity, does teshuvah, and he becomes נוֹלָד like he was just born. This is a חֶסֶד; he succeeds in changing his ways and becomes like a newborn.

**18.** Although humility is a great attribute, and the entire sefer Bas Ayin is filled with the praise of those who are humble, nevertheless, one should be cautious that the humility shouldn't cause him to forget his elevated status, that he is a son of the King, his father in heaven who waits for him and wants to be close to him.

אֵלָיו לֹאמוּ וּלְאָבִיו וּלְבִנוּ וּלְבֵתוֹ וּלְאָחִיו, "Let none [of you] defile himself for a dead person among his people, except for his relative who is close to him, his mother, his father, his son, his daughter, his brother..." As we wrote above, עָנִי is gematria ענו, humility, and the pasuk is a warning that we shouldn't let humility knock us down and cause us to lose hope. The pasuk continues and lists the family relatives. The Bas Ayin explains that this means we should remember that we are a child of Hashem, like a relative to Hashem, and Hashem loves us immensely. With this awareness, we won't lose hope. We will know that whatever we do for Hashem is precious in His eyes.

One shouldn't become tamei due to *anavah*. Rather, he should remember and rely on his closeness to Hashem, Baruch Hu, with all kinds of closeness, for He is our Father and calls us His children. There are other expressions of קִרְבָּה, such as wife (see Yirmiyahu 2:2) and daughter (see Shemos Rabba 52:5), because of Hashem's immense love for Yisrael.

The Bas Ayin (Vayeira ד"ה המכסה) explains the pasuk (Bereishis 18:21) אֲרֵדָה נָא, "I will descend now [to Sedom]..." The Bas Ayin explains that the pasuk means that Hashem will go down to the *resha'im* of Sedom to arouse them to do *teshuvah*. Hashem told this to Avraham, so he should know Hashem's immense chesed and compassion that He doesn't want the punishment of *resha'im*. As it states (Yechezkel 33:11) אִמְרָה אֲלֵיהֶם חַי אֲנִי נְאֻם ה' אֱלֹקִים, "Say to them: As I live, says Hashem, I do not wish for the death of the wicked, but for the wicked to repent of his way so that he may live."

Hashem said (Bereishis 18:21) אֲרֵדָה נָא וְאֵרָאָה. The Bas Ayin says that this means that if they do *teshuvah*, כֻּלָּה, Hashem will remove the *aveirah* entirely. And if they do *teshuvah*, but not completely, אֲדַעָה, Hashem will remove the sin slowly with *yesurim*.

With this conversation, Avraham learned a great *chiddush* regarding the extent of Hashem's compassion for His creations who sin before Him. Not only is Hashem's hand open to receive those who return to Him, but Hashem Himself also arouses their hearts and calls them to do *teshuvah* before Him. However, Avraham still thought that when Hashem arouses people to *teshuvah*, it is solely when the community does *teshuvah*. He didn't know that Hashem would accept the *teshuvah* of an individual. This is the reason Avraham davened that even if there were only ten *tzaddikim* in each city, and there were only a few people who were doing *teshuvah*, it should be enough and Hashem should accept their *tefillos* and *teshuvah*, and Hashem agreed to his requests.

This portion of the Torah is written to teach us the potential of *teshuvah*. Hakadosh Baruch Hu waits for every individual to do *teshuvah*. And even if his sins are very significant, like the sins of Sedom and Amorah, chas v'shalom, his *teshuvah* is still accepted. Furthermore, Hashem will arouse him from heaven to do *teshuvah*.

The Gemara (Sotah 44:) says, "When someone speaks between the *tefillin* worn on the arm to the *tefillin* worn on the head, he returns [and doesn't go out to] war." The Bas Ayin (beginning of Tzav) explains that the *tefillin* worn on the arm, near the heart, represents a humble, broken heart. And the *tefillin* worn on the head represents the uplifting feelings of hope, and trust in Hashem's compassion and love. One can't interrupt between the two *tefillins*. This means that after one has a humble heart, he must immediately strengthen himself with the awareness that he is still precious to Hashem and Hashem desires his service. If one interrupts between these two matters, he returns from the war. He isn't able to stand in the war against the *yetzer hara*. The only way to win the war against the *yetzer hara* is with a mixture of a broken heart combined with courage and trust in Hashem's compassion.

Eichah ends with the pesukim השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם כי אם מאם מאסתנו קצפת עלינו עד מאד, "Return us to You, O Hashem, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old. For if You have utterly rejected us, You have been exceedingly wroth against us."

And then we repeat, השיבנו ה' אליך ונשובה חדש ימינו כקדם, "Return us to You, O Hashem, that we may be restored! Renew our days as of old."

We mention השיבנו, that Hashem should bring us back and accept our teshuvah, and we say this twice. The Bas Ayin (Va'eschanan) explains that this represents two types of teshuvah. We first do teshuvah for our bad deeds. The second teshuvah is for our negative thoughts when we think that we have become disgusted in Hashem's eyes, r'l. So after we say כי אם מאם מאסתנו, that we feel that Hashem has rejected us and doesn't want us anymore, we do teshuvah on this thought, and we repeat that Hashem should accept our teshuvah.

We quote, "[We do teshuvah] that we have so much humility until the heart is broken and we are disgusted with our life due to our many sins, and we lose hope. On this, we daven a second time, השיבנו."

May the merit of the Baal Hilulah protect us, and everyone should have brachos and yeshuos, b'ruchniyus and b'gashmiyus, amen.<sup>19</sup>

## The Importance of Studying Halachah

Chazal (Niddah 73.) say, כל השונה הלכות בכל יום, מובטח לו שהוא בן עולם הבא, "Whoever studies halachah every day, he is guaranteed that he is a ben Olam HaBa." It doesn't necessarily need to be for a long time (although, certainly, the more, the better). Even just three minutes a day is significant. You will be surprised by how many halachos you can learn in even a short time. Reb Shmuel Vosner zt'l would encourage learning Kitzur Shulchan Aruch. He would say, "Kitzur Shulchan Aruch teaches us how to live as a Yid. Shulchan Aruch is for when one has a shailah."

Learning halachah is essential because otherwise, how will one know how to say brachos, keep Shabbos, etc.? But let us be aware that several other significant benefits come from studying halachah.

Chazal promise that for studying halachah each day, one is guaranteed a portion in Olam HaBa. This is difficult, because doesn't every Yid have a portion in Olam HaBa, as it states כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, that every Yid has a portion in Olam HaBa?

Aruch l'Ner (Nidah 73) answers that every Yid merits Olam HaBa, but it can take time before he gets there. If he studied halacha during his lifetime, he is brought to Olam HaBa immediately after his passing.

He writes, "[If one doesn't study halachah], he will receive Olam HaBa, but after going

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19. A chasid came to the holy Ruzhiner zt'l and poured out his bitter heart before him, all the pain and tzaros he endured, and asked the rebbe to bless him and to daven for him. When he left the Ruzhiner's room, he ran into the Ruzhiner's son, Reb Dovid Moshe of Tchortkov zt'l. Reb Dovid Moshe asked, "What did my father tell you?"

The man replied that he said, דער אייבישטער זאל דיר העלפען, "Hashem should help you." The boy said, "Go back to my father and ask him 'What will be until Hashem helps?' He returned and asked that question. The Ruzhiner replied, "Hashem will help you until He helps you." This is hinted in parashas Vayeitzei (28:15) כי לא אעזבך עד אשר אם עשיתי את אשר דברתי לך concerning you."

The Shinover Rav zt'l (Divrei Yechezkel Likutim) writes that this is the meaning of what we say Friday night before Kiddush, ושויתי ה' לקראתי שתרחמני עוד בגלותי לגאלי, "Hashem should have compassion and redeem me, while I am still in galus." Even while we are in galus and await the complete redemption, Hashem should have compassion on us and redeem us.



through a cleansing process. Just like silver and gold are purified from all defects, so will these people need to undergo cleansing to clean themselves from all types of yetzer haras and sins of this world. However, [when one studies halachah] he is a ben Olam Haba. He will merit Olam Haba easily, and he will go to Olam HaBa immediately after he leaves this world. Hashem will lead him there."

This is because one of the specialties of halachah is that it is the refined truth of how Hashem wants us to act and to live in this world. The Aruch l'Ner writes, דכמו שלמד האמת, הברור שאין צריך ליבון וצירוף עוד כן לא יצטרך צירוף לבא לעה"ב. "Just as he studied the clear and decisive truth that doesn't need clarifying and purifying, so he won't need to be purified in Olam HaBa."

Another benefit of learning halachah is that it will purify him and help him raise himself above the gashmiyos of this world. It states (Tehillim 100:1) הריעו לה' כל הארץ. The Yismach Yisrael zt'l (Chanukah, p. צ"ה) says that כל הארץ, can be translated as "entirely in gashmiyos." The pasuk alludes to people who are at low levels and are entirely immersed in the pleasures of this world. The pasuk proclaims, הריעו לה', they, too, can pull out of their gashmiyos and praise Hashem.

How do they do so? The roshei teivos of (Tehillim 100:1) הלכ"ה spells הריעו לה' כל הארץ. The Yismach Yisrael teaches that the segulah of learning halachah is that it pulls people out of כל הארץ ארציות, their low levels.

Once again, the explanation can be because he is learning the final line, the will of Hashem, of how He wants us to act in this world, and that has a spiritual influence on the person, as the Arizal tells us. It purifies him immensely.

Another benefit of studying halachah is that it brings us joy, as it states פקודי ה' ישירים משמחי לב, "The halachos of Hashem are upright, causing the heart to rejoice."

## Fear Creates the Problem

In this week's parashah, Yaakov Avinu is traveling to his father, Yitzchak, who lived in Chevron, to the south of Eretz Yisrael. Yaakov feared that when Eisav heard he was in the vicinity, he would come and take revenge on him for receiving the *brachos*. This is the reason Yaakov tried to make peace with Eisav.

As the Ramban (beginning of the parashah) writes, "The south of Eretz Yisrael is near Edom, and Yaakov's father, Yitzchak, also lived in the south. Yaakov would either pass through Edom or come close to Edom, and Yaakov feared that Eisav might hear that he was nearby. So before arriving, he sent *malachim* to Eisav's land [to make peace with him]. The *chachamim* criticize Yaakov for this."

It would have been better if Yaakov didn't draw attention to himself. Many years had already passed, and Eisav's anger had subsided. Had Yaakov not sent messengers to Eisav, Eisav wouldn't have thought to come to see him. By bringing up the issue, Eisav's old grievances were reawakened.

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 75:3, quoted in *Ramban*) elaborates:

It states (*Mishlei* 26:17), מחזיק באזני כלב עבר מתעבר, "על ריב לא לו", "Like someone who grabs onto a dog's ears, so too is a person who gets involved in a fight that isn't his." We can compare it to someone who sees the leader of thieves sleeping at the side of the road. He awakens him and says, "There are bad people nearby. You better get away from here." The thief got up and slapped the man.

The man shouted, "You evil man! I came to help you, and you hit me?"

The thief replied, "It's your fault. Why did you wake me up?"

Similarly, Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "Eisav was going his own way, [he wasn't thinking of harming you]. So why did you send messengers to him?!"

As is the nature of fear, Yaakov's fears only complicated matters.

The Gemara (*Brachos* 60.) states:

Reb Yehudah bar Nasan walked behind Rav Hamnuna, and Rav Hamnuna heard Rav Yehudah moan from fear. Rav Hamnuna said, "You are bringing troubles onto yourself. As it states (*Iyov* 3:25), *כי פחד פחדתי ויאתני*, 'I was afraid, and it happened. The matter I was worried about came to me.' Fear can cause the issue you are afraid of to happen.

The Maharal (*Chidushei Agodos Bava Metzia* 33) writes, "The Rishonim say: When one is afraid that he might fall, that fear itself causes him to fall. [We'll prove it.] Place a wooden plank across a river, and now walk across it. You will likely fall into the river. Now place the plank on the ground and walk over it. You won't fall off. Because

when you are above a river, you are afraid of falling, and that fear causes it to happen. This is also true when one is afraid that he might become poor. Thinking about this causes it to happen.... As it states in *Iyov* (3:25), "That which I was afraid of, came to me."

Elephant tamers tie their elephants to a post, and the elephants don't try to pull away from the post to escape, although if they tried, they would succeed. Why don't they try? The answer is that when they were young and small, they tried to break loose but failed. They don't realize that they are many times that size and can easily break loose today.

We, too, must overcome our fears. Don't be afraid of the *yetzer hara*, or public opinion. Do what you know you should, and you will succeed.